

Committee : European Union

Country : Kingdom of Belgium

Topic : Preservation of the European Union

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The European Union (EU) was founded to built sustainable peace on the remnants of the destruction caused by WWI and WWII. In order to achieve this goal, the six founders formed an economic bond in order to develop a political bound. In face of the ongoing crisis such as Brexit or the refugee crisis, the Kingdom of Belgium believes that the question of the preservation of the EU is essential, one that needs to be considered thoroughly from the recovery from the global financial crisis to the refugee crisis. Furthermore, the Kingdom of Belgium would like to first consider the economical question in which the recovery of the financial crisis of 2008 has impacted the future of the single market and it's goal for harmonization, to then ponder on the security question from the EU borders to the refugee crisis.

On September 15 of 2008, Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy. The fall of this giant of the finance revealed in the eyes of the world the scale of a crisis which smoldered for numerous months. In spite of a financial health, Belgium did not escape this climate tightened on the credit market. In fact, in accordance with the rules set by the Eurozone, public debt was reduced from 137.8% GDP to 84% GDP in 2007, yet, the economic slowdown has affected the government debt, rising again to 99.6% GDP in 2012.

The Kingdom of Belgium has always wanted to avoid the austerity route by taking budgetary cuts despite the ongoing political crisis. As an alternative, when the interest rates reached a relatively high level at the end of 2011, the Prime Minister Yves Leterme launched a campaign of vouchers of State. Our government took advantage of the importance of the Belgian savings as a mean of finance at a lower rate than those proposed by markets.

The delegation of Belgium truly believes that the solution to recover from the global financial crisis and to save the PIIGS is to continue the work done in 2012 by the European Council. According to the adopted map, a robust and stable monetary union would have to be built on four pillars including an integrated financial, fiscal and economic

policy framework. In fact, although the monetary policy is independently managed by the European Central Bank, the budgetary policy as well as other economic and social policies are always within the competence of the national governments. Nevertheless, in a context of interdependence, the policies led in a member state have an impact on the EU and its member states. Therefore, a better economic social coordination is needed which is impacted and impacts directly the goal for harmonization of the European Single Market.

The European single market allowed the EU to rise as one of the largest economy in the world. The absence of internal borders allowing the free movement of goods and services has attracted firms and companies from all around the world, which is why Belgium strives for an harmonisation of the European single market. Belgium is advocating to go forward in the trajectory set 20 years ago while facing issues that have presented themselves such as the lack of industrial policy, the remaining obstacles for the free movement of workers, or the weakness of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) initiative.

Free movement of workers allows a person from a EU country to work in another EU country while being entitled to the same rights given to the citizens of its countries. A fundamental right inseparable from the internal market established by the Treaty of Rome 1957. A true harmonization of the single market cannot be in order with the remaining obstacles.

The success of multinational firms have shadowed small and medium, presenting a blockade in terms of competitiveness despite the EU actions with the SME initiative and the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA). However, aside from attracting multinational firms, Belgium believes the promotion of entrepreneurship is indispensable to encourage the establishment of small and medium business. Not only does the EU needs to ensure its attractiveness to the rest of the world, but the EU also needs to reestablish its attractiveness to the EU citizens. Furthermore, the attractiveness of the EU needs to be contemplated in terms for its borders and the security within.

The frequency of which terrorists attacks have happened in Europe in the last few years have forced the members of the European Union and Belgium to reevaluate security within EU borders. As of today, the EU has taken a comprehensive approach encouraging cooperation between member states but also with international organisations. However, those actions have failed to restore faith in the EU and trust in the security within its borders.

The implementation of the Schengen Information System (SIS) on 25 March 2001 has demonstrated the wish for a stronger cooperation between its 30 members throughout border control, law enforcement and cooperation on vehicle registration. However, despite the permanent connection and the real-time updates, Belgium wishes for a stronger, more efficient system based on furthering cooperation with international organisations such as NATO and the United Nations with the help of digital tools.

The EU-wide system, a system collecting data on passengers travelling by the air, was introduced on April 2016. Belgium welcomes this initiative but regrets that it only apply to air travel. Belgium truly believes this is a first step towards a more global approach to a system which would englobe all international trains, bus and ships. This global approach would allow the EU to collect data on passengers using news means like the digital sector including the biometric system which allows a much faster yet safe process, thus avoiding the possible long lines presenting “new targets”. The security within EU borders is facing another challenge with the refugee crisis.

In 2017, the CGRA (Commissariat général aux réfugiés et aux apatrides), the central authority of asylum in Belgium, an independent federal administration, handled 19.688 demands of international protection. In the last 3 years, the CGRA gave a protection to 40.094 people. The CGRA offers a protection to the foreigners who are running from persecutions, from an armed conflict or from violence in their country of origin. The CGRA examines every application for asylum in an individual and impartial way and provides certificates and documents of registry office to the refugees and to the recognized stateless persons.

The right to asylum is established in article 18 of the Charter for Fundamental Rights of the EU. This right is not only applicable to refugees as defined in the 1951 Refugee Convention, but also to people fleeing the existing violence in their country who are eligible for subsidiary protection. Belgium respects its European obligations and made a commitment in 2018 to supply the same effort for the number of people who can aspire to the reinstatement. Therefore, the protection intaured by Belgium is not only a national protection but an international one as well. Our delegation wants to recall that Belgium has always been in favor and truly believes that a strong Common European Asylum System is the only solution to protect the Fundamental Human Rights in the European refugee crisis. Our priorities are to find alternatives to detention but also to assure at all costs the procedural guarantees at every stage of the procedure.

In light of the new events, the delegation of Belgium hopes that with constructive debates and thorough cooperation, the European Union will reach a consensus on its preservation.

SOURCES

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