

MEP Doris Pack (EPP, Germany): The question of big and small is not a question of the European Union

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Europe Gateway's blitz interview with German MEP Doris Pack (EPP), Chairwoman of the Committee on Culture and Education in the European Parliament.

Mrs. Pack was special guest to the International conference "Europe 2020 – Civic Visions", held in Sofia on January 29-30, 2010, within the "Interacting with the European Parliament" project, financially supported by the EP through DG "Communication".

Mrs. Pack, what is your vision of Europe 2020?

It is that we would be acting in a much more coherent manner in the sphere of foreign policy because this is still lacking. Now we have a new foreign minister, Lady Ashton, who is the first person to hold this responsible position after the Lisbon Treaty entered into force. Other important issues, that we really have to work on in our daily activities, are the questions of climate change and of migration. These are topics of concern for most of our countries, especially the Southern Member States, and we all have to think of – how to say – of the democratic change, which can sometimes be linked to the immigration and therefore we should open our minds a little bit more for a good immigration policy.

The Lisbon Treaty is designed to iron out the so-called democratic deficit in the EU. Is the European Parliament prepared to efficiently use these new opportunities?

I do not think there is a democratic deficit. This is "bla-bla" of journalists. I do not think there is any other Parliament which is so open to working with citizens, as is the EP. Through the Lisbon Treaty we even have the possibility to give a chance for one million people to have a demand and this demand should be respected by the Commission, by the Parliament and by the Council. It is true, not all the Member States have a very big number of MEPs, but this still does not mean a so-called democratic deficit. The citizens have a good number of other instruments for influencing, for example by pushing their national politicians, and I would recommend for these instruments to be more actively used. When it comes to the topic I am working on, the education and culture, I would like to underline that we, Europeans, have a lot of good programs – citizenship programs, youth programs, education programs … All there are really helping to bring the people together. Just to name one example, we have the "Comenius" program which is a school program. We have e-twinning, bringing schools from all over Europe together, the Grundtvig adult-learning program.... There are so many

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possibilities which should now be elaborated further, for the next programming period, and I think the colleagues – the Commission and at the Council – would do their best to achieve this. These are the institutions, where we work on getting closer, on making things more transparent and being more accepted by the people. This has to be done in the next years.

Do you believe that the EU will be listening more carefully to the voice of smaller Member States, such as Bulgaria…?

I think that if these countries have the voice, they should raise it. I have colleagues from Bulgaria who are working very, very well in the Culture Committee, and not only there – I know others in other committees. The fact that someone is coming from big Germany or from smaller Bulgaria does not make a difference. The person has to be engaged and to show his/her engagement and to perform well. The question of “big” and “small” is not a question of the European Union. One of the European Community’s six founding Member States is Luxembourg – it is smaller even than my constituency in Germany. What matters is the dedication of the different politicians in each country.

ABOUT

Mrs. Doris Pack (<http://www.dorispack.de>) is Chairwoman of the Committee on Culture and Education in the European Parliament (Germany, EPP). As MEP, she is also member of the Conference of Committee Chairs and of the Delegation for relations with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo. She is substitute member on the Committees on Foreign Affairs and on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. She is also Member of the Bureau of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats).