



EUROPEAN IDEAS NETWORK

EIN Dinner-Debate

***The Work of the EIN
in the Context of the Financial Crisis***

Monday 16 February 2009, Club des Guides, Place Luxembourg, Brussels

Joseph Daul MEP

Chairman of the EPP-ED

***"The hour has come for the EIN to
demonstrate once again its creativity"***

Disclaimer

The European Ideas Network is a forum for debate, created by the EPP-ED Group in the European Parliament, to analyse the economic, political and social challenges facing Europe and to develop practical policy options to meet them.

This paper, like all publications of the European Ideas Network, does not represent the collective views of the EIN or of the EPP-ED Group but only the view of its author.

Copyright of this publication is held by the author. You may not copy, reproduce, republish or circulate in any way the content from this publication except for your own personal and non-commercial use. Any other use requires the prior written permission of the author.

This is translated from the French original which is also available from the EIN. Only the original French version may be considered definitive.

Joseph Daul
Chairman, EPP-ED Group

"The hour has come for the EIN to demonstrate once again its creativity"

It is a very great pleasure for me to be speaking to you this evening, on the occasion of this dinner where the key figures in our European Ideas Network are assembled.

Like any political family, the centre-right has a duty to think about the measures it needs to take to keep up with – indeed, I would say to stay ahead of – a rapidly changing world.

A world that was taken by surprise by the financial crisis, and by the strength of the economic crisis, which for the first time in contemporary history is affecting not one, not two, but all the regions of the world at the same time. And Europe has not been spared.

The left quickly found someone to blame for this crisis: us. And it will be making this one of the major strands in its campaign over the next few months. They paint the crisis as the failure of the market economy, the fault of capitalism.

We are well aware that things are not that simple, and I think that the public also knows that things are not that simple. What is mainly being called into question is the absence of rules. Something that is also being questioned, perhaps, is too much closeness between some banking circles and some political circles. There is also the breakdown in the public regulation systems.

But one can also ask oneself this question: is there not, at a deeper level, a crisis in our ‘lifestyle’? Consumption by individuals that is in excess of their means, too little investment in the future by businesses, many States that have become dependent on private markets to refinance their debt.

We need to look at all of this in depth. We have to be capable of fighting fire with fire.

The first step in this process is to think about the issues in depth, and what better instrument, what better locus of reflection that our EIN network?

How are we to come out of the crisis and prepare for recovery?

We need to strengthen the areas of consensus within our political family. What are these points of consensus? I will mention the priority issue of saving credit, continuing reform of the employment market and special attention for SMEs. Also, the misunderstandings about protectionism, State aid, the ‘reform of capitalism’ and social packages must be reduced. Also – perhaps more than anything else – we must tackle what I would call the ‘moral crisis’, or rather the crisis of values: savers, workers, voters – all of them have been thrown off track by a failure of values on the part of those who should have been protecting them.

What are we to say to them? How are we to avoid a slide into ‘every man for himself’?

The EPP-ED Group in the European Parliament has invested in an active network of ideas.

This evening I would like to pay very special tribute to the President of the EIN, my dear colleague Jaime Mayor Oreja, who coordinates no fewer than:

- * 12 thematic working groups, within which some hundred experts meet,
- * more than 15 foundations and active think-tanks, including the most important centre-right ones in Europe: the FAES (Spain), the KAS (Germany), the Fondapol (France), the Karamanlis (Greece) – you will forgive me if I do not list them all.

But the EIN is also a website that is updated daily, a monthly working breakfast, a monthly seminar and event organised by one of the think-tanks and, of course, a carefully planned annual summer university, the next of which will be held in Vienna.

The EIN made a major contribution to the EPP-ED Group's prospective report, 'The World in 2025'. I shall be proposing to the President of the EIN that it be updated and publicised even more widely.

The EIN also made a major contribution to the EPP-ED Group's Decalogue; here again, let's do more to publicise this important document.

I think the hour has come for the EIN to demonstrate once again its creativity.

I will make a few suggestions:

- carrying out a campaign to attract more visitors to the excellent website;
- expanding the network, without waiting for the elections, to include original thinkers and institutions;
- publicising the results of the four seminars you will be devoting to new agendas for coming out of the crisis:
 - the financial agenda,
 - the social agenda,
 - the moral agenda – the debate on values you had today,
 - the environmental agenda, and
 - the agenda for business.

The EIN is in touch with people's concerns. The EIN is ahead of the future. We must demonstrate the group's ability to anticipate, to think without taboos, while others indulge in ideology.