

DEMOCRACY, SOVEREIGNTY, GLOBALIZATION AND COMMUNITY. TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGES AND NEW SCENARIOS

My name is François Lafond, Executive director of a think tank, EuropaNova, associate professor at Sciences Po in Paris, but more important today member of the Scientific Committee of the Institute of European Democrats. The IED is the political foundation at the European Parliament of the European Democrat Party, EDP, which is the umbrella organization where the EAJ-PNV, the Basque nationalist Party is affiliated.

This is why I am here today at this new edition of the BILBAO DIALOGUES to give a “European tribute” from the EDP and the IED to your works which will take place here for two days in this wonderful city of Bilbao. This International conference giving me the opportunity to learn more about your reality, your desires and your aspirations.

1. Globalization is a process. It will not be stopped and we still do not figure out precisely the evolution of this process. Where we are going is less than sure. Except that everything is going faster, everybody and everything are known everywhere, and that everything is for sure interlinked. Our political task is to make sure that the decision-making processes that we put in place will strengthen the positive aspects of the globalization and will reduce, will undermine the negative aspects. In other words, globalization is not good, not bad in itself, globalization has to be managed, driven, and its effects controlled. Some have says that globalization has to be “humanized”. We do not have to follow it. We have to lead, to orient. This is why the political action is important.
2. Democracy is a permanent objective. Democracy reach to be the more inclusive possible in the decision making processes. Then the main challenges are to make sure to manage two pillars of all political organization: efficiency and legitimacy. How to be sure

FRANÇOIS LAFOND

DIRECTOR EJECUTIVO DE LA FUNDACIÓN EUROPA NOVA
Y REPRESENTANTE DEL PDE

that the majority will be able to decide, with the respect for the minority, but in an efficient way? Because we have to make sure the institutions are delivering to the citizens. For sure, our current times may be different and the politics offer a different framework than before, and we see a lot of rhetoric about the elites and the people. But at the same time, I am not sure there is such a difference today between the elites and the citizens, as during the pre-period of the French revolution of 1789 and many other historical examples could teach us. It seems to me that we over-consider the need for democracy, forgetting the assets of the representative democracy.

3. Sovereignty is the capacity to take decisions, to keep control and to influence the events. To know where the power to constrain is located. Some, and even in European countries more and more, seems to think that national sovereignty is the best level of action, the unique level where decisions should be taken. The most efficient place to act. Let's be clear. I do not think so. The opposite I must say.

I think that the European sovereignty is the concept that we have to work on. Offering a good opportunity to mediate globalization, democracy and sovereignty.

We could speak about the "transfer of national sovereignty" to European institutions (which are still non-perfect and not fully democratic). However, a lot of people are still afraid about such transfer. Furthermore, sometimes it seems to me that our national elites are the main brakes to the transfer. So let's speak about a softer notion: "sharing sovereignty" at the European level.

This is my conviction. We have to move forward to a better shared sovereignty at the European level. A better institutional European framework.

La globalización no es buena ni mala en sí misma; la globalización ha de ser gestionada, conducida, y controlados sus efectos. Algunos han dicho que la globalización tiene que ser "humanizada". No tenemos que seguirla. Tenemos que liderar, orientar. Por ese motivo la acción política es importante

It should be obvious if we want things to be done, decisions taken, having an impact on the life citizens. To deliver.

Have a look when we list our current political agenda: migrations and refugee tremendous crisis, climate change and the forthcoming COP21 in Paris, the still Eurozone crisis and the difficulty to recover and to promote the economic growth and the employment, the financial regulation, and even the Volkswagen scandal and the regulation aspect.

The only possibility to address these issues (and much more), the best possibility to gain some capacity to influence is to decide at the European level. The "European Sovereignty" is the concept to discuss and to shape in a better way.

And this is because we will take more decisions at the European level that the subsidiarity principle will be the right tool to give regional and local authorities their own capacity to play a stronger role in the overall framework. This is not new here in Bilbao, as in other part of Spain, in particular after this week-end that I will have to explain in details what it means. But we have to implement the subsidiarity principle, in its positive conception.