

Political Programme 2016

Proposal – Final vote of amendments and approval to take place at the General Assembly

We, the members of Europæisk Ungdom (JEF Denmark), seek to actively engage ourselves in Denmark's political debate on European matters, because we fundamentally believe that the pathways towards the best political solutions are paved with qualified and inclusive deliberation. In 2016, our political work will place specific focus on the four themes below, though we will naturally get engaged in many more questions of both current and evergreen nature.

1 EUROPE'S REFUGEE CHALLENGES MUST BE SOLVED THROUGH COOPERATION

In 2015, the countries of Europe, including Denmark, experienced a significant increase in the arrivals of refugees from North Africa and the Middle East. This development has led to a string of summits, a long list of unfortunate political reactions and an increasingly heated debate. In the heat of rhetorical battle, we in JEF Denmark, consider two elements of the situation to have been particularly warped. First of all is the notion that the refugees themselves are the primary cause of the "refugee problem". Second of all the notion that the EU is incapable of solving these challenges, which is why each nation should fend for itself.

The cause of the massive refugee flows that have not only affected the Member States of the EU, but especially much less stable and less wealthy states in the Middle East, is first and foremost the Syrian civil war. More than 250.000 people have lost their lives in the bloody conflict. Furthermore, the war between the Assad regime, a number of rebel groups, Islamic State, and third countries such as Russia have displaced more than 11 million people from their homes. The catastrophic situation shows with unbearable clarity that the countries of the West and of the EU cannot shut the problems of the world out and erase all traces of responsibility. Such inward-looking behaviour is not *right* from a humanitarian perspective, and as the pressure on both external and internal borders clearly exemplify, it is not even in European countries' more narrow self-interest.

JEF Denmark therefore advocates a much stronger common European foreign policy with which to engage in the EU's neighbouring regions. Capacity building, economic and administrative support, and – if necessary – military presence must be tools that the leaders of Europe utilize to a much higher degree when conflicts escalate (such as in Syria), or when states collapse (such as in Libya). No single EU country has the necessary resources to establish peace or assist with state building in these war-torn countries. Common and united effort as well as pooling of national resources is absolutely necessary in this regard. In this way, the EU can contribute to peace, stability and the upholding of human rights, as well as strengthen the potential for economic growth in the Union's near abroad. This sort of unity and leadership in testing times must be seen as a duty for the EU's Member States – imperatives derived from both value-based principles and rational self-interest.

Regarding the current refugee situation, JEF Denmark is not in doubt: The solutions must be European. Even critical observers of the EU usually underline that the Brussels-based institutions must take action regarding issues of cross-border nature. Refugee flows are at their core exactly such issues. Many of the EU's countries have resorted to individual actions such as border closures, border controls and border fortifications. It may well be that these measures establish an illusion of success, but in the long – and collective – run such plans are useless. The pressure persists and such "beggar thy neighbour" policies are not just ineffective – they

actively erode some of the core principles of European integration. Just as mutual currency devaluations of the past, mutual border closures are not solutions – they merely serve to accelerate the negative consequences of Europe’s refugee challenges. JEF Denmark holds firm: we must find the real solutions together. Concretely, we call for stronger efforts regarding refugee relocations throughout the whole of the EU, more coordinated and effective asylum recognition procedures, and a common effort regarding the logistic and financial challenges regarding transportation, housing and basic needs of refugees. Furthermore, we call for a firmer legal and institutional framework to underpin a common European refugee policy. In JEF Denmark’s eyes, this required a revision of the Dublin regulation as well as the establishment of a common European external border guard agency. It is neither realistic nor solidary to expect the Mediterranean frontier states of the EU to handle registration and eventual deportation of asylum seekers. It requires more resources and an effort from all of the EU’s Member States. Without a solid and effective control of the EU’s external borders, Schengen will be under continuous threat and the incentive for self-serving and counter-productive policies from individual Member States will grow.

2 WE MUST PROTECT THE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN THE EU

With regards to the present challenges of the Schengen cooperation, JEF Denmark considers the protection of the EU’s freedom of movement to be absolutely crucial. The passport-free zone has not only benefited business, workers and tourists throughout the EU, it is also a potent symbol of European integration and of the EU’s capacity to transform the norms within international politics. Through trust and cooperation, the individual Member States have accepted to make the EU’s internal borders virtually transparent – for the collective benefits of prosperity, security and mobility. We must hold tight to this trust and in this cooperation, and we must seek common solutions for the challenges that inevitably arise. In the contrary situation, there is a real and present danger of the unravelling of the thread that binds the European Union together. Such regression would be a historic mistake.

As mentioned above, JEF Denmark is of the opinion that the Member States of the EU should cooperate regarding controlling the EU’s external borders; they must not give up prematurely and reinstate the border checks and mistrust of the past. This holds true for the freedom of movement – and access to equal rights – for workers in the EU. Solutions to challenges in this regard must be sought through the institutional system of the EU – not by bypassing it. The recent negotiations between the EU and the UK show that there is indeed room for common solutions – even for politically toxic issues such as welfare payments and child benefits. Danish politicians should always seek solutions in Brussels rather than making the EU a recurring scapegoat for unpopular policies. No political system is perfect – and it is only natural that different welfare state models and the free movement of labour present challenges. Still, JEF Denmark does not doubt that cooperation and common solutions are the way to go – because the benefits of the single market and of the four freedoms are colossal. This holds true for economic benefits – but also less tangible but at least as important benefits for the young people of Europe; benefits that are reaped every time we have the freedom to study, travel and work in the colourful and diverse member base of the EU. Mutual recognition and cooperation are fundamental principles of European integration – and not centralization and regimentation as many EU critics continue to argue.

3 THE UK MUST REMAIN A MEMBER OF THE EU

A part of the diversity that characterizes Europe is of course the dry sense of humour, the mirrored driving rules and the weird units of measurement of the United Kingdom. JEF Denmark is of the opinion that continued

British membership of the EU is beneficial for both Britain - and for the rest of the EU. The UK is not just the Union's third largest economy. The country has enormous diplomatic, military and cultural competences. In a world where the EU must play a stronger and more unified role on the global scene, we definitely need the strong international presence and capabilities of the UK. On the more concrete and practical level, the UK also contributes with valuable research and innovation, which is an essential part of Europe's future economic development. The UK houses some of the best universities in the world – and it would indeed be a shame for the thousands of Danish students who wish to study abroad if the UK was no longer a part of the Erasmus cooperation, which makes student exchange so much easier for all parties involved.

A case of “Brexit” would be problematic in many ways. First of all, it is utterly unclear what the alternative to EU membership for the British people will be. Businesses will most likely demand continued membership of the EU's single market, but will a Norwegian-style “fax democracy” be sufficient? Will it be presented as an opportunity at all? Will the more pro-European Scotland demand a new independence referendum? There are countless unanswered questions such as these, and they may potentially lead to crises of political, economic and international nature. This is not a path, JEF Denmark wishes for Britain – and for Europe. A British exit from the EU will also fuel the flames of Eurosceptic parties across the continent, including the ones in Denmark. In these difficult times, the EU needs strengthened unity and cooperation – not the opposite. We consider the UK as a crucial partner regarding solutions to the EU's political challenges. This is why we will fight for continued British membership of the European Union.

4 STRENGTHENED EUROPEAN ENGAGEMENT IN UKRAINE

Ukraine has slid away from the front pages of European newspapers. JEF Denmark, however, considers that the situation in Ukraine is the litmus test for the EU's capacity to act in united fashion on the arena of foreign policy. The unity has been strong with regards to the sanctions of Russia – no mean feat and definitely worthy of praise. However, much more must be done in order to secure stability, prosperity and democracy in Ukraine.

JEF Denmark argues that the EU has a special responsibility for stronger engagement in Ukraine. The blue flag with the 12 golden stars was a symbol of a brighter future when tens of thousands of Ukrainians hit the streets of Kiev in the winter of 2013-2014. We commend the Ukrainian people and their brave decision to turn away from corruption, clientelism and dominance by Russia, but the reform-minded forces in Ukraine cannot handle this difficult transformation on their own. The EU must support the democratizing and liberalizing forces through increased economic, political and administrative assistance. It must be clear that the EU is actively engaged in the construction of a stronger, freer and more democratic Ukraine. If we fail the people of Ukraine in this hour of need, it will do more than simply undermine the EU's image in the region. It can potentially lead to further destabilization of the large country – with the EU on one side and Russia on the other. Without a strong and reform-minded government in Kiev – supported by the EU – the collapse of the country is not unthinkable. Such failure may lead to renewed authoritarianism (possibly dictated from Moscow) or the reignition of civil war. The latter scenario would be catastrophic for millions of Ukrainians – and it could potentially lead to massive problems for the EU through increased refugee flows and the destabilization of the Union's eastern flank. Such possible outcomes must be prevented at all costs. This is why the leaders of Europe must invest time, resources and political capital in order to support Ukraine in the country's fragile journey to Europeanization, liberalization and democracy.