INTRODUCTION

After the Second World War, a war that had a devastating effect on the European continent and its citizens, the strong belief emerged that the integration of Europe was the necessary and only response to the evident instability of Europe and the political and economic problems of that time.

The first step in the integration of Europe was made when the European Coal and Steel Community was established by Treaty in 1951. Two other Treaties followed and established the Euratom and the European Economic Community in 1957. The continuing process of European integration has eventually culminated into a European Union, of which the policy areas extend far beyond purely economic forms of integration.

Strange as it may seem, there have been very little discussions on the actual finality of the whole project of European integration throughout its history. While such discussions did take place on the academic level, they were almost completely absent on the political, as well as the public level. This situation was caused by a pragmatic and functional method of proceeding with integration (the so-called Monnet method), which was favoured over the idea of creating some kind of blueprint for Europe's finality.

However, things have fundamentally changed. The European Union currently is at a crossroads and a decisive moment for its existence. The Union has become a quite complex structure, remote from its citizens and characterised by a deplorable democratic deficit. At the same time, the Union is facing the tremendous challenge of the coming enlargement, which is without precedent in terms of scope as well as diversity.

In these exciting times, the Union is in desperate need of structural change in order to function effectively in the future and to remain able to live up to the high expectations. This has resulted in an intensified interest in the future
of European integration: the fundamental question of Quo Vadis Europa is posed now once again.

The debate on Europe's future was started with the already famous speech by Germany's Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer to the Humboldt University in Berlin on 12 May 2000, where he presented his own view on the future shape of Europe. Subsequently, at the European summit in Nice in December 2000, a deeper and wider debate about the future of the European Union was called for and was formally launched on 7 March 2001. This debate reached another phase with the decision made at the Laeken summit of December 2001 to establish a Convention on the future of Europe. This Convention held its inaugural session on 28 February 2002 and will do the preparatory work for an IGC to be held in 2004 where amendments to the treaties will be made. It is without doubt that the current constructive, wide-ranging and unprecedented debate will be of immense importance to the future of the European Union, marking a decisive point in its history.

In this article, I will give my own vision on the fundamental question of how the future European Union should look like on general lines. As this is a very wide-ranging matter, I have chosen to analyse a number of fundamental and constitutional issues which are of most significant relevance for the future of Europe. Hereby, I will focus on what I think are desirable reforms for the European Union, but in doing this, I will also give much consideration to what would probably be realistically achievable for the future.

First, I will discuss the four issues enumerated in Nice declaration no. 23 on the future of Europe, which, such as the declaration states, should be inter alia addressed by the debate. These four issues are: the delimitation of powers between the EU and the Member States; the status of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; simplification of the Treaties and the role of the national parliaments in the European architecture.

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2 See declaration no. 23 on the future of the Union, annexed to the Treaty of Nice.


5 As was decided in Nice: see declaration no. 23 to the Nice Treaty.