



Solidarity and Austerity: The 2012 State of the European Union

Annual Brussels Think-Tank Dialogue

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Press release

No Trade-Off between Austerity and Solidarity

EU governments are implementing austerity packages; populist and nationalist movements are growing; social discontent rages. The European Union is facing a crisis of multiple dimensions – both economic and financial, but also social and democratic.

Member States must ensure that the short-term crisis doesn't mask the medium- and long-term challenges facing the EU. Solidarity is not just an economic project, but also political imperative, heard participants in this year's Annual Brussels Think-Tank Dialogue.

“There are two possible options: either skip austerity and let governments act as they were doing before the crisis, or stress the need for austerity measure in order to send a strong message to national governments,” said Poul Christoffersen, representing the Danish Presidency of the EU..

Participants in workshops of the 2012 Think-Tank Dialogue suggested the following ways forward for the EU:

“If we want to produce a resource-efficient Europe so that the pursuit of resource efficiency becomes a European resource in itself, we need to tailor the Regulation to make sure that it is adaptable, flexible and able to evolve in line with costs and technological development.”

“As regards mitigating the social impact of the euro crisis, we must provide ways at EU level to give young entrepreneurs an incentive to try start-ups, and find ways to raise European funds and private funding for social enterprises with greater capital requirements, such as hospitals, social housing, or homes for the elderly and the disabled”.

“The EU budget has an important role to play in Europe as a genuine investment tool for long-term growth and a source of finance for European public goods with high added value .”

“The Arab Spring offered the EU a perfect opportunity to present to the world a confident new foreign policy. But it came too early for the nascent European External Action Service to exert much influence. Member states still harbour different interests and pursue different priorities in the region, making it difficult to forge a common EU approach”.

“We must not over-react to the ‘immigration emergencies’ that the EU is experiencing, such as last April’s influx of Tunisians into Italy. No major changes to the Schengen Treaty are needed, but the Schengen Evaluation System must be improved.”