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EUROPE, A NEW RULING CLASS TO CHALLENGE THE EUROSCEPTICS

A week after the European elections, which have resulted in the most Eurosceptical parliament since 1979, Trento Festival of Economics tries to offer ideas and suggest prospects for reviving a continental union which is feeling the weight of global change now more than ever. There was one aspect on which all the speakers - the Spanish politician and academic Josep Borrell Fontelles, and two lecturers with solid international relations, namely Sergio Fabbrini, Professor of Political Science at the Luiss Università in Rome and Marc Lazar, Professor of Political History and Sociology at Sciences Po in Paris – were in agreement: Europe cannot do without Europe. This is a predictable statement but which nevertheless requires concrete and immediate answers, and above all a new ruling class, capable of interpreting the needs of a continent that risks drifting away economically and politically. There is also a need to respond to the ever more compact and numerous front of Eurosceptics by reforming bureaucracy and policy.-

The toughest analysis came from Sergio Fabbrini, according to whom Europe risks a dual split: between North and South, with the United Kingdom and Denmark a long way away from the idea of a common Europe, as compared to Greece and Spain, which are battling an economic crisis that runs the risk of increasing the discontented, and with the East, where the European elections saw the participation of less than 20 per cent of voters. "It is clear", added Fabbrini as regards this "that eastern European countries are only interested in a European market, with the free exchange of goods and labour, and certainly do not feel the need for political union, a concept distant from their culture". What makes the situation even more critical is the fact that France is in crisis and would seem to have lost the political leadership on which the axis between Berlin (economic force) and Paris (political force) was based for decades. "We cannot even consider a Europe without France", reiterated Fabbrini, making reference to the extraordinary success of Le Pen's Front National. So how is it possible to come out of this situation, if not with a new ruling class? All three speakers seemed to agree on this, albeit with slightly different nuances. On the strength of his recent role in the European Parliament, Josep Borrell Fontelles also highlighted the limitations of a European ruling class, still too tied to national patterns ("reflected in the European environment") and as yet incapable of reasoning according to a supranational European vision. Thus an outline for the future European (political) ruling class emerged from the debate: a political class that cannot allow itself scandal and waste ("the parties cannot waste millions of Euro and then ask for sacrifices from people", Lazar), with rigorous and long-sighted training ("Enough of officials and party leaders not respected by electors", Borrell) and capable of thinking big ("They will have to solve two types of problems, related to political and geographical inequality", Fabbrini). In the next few months it will be the political agenda that confirms the European will to change route and head towards true union, not only based on criteria and economic and financial rigidity. -