



## European Partners for the Environment

EEB 40st Anniversary

Strengthening the movement for environmental change :

Change the Dynamic, Mobilize The Power of Many and Launch the European Co-Revolution .

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### Summary :

**As the EU Commission or Council leaders as such are not ready to take the lead of the ecological transition, we need to change the European dynamic. Two proposals for a strategy to launch a 'Co-Revolution' :**

- **Request a group of experts to draft a strategy '*Mobilise the power of many in the digital age*'. In the era of digital age and collaborative economy, the way in which NGOs take action at local, national and European levels should be adapted.**
- **'re-invest' in EPE as a multi-stakeholder platform with a mandate to engineer the '*bottom up multi-stakeholder co-revolution*' we need to accelerate the ecological and energy transition and partner with the 'bottom-up initiatives' generated by the Commission programmes (as European Innovation Partnerships, the Covenant of Mayors, Horizon 2020 etc) or other EU Institutions as the EESC and the Committee of Regions.**

I have always loved the word "*metamorphosis*", which derives from the Greek word μεταμόρφωσις, meaning "transformation, transforming", from μετα- (meta-) "change" and μορφή (morphe) "form". In my opinion, the role of environmental NGOs at European level has been and should be to contribute to the *transformative change* that we need in Europe.

For this transformation change to happen, to accelerate the ecological transition, citizens and their intermediaries, non-governmental environmental organizations, need to be *empowered*. Even more, we need to build a much broader and multi-stakeholder movement for environmental change deciding to launch a 'co-revolution'.

In the present political circumstances, the time has come for a European 'Co-Revolution'.

Ban ki-Moon, UN Secretary General<sup>1</sup> stated in Davos "*We need a revolution, revolutionary thinking, revolutionary action, a free-market revolution for global sustainability. It is easy to mouth the words 'sustainable development,' but to make it happen we have to be prepared to make major changes in our lifestyles, our economic models, our social organization and our political life*".

## 1. Empowerment at EU level

A Federation such as the EEB is an essential go-between for NGOs vis-à-vis the European institutions and networks. The EEB, active i.a. at EU, UNECE, OECD levels, has played a key role in "greening the Treaty", in improving access to information, facilitating participation – including in the field of standardisation – and providing access to justice. These are the issues to which I contributed when I was the EEB Secretary General, working alongside Michael Scullios, Armando Montanari, Ralph Hallo, Jeremy Wates, Karola Taschner and Regina Schneider. And to answer to the question *'if there's just one thing we should continue doing exactly the same way, what is it ?'* and would say this is it : work to empower people.

However, did these actions to 'empower' citizens, fundamentally change the context of European decision-making? I am afraid the answer is that *"it was needed but not enough"*.

I'm afraid NGOs' room for manoeuvre at European level is quite reduced, if NGO's strategy remains unchanged :

- it is reduced because in spite of the 7th Programme, brokering a consensus among the EU-28 about a strong environmental policy looks increasingly uncertain; this is shown by the fact that the circular economy package – a leverage for green growth - is among the initiatives to be removed, as listed by or for the Commission's first vice-president, Mr. Timmermans;
- it is also reduced because the extreme difficulty in modifying market instruments (prices, taxes, subsidies) acts as a blockage to any acceleration of the transition process;
- finally, it is reduced because NGOs don't activate, thoroughly or strongly enough, all the levers available in the digital era *'to force change'* (see point 2).

### Are business platforms more successful ?

I'm afraid not. Personally I am very critical of the way in which bodies such as the WBCSD have failed to take up the opportunity to support a broad alliance and swing decision-making at European level. WBCSD members continue to finance 'Business Europe' to demolish the "green" proposals that they claim to support otherwise.

Furthermore, on October 24<sup>th</sup>, an impressive list of Companies and other interested parties signed a letter to the President of the European Council and to the President of the Italian Council to advocate in favor of a 40% energy saving target. This initiative failed. This failure should be a 'wake up call'. If we want to make significant progress prior COP 21 and during the five coming years, the 'Lateral Powers' need to review dramatically their strategy.

This failure is an invitation to change the way we 'lobby' and 'make use of the power of the purse'.

### A large movement for environmental change

But, there are also reasons to be more optimistic as soon as you are defining the movement for environmental change in a broad manner, in other words not as limited to members of non-governmental organisations. Firstly, other key actors of the movement for environmental change are 'Cultural Creatives', Mayors, Landlords and Tenants, Entrepreneurs, Teachers,

Households and Consumers, Investors. For example, I'm Board member of Committee 21 France. It brings together 475 members of which 130 companies, 180 local authorities with a focus on local agenda 21. It works !

In this regard also, the Commission initiatives which are a mix of 'top down' and 'bottom up' initiatives are very important. I'm referring here to initiatives as the Covenant of Mayors on Climate Change, the European Innovation Partnerships, Horizon 2020 for the de-pollution of the Mediterranean, the SWITCH programmes for Asia or the Mediterranean, Smart Specialization Programmes, the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) etc. The numerous partners of these initiatives are also key actors of the movement for environmental change ! They are 'empowering themselves' and are also 'empowered by their partnership with the EU.

An other key trend is the 'marriage' between the actors of the green economy movement and the actors of a 'collaborative economy'. How to connect "the power of many" in the digital era with a "collaborative economy" and "sustainable development" as a triple vector for new prosperity is the key issue being raised at global and local level by the actors of the movement for change. A good example is the alliance between the actors of the 7 pillars of a circular and collaborative economy as proposed by ADEME :

- Sustainable supply
- Eco-design
- Industrial Ecology
- Economy of the feature / Product service system
- Responsible consumption.
- Extending the duration of use
- Recycling

### Lateral Powers

It was Jeremy Rifkin that popularized the concept of *lateral powers*<sup>1</sup>. If the European Union and its Member States want to take the opportunity of the 2014-2019 legislature to give new impetus, the EU work programme in 2015 should focus in particular on radical collaboration – *co-revolution* – between European institutions and "lateral powers", which are not only the actors of millions of silent revolutions, young people and bloggers but also, for example, trade unions, pension funds, cities and churches. Europeans can build "prosperity for all" within the carrying capacity of ecosystems – which means redirecting globalization, de-financializing the economy and building a fairer world marked by greater dignity and increased solidarity – if they can better "coordinate" their actions (those of EU Powers and States) with those of Lateral Powers in Europe and in the world.

I welcome the EEB's participation in initiatives such as 'G10' which I initiated, 'the Spring Alliance'. But I believe that these alliances as well as "Finance Watch", the ETUC, BEUC and many others will need to empower themselves with the tools of the digital age to have the impact they would like to have.

## 2. Empowerment in a digital era: the power of many

In the era of digital networks and collaborative economy, the way in which NGOs take action at local, national and European levels should take the digital age transformations into account.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Rifkin, *The Third Industrial Revolution: How Lateral Power is Transforming Energy, the Economy, and the World*. Paperback 2013.

Looking to the new Commission's agenda, the way the European Parliament is composed, the way business behave and react to threats to their market, their image and their 'trust gap', these new tools should be on the forefront of environmental NGO's strategy to reverse the EU trend. NGOs have been involved in initiatives such as the initiative petition on water, which was a success. But in the areas related to market levers, in which the impact would be much stronger on consumption, production and finance, and could accelerate the ecological transition, it seems to me that there is room for improvement on the basis of new tools made available by the digital age

Mobilizing the power of many: The digital era provides levers for action which are the stuff of dreams. I believe that with regard to relying on the levers of the digital era, environmental NGOs have room for improvement. To answer the question '*if there's just one thing we should do differently, what is it ?*', my answer is this : revisit the way you conceive alliances, make use of the new levers in a digital age to mobilize the power of many, citizens and other lateral powers ! Not to 'petition' but to hit the market. : all those for environmental change should make more use of the 'power of the purse' and their 'trust power' in new manner !

One example is the WWF campaign to turn off the lighting on monuments all round the world for an hour – a fantastic logistical achievement - but I have a dream: putting the same logistical means at the service of "harder" projects such as creating a tipping point to make markets move, either in the negative direction (pushing for the closure of accounts in a bank or an investment fund or the ban of products) or in the positive direction (through crowdfunding, for example, or to promote products and services). Such 'signals' would have a direct impact on business, one way to 'convince' political leaders to support a 'greener' agenda.

We can thus accelerate the transition towards a new development model and build up trust between the many actors (public authorities, businesses, civil society) that want to use their "powers" to accelerate the shift to a more "sustainable" economic and societal model and regard themselves as "responsible" and "accountable" for their commitments, aware that these commitments are the foundations of their reputation and the building blocks of trust.

### 3. Empowerment at Member State and local level to have leverage over EU regulations so as to protect the environment all over Europe

If I'm not very optimistic as far as NGO's impact at EU level if their strategy remains unchanged - or a natural disaster doesn't happen, - I believe on the contrary that NGOs' room for manoeuvre at local level is becoming always bigger but, there too, in partnership with other economic and social actors partners of local development action plans.

This sphere of action is essential. European Directives clearly have a positive impact on EU Member States: introduction of national legislation and related investments, sometimes in the wake of legal proceedings for non-compliance with EU Directives. The EEB has always been on the forefront fighting for EU environmental directives enforcement. And I'm pleased to see that Regina Schneider is now in charge.

But today, to really be able to secure the implementation of a strong environmental policy, NGO's need to look as well to other issues. For example :

- Tax shift which appears almost impossible at EU level do happen at local level. Cities as London, Amsterdam or Stockholm and many others part of the Covenant of Mayors are

on the forefront of initiatives which have a major impact on prices and costs, redirecting local development with a large citizens support.

- NGOs involvement in drawing up the plans of Member States and their Regions within the framework of structural funds. I am thinking in particular of smart specialization programmes which could have a major impact on the move towards 'green technologies'.
4. Empowerment by building alliances to promote a vision of Europe, build up large multi-stakeholder support for "transformational collaboration", accelerate change at EU level, change the market, change finance and contribute to sustainability at global level

The world is already largely engaged in the next stage of events, with a new imaginative world for sustainable development and societal metamorphoses, a new set of references and new values, particularly that of sharing. We are engaged in a mutation process towards a qualitative welfare economy in our countries, though with still very serious threats to peace and other concerns.

If we manage to establish the mechanisms required for mobilizing public and private financial means, another long economic cycle can be entered, a new prosperity era can be set in motion on the basis of a new vision of prosperity and progress, not to say happiness, together with technological and non-technological eco-innovations – societal, in particular – with a view to a "performance economy" based on a much more efficient management of raw materials and energy, their scarcity and their cost as well as greater sharing of knowledge resources in the digital era. This should lead to a new strategic vision, especially in the field of governance and as regards the investments needed for addressing climate change, ensuring the energy transition, shifting to a circular economy and protecting biodiversity and our cultural heritage.

I should like to insist here on transformations in the field of governance. In its research programmes the European Union lays emphasis on the adoption of a '*systemic* approach', new solutions and new models for a new circular and collaborative economy, the need to reinforce *synergies* among the various actors involved and a widespread dissemination of '*systemic* eco-innovations'.

Today we need multi-stakeholder platforms for open coordination at all levels in order to manage risks and become more resilient, create synergies and mobilize the power of many. NGO participation is likely to vary on a case-by-case basis. Their involvement is essential in the field of project management within the green economy, ranging from the management of natural reserves and the renovation of buildings to value chains for critical resources. It is also essential in the field of reputation and trust.

It is important to establish a distinction between those partnerships which aim to reinforce lobbying and those partnerships which aim to accelerate transition on territories.

#### European Partners for the Environment.

Thanks to its past- President Armando Montanari, the EEB – together with the European Trade Union Confederation, the UNEP and a few companies – was one of the founding members of European Partners for the Environment (EPE). I should like to pay tribute in this respect to the unflinching support of Geraldine Walsh (from the Dublin Civic Trust), who has served up to now

on the EPE Board of directors, and to the support of other people such as Hubert David's first assistant, Geneviève Verbrugge as well of the financial support secured along all the years by the French Ministry of Ecology.

Today, given the expansion of the five '*European Innovation Partnerships*' established by the European Commission (smart cities and communities, water, raw materials, sustainable agriculture, aging population and health), which are on a larger scale what the EPE has tried to promote all along, I think the EEB can be proud of contributing to the launch of the EPE in 1993.

### Covenant 2022.

Within the framework of the European Innovation Partnership on Raw Materials, EPE is now a member of the high-level group and leader of the *Covenant Circular Economy 2022* Commitment launched with a number of partners such as Regions and Cities of Europe. Please visit [www.covenant2022.eu](http://www.covenant2022.eu).

The Covenant Circular Economy as a '*Raw Material Commitment*' registered by the EU is targeting 2022. In 2002, at Rio+10 "*Guidelines Principles for Partnerships*" were adopted. The oversight of their implementation has not been secured. This remain still today a major gap of the Rio process from 1992 till today. In 2012, the § 283 of the Rio+20 conclusions refers to a '*registry*'. Today the '*transformational collaboration*' we need is '*multi-stakeholder partnership*' driven. They need new forms of co-operation to become much more efficient and scale up. Responsibility and Accountability monitoring rules are not in place after 20 years of efforts !

'*Covenant2022*' is testing an *oversight system* (see annex1). The signatories of the *Covenant* should agree on a roadmap leading to a *Summit of Partnerships 2022*, at Rio+30, where an assessment of the Covenant mechanism would be made. *Covenant2022* – with monitoring, reporting, verification and rewarding mechanisms for partnerships related to a circular economy and raw materials – should be based on five pillars:

- *Objectives*: System to implement the 'sustainable development goals' and timetable, including sustainable consumption goals, which would incorporate and expand the Millennium Objectives.
- *Access to information* within the new context of the knowledge-based society and a cooperation project. (see Aarhus Convention)
- *Reporting and rewarding* including finance, performance rewarding schemes (bonuses, stock options, etc.) in connection with environmental, social and governance criteria (ESG). (see GRI)
- *Monitoring and verification*: an oversight system which would be supported by governments, UN agencies and environmental agencies and would be provided in particular by sustainable development rating agencies.
- *Dialogue*: a virtuous circle would be started and amplified by dialogue – on the basis of reports – among interested parties.

## Conclusions. An Agenda for Peace and Prosperity.

With the 2015 Agenda at European level (review of the "Europe 2020" strategy and review of the EU neighbourhood policy) and at international level (adoption of the sustainable development goals and the COP21 meeting), the time has come to engage in new dynamics for peace and prosperity, in other words a *Positive Agenda for Peace and Qualitative Growth* (qualitative means economically sound, ecologically sustainable and socially just). I appeal to all the NGOs belonging to the EEB and to the EEB itself to be the spearhead of this movement for change in Europe as well as within partnerships with all their North-East-South neighbours, from the Arctic region to the Mediterranean shores<sup>2</sup>.

The role of NGOs under the "Horizon 2020" programme for the de-pollution of the Mediterranean, in which the EEB former-President Michael Scoullou plays a major role, as well as the NGO role in the five established European Innovation Partnerships or the Covenant of Mayors, should be thoroughly reviewed.

If the EU Commission or Council leaders as such are not ready to take the lead of the ecological transition, don't underestimate the 'bottom up initiatives' generated by the Commission or other EU Institutions as described above when I was defining who are the actors of the large movement for environmental change. In addition, NGOs should use the citizens powers in the digital age to convince other lateral powers to join forces with the support of the 'weak' EU Institutions, the European Economic and Social Committee<sup>3</sup> and the Committee of Regions.

The EEB AGM can't expect from the EEB Secretariat to be able at the same time to lobby at EU level and be involved in all the dimensions of an 'empowerment strategy' in the digital age for a European co-revolution'. This is why I suggest that the EEB members and Board should

- Request a group of experts to draft a strategy 'Mobilise the power of many in the digital age'<sup>4</sup>.
- 're-invest' in EPE as a multi-stakeholder platform with a mandate to engineer the bottom up multi-stakeholder co-revolution we need to accelerate the ecological and energy transition .

EPE will have next year a new Executive Director. EPE works as a think tank on a '*new generation of partnerships*' and advocates in favour of an Alliance of 10 European Innovation Partnerships as well as a new Neighbourhood Strategy (see annex 1).

*"The issue at stake in the 21st century is the shift from nature processing to human processing, redefining the notion of common good, unfolding our potential of intelligence and conscience, opening a new development cycle and putting our intelligence in the service of value, in other words in the service of our soul power"*<sup>5</sup>. Will Europeans head this *major transformation* in which we *change structures, we change society while changing ourselves*, to paraphrase Edgard Morin<sup>6</sup>?

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<sup>2</sup> *The Neighbourhoods, a new driver for European growth*. ITAN. ESPON applied research 2013/1/22. [www.gis-cist.fr/dossier\\_itan1](http://www.gis-cist.fr/dossier_itan1)

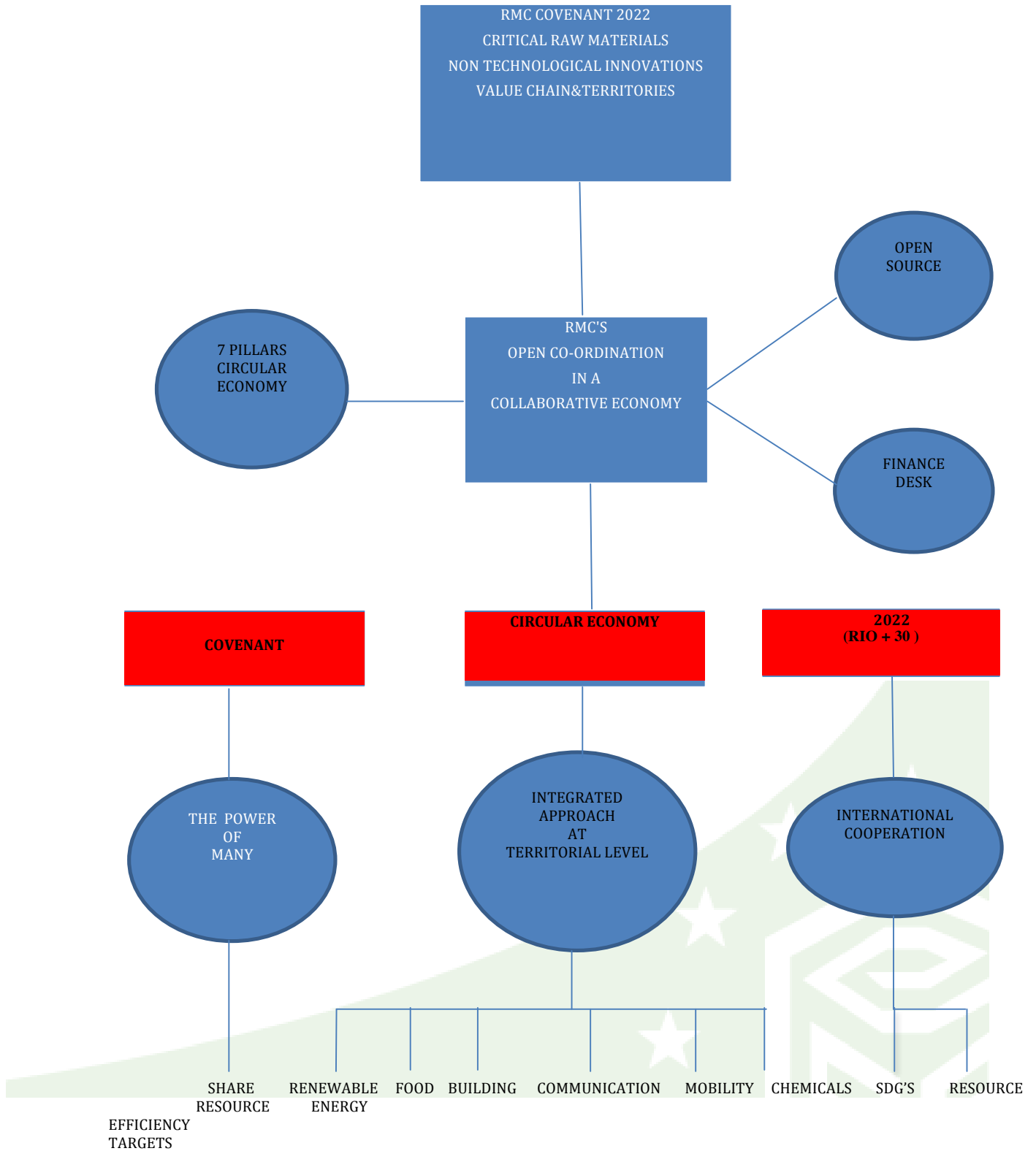
<sup>3</sup> See the 2014 EUROMED Summit of Economic and Social Actors and Institutions organised by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) .

<sup>4</sup> ACIDD in France has developed an expertise in this field.

<sup>5</sup> *Une vision spirituelle de la crise économique*. Ed. Y. Michel 2012, p 153.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p 29.

Annex 1. European Innovation Partnership on Raw Materials. Raw material commitment  
Covenant Circular Economy 2022. [www.covenant2022.eu](http://www.covenant2022.eu)





Annex 2. EPE Memorandum 29/09/2014

to President Juncker and his Commission  
to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy  
Full text on [www.epe.be](http://www.epe.be)

A Positive Agenda for Peace and Qualitative Growth for 2014-2015

Given that "history has taken steps backwards", EPE proposes two initiatives which should be synchronized to engage in new dynamics for peace and prosperity: the Positive Agenda for Peace and Qualitative Growth for 2014-2015 (qualitative means economically sound, ecologically sustainable and socially just). This dynamics covers two scales of action and two types of action to be developed in synergy in the field of multi-stakeholder partnerships:

1. economic recovery within the EU with the help of an *Alliance of 10 European innovation partnerships* as the second pillar of the Europe 2020 Strategy<sup>7</sup>;
2. a new EU- East/South neighbouring countries partnership with a *Three-Sea Alliance* (Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, Caspian Sea) for security, energy and ecological transition, green and blue growth;

The time has come for Europeans to play a catalyst role again at international level, in our neighbourhood, in the European Union and on our territories through multi-stakeholder partnerships that can speed up the major transformation engineered at these four levels in order to launch a new sustainable development cycle taking two elements into account:

1. the agenda for peace and security is closely linked to the agenda for sustainable energy, water, raw materials, climate and biodiversity : a Three Seas Alliance designed as a new Helsinki process would help respond to this need.
2. we are entering another long cycle (Kondratiev cycle) in which " green/blue growth"- a combination of energy and ecological transition and a circular, environmentally sound and collaborative economy - as a leverage for innovation, new technologies, new demand, new business models - will be one of the main drivers. Therefore we need 'transformative partnerships' at a large scale which would be secured by the Alliance of 10 European Innovation Partnerships.

To this end, in the field of multi-stakeholder partnerships, it is clear that European institutions, the EU Commission and external services, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions play complementary roles, though with insufficient synergy to create a scale effect. These bodies must also better cooperate with one another as well as innovate! They should launch together the *Positive Agenda for Peace and Qualitative Growth for 2014-2015*. This agenda will contribute to peace as well to :

1. the reindustrialization of Europe in a circular-economy approach is closely linked to international cooperation in the field of system management and value chains of critical raw materials
2. accelerate the energy and ecological transition towards a circular, environmentally sound and collaborative economy at Territorial level (Regions & Cities)

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<sup>7</sup> After 2015 Mid-term review