

THE VENTOTENE LIGHTHOUSE *A Federalist Journal for World Citizenship*
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Europe's response to the pandemic comes in the form of a major undertaking, the *Next Generation EU* recovery plan, based on a European public debt and new own resources. The Commission's commitment to offering young people a future shows that European solidarity exists. But there are various rarely discussed phenomena that are gradually eroding it.

The one I would like to examine is the phenomenon of citizenship for sale. Many countries, large and small, sell their citizenship to those who can pay for it. As well as republics in the Caribbean, the US, Canada, the UK and Russia all advertise it on the web, and in the EU you can pay to become a citizen of Cyprus, Malta, Bulgaria, Portugal, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Romania, Lithuania, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Luxembourg and Austria. The cost of a "Golden Visa" varies greatly from country to country, with some countries setting conditions such as residence, a certain amount in private investments or public debt, and some

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offering generous discounts on taxes.

The issue was debated in the European Parliament, which in 2014 passed a resolution that stated, “EU citizenship should not be for sale at any price”. Furthermore, an in-depth study (EPRS, October 2018) warns member countries against this practice, due to possible negative consequences such as financial instability, harmful fiscal competition, excessive investments in real estate, the infiltration of organised crime, political corruption and lastly, the most damaging consequence, citizens’ loss of trust in democratic institutions. Yet despite these warnings, the citizenship market thrives.

The sale of national citizenship is a side effect of the financial globalization that began in the 1980s. It is a parallel phenomenon to that of tax competition between countries, which began to reduce corporate tax rates to attract foreign investments. This has proven to be a suicidal practice, especially for European countries with expensive welfare programs, which now increasingly depend on the taxation of income from immovable property and work, and less and less on that of mobile assets such as the capital of companies and individuals, which/who can move their wealth to safe places. National sovereignty is being eroded not by external threats, but by an internal cancer, because the political class is scraping the barrel and putting the family heirlooms up for sale.

Citizenship is a valuable public good; it is the very substance of a political community. In the history of humanity, the process we call civilization began when the individual questioned belonging to a political community, as happened, in pre-modern forms, in the Greek polis and the Roman empire. In the contemporary age, civil progress has assumed a form defined by the French revolution, based on the declaration of “the rights of man and the citizen”, when the multitude of subjects demanded to be recognised as citizens - a new legal

status which did away with privileges and discrimination. “Liberté, égalité, fraternité” are the values that identify post-revolutionary people.

The sale of citizenship of an EU member country is doubly wrong. It injures democracy, because citizenship is sold to wealthy individuals who are primarily interested in exploiting the single European market and national and European voting rights. Indeed, article 3 of the Lisbon Treaty states: “Every national of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union”. It also deprives the Union of its power to regulate the crossing of its external borders. Article 77 of the TFEU states that the Union must “develop a policy with a view to carrying out checks on persons and efficient monitoring of the crossing of external borders”, and ensure “the gradual introduction of an integrated management system for external borders”. How can we justify the fact that European citizenship is granted to the wealthy, yet denied to poor individuals looking for work and a new homeland? The former become EU citizens, the latter subjects. Moreover, the distinction between refugees and economic migrants is destined to become increasingly blurred with the rise in “ecological migrants” fleeing their countries as a result of global warming.

There is no simple, clear cut answer to these problems, but I would like to suggest two possible reforms. The first reform consists in giving the Union, as indicated in article 77 of the TFEU, clear concurrent powers when it comes to granting European citizenship to third parties from non-member countries. If a person is granted the right to vote in Europe, the main reason for this must be political, because the European Parliament plays an active role in defining the Union’s policies and is elected by a multi-national people of European citizens, not the multitude. The granting of national and European citizenship must therefore be approved by the European Commission and the sale of national citizenship must be prohibited.

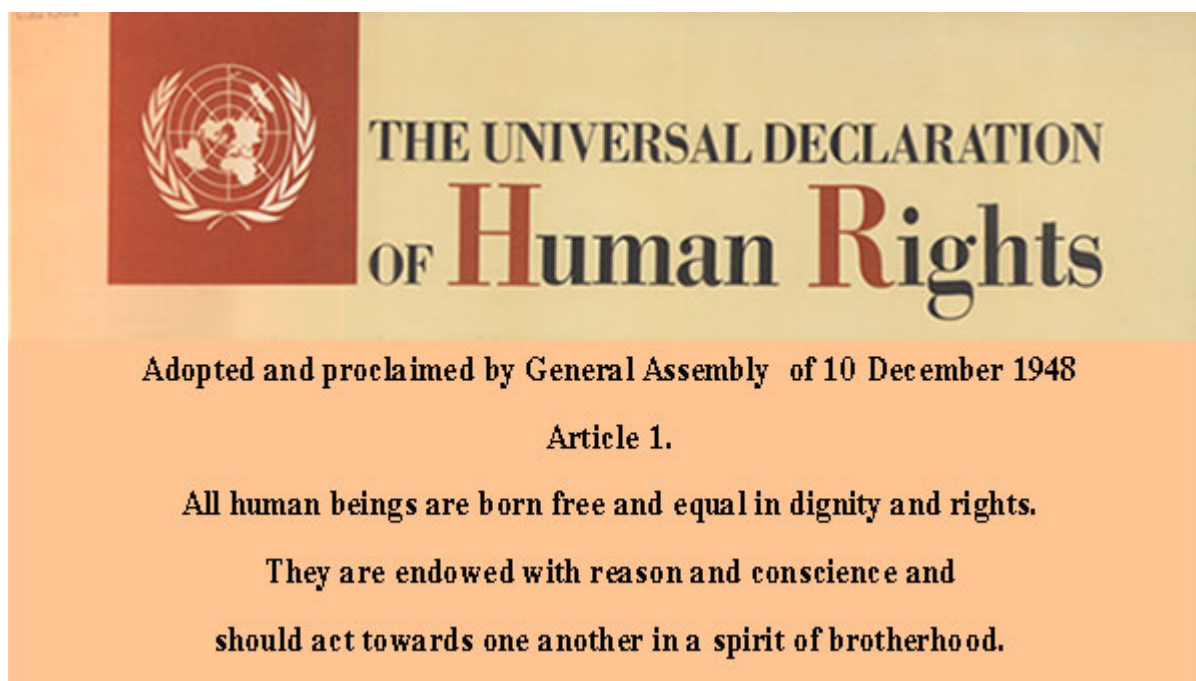
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Based on the principle that crossing the borders of the Union implies an explicit European decision, the EU should have the power to grant “citizenship of residence”, or local citizenship (*Ius domicilii*) to those who legitimately request it. This could be one way to solve the long-standing controversy over the Dublin Regulation and European immigration policy. The alternative to the trafficking of migrants is the creation of legitimate channels for migration, as the EU is doing with the African Union (*Joint Communiqué*, 29th February 2020). Local citizenship would enable immigrants to be integrated into a local community, which could be chosen when applying, for example, to the African Union. Of course, the EU must comply with national governments and local European governments (cities, provinces, regions) to plan how many migrants to accept, because local and national political sensitivities need to be taken into account. Naturally those who benefit from citizenship of residence must respect the rights and duties enshrined in the *Charter of Fundamental Rights* and will only be able to vote on the local level, because voting in national and European elections requires national citizenship.

The second proposal concerns the introduction of *compulsory* European civil service, coordinated with member country. Politics nowadays is dominated by uncertainty: some decisions are taken at a national level, others at the European level and others at world level. In some countries of the Union, citizens fight, sometimes vehemently, for demands that cannot be met, or become prey to populist or illiberal parties, led by demagogues promising a brighter future. Democracy is in danger. One of the possible remedies for this is to remind young people, when they reach voting age, that citizenship entails duties as well as rights, because political communities break down if there is no sense of membership - and membership means giving as well as receiving. A European civil service would enable young people to work in their community (on any levels, from local to global) on projects concerning health and social services, environmental protection, collective security and international aid. Public goods are not a gift of nature; they are the result of selfless human action, deliberately

pursued for the good of others, as we saw during the pandemic, with the tireless efforts of healthcare workers.

These two proposals should be taken into consideration at the forthcoming Conference on the future of Europe.



Think and act like a citizen of the world

In our politically and economically interdependent world the idea of progress seems to have disappeared. The major powers have taken up the nuclear arms

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race once more, investing heavily in the military sector when what we urgently need is effective international cooperation on sustainable development to halt global warming. It is only right, and entirely understandable that young people are protesting. So what can be done to ensure a future for humankind?

On the Mediterranean island of Ventotene in 1941 a group of anti-fascists wrote the *Manifesto for a Free and United Europe*, in which they proposed a new idea of progress: at the end of the war, they envisaged the continent's sovereign states cooperating peacefully thanks to "the creation of a solid international state". This revolutionary message - no more wars - spurred people of good will and organizations of volunteers and politicians to fight for European unity. Their work played a decisive role in the construction of the European Union (EU), the first supranational organization in history.

But the European Union remains a weak institution, whose survival is threatened by the current scenario of increasing international disorder. The current pandemic is also jeopardizing the EU's political cohesion. And although the fact that a "European Green Deal" is on the table is an encouraging sign, if it does not lead to a World Green Deal we cannot expect to solve the environmental crisis.

The Ventotene Lighthouse aims to spark the debate and political initiatives necessary to assert a new idea of progress. Many European citizens have understood that the European Union, however imperfect, has guaranteed more than 70 years of peace on this continent. This represents a public good that is not just European but global. We are European citizens hailing from various member states. Our governments have said no to war, and are committed to resolving the inevitable economic, social and political clashes that arise by applying the rule of law rather than military force. Europe's citizens can now study, work and circulate freely throughout all of the Union's countries.

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The European model can also be adopted by other continents, as is happening in Latin America, Africa and Asia. On a world scale, global governance - namely peaceful cooperation between the major powers to tackle the climate emergency and initiate a controlled process of disarmament - is both necessary and possible. Subsequently the status of world citizenship, similar to European citizenship, could be introduced.

Some will say that this is a utopia, an unrealistic dream. It is not so. The same accusation was levelled at the federalists when they proposed a United States of Europe as the goal of the integration process. The European Union is an unfinished federation, but its history shows that without an idea of progress politics remains trapped in the past. The task of the political avant-garde is to point the way forward.

The Ventotene Lighthouse speaks not only to the vanguard. To party politicians and national governments we say: how can you guarantee the safety of your citizens if the enemy can arm itself with nuclear missiles many times faster than the speed of sound? The counter-strike - needed in a matter of minutes - would inevitably have to be entrusted to artificial intelligence, but that would leave you open to risking the complete annihilation of both your own country and the rest of the world (as in the days of the MAD scenario). We also ask you: why are you not listening to the urgent appeals of the scientists warning us that we are about to pass a tipping point in global warming? Beyond that point, your citizens will be condemned to a lingering death. Lastly, we say: to tackle the global emergencies we face, why do you not enable the UN and all the other international organizations (like the IMF, the WTO, etc.) to reinstate the rules of multilateralism, now compromised by the rising tide of nationalism, and why do you not permit international tribunals to defend the rights of the world's citizens - proclaimed in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* of 1948, but not enforced by the law?

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This battle can be won. In the nineteenth century the governments of Europe, bolstered by their industrial power, devoted their energies to colonization, subjugating almost all of the earth's peoples. After dividing up the spoils they set upon each other in the fight for planetary supremacy. The two world wars put an end to this nationalistic power-mongering, and in the post-war period the two super-powers, the US and the USSR, guaranteed a sort of weaponized truce - the balance of terror - that enabled many nations, both industrialized and developing, to grow economically. Now, the two super-powers have left the scene: one disintegrated after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the other is behaving like an arrogant nation state, even refusing to cooperate in efforts to save the planet.

This scenario of increasing international disorder is being fueled by second generation nationalism. Nationalism is the ideology of the sovereign nation state and the just war. Whenever they can, nationalists attempt to assert their supremacy over other states (America First, Russia First, China First, etc.), and they reinforce their domestic power by pursuing policies of cultural homogenization: everywhere, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities are being oppressed. In the 1920s this is what enabled dictators like Mussolini and Hitler to exploit the weakness of democratic governments and seize power, triggering a global cataclysm. We run the same risk today.

The Ventotene Lighthouse believes that it is possible to halt this self-destructive trend. Worldwide, civil society shares a culture that shows its openness to solidarity and friendship between peoples; production chains are inextricably linked across national confines; students willingly pursue their education in different countries and speak several languages; scientific and technological research knows no borders, and the same is true of communication networks, epidemics and migration flows. We inhabit a world that we view as our natural homeland, while planning interplanetary voyages.

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Second generation nationalism can be defeated by a movement that relentlessly exposes the lies told by national governments opposed to the creation of supranational institutions, in their continents or globally. The physical and political barriers that divide the people of this planet must be torn down. We cannot let the spreaders of hate implement their doom-laden designs.

The first step is to *think and act like a citizen of the world*.

The Ventotene Lighthouse