

## **The European Dream - Reality Check**

The most famous example of collective dreams is the American Dream. Long it looked as if this dream would have powerful attraction and therefore spreads all over the globe. Now an American who says of himself, he was influenced strongly by the American dream claims there is another dream that will be more attractive and successful in the future than the American: The European Dream.

The author Jeremy Rifkin is an economist , head of the Institute "The Foundation on Economic Trends " in Washington, DC , university professor and advises in Europe not only leading parties and politicians , but also the European Commission . As a traveler between worlds , he holds a mirror up to the europeans who firstly wonder. Not only that they never heard of the existence of the European Dream yet - but furthermore this unknown thing should be more promising for the future than it's American counterpart.

James Rifkin published his book: "The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future Is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream" in 2004 describing the evolution of the European Union as well as the key differences between the American Dream and the European Dream.

He formulates the allegation that the focus shouldn't be on the individual interest, dreams, success and accumulation of wealth like it is in America but rather on the sustainable development and the quality of life. This new emerging Dream in Europe presents an alternative and is the complete opposite to the American Dream.



According to Rifkin a lot of young people are starting to look to this European Dream the way so many generation looked at the American Dream. He lays out the European Dream as incorporating:

- 1) **Inclusivity: the idea that no one should be abandoned totally by society, and that we have an obligation to our fellow human beings**
- 2) **Respecting multicultural diversity**
- 3) **Promoting a good quality of life for the community**
- 4) **A strong commitment to sustainable development, the environment, and the earth**
- 5) **Promotion of social rights and universal human rights**
- 6) **Balancing work and play**
- 7) **Peace and harmony**

He sees the EU as the standing for these things. It's a powerful but still developing dream. He is sure that the European Dream creates global consciousness as a new social and political power in our globalized world.

You could say James Rifkin is a very naive and optimistic man if he believes in this hard to live up dream but back then in 2004 Europe was something completely different than today. Problems like the finance crisis, the huge unemployment or the refugee crisis shaped Europe. 12 years ago this dream may be applied on Europe, but today? Are Europeans still living the European Dream although Europe undergoes so many crises? Or did they ever live it?



## **REALITY CHECK**

A long time ago the heartlands of Europe came together wanting to turn the most hate ridden continent into a continent where Inclusivity, Diversity, Sustainability, Quality of life, Balanced Work and Play, Universal Rights and Peace are the most important values.

That isn't to say that Europe has suddenly become a wish dream. For all of its talk about preserving multicultural diversity, europeans have become increasingly hostile toward newly arrived immigrants. Ethnic arguments and religious intolerance continue to unleash across Europe. Racism is on the rise again, as well as discrimination against Muslims and other religious minorities. At the same time we're not spared from terrorism. All over the continent people are scared of attacks and may rather stay in their safe home than walking out on the streets where every moment something can happen to them. The fear europeans are living with is restricting their freedom.

Missing data privacy takes away the freedom of EU-citizen as well. People feel defenceless and are still waiting for the government to solve this problem with the US.

At the same time negotiations about topics concerning the future of europe, like the controversial free trade agreement with the US, are untransparent and more and more gets decided in Brussels. It's officials often get accused of being distant and unresponsive to the needs of the European citizens they

serve. Thereby people feel uninvolved, uncared and that they don't have a say about how Europe will go on.

And if you ask the 20 million unemployed people today do you really think they agree that social rights are still a big part of the European dream? Every fifth adolescent who wants to work can't. Greece with 50%, Spain 44% and Italy 37% youth unemployment. Lack of training courses, lack of infrastructure and lack of investment.

To these problems, austerity is added which Germany can handle but for the southern European countries this is impossible.

You can see the EU has a lot to deal with, its problems are complex and its weaknesses are transparent, all these problems together make a lot of Europeans feel upset when they think about Europe. At the same time we shouldn't forget all the strengths of Europe, everything Europe is doing well. Europe has the biggest domestic market world wide, one quarter of the global GDP. The environment counts, Europe is the champion of the global warming treaty. Europe uses energy more efficiently, goes for renewable energies and organic sustainable agriculture. Universal rights are on top, offering us privileges we're not even aware of and which we maybe not appreciate often enough because we're used to it.

We can say, Europe isn't totally living up to its dream, but what's rather important is that Europe has structured a new vision for the future that's different to everything we knew before. And this model has potential especially for the globalized world we're living in. Despite the challenges Europe has to overcome, Europe will grow with these and it'll make Europe even stronger.

The new European Dream is still powerful because it dares to suggest a new history, with an attention to quality of life, sustainability, peace and harmony.

In the end in my opinion those are the true and right aspects to look at if you want to build a peaceful, satisfied and successful union.

