

Europe's Foreign Policy needs less national egoisms and more efficiency. Joseph Daul MEP, Chairman of the EPP Group in the European Parliament

Published at: 11-05-2011

Source: [Portal Europe](#)



"Does the handling of the immigrants situation in Lampedusa characterise Europe and its values and ideals? I don't think so, the EPP Group doesn't think so, and I am sure that the majority of colleagues in this House don't think so either" - Joseph Daul.

"The Jasmine Revolution, the fight against terrorism, the conflict in the Middle East: where is Europe's place in all this?", asked the Chairman of the biggest parliamentary Group in Europe (EPP Group, centre-right), in a debate in the European Parliament with Catherine Ashton.

"Are we a willing, committed and hands-on player? Yes, without a doubt, and the action taken under the auspices of the UN in Libya, on the initiative of several Heads of State and European governments, proves that Europe - or part of Europe - is able to act in difficult times, when it wants."

"But are we an essential actor on the international stage with an influence corresponding to our economic muscle?" For Joseph Daul, the answer is undoubtedly negative.

"Europe is still a small fish in a big pond, a political and geostrategic 'Tom Thumb', despite the ever-increasing expectations of European public opinion. Europe placed its bets on stability and aid for the development of the Mediterranean, but the people there are quite rightly demanding their political freedom, they are fleeing their countries as they can't see a feasible and worthy future for them and their children. Are we starting to learn lessons from this experience? I would like to think so", continued the Chairman of the EPP Group.

Joseph Daul said that 18 months after the entry-into-force of the Lisbon Treaty, it is time to concentrate on practical work in foreign policy and defence.

"This involves making choices and sticking to them. So, what are Europe's priorities? Relations with its Eastern and Southern neighbours, the fight against terrorism, finding a solution to the conflict in the Middle East, trade policy, or all of this at once? Who are our privileged partners: the United States, emerging countries, or others? How can we achieve the best results - by leaving it up to individual Member States like we did 60 years ago, or do we speak with one voice?"

On foreign affairs, such as security and defence, the Chairman of the EPP Group believes that the solution is not more inter-governmental intervention, but more Europe. "We don't want more national egoism, we want a more effective Europe."

"In my opinion, 2011 should be the year of the Mediterranean, the fight against terrorism, and even a

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breakthrough in the conflict in the Middle East. If Europe can become a key player on this front, it can leave past mistakes behind", concluded Joseph Daul MEP.