

Charter of the Thomas More Institute

The purpose of the Thomas More Institute is to influence and be present in contemporary cultural, political, social and economic debate, with a view to forwarding the public good through the development of personal responsibility in the framework of a free society and a free economy. As an open and independent European institute of political thought, it wishes to speak with a free and original voice and to be a force generating responsible and innovative proposals.

Founding Principles

I | We assert that every person is of equal dignity, whatever his or her race, religion, convictions, physical condition, age or place in society.

II | We assert that the nation is composed of people linked to each other through time by a common destiny and sense of belonging, who because of this possess both rights and duties and who exercise their freedom by undertaking responsibilities with a view to the public good, unlike individuals who are motivated by independence, personal interests and self-centredness.

III | We assert that the physical, mental and material autonomy of the Person is a fundamental condition of his/her dignity. Each person must be able to live on the fruits of his/her work and ensure the subsistence of his/her family. The role of the State is not to subject those who are in difficulty, but to help them to retrieve their autonomy and only assist them when solidarity within the community fails.

IV | We assert that each person, whatever his status and origin, must abide by the prevailing democratic laws. The law has not to justify individual, personal rights, nor to take into account individual or corporate needs. It is an expression of the will of the people and thus must favour balanced community life by defining limits to our liberties and by protecting the weakest and most vulnerable.

V | We assert that nobody may be accused, tried and condemned in whatever manner if he/she has not committed an act prohibited by law. Any personal accusation or any declaration that does not comply with the secrecy of legal procedure and investigations – and with the right of any accused person to be presumed innocent until proved otherwise – whatever its motive, is contrary to personal human rights.

VI | We assert that the safeguard of freedom requires as much private initiative as possible and as much State as necessary. Every person must be free to do business or to enter into a contract. The vocation of the State is not to replace private initiative but to ensure equality of opportunity and to create favourable conditions for the creation of wealth and the development of the individual person.

VII | We assert that safety and security are the first conditions of freedom and the indispensable condition for the development of the individual person. It is the State's duty to ensure, over the whole of its territory, with no exception, the physical security of people, together with the protection and conservation of their rights and their property.

VIII | We assert that the taxes intended for the funding of public expenditure must be equitably shared among everybody according to their ability to contribute. Each person must be able to verify for him/herself the correct use of public funds and make sure that public contributions and expenditure are not an obstacle to initiatives tending to create wealth and property.

IX | We assert that the right to property is essential to guarantee the autonomy of individuals and promote responsibility. Nobody may be deprived of all or part of his/her property without his/her consent. Expropriation is only possible if – conditional on fair and prior compensation – it is the unique means to protect the public good, if it is effective, does not discourage ownership in others, and is not

contrary to the interests of those that the law is intended to protect.

X | We assert that our democracy needs to be supported by mediating structures that are strong enough for the life of the community to achieve a balance without constant recourse to law. It is for community entities that are closer to the individual person: the family, school, enterprise, associations and local urban authorities, to undertake the pursuit of the public good. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the State is only entitled to intervene when these other community entities are unable to assume their responsibilities alone.

XI | We assert that democracy implies participation of citizens. The condition of their mobilisation is that there should be rules of transparency and right government, which clarify the working of institutions, in particular political parties.

XII | We assert the autonomy of local authorities because they are closer to people and territories. The State must leave to them the responsibilities that they are able to assume, and acknowledge their right to experiment with new, varied and specific solutions. The Nation, in turn, delegates to the European political authority, where it is represented, only the responsibilities that it is unable to exercise alone.

Project

Guarantee the basic liberties of the human person | We want the State to ensure the basic liberties of each and every person, without distinction, from the most powerful to the least powerful, with no discrimination and no privilege. The paramount concern of the State, in this perspective, must be the security of each citizen, allowing him/her to come and go and express him/herself freely, which also means ensuring the access of each individual to a minimum security of the means of existence. The other basic liberties that we want to consolidate are freedom of association, freedom of the press, of teaching and religious practice. In return for each of these liberties, the citizen has duties and obligations to the community, since there is no liberty without responsibility. The family, state and civic duties and obligations of Man, are thus shown as the indispensable corollary of his rights.

Give new life to Democracy | Today, the structures that are supposed to guarantee these liberties are jeopardised. It is essential to conserve a genuine separation of power and to free us from partycentred oligarchies. While we must struggle against “subnationalisms” we must also generalise the principle of subsidiarity in the management of Europe and its nations, provinces, regions and local communities.

Promote free enterprise, quality and creation | The entrepreneur, even more than other workers, is stifled by regulations and fiscal, social and administrative costs. Yet progress results from the creation of new wealth, and from the pursuit of quality in products, services and all human activities and not from an irresponsible redistribution, which changes the citizen into a non-responsible subject. We therefore want every effort to be made to encourage, promote and reward initiative, enterprise, and the untiring quest for quality in every field. In addition, the gradual transformation of what should be just a reasonable and consented contribution to communal needs, into a tax that deprives the worker of his freedom to dispose of the fruits of his labour, has harmful effects on his liberty, his sense of initiative and his responsibility. The citizen is reduced to the state of an individual who has the vague impression of being entitled to everything because he has paid everything in advance. It is, therefore, for ethical as well as economic reasons that we must revolutionise the fiscal system.

Acknowledge universal values and the values of our western civilization | They are: life, the family, the respect due to the weakest, equality in dignity for all, honesty, civic sense, generosity, effort and the quest for quality. These values are indispensable to life in society. All moral systems defend them, but consumerist hedonism obliterates them. These values are engraved in the history and culture of Western Civilisation; the soil in which our roots are sunk. To promote them is also to promote not only our philosophical and religious tradition but also our cultural and artistic heritage, which are the memory of all our values.