

**Transcript of the interview with Mr. Luigi Morgano, MEP  
(S&D Italy)**

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## Introduction

In the framework of the European Governance project “*Divide et compromise: the quest for improved European Governance*”, the Centre for Geopolitics & Security in Realism Studies (CGSRS) has launched an interview series with European actors – of different political sensitivities and from various European institutions- to bring together their visions for European Governance reform given the deep cleavages that have progressively undermined the EU’s decision-making capacity.

Methodologically, as primary sources of European Governance, the interviews are semi-structured and the questionnaires vary to a degree. Core questions on cleavages in the main thematic and geographic axis of the project are common. The other questions account for the specificity of the interviewees’ functions. Whenever the interview has been conducted in a language other than English, the original and the version translated by the interviewer are published. Not all posed questions have been answered due to either the interviewees’ personal reasons and/or lack of time. Therefore, the CGSRS has decided to publish only the answered questions.

Luigi Morgano, Italian Member of the European Parliament for the Socialists & Democrats, shared his views on the challenges of European governance on September 22, 2017.

**NB: EU Member States are divided across cleavages which may be geopolitical in nature, as in the north-south divide, as well as ideological, as in the case of the Visegrád group. In your opinion should these cleavages be institutionalized into the EU (for instance, but not only, through multi-speed Europe type arrangements) or should the EU contrast them?**

LM: The issue of what type of Europe we want, in institutional terms, has been a central topic of the debate over the last year. The topic became especially important following the outcome of the referendum in the United Kingdom, and with the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaty. The persistence of tensions in the EU stems from the intrinsic diversity that characterizes the different Member States. One of the EU's pillars is summarised in the expression "united in diversity".

Today this diversity is a treasure and a value (unique in the world). This reality, however, historically involves an obligation to face the challenges that emerge in achieving a united path towards a more fulfilled Europe.

A perfect example is the gap between West and East. This is manifested, for example, in the two different welfare systems and labour markets.

This condition has been exploited by Brexit supporters' rhetoric. They focussed on protecting the British welfare state which, in their view, was "threatened" by workers from Eastern Europe who are willing to work for lower salaries while benefiting from UK social security.

Given the above context, the question is whether a Europe at different speeds is an inevitable solution.

Undoubtedly, the EU is already a two-speed organisation. On one hand, the countries of the euro area and, on the other, those that are not yet part of the eurozone.

This situation exacerbates some tensions between Member States, favouring unfair competition and dumping. This is due to a failure to harmonise a number of issues. These issues include; workers' guarantees, differentiated labour taxes, and profits. The latter issue tops the current discussions.

This sums up is the complexity of the scenario, and indicates a need for connected and communicative governance levels. The future of Europe is tied to the awareness that it is time to make ambitious choices, towards more - not less, Europe.

**NB: In the EU's State of the Union this September, the Commission's President Juncker addressed the challenges that Europe is facing; at this time a White Paper on the Future of Europe was prepared by the EU, considering this, which scenario raised do you see as more likely to prevail?**

LM: Part of the answer to this question can be found in the speech on the state of the Union by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. This seems to be demonstrated by

the consensus with which the plenary has welcomed the report. In particular, the prospects for work, not only in the long run, but also in the immediate future. The intergovernmental model that largely determines the decision-making process in the EU is the central stumbling block. It is sometimes constrained by the positioning of the Member States.

The challenge that Juncker had advanced at the beginning of his mandate: to maintain the triple A on the economic level while achieving the same on the social side is essential. This includes decisively facing the issues of growth and employment, especially among young people. Therefore, from the five proposed scenarios, I hope that a transnational cooperation between national states at all levels can be achieved: defence, economy, security, but above all real progress towards European social cohesion.

**NB: What do you think can be changed in the EU governance system without changing the treaties?**

LM: Although the issue of reviewing the treaties is inevitable, the treaties already have room to go beyond the established implementation modalities that could lead to greater efficiency in governance.

Personally, I am inclined to use the existing spaces immediately, to show their limits and the need to overcome them more urgently.

**NB: As a MEP do you think the European Parliament has a fair impact on the EU's legislative and executive power, compared to the Council and the Commission? Sure, the EP has come a long way, but is its evolution still progressing?**

LM: Your question requires that the EU make a fundamental strategic choice.

Also, the debate must end with proposals and decisions that, as far as I am concerned, cannot be a simple repetition of the present.

First with the Amsterdam Treaty, and then with the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament effectively became a co-legislator with the Council. The Spitzenkandidaten mechanism, introduced in the last European elections, has increased Parliament's political legitimacy and hence its impact and ability to influence the Commission and the Council.

As a Member of the European Parliament, both in the Committees on Culture and on Economic and Monetary Affairs, I can account for the role of co-legislator - within the areas of competence – of the Parliament. The parliamentary machine is indicative of the strengthening of the EP's role compared to other institutions.

The possibility of the Parliament, the Council, and the Commission reaching agreement on the texts following a first reading, via the trilogue tool, gives Parliament more negotiating power than the procedure for a second reading.

The progress made with the ordinary legislative procedure, and the direct election by the European Parliament of the President of the Commission represented significant steps towards bicameralism.

There is plenty of room for improvement, of course. Much will depend on the participation and the type of consent that citizens will express in the 2019 consultation. The greater the democratic representativeness of Parliament, the greater the chance to move towards a more relevant role.

**NB: The EP's politics, based on the Brexit referendum campaign experience, often seem alien to national audiences. Some political parties have begun to use references to the EP's political groupings in national elections. For instance, in their symbols on the ballot. What else can be done to bridge the gap between the public at home and Strasbourg?**

LM: The issue of distance between parliamentary activity in Brussels and the perception of citizens has been long debated. Yet, decisions at the European level have a significant impact on everyday life, as has been the case with the abolition of additional roaming tariffs. Thousands of citizens, starting on June 15 2017, travel to the European Union and call their loved ones without incurring additional costs in their countries of origin. Additionally, in the near future, it will be possible to overcome the problem of geo-blocking of contents.

Further, the EP is in the process of reviewing the media and audiovisual services directive. This initiative will address the regulation of, as well as the presence and timing of advertisement broadcasting, especially in relation to young audiences.

Very often, however, the role of the European Parliament is not recognized in national debates, and its activity is objectively "obscured".

National media reporting on the activity in Brussels and Strasbourg often is partial. This is the case because of difficulties understanding how the European machine operates, branched between the Council, Parliament, and Commission.

However, currently, more than 70% of national legislation derives from EU determinations. This should warrant that more attention be given to individual issues, the implications of decisions, and sometimes even to the tremendous costs that would come from a non-Europe.

Lastly, it is clear that with the public's increased interest in European institutions, transparency in decision-making will increase.

**NB: The Polish case, in conjunction with the Hungarian opposition to the triggering of Article 7, highlighted the problems with unanimity mechanisms. Are these mechanisms**

**important safeguards, or obstacles to EU governance? Do you see a trend in favour of unanimity, or majority decision making?**

LM: The cited cases, before being an issue related to the governance mechanism, are about the shared values of the European Union.

On May 17, 2017, the European parliament started the procedure for the activation of Article 7 against Hungary related to a "serious breach of rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights".

Before discussing the mechanism of unanimity or relative majority, we should wonder how can a Member State of the Union propose an amendment to its constitutional system submitting the judicial system to the legislative or to the executive branch, or threaten to close a university because it is supposedly not aligned with the national government position.

Unanimity unquestionably does not make decisions easier. However, it can be overturned only via the revision of the treaties, and the correct balance regarding the competences of the individual states (the principle of subsidiarity).

**NB: Do you believe that the system of multiple presidencies and overlapping competencies in the EU is still the only viable way to organise its work? Or, is it opportune to move in another direction?**

LM: Two very important figures were introduced with the Lisbon Treaty: the President of the European Council and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The goal was to give one voice to the Union on the international scene. During this legislative session these two figures not only were accorded a greater weight, but also were acknowledged by international interlocutors.

This is obviously a matter of time. We all recognise that, for example, Federica Mogherini, as High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, has a much more influential and important role than her predecessor, Catherine Ashton. This is comparable to Donald Tusk, as chairman of the Council, versus his predecessor, Herman van Rompuy.

Before thinking of a change of direction, I would let the current mechanisms to come "in full", bearing in mind that significant and immediate new developments at the institutional level cannot happen quickly.

Meanwhile, Juncker, in his State of the Union speech, has authoritatively proposed to merge the Presidency of the Council and the Commission into a single "commander". However, this is a change that involves EU governments directly.