

Europe and the 2024 Elections

FRESACH TRUTH CHARTER

The old truths

For centuries, religion and politics in Europe have determined what counts as truth. Doubts or contesting propagated truths could end in prison, expulsion and even burning at the stake. People, subjects and tax debtors hardly had a chance to question existing circumstances - no matter how wrong and unfair they were. To this day, it is a popular method in dictatorships to intimidate opponents and deniers of an ordered truth with threats and lawsuits, to prosecute them, to commit them to psychiatric care or to lock them up in a re-education camp.

But the revolutions that started in Europe have upended many “eternal truths” and put their apologists in churches, ruling houses and centers of power into their place. It was the sciences that pulled the rug out from under the doctrines of the superiority of certain races and classes, even of some princely families. It was the sciences that took away the credibility of “natural” inequality, colonialism and ethnic racism within Europe ... and thus had a huge impact across all continents.

The new truths

But the new truths gained through science and research are also subject to progress. Every pursuit of new knowledge, every science, lives not only from confirmation, but also from objection and contradiction. What is true today can change tomorrow - through new findings, to which science itself contributes. That is why education, science and research in Europe are so central to finding the truth, to the well-being of the community and to a vibrant democracy.

The new Europe, which gradually came together into a union after the Second World War, must distance itself clearly from the old Europe, namely from those countries whose rulers repeatedly forced false truths on their own citizens and neighbors, which later turned out to be lies have proven. This was the case under fascism and National Socialism, as well as under communism and Stalinism. All of these systems always produced their own “truths” to keep the ruling representatives in power.

The new and enlightened Europe does not need to be forced to spread certain truths, but rather strives for universal knowledge, dialogue and cooperation across all borders. Europe today assumes that truth emerges from unbiased observation and analysis of the facts. In this sense, the new Europe is committed to scientific and empirical findings and combats obscurantism and ongoing prejudices that have already caused hatred, misfortune and destruction in the past.

Alternative truths

We see forces at work that propagate “alternative” truths and spread new prejudices. These forces do not seek truth, but rather nebulize the discussion in order to seize political power. The diversity of opinions that bombard citizens through new channels and media makes it easy for them to twist their lies and myths into truths. Entire Lie factories are trying to heat up the mood and influence elections. They want to discredit and destroy the new Europe and its achievements.

The challenge of identifying and detecting lies becomes even more urgent due to the possibilities of artificial intelligence and the use of false algorithms. We therefore have to use AI techniques ourselves to make untruths and fakes visible. In any case, intensive efforts and social pressure are required on the global media and technology companies in order to increase their sensitivity and willingness to take responsibility! This is not about censorship, but about a shared commitment to the truth!

Truth through knowledge

Governments and civil society are called upon to strengthen trust in scientific knowledge and the discovery of truth through scientific methods. This cannot be achieved by prescribing truths or laws, but only through public dialogue and careful justification for the truths found. New findings do not stand in the way of scientific orientation, but should support the discovery of truth. Here scientific findings do not contradict religious beliefs. What’s crucial is the ability and willingness to engage in dialogue, tolerance and mutual acceptance.

The role of the media

However, finding the truth also requires media diversity and media literacy in order to recognize alternative facts and propaganda. Because naivety when dealing with social media can quickly lead to manipulation and misleading the public. If the media is hijacked by trolls, controlled by interest-driven financiers and bought by anti-democratic forces, our democracy is in danger and with it freedom of the press and freedom of expression.

Independent and critical journalism is a democratic good. It gives the truth a voice and ensures justice and balance of interests. It is an important instrument of education and the rule of law, and makes an indispensable contribution to information, criticism and control - and thus to the democratically necessary correction procedures (reforms). Anyone who wants truth will have to strive for precisely this quality of media.