



Adults for Adults

Citizens Against Patronizing Politics

Referenz Citizens Against Patronizing Politics
Datum September 2013
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Dear Member of the European Parliament!

You are soon going to decide whether EU citizens need shocking images on cigarette packages in order to inform them of the damaging effects of smoking.

We are a group of intellectuals and artists who observe the measures taken by the EU with growing concern. We ask you: do you really believe that it is the role of politicians to issue health warnings? Given mass poverty in Europe, homelessness, rampant youth unemployment and social radicalisation, do you not think that there are other, far more important, complex and pressing political challenges?

Do you not think that the patronizing treatment of adults at the hands of politicians can have dangerous and damaging consequences? If you treat responsible adults like children who need to be given health warnings, you might open the door to people actually behaving like children at some point in the future. Do you really want that? Would you prefer timid, obedient and servile subjects to autonomous citizens?

If the issue you raise is the health costs caused by individuals, the situation might quickly escalate as the public begins to name and shame other costly or no longer productive individuals or groups and considers ways of disposing of them. We have already been there in the previous century. Do you really want to play this dangerous game? If you encourage citizens to perceive others solely as a potential threat, you engage in scaremongering and worsen social divisions, all of which erodes Europe's social cohesion, already under threat, even further.

Finally, if you treat Europe's citizens, who have voted you in, as if they were legally incompetent, you ultimately question your own democratic legitimacy – following this logic, you would have been elected by legally incompetent voters.

That is why we call on you to put an end to this problematic and dangerous policy of issuing well-meaning health warnings. We ask you to focus, instead, on those challenges that are essential to restore social security and solidarity in Europe. Set necessary limits to irrational movements and big private sector players in order to protect society from any damaging impact such as the recession and unemployment. But we ask you to stop pointing out the obvious to individuals. Please show citizens once more the respect they deserve as responsible adults imbued with human dignity.

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