SEMINAR
"THE AWAKENING OF NATIONS, REGIONS AND CULTURAL MINORITIES IN EUROPE. THE EUROPEAN UNION AS A SOLUTION"

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Globalisation has spread, sending out signals of uniformity that have brought about the creation of new regional structures of a supranational nature that have weakened the classic nation-states which have proved to be too small to face the new global realities and, at times, too big to deal with the everyday needs of their citizens. The creation of these supranational organisations has redefined the concept of national sovereignty and restricted it in order to move forward in a community of shared sovereignties and multi-level governance.

Europe is a land fertile in national cultures and minorities that reveal the continent's roots and represent diversity and a treasure for Europeans. Many of these realities are ignored because they are hidden by states with a uni-national vocation and a hegemonic culture. These regional or national cultural expressions that are used to preserve their heritage contribute to the biodiversity of a continent that has adopted various forms of legal-political organization throughout its history but which have always been based on the existence of these original cultural manifestations. We are currently experiencing a revival of these minority communities who seek to strengthen their identity heritage without aspiring to become a state.

On a different scale we are also witnessing the re-emergence of the so-called nations without a state. In this context, national identity, the right to self-determination and the capacity to decide have become recurrent themes in recent years in the politics of multinational states, and Europe is no exception. In this sense we can talk about a different Europe before and after 1989. The fall of the Berlin Wall was the symbol of the beginning of a new era both in Europe and in the international scenario where a polycentric reality began to take shape. The implosion of the Soviet Union and the dismembering of the Balkans lead to the emergence of new small national-states that agreed to give up sovereignty to the European Union, states where several national and language minorities often co-exist.

Today Europe includes nation-states that where formerly the home of passed empires. Eastern Europe has fragmented into nation-states while Western Europe is characterised by larger states, some of which contain nations without a state as well as cultural minorities.

Some member states in Western Europe chose to recognise decentralised structures as a way of responding to internal emerging national demands. Finally, the enlargement of the European Union towards the east during the first decade of the 21st century showed up the contradictions within the Union. By joining, a significant number of small states were granted certain rights that are not recognised for nations without a state that at times have a larger population and are wealthier but form part of member states. In the same way, the fact that by virtue of the national issue some members of parliament represent a larger or smaller number of citizens depending on the state electoral district makes it more difficult to balance the principles of citizen's equality and representative democracy specifically recognised in the Treaty of Lisbon. The European Union for many years has ignored the contradictions and complexities within the excuse that the Union is a club of states.

The multi-level governance and decentralised dimension that the Treaty of Lisbon brings to the principle of subsidiarity means, among other things, that it is less and less appropriate to consider the European Union to be a constitutional order of states characterised by their asymmetry.

The construction of Europe should therefore not overlook the existence of the complexities involved that are expressed through a variety of feelings of identity and nationalism. The motto *united in diversity*, apart from establishing a stubborn reality, does not in itself provide solutions to the problem. The ideologues behind the construction of Europe should take note of this reality and adapt their projects accordingly. Monnet already pointed out that *nothing is possible without the people*; but also that *nothing lasts without institutions*. Classic international institutions are not enough to ensure economic and political stability. Tools like the subsidiary principle, that some even consider to be a principle of good governance, and setting up suitable multi-level governance could help to mitigate the growing complexity that too much federalism could mean for the European construction project.

Moreover, the sovereignty processes in Catalonia and Scotland have put a debate on the table regarding the right of eventual new states to belong to the European Union and the possibilities of doing so. The lack of precedents in the matter, as well as the special legal-political nature of the European Union which is characterised by its approach to the rights and obligation of citizens, advise careful thought.

Based on these issues, the goal of the seminar is to identify key factors that may contribute to the search for solutions that will enable a political space to be built for citizens that will respect the founding principles of the European project and promote peace between the peoples of Europe.