



Proposal to the new European Parliament

After 10 years of (no) European policy, time has come to assess the situation and to relaunch a dynamic policy for developing employee ownership across Europe.

150 Members of the European Parliament and leaders from all political parties expressed their support to the Employee Ownership Manifesto for the 2009 European elections. Healthier economy, sustainability, better governance are the key points in most supporting messages from all parties.

Let's quote MEP Frédérique Ries : *"I commit myself with my colleagues of the ADLE to convincing the European Parliament that the issue of the development of employee ownership in the European Union should be a priority for the first year of the new legislature."*

The most supportive statements came from the European Liberals and Democrats, from the Greens and from the Group of European Socialists, as well as from the European People's Party and others.

After 10 years of (no) European policy, time has come to assess the situation and to relaunch a dynamic policy. This is a perfect role for the European Parliament. Elements of this assessment:

- 10 years ago, the European Federation of Employee Share Ownership organized a first Conference of the Belgian Presidency of the EU on employee ownership (on the 23.11/2001 at the Egmont Palace). At the same time, Guy Verhofstadt had convinced the Lisbon Summit to ask the European Commission for a communication and an action plan. This plan has never come into being.
- For 10 years the Parliament has voted a (sub-) budget line for the promotion of employee financial participation in Europe. The Parliament counted on an annual budget of one to 2 million euros. Actually, in ten years the Commission has only granted 3 million euros for projects to that end.
- A High Level Experts Group was set up by the Commission. It put forward seven concrete proposals in 2004. In his Report to the French Parliament, Deputy François Guillaume wrote down in September 2006: *"Nevertheless on the date of the drawing up of this report, the implementation of these proposals has not even been initiated"*. Since then nothing has moved.
- Very recently, MEP Ieke van den Burg has put a series of written questions to the Commission. The answers received are distressing. In conclusion Mrs van den Burg says that *"Hopefully DG Employment & Social Affairs will have a new and more ambitious Commissioner after the elections"*.
- Paradoxically, in spite of the do-nothing community attitude, employee share plans have rapidly developed in huge numbers in European companies, but in bad conditions and with multiple discriminations. This wide gap between the dynamics in the companies and the community do-nothing attitude has generated a strong feeling of frustration towards Brussels and Europe.

Among the proposals put forward to break with this acknowledgment of do-nothing attitude, one of them seems of the utmost importance. We need a permanent community body to ensure the promotion and development of employee ownership in Europe on a regular basis.

Within the European Parliament, such permanent body could be an "Interparliamentary group for employee ownership".

At the Commission level, it could be an "European Ownership Forum", following the example of the Forum on Remunerations, the Forum on Restructuring and others. Light structures, but permanent structures ensuring a follow-up.