

Recapitulative political statement on the main issues discussed in the EFA General Assembly held in Bautzen on 16 – 18 April 2015.

Implementing the right to self-determination in a gradual, democratic way is a XXI century solution to XXI century socio-political problems in Europe.

The European Free Alliance, European political party created in 1981 that groups more than 40 parties fighting for self-determination of the peoples of Europe present in 17 Member States of the European Union, held its Annual General Meeting in the city Budyšin in Łužyca (Germany) from 16 to 18 April 2015.

This General Assembly was hosted by Łužyska Alianca, the EFA member party that represents the interests of the Sorbian people in Łužyca. The Sorbs (Sorben/Wenden) want to save their culture and language, and they denounce the devastation of their territory by the open pit lignite mines by the Swedish state owned multinational company Vattenfall. This activity pollutes the entire Łužyca producing an extremely harmful fuel used to make electricity, sold throughout Germany. The EFA is denouncing the expropriation of the Sorbian people by the multinational Vattenfall and the German state, and calls Europe to request the immediate cessation of the lignite mining, as it is one of the biggest ecological scandals of the continent.

During its General Assembly, the EFA took stock of the progress of self-determination process and defence of peoples and cultures in the European Union, in a context where the European Commission is stepping back on linguistic diversity, respect of minorities and respect of the democratic will of the peoples. Contrary to his predecessors, who usually agreed to meet the representatives of our European Political party, the current President of the EC, Mr. Juncker, does not have time to receive EFA. The political discourse in the European Institutions is shifting from subsidiarity to empowering competences of the Member States. Everywhere in Europe we see and feel the re-centralising tendencies of the member states. Europe is moving backwards, and these steps back are a threat to the future of Europe. EFA wishes to re-launch the European dynamic and logic, respecting the rights of peoples and the diversity that are keystone principles upon which the European project is founded. EFA's 12 Members of Parliament will make of this their priority in the new mandate of the European Parliament.

In Catalonia the year 2015 will be once again historic, in the run up to elections that will enable people to vote for the independence of their countries and the accession in Europe. Since the creation of the European Union, it will be the first time that Europe will have to integrate new States coming from within the territory of the EU itself. That is a juridical, cultural and democratic challenge that Europe needs to accept and support on behalf of one of the essential European values: democracy.

The willingness and deep wish of the Catalan must be respected. The EU must put all its efforts to define a framework for « internal enlargement ». Europe should be a democratic example on conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence between peoples. Refusing the democratic choice of the Catalan peoples would mean a total failure on that mission.

In France as well, Europe should value the rights of Peoples. EFA opposes to these worrying tendencies where Paris is blocking all institutional reforms voted with clear majorities in the Corsican Assemblies; where Paris further dilutes the Occitan, Savoyan, Basque and Catalan regions, refuses to re-unify the 5 historical parts of Brittany and abolishes the Alsatian region. To abolish a region the way it has been done in Alsace, against the advice of its elected members and even without consulting the citizens involved, is a denial of democracy that EFA strongly denounces. Refusing an official language status to the historic language of the Corsican people, although such a statute is requested by an overwhelming majority of the elected representatives of Corsica, is an intolerable attack on the rights of peoples. Europe should condemn these excesses of the French state.

EFA worries about the vows on devolution, made in the last days before the Scottish referendum, broken by the UK government. The UK must accept the Scottish wish for self-government and Europe should sustain the Scottish demands.

EFA denounces that the Spanish central state refuses to acknowledge the principle of self-determination, ignoring and blocking modern democracies that develop within the territory of the Iberian Peninsula; and denounces the Spanish government attitude against peace building and reconciliation in the Basque Country. EFA renews its support to the International declaration to free Arnaldo Otegi and to bring political prisoners home, signed in Brussels on 24th of March 2015.

EFA protests against the way the Italian state continues to hollow out existing autonomy statutes.

EFA worries about Bulgaria and the Greek state, amidst an existential crisis, who continue to ignore their minorities.

EFA denounces the illegalisation in Poland of any organisation with the denomination Silesian in its name.

"EFA worries about the lack of active measures in Finland to secure the survival of the Swedish language, and protests strongly about the recent decision in the Finnish Parliament not to ratify the convention on indigenous and tribal peoples, ILO 169."

EFA is appalled about the Romanian state listing autonomy ambitions as a threat to national security.

EFA protests continuing discrimination against minorities in the Slovak republic and centralising tendencies in the Austria and the Czech Republic.

Most EFA parties disagree with the EC and the unbalanced austerity agenda they implement and with the negotiation agreements on TIPP. EFA parties fear, in view of these EC policies, the effects on minorities, social equality, ecology, linguistic diversity,...

In the rest of the world EFA sees a growing instability, more specifically in the Middle East. Learning from the commemoration periods, "100 years begin-end of the First World War '14-'18" and "100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide 1915", EFA asks governments and institutions to prevent, by all means, the use of violence when solving political or social problems. War and ethnic cleansing should NEVER AGAIN happen. On this regard, the EFA takes note of the words stated in the "*Pan-Armenian declaration on the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide*"¹. EFA Calls upon the UN States to recognise Nagorno Karabakh as a normal state, which is based on the principles of democracy, freedom, justice and peace. The case of Nagorno Karabakh is of crucial importance for the EFA family. We want to show not to only claim and defend the right to self-determination within states but to also support new states rising from a process of self-determination. EFA seeks to help these "non-recognized *de facto* independent states" and hopes to learn how a governmental political party of a "de facto" independent state functions.

EFA continues to focus the right to self-determination as a universal right as part of human rights. Everywhere in the world, whenever possible, Europe must defend national minorities, the right for peoples to self-determination and the respect for all cultures, identities, languages and all democratic and peaceful political ambitions of all European peoples (from more autonomy to independence). EFA will exercise its solidarity, more specifically in the European Parliament, with all peoples in their fight for freedom.

Discussions and decisions of the EFA GA:

1) Following the request and proposal of Łużycka Alianca, the **European Free Alliance** decided to hold the 2015 General Assembly in Lusatia in order to allow all EFA members to see what is going on in the Lusatian region. EFA hereby shows the perfect example of how cultural and ecological sustainability of a European nation are under threat. The passive attitude of the German, Brandenburger and Saxony governments towards a Swedish state owned company Vattenfall that excavates one village after the other in order to create energy

¹ <http://armeniangenocide100.org/files/uploads/2015/02/declaration-eng.pdf>

from brown-coal, destroying the eco-system and disrupting the social-cultural networks in Lusatia, is a true scandal. EFA demands a stop of the brown-coal mining activities and supports the demands of the civil society in Lusatia to create an own parliament. Examples from other Nations show that self-determination works and this universal right should be implemented in support of a democratic process to save the culture, language and environment in Lusatia.

2) EFA adopts a strategic plan 2014-2020 formulating the strategic aims of our organisation in the upcoming period. The plan aims to improve relations with the EFA group, with the existing EFA member parties, with CMC and EFAY, with the EU stakeholders and sub-state level entities. EFA also commissions a study on how to enlarge our network.

3) EFA adopts an addition to the Articles of Association and Rules of Internal Order with the aim to create a new membership category. Associated members are political parties in Europe coming from member states that are not (yet) member of the EU.

4) EFA embraces new parties. Bloc Nacionalista Valencia receives the status of full member in EFA. Observer status is granted in the case of: Pro-Lombardia Indipendenza, DEB Partisi (Turkish minority in Greece), Hungarian peoples party of Transylvania (HPPT) and Yorkshire First. In this General Assembly, the EFA has also extended its membership welcoming the Democratic Party of Artsakh (DPA) as associated member.

5) EFA fully supports the ongoing processes of self-determination in Scotland, Catalunya and the Basque Country. EFA continues to support a sustainable peace in the Basque Country.

6) EFA adopts the closed budget 2014, the amended budget 2015 and the budget proposal 2016 and the connected activity plans. Higher budgetary possibilities and sound management have to go together with a higher sense of responsibility of all members to generate the needed own resources.

7) EFA takes note of the EFAY activities 2014 and 2015 and of the refusal of the European Commission to fund our youth branch. EFA takes note and supports the appeal made by EFAY to contest the EC 2015 decision concerning the EFAY grant. Apart from the political support, the EFAY also requires a financial effort and EFA has again shown its support to EFAY by considerably increasing the financial support to its youth branch.

8) EFA adopts a new communication plan and welcomes the new staff member focusing on our visibility, media presence and communication. To that end, the new communications officer will be focused on producing very attractive audio-visual materials and enlarging and strengthening the network of press and media contacts, including the main European opinion makers.

9) EFA takes note of the activity plan of CMC of 2014 and 2015. EFA will continue to create good synergies to work together with our political foundation and as an example our common media-room in Brussels embodies this co-operation. On this regard, the perception of the EFA family has grown more positive and an increase of visibility thanks to the impeccable work of its political foundation, the CMC, which this year has launched new publications and organized a number of interesting conferences and seminars, getting very positive reviews from outside the EFA family.

10) EFA approved a motion in "Support for a Serbski Sejmik". Other adopted texts, are related to environmental questions such as the declaration on "Environmental liability" and the motions on "Organic farming" and on the "Reversed burden of proof in mining issues". Motions and declarations related to institutional and political issues such as the declaration on "Foreign policy sanctions", on the "Support the Catalan elections of 27 Sept" and the French "Territorial Reform" and the "Situation in the Basque Country" were adopted. As well as the motion "Islamic radicalism and violence" has been discussed and approved.

11) EFA grants the title of EFA honorary members to Eva Klotz and Inaki Irazabalbeitia.

Ends.-