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Report of the conference "Taking up the challenge"

Joint meeting Greens/EFA and Bundestagsfraktion - 10-11 January 2007

- Report of the 1st panel - Wednesday 10 January 2007 - 19.15-21.00
  Which challenges do we face? Which Europe do we need?

  "Our task as Green Parliamentarians is to 'green the European Union'" – this was the wake up call with which Renate Künast, co-Chair of the German Greens, opened the third Green parliamentarian network meeting. The meeting gathered together 170 participants from all over Europe discuss Green positions on the German EU presidency. Greens/EFA Co-President Dany Cohn Bendit called for intensifying interparliamentary dialogue between elected Greens, also with a view to the next European elections in 2009.

  Mark Leonard, director of the Open Society Institute, who presented himself as a "British European optimist", stated that the EU is a highly important global political power and a well established force of transformation. Despite all the talk of a crisis talk, Europe has the ability to initiate the transformation of societies towards European values simply through promotion of the rule of law. Other regions have tried to duplicate this successful model, such as the African Union, ASEAN or the Mercosur countries. Europe was strong enough to realise the Kyoyo protocol and the International Criminal Court despite US resistance. Enlargement is another success story and should vigorously pursued even if not all countries will not reach the same grade of integration.

  Martin Bursik, who was just nominated Environment Minister in the Czech Rebulplic, stated that it was important not to underestimate the influence which Greens already exert in Europe. This is clear from the German Presidency's programme, which lists climate change as on of its priorities even though the Greens are no longer in government.

- Report of the second panel - Thursday 11 January 2007 - 09.30-11.30
  What kind of constitution do we want ?

  The constitutional process and the enlargement perspective

  The debate sought to bring the Greens closer to a common position on the Constitution, as well as on the future for enlargement, analysing the link between deepening and widening the EU.

  For the Greens the current constitutional crisis cannot be solved by EU governments alone; there must be a genuine 'parliamentarisation' of the process. This means the inevitable Inter-

Governmental Conference must be preceded by an inclusive process, truly involving the European and the national parliaments. The debate also stressed that the crisis will not be solved by protocols or minor changes or by simply changing the name of the text. The political forces in Europe need to come together and clarify the purpose of the European Union.

There was an admission that the initial Green strategy following the negative referendum votes in France and Germany namely trying to rally and unite the 'pro-European' forces in the no-camp, as well as allowing parliaments to be the driving force of the process was unsuccessful. Going forward, there will be a need to work with those sections of civil society involved in the constitutional process and in the preparation of the 'Berlin declaration' on the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome.

There is no clear agreement between the Greens on the question of a referendum for ratification. Those who favour this instrument do see it as essential for legitimising the European project and creating a European identity. Those who are more sceptical expressed doubts about the legal and political possibilities of creating such an instrument.
This is certainly one of the issues for which further discussion will be necessary.

- Report of Panel 3 - Thursday 11 January 2007 - 11.30 -13.00
  Migration and integration

The second session focused on migration and integration. With debate centred on legal migration, integration, labour market demands and the need for a European approach to the cross border dimensions of this.

The German Presidency has made migration and integration a priority, which the Greens welcome. There is a need to facilitate a variety of means of legal migration, along with an intensified effort to bring about concrete proposals for integration of third country nationals, whether temporary or permanent migrants. It is important for there to be an honest and open discussion about the European approach to not only asylum but also to migration.

The debate highlighted one outstanding problem to realising a common policy on legal migration: the fact that many Member states, including Germany, have not yet implemented directives concerning the first step of a common European asylum policy. The revision of the Dublin II agreement, regulating what Member state is responsible for asylum claims, is overdue and could be a good opportunity to highlight this and to emphasise the need for the implementation of the adopted directives as part of the bigger picture a common European asylum and migration policy as set out as early as 1999 by the EU summit in Tampere.

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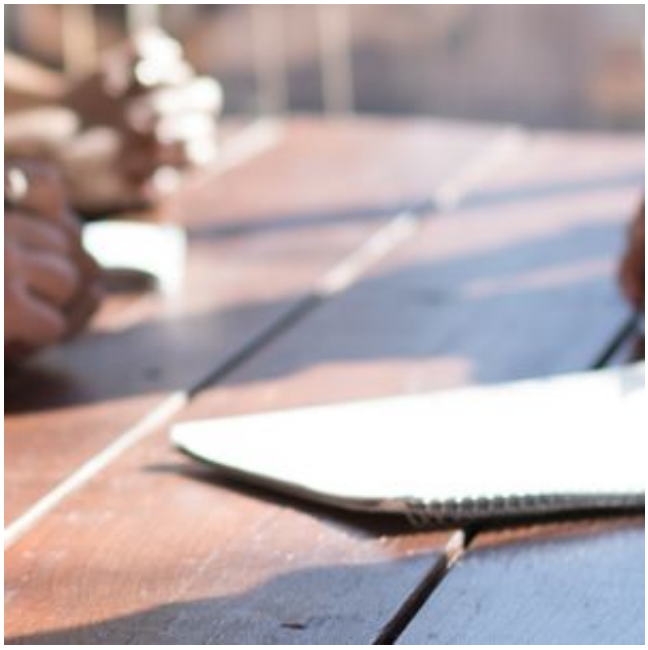
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