

# Beyond Austerity and Growth: Emerging and Established Voices for a Shared Prosperity Project in Europe

*A Political Seminar, Berlin, 7-8 November 2013*

The European Union is undergoing a double transformation. Top-down, it is transforming in ways thought unthinkable a few years ago. New rules for fiscal policies, a separate treaty to strengthen commitments, and plans for a banking and fiscal union are moving the Eurozone towards greater integration. Bottom-up, the crisis has given rise to a strand of new political and social movements, which challenge the foundations of our political system as much as they suggest new approaches to governance and to foundations of our commonwealth.

European citizens feel the brunt of crumbling welfare systems, soaring unemployment and anaemic or negative growth, while the prospect of fiscal redistribution at the European level remains uncertain. Particularly in southern Europe, citizens have been raising their voice, questioning the loss of economic sovereignty coupled with austerity measures. Many ask for new impulses to democracy and have started to explore ways of creating a future for themselves and their children.

But we in Europe have spilled a lot of milk recently on both sides of the creditor-debtor cleavage. We have deepened this cleavage over debates on “austerity”, a term which today epitomizes all technical as well as cultural, mutual estrangement in Europe. Negative stereotypes of the “other” proliferate. This process does not only hamper pathways to joint solutions; it deeply undermines European integration as a shared project of mutual and trans-generational benefit.

We insist that we can do better than that. We are a consortium of four leading think tanks and one foundation. We now join forces to offer new openings for exchange and platforms for open dialogue between established and emerging political representatives across borders, parties, and parliamentary committees.

We organize an interactive and innovative political seminar in Berlin on 7-8 November 2013 for 35 carefully scouted and personally invited members of parliaments, caucus leaders, and representatives of large social movements. We invite them because we deem them key voices of today as well as tomorrow—hence participants embody both emerging and established voices in political Europe. They represent different worldviews, and they come from different parties. They come from Italy, Spain, Germany, Greece, France, the Netherlands, Finland, Belgium, Sweden, Poland, Austria and Slovakia.

The immediate aim of this unconventional, interactive seminar—there will be no panels and no powerpoint presentations—is for members of parliament and leaders of social movements to learn more about the motivations, aims and visions of their European colleagues, friends,—or foes. We offer a setting for dialogue and for the cross-fertilization of ideas, experiences and visions.

The broader aim of our initiative is to explore possible avenues towards the construction of a new European consensus—one that is ideally fit to help our generation switch gears from “crisis mode” to “solution mode”, and one that is ultimately fit to carry our children into our common future.