



BONINO INSPIRED BY THE STOCKHOLM NETWORK

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Emma Bonino has a profound knowledge of Europe and its problems. Not only was she a European Commissioner (and is still remembered in Brussels as one of the most efficient, enthusiastic and energetic members of the Commission in the last couple of decades) but, even before landing in Brussels, she had a very comprehensive European background, including the conviction that many of Italy's problems - not only those of the economy and finance, but also and above all those of freedom and civil rights - could only find a solution in a European setting.

In Europe, two think tanks exist, both headquartered in London although with affiliates in Brussels and other EU capitals: Policy Network, created by Peter Mandelson (which, from Lancaster House, connects social-reformist thinkers; its point of reference in Italy is the Italian-European Foundation) and the Stockholm Network of Britannia Row and of liberal or libertarian inspiration (its Italian reference points are the Istituto Bruno Leoni and the Ideazione Foundation).

Although she is a centre-left government Minister, it is clear where she leans. Years ago, she was a reader (and an enthusiastic conveyor) of Frank Vibert's book "Europe Simple/Europe Strong" which caused a furore a few years ago by challenging the then prevailing vision of a directorial and bureaucratic Europe and recommended a programme of radical simplification for a stronger Europe. Vibert's book was not born within the Stockholm Network but it breathes the same air.

Now on the table are two texts which actually come direct from the Stockholm Network and which relate more or less directly to Bonino's institutional tasks: the modernisation of Europe (and the improvement of its competitiveness) according to what has been called the Lisbon Agenda.

The first one is an essay by Johnny Munkhammar, director of Timbro (the ultimate liberal think tank of the Swedish Kingdom). It was released in pocket format in London and Stockholm a few months ago, entitled "European Dawn - after the social model". In less than 200 small, concise and clear pages, it outlines a punctual programme of how to

create resources and make them more efficient, compared to what has been done so far in the EU. The stress is not on how to dismantle the social state (which is very much linked to Europe's history and tradition), but to change it in the interests of everyone, not only for younger generations but also to safeguard what their fathers and uncles built. A concise but important chapter goes through the reforms of recent years in order to learn lessons and good praxis. "Europe was the place where society for the first time turned its back on permanent poverty and stagnation. It did so with ideas of liberty, rationality and improvement. It can do it again."

A more technical work has also just been released by the Stockholm network: "Europe needs saving" It was written by various economists from various countries (one of whom is Italian) and concerns how to use the mother of all reforms, welfare, to obtain necessary savings and investments for the transformation of Europe. Among the authors there is also a representative from the Economist, which is one of the reasons why this brief essay has an important echo. But will Bonino succeed in making her colleague, Cesare Damiano, who numbers pension reform among his tasks, actually read and digest it?