

**Labour Brussels: John Fitzmaurice Memorial Lecture
By Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament
16.10.2013**

Friends, and if I may, comrades

Jo, thank you for the kind invitation and for your warm words.

I am very pleased to be here with you. It's an honour to give this year's John Fitzmaurice Memorial Lecture here at Brussels Labour.

I didn't know John personally but I know that many of his friends here still miss him deeply. They have told me he was so much more than just an excellent civil servant. He was a passionate European who wrote brilliantly about Europe. He was a devoted Labour man. He represented the Commission in the Parliament, but I think his heart was really in the Parliament.

It's a great honour to speak in his memory; especially, in a year we celebrate a double anniversary: 40 years of British EU membership and 40 years of Brussels Labour!

Congratulations!

Comrades, friends,

I don't want to ruin the celebratory mood, but in all honesty we have to admit: relations between the UK and the EU these past 40 years have not always been easy. Recently, they have been on a roller-coaster-ride, mostly going downhill.

I am very happy to see many of my Labour colleagues here this evening. You remember me from my days as Group leader of the Socialists and Democrats. And I have to say: You did not always make my job any easier!

But I know I did not always make life easier for you either. We had our tough negotiations and at times disagreements. But in the end the arguments made the outcome better. We've had many great successes together.

Only last week Linda McAvan scored advances for the S&D Group with the tobacco directive. Congratulations Linda! Claude Moraes is now leading the special inquiry into mass surveillance of EU citizens. Arlene McCarthy is fighting our corner for tougher banking legislation. Michael Cashman is our strong voice for equality. Stephen Hughes is fighting for worker's rights. David Martin is leading the fight for trade deals which respect ILO standards and human rights. On every issue Labour MEPs make a difference.

Labour in the S&D group, and Britain in Europe hasn't always been a bed of roses but it's vital for our common future success.

Especially as a German, I must and want to say: The times when the UK is actively engaged in the EU are always good times for Europe.

The recent Labour governments pushed for Britain to be at the heart of Europe, leading on climate change and oversees aid, shaping policies in Britain's and Europe's best interest.

If I have learned something in the last years, it's that for a strong European social democracy, we need a strong Labour delegation in the S&D group.

That is why I know that in May 2014, we must return many more Labour MEPs from across the UK fighting for social justice, leading the battle for jobs. Glenis, you have an important job ahead of you, campaigning to return many more British Labour MEPs. You can count on my support. We need the largest possible Labour delegation to bring change to Europe.

We need this to make a difference here, and as a stepping stone to Ed Miliband's victory in the UK 2015 general election.

Friends,

I'm a strongly committed European. But I feel free to criticise many of the things Europe does or fails to do. Criticising what European institutions decide doesn't make you anti-European. We must never allow the eurosceptics to corner us into defending the Europe of Barroso and the conservatives.

And we must listen to our fellow Europeans who feel this Europe is no longer on their side. We must engage with them. And we must act.

My friend, the film director Wim Wenders once said something to me that really hit the nail bang on the head: "Most people support the idea of Europe," he said: "they support the idea that nations overcome boundaries to solve problems together. But then this idea turned into bureaucratic institutions. And now people mistake the idea for the institutions and reject it."

But, does this mean, I asked him, that we have to give up the idea of Europe? No, it means that we have to change the EU for the better!

So what's wrong with the EU?

Basically, to some it seems there are just two schools of thought in the European Commission. One will not rest until they have privatised the last village cemetery. And the other won't stop until they have implemented an EU-directive for funerals.

Yes. I'm exaggerating. But you know exactly what I am talking about. The Commission is sometimes meddling in too many things that are not its business. And certainly not a priority.

So, how can we fix the EU?

Repatriating powers for sure is not the answer. Because repatriating powers means treaty change. And treaty change means opening Pandora's Box.

Prime Minister Cameron's idea of unilaterally renegotiating Britain's relationship with the EU simply won't work. Why shouldn't everybody else use this opportunity to *sneak* their special interests through, too?

If we now go down on the slippery road of treaty change we are looking at years of horse-trading and cherry picking.

Years of dissent and discord.

Years of bitter in-fighting and a real danger of disintegration.

Years of focussing on everything but the real change that's necessary.

Years of distraction.

Is it really in our best interest to embark on this dangerous adventure with all the confusing signals to the rest of the world and to the markets while our economic recovery is still fragile at best?

Is it really in our best interest to risk losing Britain as an EU member?

I am convinced that Cameron really does want the UK to stay in the EU. He knows it is in Britain's best interest. But Cameron has become the sorcerer's apprentice who can no longer control the spirits he has conjured up. By failing to confront his own people with the truth he has lost control. He has given the lead to radical Tea Party Tories and to UKIP.

Do you really think that those who advocate British withdrawal will be content with anything Cameron brings home from renegotiations when their real goal is for Britain to leave the EU? I'd bet money that no matter what Cameron takes home in case of a referendum they'd run a staunch anti-European campaign anyway.

And, as your trade unions have pointed out, quitting the EU is only stage one of the right's ideological agenda. It's a stepping stone in the dismantling of your welfare state, by removing the rights and protections of working people.

Cameron is taking a big risk. Instead of pulling Britain out and trying to repatriate powers, Britain should be convincing the EU to do things differently.

As Julian Priestley and others have pointed out, Ed Miliband and Labour are right to avoid the trap of an in-out referendum at a pre-assigned random date. There is no logic to this whatsoever. Ed and his team can count on our support.

Comrades,

To fix what's wrong with the EU there's no need for treaty change.

Part of the solution is as simple as this: The next Commission should stop over-stepping its powers, and fully respect the subsidiarity principle.

The subsidiarity principle lays out simple ground rules:

What can be done better locally must be done locally.

What can be done better regionally must be done regionally.

What can be done better nationally must be done nationally.

The EU should only act when there is added value. But in our globalised world some problems transcend borders or have become too complex for one nation to deal with alone.

It's these problems the EU should tackle: terrorism and organised crime, climate change and migration, trade and tax fraud. That's where the EU can make a real difference for its citizens.

When I am back home in my German constituency people tell me: "We don't need all these drawn-out negotiations in Brussels and pay all this money for the EU. We are a big country and our economy is doing well; we can deal with things on our own." Then I ask them: "Do you really want Germany to go out there and negotiate trade deals with the Americans and Chinese on its own? Who do you think will get a better deal, 80 million Germans or 507 million Europeans?"

Of course, Germany could stand alone.
Of course, Britain could stand alone.
But alone we would be weaker.

Britain or Germany simply would not be able to deliver the same free trade agreement with the United States that the EU is negotiating right now.

Leaving the EU won't make our economies stronger because they benefit hugely from the single market.

Leaving the EU won't increase our influence in the world – be it on climate change policies or the situation in the Middle East.

Leaving the EU won't make it easier to protect our social model, our democracies, our high-skilled, high-wage jobs in a world characterised by intercontinental competition. If we don't stick together to protect our values and standards we will all get trapped in a race to the bottom. And the race to the bottom is a race we could never win. We can only win by a new economy, based on high skilled jobs, well-trained workers, innovation, research, supporting our growing businesses, modernising our infrastructure. A race to the top.

Friends,

When I was a young man, I was a passionate activist for a United States of Europe. But sometimes, with age comes not only loss of hair but also a little wisdom. Today, I know that nation-states are here to stay. Because they are the emotional homes for our national identities. We will never stop feeling French, British, Dutch, Italian, Polish or German. That's a good thing. Diversity makes us richer. So, I don't want to EU to substitute the nation-state. No, I see the EU acting at another level, as

the necessary complement to nation action, to further our common interests.

In today's interdependent world some problems *are just* too big for nation-states. In some areas pooling our efforts makes sense. We do not lose sovereignty by transferring it to the EU level as Eurosceptics claim - we actually regain lost sovereignty by acting together.

If we act together as 507 million Europeans, 28 nation-states, backed-up by the biggest market and largest economy in the world we are a real heavy-weight in the international arena. Together we are stronger!

It's the big problems where the EU brings added value to its citizens. That's what people want us to do. They don't want the EU to regulate olive oil jugs in restaurants. They want us to solve their real problems.

And there is a lot to fix.

We are still struggling to come out of the worst economic crisis of our life-times.

People are hit hard by the crisis.

In Europe, 26 million people don't have a job. 6 million young people are out of work.

Countless family companies and young start-ups can't get banks to lend them much needed money for investments.

Many hard working families suffer from cuts to education, health care and pensions.

43 million people in Europe can't pay for their daily meals, they depend on soup kitchens and food banks.

120 million people are at risk of poverty.

This is shameful.

This is a scandal.

In the richest continent of this world there are parents who don't know where the next hot meal for their children is coming from.

In the richest continent of this world we risk losing a generation to unemployment. In some member states, every second young person is out of work.

Recently, a young woman in Madrid asked me: "So you found 750 billion Euros to rescue the banks? How many Euros do you have for me?" When I go back to Madrid the next time, I want to be able to tell her, what we are doing to make sure she has a job and a future.

Otherwise, we will lose the trust of people in the EU and in the capacity of democratic institutions to act and deliver.

People are paying for a crisis they did not cause. And what's even worse: they are forced to swallow a bitter medicine that's not working.

And austerity simply is not working. It's even counterproductive.

Now, we are told to believe that there are clear indicators for economic recovery. But this economic recovery is fragile at best. If we continue at this rate - the Eurozone expanded by 0.3 per cent this quarter - it will take us almost three years to be back at pre-crisis levels.

In the UK, there are tentative signs of recovery too, yet people don't see it. All they see is their standard of living declining, not least because of the cost of fuel bills. The European Union has a key role to play here - supporting supply and ensuring that large companies do not dominate the market unfairly. In making business more accountable. In standing up for the consumer.

This tentative recovery is not proof that austerity has finally started to work. On the contrary, what fragile growth there may be has only come about where austerity has been relaxed and where investment has returned.

Britain and the rest of Europe face the same problem. And we must fix it together.

By changing our direction.
By putting an end to austerity.
By putting jobs, growth, innovation, first.
By making Europe competitive again.

And, yes, by changing leadership here and in London. It's the conservatives in Britain and Brussels who have brought us to where we are. They must now be held to account.

It's the same battle in London and in Brussels. And we must win it together.

By making sure that in the 2014 European elections and the 2015 British elections we mobilise to win!

Ed Miliband has shown strong leadership. He's confronting the vested interests which hold Britain back. That's the reason why he and his family are now in the line of fire of your right-wing newspapers.

I am convinced that under his strong leadership Labour will become the strongest and largest British delegation in the European Parliament. And a year later, Labour will take back Downing Street.

This will be a game-changer. For Britain and for Europe.

Because Ed Miliband could exert much more influence for Britain in Europe than David Cameron.

Cameron is alone when he comes to Brussels. By dropping out of the EPP he has isolated himself. For sure, at the moment Merkel is dragging him along, but we will see, for how much longer...

Ed will have a much bigger say on those European questions which matter to Britain, he will be able to shape the direction of the EU – because Ed has the backing of a strong political family. He will have strong allies for progressive policies in Europe.

With the up-coming European elections we are embarking on an exciting adventure. To a real terra incognita.

For the first time ever, the European Parliament will elect a Commission President.

For the first time ever, we will have lead candidates of all political parties debating ideas in a real campaign.

For the first time ever, voters will have a choice between candidates and alternative policies.

And for the first time we can have a real Europe-wide campaign not as a substitute for the campaigns of national parties, but complementing them.

Let me make one thing clear; I want to work with the Labour leadership in London and here to run a campaign that works for Labour in Britain. Nothing that we do or say must make the job of winning more seats in 2014 more difficult.

It has to be a campaign about what kind of EU we want, about what policies we want for Europe. And of course the more we talk about positive policies for Europe, the more we weaken the Eurosceptics, the xenophobes and the populists.

At the moment some people who are not happy with what the EU think they can only express their anger by voting for anti-Europeans. This time we must offer them a real choice between different candidates and different programmes. This is an act of empowerment for people.

The next European elections *can* be a further step in fixing what's wrong with the EU. More transparency, more accountability, more democracy.

We are trying something that has never been done before. A Europe-wide campaign to change Europe for the better. Join us in this adventure.

I know many people in Brussels Labour use their weekends to go and campaign back home in their constituencies. I admire your dedication. But for those who can't or for those who want, there's much to be done here as well. Get in touch with us, through the EPLP, through the Group, through the PES, through Julian.

We can't do this alone. We need your help.

Comrades,

The European Union is an undoubted success, and the UK and the Labour party have contributed strongly to that. So, here is to 40 more years of Britain playing leading role in the EU, and 40 more years of a bigger and stronger Brussels Labour! Let's honour John Fitzmaurice's memory, because Europe can do better than this!