



Green Ideas for the Future of Europe

In the Context of Germany's EU Council Presidency

Published by Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union, Brussels

 HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
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Foreword – Taking stock of Germany's EU Council Presidency 2020

Germany's EU Council Presidency faced major challenges given the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic overwhelmed healthcare systems and plunged the world into a deep economic crisis. Ill-coordinated measures and reactions, especially at the beginning of the year, have endangered European cohesion, with the pandemic showing us how fragile the EU is. The German EU Council Presidency had to shift from its original working programme to encouraging Member States to work together in solidarity and to find common ways out of the crisis.

Its main success has been the adoption of the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 (MFF) and the recovery instrument "Next Generation EU" (NGEU) in order to support Member States hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. The moderation of the process has not been an easy task at all. During the negotiations, many fault lines between the governments of the 27 Member States became visible and had to be addressed. It merits respect that a package of 1.8 trillion euros was adopted. Without the joint proposal for an EU recovery instrument, presented by Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel in May 2020, it would have almost certainly been impossible to reach an agreement. The fact that the European Commission, in order to finance the recovery, will borrow from the international capital markets on behalf of the EU (joint debts) and redistribute the money between the Member States is a historic step and would have been unimaginable prior to the pandemic. It has to be stressed that the role of the European Parliament was extremely important in preventing attempts by the European Council to undermine the European Commission's proposals, especially regarding tackling the climate crisis, future-oriented EU funding programmes and safeguarding the rule of law in the EU.

After months of negotiations, the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament agreed on the introduction of a rule of law conditionality. For the first time in the history of the EU, the disbursement of EU funds is linked to compliance with the rule of law, with the aim of combating corruption and illiberal attacks on democracy and fundamental values. The conditionality mechanism, however, is not a panacea. Unfortunately, the Hungarian and Polish governments managed to weaken the original proposal of the European Commission by threatening to veto the MFF and NGEU. Nevertheless, it has to be emphasised that Hungary and Poland were not able to stop the conditionality as such, and despite all justified criticism, the rule of law conditionality is a step in the right direction. It now has to be ensured that the compromise reached during the December 2020 Summit of the European Council will not result in the conditionality's delayed implementation. In hindsight, the German government disappointed by not de-

monstrating leadership on the rule of law, despite declaring this topic a priority back in July 2020. The inaction of the German government during its EU Council Presidency in ongoing Article 7 proceedings against Poland and Hungary was deplorable.

While Germany's EU Council Presidency has officially always spoken in favour of the European Green Deal (EGD), a more detailed analysis shows that it has also stepped on the breaks regarding more ambitious, concrete policy proposals. During its first year, the EGD consisted mainly of non-legislative strategies, but it also included proposals for some binding measures, such as the Climate Law and the Just Transition Fund. The most prominent feature of the former is the updated greenhouse gas emissions reduction target by 2030: from -40 to at least -55 percent. Yet, natural gas was embraced as a transition fuel and Europe's land use and forests were allowed to count toward the emissions reductions. A more progressive move was the exclusion of monies for fossil gas within the Just Transition Fund, which aims at providing the most affected regions with financial and technical assistance.

Germany's official support for the EU Biodiversity Strategy has unfortunately not been followed by coherent actions. The need for more funding to protect and restore ecosystems, as well as a substantial restructuring of payments to farmers, have not been reflected in the German EU Council Presidency. One of the most disappointing aspects is the reform of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), accounting for about one third of the EU budget. Loopholes for the already underfunded eco-schemes, disregard for the Farm-to-Fork and Biodiversity Strategy, and a big majority of the funding still paid per hectare with barely any strings attached, make the agreement between the Council and the European Parliament incompatible with the EGD. The MFF proposals are respectable with regard to an increased spending target on climate, a first ever spending target on biodiversity, and own resources derived from environmental measures, such as a tax on unrecycled plastic, an extension of the EU's Emission Trading System (ETS) and a carbon border adjustment mechanism. Nevertheless, this success can be attributed to efforts stemming from the European Parliament rather than the German EU Council Presidency.

The long-awaited New EU Pact on Migration and Asylum was published in September 2020. In practice, the proposal on the table does not mean an end to the dysfunctional Dublin regulation, but a continuation, and even an intensification, of it. It keeps a major focus on the externalisation of the EU's responsibilities and external borders management. Since 2015, the question of how to organise a fair distribution of asylum seekers within the EU has caused serious conflicts. The European Commission's vision of "flexible solidarity", and especially its concept of the so-called "return sponsorships", are unfortunately an absolute boon for governments that have been trying to block all solidarity-based approaches for years, and who refuse to receive and welcome any refugees at all. Additionally, the European Commission is not planning to resume EU sea rescue operations in the Mediterranean. The German EU Council Presidency's plan to achieve an agreement between all Member States on the Pact's major lines by the end of 2020 failed.

After the US Elections in November 2020, EU institutions are hoping for a fresh start to transatlantic relations based on trust and predictability. Germany's EU Council Presidency, however, did not succeed in advancing the internal discussions on what future role the EU would like to play in order to strengthen multilateral cooperation, structures and organisations. The negotiations on the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) were finalised by the end 2020. Members of the European Parliament and civil society organisations raised concerns about the risk of weak environmental and climate commitments and the non-compliance with human rights. In addition, it is very questionable whether or not the CAI helps to tackle the challenge of a unified approach to dealing with China. There has been no significant progress regarding the EU's comprehensive strategy towards Africa but at least the Post-Cotonou negotiations have resumed with a political agreement.

In December 2020, the EU Foreign Ministers adopted the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, which allows targeted sanctions against individuals who breach human rights independently of their geographical location. The EU now has a toolbox at hand to react to human rights violations. It has to be mentioned though that the sanctions can only be adopted unanimously, which gives single EU Member States the possibility to veto the decision, whereas a qualified majority vote would have allowed for efficient and faster decision-making in this regard. The Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) as a tool for the EU's external action for democracy support and other priorities has finally found a political agreement between the European Parliament and the Council. While it does send a positive signal to the world that the EU remains committed to its role as actor of democracy support and human rights defense, it is alarming that the final sum allocated to the NDICI is considerably lower (almost 20%) than what the European Commission has initially proposed.

Digital transformation was a priority of Germany's EU Council Presidency in order to strengthen the EU's digital sovereignty and competitiveness. EU's efforts in the fight against online disinformation and misinformation were consolidated by promoting discussions on the European Democracy Action Plan and the Digital Services Act, both of which were released in December 2020. However, no progress was made on the ePrivacy Regulation, an important regulatory reform complementing the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and a compromise proposal during the German EU Council Presidency was rejected. EU Member States are once again putting ePrivacy off to the long term, leaving the door open for current practices that endanger citizens' rights. A resolution proposed by the German EU Council Presidency on access to encrypted messages calls for a uniform legal framework for the first time. Although no legal steps have yet been taken, this shows that digital rights such as the confidentiality of communications are being disregarded.

Regarding Brexit, the EU and the UK agreed on a deal just days before the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020. While the true impact of the deal remains to be seen, it should be highlighted that the EU did not cross its red lines and protected the

integrity of the single market, as well as the level playing field. However, many questions remain open and only time will tell how the post-Brexit dynamic will develop.

In conclusion, the German EU Council Presidency focused on crisis management rather than on political visions for the future of the European project. However, the EU is in urgent need of future-oriented ideas, particularly in the context of the impacts of the pandemic.

The project “Green Ideas for the Future of Europe” has explored Green proposals and initiatives on the European Green Deal, the future of the EU and the role of the EU in the world. Through 20 conversations with Green decision makers and civil society actors, held prior to Germany’s EU Council Presidency, the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung has striven to contribute to a profound debate about the consequences of the pandemic. The insights are synthesised into policy recommendations, and since the ideas and recommendations are still relevant, we have decided to publish all contributions in this volume.

We would like to thank all interviewers and interviewees for their valuable input and hope that their ideas will continue contributing to a fruitful discussion about the opportunities and challenges ahead of us.

Brussels, December 2020

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1. Introduction – European Responses to Multiple Crises

Eva van de Rakt

The way the Covid-19 pandemic has been dealt with has raised many questions for the future of the European project. How have the EU institutions and Member States managed the crisis so far? What challenges will coincide with the German EU Council Presidency in terms of crisis management and the future of the EU?



The director of our Brussels office, Eva van de Rakt, talked to Green MEPs Ska Keller and Sven Giegold, the Director of the German Council on Foreign Relations, Dr. Daniela Schwarzer, and Michael Peters, financial markets expert for Finance Watch Germany, on the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the role of the European institutions and the challenges for the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Eva van de Rakt: The way the Covid-19 pandemic has been dealt with has raised many questions for the future of the European project. How would you assess the way the EU institutions and Member States have managed the crisis so far? What do you think this has shown?

Ska Keller: Especially in the beginning, there was no European coordination, which is understandable to an extent, as public health measures are a matter of national competence. Unfortunately, we ended up with a mishmash of different national measures, borders being closed with no coordination. Within the EU, export bans were placed on medical materials, including from Germany to Italy, which was ridiculous given that these items were desperately needed in Italy. The European Commission tried to coordinate things a little, but without much success. This has improved a little in the meantime. Still, although there has been more talk of European coordination, for instance in the tourism sector, the Member States are continuing to do as they please. In the current phase, that of recovery, the European Union will naturally return to the foreground. I was concerned that it would not be possible to offer a strong European response, but I have to say that the European Commission's proposed recovery plan is a very important step in the right direction, even though it is obviously not green politics in its purest form.

Daniela Schwarzer: The national reactions when dealing with the first phase of the public health crisis clearly showed that if European integration is not complete, it does not hold water. Politically, I found it alarming that there was absolutely no political framing in the first weeks of the crisis. A number of cities and regions were really struggling, which received far too little recognition at European level. A further lesson learned is how quickly the single market folds. And if everybody focuses solely on securing protection for their own countries, it appears that other political objectives are forgotten. When export controls on the EU external borders were introduced, there was no thought for the Western Balkans and the states of the Eastern Partnership. This shows the inconsistency of politics, which I by no means impute to ill will, but to a certain thoughtlessness in crisis management. But there is an enormous amount to be learnt from this, so that in similar situations in the future, the challenges are viewed more holistically.

Michael Peters: The EU institutions were unfortunately fairly quiet for a long time – apart from the European Central Bank (ECB), which actually averted a worse outcome through its proactivity, which has so far avoided a financial crisis. This was very important, but is a problem in itself, because the Central Bank props up a financial system that was already unstable and is in need of in-depth reform.

Sven Giegold: On the one hand, the crisis showed us that people expect comprehensive answers from Europe. Basically, they have expectations of the EU in the same way they do of a nation state, although we do not yet have a European Republic. As Ska said, there are no competences in the field of healthcare at European level. In Germany, we are now in favour of distributing refugees by quota – but there was no distribution of the sick by quota. As we did not want to take the risk of a worst-case scenario exceeding our capacities, only very few patients were admitted to hospitals with intensive care beds available, and even then, it was very late in the day. That did, admittedly, belatedly save Germany's reputation, but we could have done things much better, in other words with shared competence – not only in the field of health, but also in the framework of a functioning single market. And last but not least, also through financial solidarity. As Michael said, the only institution that really managed to make a decision without major delays was the ECB, which had to prevent the break-up of the euro once again.

How does the coronavirus crisis differ from other crises, from a political and economic point of view? What consequences should we expect?

Sven Giegold: One major difference is that we are so strongly in the grip of a virus. We still do not know what the course of this crisis will be, how bad it will be, and what it will mean financially. The uncertainty is far greater than with the climate crisis, for instance – that is a major difference.

Daniela Schwarzer: I would also like to raise the issue of uncertainty and unpredictability. Obviously, there have been other pandemics before, but we have never experienced one that has spread so far across the planet and will unquestionably cause even more enormous upheavals in our neighbourhood. In the second half of 2020, the crisis will continue during a phase of political, social and socio-economic fragility within the EU. At the same time, we are seeing how the crisis is exacerbating global trends: the polarisation between the USA and China, the power grab by authoritarian regimes and the decoupling of the global economies. Additionally, the crisis coincides with many fundamental transformation tasks to be faced, concerning digitalisation as well as the future of employment, forms of participation and employment models. The great danger is that this crisis will weaken our ability to deal with this situation politically and push forward the transformation.

Michael Peters: From an economic point of view, this is the worst simultaneous supply and demand shock we have ever seen. In terms of predicting what happens next, we

cannot assume a classic recovery scenario in a U or V shape. I think that we should expect waves that will hit different regions at different times, depending on outbreaks and spreads of the virus. Some Member States are less affected than others. And there are enormous differences between sectors: tourism has taken a particularly hard hit, but fully digital business models less so. Against this backdrop, a reflection is needed as to how transformation can be implemented in the long term, precisely because the circumstances will constantly change.

Ska Keller: As we have mainly talked about the negative aspects, I would like to raise a few positive ones: this crisis has caused us to reflect on existential matters far more than any other crisis. It has led to an intensive reflection and also accelerated transformation processes. There are new possibilities for participation. Many more people can take part in webinars than can congregate physically in the same place. Also worthy of mention is the value we place on work done within a society, particularly in the fields of education and caring. This new way of measuring value has a positive side. However, whether we go on to make something positive of it in the future remains to be seen.

As an immediate response to the crisis, the EU has put together a package of immediate aid measures with an envelope of more than half a billion euros to support workers, businesses and economies. From 1 June, the EU Member States have access to 240 billion euros under the credit lines of the European Stability Mechanism, 200 billion in bailout loans from the European Investment Bank and 100 billion under the EU unemployment insurance scheme, SURE. At the end of May, the European Commission also tabled a proposal for a European recovery plan¹, aiming to put the European Green Deal at front and centre. The proposal includes the new recovery instrument Ska has already referred to, the “Next Generation EU”, with an envelope of 750 billion euros, and the redesigned EU budget, the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), with a volume of 1.100 billion euros from 2021 to 2027. What is your opinion of these measures and proposals?

Daniela Schwarzer: First of all, it is very positive that these measures have been set in train so quickly. I feel that this is one of the major lessons learnt from the state indebtedness and banking crisis of the 2010s: the longer you wait, the more it costs to rescue it. The political mechanisms were triggered more quickly, despite the initial spats within the Eurogroup and the European Council. The support approach of three pillars – states, businesses and, finally, citizens – is a positive aspect. As for the recovery fund, I consider the large volume set out in the European Commission’s proposal very important. A few years ago, it would have been absolutely unthinkable to go into negotiations with that kind of figure. I also support the fact that the Franco-German proposal and the European Commission proposal both include loans and grants. Germany has changed its stance. As regards the funding side, I believe that we could be seeing the start of a much more far-reaching discussion. It is right to urge the European Commission to borrow on the markets and thus bring its triple-A rating to bear, which will keep the financing

costs down. At some point, however, the question of the length of the repayment term will need to be tackled. Where the money comes from is, in my opinion, also a question best answered through European instruments, specifically taxes. On the revenue side, the transformation agenda can be very easily combined with the need for financing: by means of a CO2 border tax, a plastic tax and a digital tax. This would really take Europe forwards, also because the question of democratic legitimacy is raising its head again and one could also consider the role of the European Parliament. I have also observed that people underestimate how urgently money will be needed, as early as the autumn. But if the crisis grows worse, it will be harder than ever to reach political agreement.

Sven Giegold: My view of the first package is very different. I consider that the economic value of this package is much, much lower. The calculations clearly show that although liquidity has been provided symbolically, there is no solidarity. For instance, if Italy makes full use of all three instruments, the impact would be 0.08% of gross domestic product. The whole thing is little more than a public relations exercise. Dialectically, however, it was the objective weakness of this first package that made Merkel and Macron's strong reaction to it possible and necessary. After all, everybody knows that you cannot help the unemployed, people living in poverty or a broken health care system with 0.08% of GDP and this was a moment of truth. On top of this, the ECB ruling of the German Constitutional Court also had a retrospective dialectic effect – although I think it is questionable in terms of European law. Because if monetary policy is blocked by Germany, Germany cannot also block fiscal policy – as a result taboos were broken. I have spent 20 years getting angry about taboos at various events in questions of liability union, debt union, EU tax and transfer union. The Merkel-Macron proposal at least weakened all these taboos, now there are only rearguard actions, acting as if the taboos had not been broken at all. However, the CSU will certainly no longer be able to run an EU election campaign on a “no EU tax” pledge. The argument in favour of maintaining the taboo of debt union will be that this is an exception. And as for the third major taboo of a transfer union, here we have really overcome an ideological blockade and won a victory for common sense. I believe that it will be a challenge for the Greens to bring these victories of discourse home as well.

Michael Peters: It is vital that joint EU borrowing succeeds. A very important part of this will be structuring the debt repayment over a long enough term to avoid restricting the financial wiggle room of the Member States. In my opinion, the real merit of the Commission's proposal is that it suggests greater integration. Through joint borrowing, the EU is also acquiring safe assets comparable to US government bonds, from which it would profit greatly. I have another point to make: in the framework of the Green Deal, there are discussions on sustainability and digitalisation. Here we should make open source software mandatory for public funding, as it allows public money to be put to a particularly efficient and sustainable use. One of the EU's strengths is that it sets stan-

dards and attaches rules to the distribution of resources, such as not allowing companies that receive public support to pay dividends or bonuses to managers.

Ska Keller: The European Commission's recovery plan is really a great step forwards. Obviously, though, it is not without problems. I would like to refer to the rule of law question, in other words whether Viktor Orbán will also have access to the pot. Such a conditionality is a very important question to us Greens. We are calling for a requirement for the resources to be spent on the Green transformation. But the Frugal Four are talking about requiring the money to be spent in accordance with the infamous austerity rules. We still have a major battle ahead of us there. I think the proposal is excellent progress and not to be underestimated. I only hope that ultimately, we will end up with major progress and not with complete failure – what's the expression? Start out a tiger, end up a fireside rug. I think it is far too early to know how well it will turn out. For one thing, there will be disagreements over the volume. For another, there will be clashes over the instruments, in other words whether and to what extent the resources should be distributed in the forms of loans and grants. A further stumbling block will be what the money can be spent on and what conditions are attached to it. Who gets the money and for what? What will the rules be? What own resources will it be paid back from? All these questions are fraught with conflict and it will therefore lead to a wide range of extremely interesting political configurations.

Daniela Schwarzer: The figures Sven gave are obviously very impressive. I think that in the first phase, it was politically impossible to do anything more, which does not excuse the fact that the volume is ultimately far too low. On the subject of conditionality, I would like to say that in the second half of 2020 there will be a virtually unique political opportunity to take a tough negotiation stance with regard to the Multiannual Financial Framework and recovery fund, particularly on the rule of law and democracy. And we must not forget that economic competition and a rivalry between systems are raging all around us. We must also bear in mind that we will no doubt come out of the crisis weaker if we do not take a great step forwards. What I mean is that we need to link the internal transformation agenda to an external political agenda, in the field of climate protection, but also in digital matters.

Sven Giegold: Exactly; if you have major money to spend, you need to solve major problems with it. Something needs to happen on climate protection, biodiversity and the rule of law and this money must not just end up being spent on jobs for the boys again. It really needs to be spent on tackling big problems. However, we are not the only players in the game; there are other parties trying to bring their conditionality into the debate. One major danger I foresee is trying to make the paper tiger of the European Semester² into an actual little lion. I am in favour of coordinating economic policy in the framework of the European Semester, but this must be on a parliamentary basis rather than a committee of expertocrats. I would like the European Parliament to have proper co-decision on the Semester and for the national parliaments to join the discussions.

Michael has already talked about the mandate of the ECB, Sven mentioned the ruling of the German Constitutional Court. I would like to return to this issue and ask your views on the role and measures of the ECB.

Michael Peters: I am not a major fan of the fact that the majority of the crisis-fighting had to be done by the ECB – but it was necessary to prevent the financial sector from collapsing. The ECB secured the entire financial sector – just as it did during the euro crisis of 2012. However, the problem is that this does not lead to a financial system with long-term stability, because it prevents any transformation in this field. The ruling of the German Constitutional Court is based on an assumption that it is possible to separate monetary and fiscal policy. It states that what the ECB does has gone beyond monetary policy and the ECB has therefore exceeded its mandate. How I would put it is that the ECB's mandate is no longer fit for purpose – a long-term approach to the issue is needed. Another point I would make is that future climate risks were not taken into account at all in the corporate bonds bought up by the ECB during the coronavirus crisis. If the European Commission is committed to climate protection, the ECB must be likewise. What worries me most is a further exacerbation of the financial crisis. If you keep saying, the ECB and its money-printing machine will solve everything, it will lead to another situation in the financial sector in which risks, i.e. losses, are socialised and profits privatised. That is why we need a public debate on the mandate of the ECB.

Daniela Schwarzer: The pattern of the last decade is that we have a federal institution, the European Central Bank, that is willing and able to act in crisis situations and protects the European public good, i.e. the euro and financial stability. Its responsibilities have increased exponentially in recent years. The ruling of the German Constitutional Court made it clear that the model of monetary policy that comes about if the Member States are not willing or able to take action on budgetary policy measures is reaching its limits and this raises questions about the functionality of the Eurozone. You also have to consider from a macro-economic perspective how a good interplay between European monetary policy and European budgetary policy is possible. It is not news that we need an in-depth debate in this context and a lot of the groundwork has already been done, not just by scientists and think tanks, but also in the Five Presidents' Report³. The shortcomings have been identified but no major political steps have been taken, because it is obviously much easier to let the monetary policy do its thing and avoid asking questions about contractual law and having to think about how to achieve a democratically legitimate political deepening of the Eurozone.

Sven Giegold: My view is that the argument of the German Constitutional Court is economically outdated, as it assumes a division of monetary and economic policy. However, the court also hit a nerve, which is that the ECB did not do its job voluntarily. Time and time again it acted out of sheer necessity as the last person standing, to ensure the stabilisation for which nobody is willing to pay the democratic price it would have cost: in certain countries, this price would have been reforms and in others, the willingness to

show solidarity. There is no Central Bank anywhere in the world that has as much power as the ECB. For that reason, I am a big fan of legal checks and balances and reject the argument that this would limit the independence of the Central Bank. Obviously, though, these checks and balances would have to be carried out sensibly – part of this is that the national supreme courts would not be able to pass judgement on the ECB, as that is the job of the European Court of Justice. As the European Parliament we should also be asking how effective our own checks and balances actually were. Unlike the Bundesbank, the ECB is accountable to the European Parliament. Reading the ruling, there are many arguments that I have never heard in dialogues on monetary policy and we need to approach that self-critically as well. This is why I have made the case for discussing reforms on controls within the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs.

You have all stressed the fact that this crisis has thrown up many uncertainties. On 1 July, Germany assumes the Presidency of the Council of the EU for six months. What opportunities and challenges will coincide with the German EU Council Presidency in terms of crisis management and the future of the EU? What could and should the German government's objectives be?

Ska Keller: The opportunities for the German Presidency of the EU Council are enormous, but so are the risks. EU Council Presidencies always set strongly-worded priorities and end up having to do what is on the agenda. It is no different for the German Presidency. Now, it is all about recovery, recovery, recovery. Obviously, Germany will have a huge role and a very important one, but this would also be the case if Germany were not holding the Presidency of the EU Council. What I hope will come from the Presidency is that Germany will not skulk in the corner with the naysayers but act as an intermediary, an honest broker, that it really tries to strike a balance and find compromises. The German government has not been at all good at that in recent years, it has acted as a brake. This is why it is a real opportunity that it is Germany of all countries taking the Presidency at such an important time. I hope that this will be a plus point in terms of recovery.

Daniela Schwarzer: The "honest broker" aspect is very important, but at the same time Germany needs to show that it is prepared for conflict. It would be absolutely the wrong attitude to come across as too friendly and thus too defensive on certain matters, particularly the rule of law, democracy and climate issues. Now is the time to set the course for the next few years. This concerns spending policy, but also a return to certain basic principles in our action, as well as our model for the future. It will come down to taking a clear and strong stance in all matters involving the basic values of the European Union. While it holds the Presidency, Germany can make a major contribution to this. Obviously, it cannot do so alone, success ultimately requires all 27 Member States on board.

Michael Peters: I hope that Germany is honest in communicating the benefits it actually derives from the EU. As a member of the Eurozone, we export an enormous amount within the Eurozone. This fact gets far too little airtime in public discourse in Germany. The advantages can also be used as a counterpoint in discussions with the so-called Frugal Four. The debate has been so shallow and so acrimonious in many countries and more should be said about the economic benefits of the European Union, particularly in Germany.

Sven Giegold: I predict the following danger for Germany's European policy: the somewhat narrow-minded, national conservative wing of the CDU/CSU has had an enormous amount to swallow. My fear with the Green Deal is that once it really comes down to discussing things like the severity of the rules, the consequence of upping the targets, everybody will suddenly decide that it's no longer reasonable. The two major jobs of the EU Council Presidency will be the Multiannual Financial Framework and the Green Deal and I worry that the relevant parts of the Green Deal will be sacrificed. This can already be seen in Germany's position on the Common Agriculture Policy, which is frankly an embarrassment. But to end on a positive note, what I am really pleased about is that there are now two things linked to the MFF and the EU Council Presidency that could not have been foreseen. Firstly, the fact that the matters of joint taxes, the end of tax dumping and joint borrowing have been put on the agenda. They also appear in the Merkel-Macron proposal. I hear from the European Commission that Germany is really piling on the pressure in this context. That is not something that could have been predicted and Olaf Scholz is playing a positive role in this. Secondly, the Conference on the Future of Europe will be organised seriously and with specific targets in mind, which is very important for Europe. Europe's capacity for action, internally and externally, is so important and changes in the institutional framework are absolutely vital.

Ska, Daniela, Michael and Sven, thank you very much for the discussion.

The conversation took place on 3 June 2020.



Sven Giegold

Sven Giegold, MEP from North-Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, is spokesperson for the German Greens in the European Parliament and coordinator of the Greens/EFA group in the ECON (Economic and Monetary Affairs) Committee. As a graduate political economist, Sven has been active in the environmental movement and altermondialism for more than 20 years. He is a member of the executive committee of the German Evangelical Church Assembly.



Ska Keller

Ska Keller has been co-president of the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament since December 2016. In 2009 she was elected to the EP at the age of 27. Ska was the European Greens' front runner in the 2014 and 2019 European elections and in 2019 also ran as the German Greens' Spitzenkandidatin. In this capacity, she led the Greens to their most successful result to date. In July 2019, she was re-elected co-president of the Greens/EFA Group.



Michael Peters

Michael studied economics (M.Sc. Public Economics) and works as a financial markets expert at Bürgerbewegung Finanzwende (Finance Watch Germany). There he is particularly concerned with questions of financial market stability, i.e. the regulation of banks, shadow banks and the monetary policy of central banks. He also deals with the question of how to develop transformative policy proposals in light of the financial and climate crisis.



Dr. Daniela Schwarzer

Dr. Daniela Schwarzer is director of DGAP. Previously, she was a member of the executive team of the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), serving as its senior director of research, as well as heading its Berlin office and Europe programme. Prior to her work at GMF, Schwarzer spent eight years at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), where she led its research group on European integration from 2008 to 2013.



Eva van de Rakt

Eva van de Rakt has been Director of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung's European Union Office in Brussels since 2019, having worked for the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung since 2001. As Director of the Prague Office, she was responsible for the Foundation's activities in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary from 2004 until 2018. She was a Member of the Board of Directors at the Green European Foundation from 2014 until 2016, and is currently a Member of its General Assembly. She has been a Member of the Board of Directors of the Czech-German Fund for the Future (Deutsch-Tschechischer Zukunftsfonds) since 2018. She is a graduate of the University of Music and Theatre in Rotterdam.



2. The European Green Deal

2.1. Reform of EU Agriculture Policy and Biodiversity Protection

Dr. Christine Chemnitz

How will the plans for the European Green Deal alter European agriculture policy? What needs to happen for Europe to pursue climate- and biodiversity-friendly agriculture that creates a rural landscape that people want to live in? And what is the role of diets and trade in all this?



Martin Häusling, Member of the European Parliament Greens/EFA and Hannes Lorenzen, President of ARC2020, in a conversation with Dr. Christine Chemnitz, Head of International Agricultural Policy Division, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Berlin

Dr. Christine Chemnitz: Do you get the feeling that discussions of the reform of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) have changed since the Biodiversity and Farm to Fork Strategies were put on the table in the framework of the Green Deal? Has the debate taken a more critical turn once again? Are there any new aspects?

Martin Häusling: Yes, I have to say that I was surprised by the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies and by the Green Deal. It could almost have been a Green manifesto. However, it lacks specific implementation concepts. For instance, it does not explain how the European Commission plans to cut pesticide use by 50% or put 30% of land and sea areas under protection in the next few years. What annoys me is the fact that the European Commission mainly just refers to the Member States and their so-called strategic plans. The instruments are still not there, though.

Among many farmers, but also among many MEPs in the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, the prevailing mentality is still that “we are already struggling and now they want to impose new requirements on us, we are going to need more money”. The situation in the EU Council is no different from that in the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development – first and foremost, it is about securing the money. A few Member States might go along with it, but I am not confident that the ones that have blocked all reforms for years are now going to implement the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies.

Does that mean there are more grounds for concern than for hope that the Member States will take on an entirely new and much more important role?

Hannes Lorenzen: I share Martin’s concerns that the forces of inertia continue to be extremely significant within the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Parliament, the EU Council, but also in the Member States. Renationalisation can be grounds for both hope and concern at the same time.

On the one hand, there is no clear, binding European framework to bring the Green Deal, Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategy under the same umbrella. As the new strategic plans are being set out, a lot of the old system is being retained. As has been the case in many of its reforms, the European Commission has accurately sketched out all the problems that have to be dealt with. But unfortunately, that results in quite little, because of the resistance from the proponents of pushing on with this industrialisation of agriculture.

On the other hand, there is more flexibility for the Member States to decide how the next CAP should look. Possibly the Covid crisis and the additional funding for Member States, which now have more options open to them, will prompt them to take a closer look at what they can do with it, in view of the challenges. That is also what we are doing at ARC2020⁴ with our analysis of the national strategic plans being developed. With Farm to Fork, the Green Deal and the Biodiversity Strategy, this debate now has a new basis – it is certainly not concrete enough, but it's a start.

What do you see as the most important things that now need to happen to make the CAP climate and biodiversity-friendly and create a liveable rural space?

Hannes Lorenzen: A thorough restructuring of the support systems is absolutely vital. At the moment, support is based predominantly on size or number of hectares and benefits the big farms. Basically, they are investing public money in an agriculture of the past. Support should be tied to other objectives, such as supporting biodiversity or binding CO₂.

We also need an adequate infrastructure to make it all possible. There has been a division of labour for a long time now: the USA and Brazil produce soy for our meat products and we grow more cereals and almost no protein. We need to achieve a sensible balance between crops and livestock, otherwise we cannot resolve all the problems with intensive animal rearing. Crop rotation systems need to be possible, the seeds for this must be available, the farmers must have the option to produce their own fodder (...). There should also be a new decentralisation in marketing, processing and slaughtering, allowing the farmers to make a decent living. And the money from the recovery plan must no longer be distributed according to farm size. It must be channelled into this **infrastructure reform.**

Martin Häusling: The crisis offers the opportunity to rethink existing structures. What is happening in the meat industry in Germany right now has been a great shock to many. I hope that these fears do not go away just yet. I don't want it to be like it was with BSE, when a point was reached when people stopped being worried and it was back to business as usual.

I am critical of the environmental performance in the first pillar. This is optional for farmers. Most money is going into the least-favoured regions, which already have environmental programmes, and not into the ones with more intensive agriculture, which are in more desperate need of greater biodiversity support and more regional structures for processing and trade. We need a strong element of conditionality in the CAP so that everybody complies with the minimum environmental requirements, but even that is highly contentious.

I agree with Hannes that the dependency on soy is critical. Ultimately, we need European protein strategy plans. European agriculture policy is still geared towards export,

particularly of meat and milk, and towards a globalised agricultural industry. We are still talking about trade deals, for instance with Mercosur, that do nothing to change this. The strategic direction needs to be fundamentally different, as this would necessarily bring us different results.

A lot of fault has been found with much of it for a long time already. Reforms have failed time and again. Where is the greatest leverage to introduce demands for greater conditionality and a completely different focus?

Martin Häusling: My hope is that we have a European Commission that is also calling for these things. A European Commission that does not just make attractive proposals, but also gets down to the nuts and bolts of implementation. Responsibility cannot just be foisted onto the Member States. The countries could be given more scope, but not without clear and specific social and environmental requirements. Time is of the essence; we cannot afford any more years of inertia.

Hannes, what aspects of the discussions of the national strategy plans in the Member States do you find hopeful? I get the impression that civil society is ahead of politics, in Germany at least.

Hannes Lorenzen: I don't think hoping for anything is of much use any more. I have been observing attempts at reform for 35 years and I have come to the conclusion that the CAP is no longer capable of reform. My hopes are for something new. Between environment and agriculture, the entire rural area is of the greatest interest in terms of development potential in the Covid crisis. Will it give rise to a food policy enabling an entirely different form of cooperation between farmers and consumers, in other words completely different structures, fair prices through quality? Is there a new, comprehensive concept for rural development? NGOs, alternative farmers' associations and consumers must now all speak with one voice. The Greens have an important role to play here, particularly as they have just won so much support in France.

Martin Häusling: But everybody needs to get on board, including all Greens in positions of responsibility in the federal states in Germany. There is still room for improvement in the CAP, for instance via the Bundesrat. Civil society groups must also start to increase the scope of their arguments. People need to consider the bigger picture, rather than just their own particular interests. Animal welfare, for instance, can only work in the long term if rearing, keeping AND marketing are gradually reformed and the products are priced honestly, it's all connected.

But to do this, an action plan is needed. Treating the symptoms is not enough. One major criterion in this must be whether a means of production hinders or supports ecosystem services. Distinctions need to be drawn. Take cattle, for instance: if they eat imported fodder, that is a disaster for the climate, but if they are allowed to graze on pastureland, that is active climate protection. We need a campaign that is based on all the central requirements.

To finish off, let us return to the recovery plan and the extra 15 billion euros. How can we make sure that this money is now spent wisely?

Hannes Lorenzen: The Member States must now apply something in their strategic plans that they previously only had to do under the second pillar. They cannot just spend money, they must plan how they spend it. And they need to justify why they choose to do one thing or the other with the money. That is fundamental. The recovery plan can help to save livelihoods and we must make sure that we are bringing them into a long-term, sustainable future. We have to keep people in farming, so that they can bring farming to the fore in the subjects of the environment, social affairs and food quality. I believe this is the banner we should be marching under, as Greens in particular.

Martin, a final question to you as well, as this is something you have already mentioned. It is about rooting European agriculture in a global agricultural trade. It is difficult to push change towards greater quality, because of the need to compete globally. What needs to happen for the EU to go down this path at all? Specifically, what is your view of the carbon tax? Or the Mercosur deal?

Martin Häusling: We Greens have been accused of protectionism in the field of agriculture. This is simply not true. We want qualified market access and that needs to happen in compliance with European standards. The fact that the European Commission itself wants to put a CO₂ tax, as I would call it, on the borders, is an opportunity for a different kind of agricultural policy, but only a step towards it. We cannot impose new requirements on our farmers while telling others that they can supply whatever they like and however they like. That would be the first point on which I would say there is a real opportunity for a fresh start for agriculture.

One very interesting lesson we have learned from the crisis is that those that have suffered the most are the ones that are reliant on export. Those who have invested in more regional structures have basically come out of the crisis unscathed. Storage of products, large-scale dairy companies, meat storage and others have received funding again. We need to finally realise that the sectors that have been the worst hit by the crisis are the ones that produce standardised industrial commodities for the global market. We need to develop the small and medium-sized regional structures. If we use the recovery plan to invest in these structures, then we will have done the right thing. We have an enormous opportunity here.

Thank you very much.

The conversation took place on 9 July 2020.



Dr. Christine Chemnitz

Dr. Christine Chemnitz has headed the Department International Agriculture Policy at the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung since 2007. Her work addresses various topics of sustainable and equitable agricultural production and consumption patterns with a main focus on sustainable soil management and global livestock production. One of the flagship publications of the department is the "Meat Atlas", which addresses the social and ecological impacts of industrial meat production. Christine Chemnitz studied agricultural economics in Göttingen and Berlin and received her PhD at the Humboldt University in Berlin.



Martin Häusling

Martin Häusling, born in 1961, is an agricultural engineer from Hessen, Germany. His family-managed farm has operated according to organic standards since 1988. Martin Häusling was Member of the Parliament in Hessen from 2003-2009 and served as spokesperson for agriculture, Europe, consumer protection, rural areas and GMOs. He was elected to the European Parliament in 2009, where he is a member of the Agricultural Committee (AGRI) and the Environmental Committee (ENVI). He also serves as agricultural spokesperson for the Greens/EFA.



Hannes Lorenzen

Hannes Lorenzen was senior adviser to the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Parliament in Brussels and Strasbourg from 1985 to 2019. Before starting his career in the European institutions, he carried out research, coordination and evaluation work on rural development projects with the Technical Service of the German Government.



2. The European Green Deal

2.2. The European Green Deal and Digitalisation

Martin Keim

Will the EU witness a Digital Green Deal? The strengths and weaknesses of the digital age have become more apparent over the course of the pandemic, but how can policy makers address these challenges and interlink them with a comprehensive and ambitious ecological approach?



Henrike Hahn, Member of the European Parliament for the Greens/EFA, Bas Eickhout, Member of the European Parliament for the Greens/EFA and Céline Göhlich, Everyone Energy e.V., in a conversation with Martin Keim, Head of European Energy Transition Programme, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union.

Martin Keim: Welcome, everyone, and thank you for joining the conversation. The first question goes to Henrike and Bas. We are in a quite particular and difficult situation right now because of the coronavirus pandemic, so in what way did this situation change the way policy makers actually go about their daily business? Has the way they interact and implement laws changed, and what changes are implied for the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament?

Henrike Hahn: Thank you for this question. Yes, of course it has changed a lot. Our life is in front of screens for the whole day now, so the time we spend with our colleagues is now in hours of video conferences. It's spent in committee work and meetings instead of discussing and looking at each other while we talk about amendments; we now have to find a way to communicate with each other, to find compromises in a very different atmosphere because we aren't meeting in person.

But I think it also opens up possibilities for us to have a broader perspective on what is possible via digitalisation. For example, now we are not on trains all the time. I believe we need to think about our working procedures in general, so let's see what happens. We are doing our best, but I am looking forward to seeing my colleagues in person again and to being efficient in the European Parliament building itself. Also on a legislative level, because when we are in the European Parliament we can watch and observe what the European Commission is doing.

Bas, would you like to jump in on that one?

Bas Eickhout: Yes, very briefly because it's comparable to what Henrike said. My daily life totally changed; it is almost all now spent in front of the computer, but it's a mixed bag as to whether it is good or not.

For me, the most positive side is that you are now thinking more of organising meetings where everyone can join in from all over Europe, or globally. For example, recently we had a climate core discussion with a minister from Sweden, whereas in the old days you had to wait until the minister came to Brussels.

It really gives you many more opportunities to talk with each other, but the real negative side is also what Henrike said. I mean, politics is a contact sport. You need the corri-

dors. You need to talk with each other. You need the moments where you are going to sit with someone and you really need to feel what someone means instead of just hearing what someone says. And this current setting is always more formal. There is no kind of informal way to chat through Zoom. Therefore, it's more difficult to have an informal exchange of ideas and I think that makes politics much more difficult.

What I take from that is that the informal side of politics is severely endangered by the digital means of working, but the more structured way of doing things allows us to actually have a benefit from this new situation as an organisational advantage. I would like to ask Céline to talk about how design matters and how policy design can also be changed in a way that allows us to be more efficient, and since we are talking about digitalisation today, I would also like to bring in European energy. What are the right policy design principles, if we are looking at the European Green Deal and more particularly at the European energy transition?

Céline Göhlich: Thank you. In the last project I worked on, we consulted various experts exploring guiding principles for the energy transition ahead, which we published in a policy brief in February this year. We observe that countries across Europe are facing similar transformation challenges regarding the energy transition, such as decarbonisation, digitalisation and decentralisation of our energy system.

While most experts agree that the technologies to shape these transformation processes are all available, we still observe that we are struggling to design an energy transition in line with our ambitious climate goals. Why is that so? One bottleneck that we identified was that we need a paradigm shift. Thus, we formulated policy principles which could help to bring forward this shift.

For example, with the deployment of decentralised energy resources, we need to adopt a bottom-up logic alongside the existing top-down logic in the energy system. What we call the principle of subsidiarity means we need to empower people to actively participate in and benefit from the transition at small scales - not only as consumers, but also as producers of renewable energy. Thereby little "units", be it local communities or city districts, could drive energy transition from below and organise the process of producing, storing or selling energy locally to the extent they want. Larger renewable power plants and the grid are still relevant in such a system, especially to cover industrial demands, but they also hop in when self-organised small-scale units cannot fulfil their energy needs.

An energy system that is guided by this principle of subsidiary, which encourages bottom-up transformation, also brings advantages for sector coupling and by democratising the energy transition, it can increase social acceptance. Digitalisation is essential here, as it is crucial to deal with the level of complexity and to coordinate the granularity of a decentralised system.

Of course, there still are multiple challenges regarding the energy transition, especially regarding grid stability and security of supply. But in light of the urgency of the climate crisis, I think we need to come up with a new logic as to how we understand and shape our energy system.

I think this was quite helpful, you mentioned a couple of things that we are going to touch upon later, which is sector integration or sector coupling, the question of how to integrate different areas of energy, namely mobility, energy, heating. But before going on to that I would like to hear a first reaction from Bas and Henrike on the ideas you mentioned. And then a further question: What is the challenge of transforming these ideas into actual policy?

Bas Eickhout: First of all, thanks Céline, a couple of points are very recognisable. It's absolutely true that the move to more renewables in your system is a decentralisation of the energy system, so that instead of a few big players delivering to the consumer, you will now get many smaller players delivering and producing and consuming, so that requires a totally different grid in a way and is really a change in design.

At the same time, we still have some big industrial players that are built on fossils, where we need to transfer the energy system to be more reliant on electricity.

The biggest challenge in all this design is that the system must be much more flexible and much more bottom-up. At the same time, we also need much more from the top down because there is huge potential for renewables in off-shore grids or solar in the south. In order to make that off-shore grid effective, you need collaboration between countries and matching those two different sizes into one grid is the biggest challenge for us.

I absolutely see a lot of potential. For example, looking into cities where entire districts can become self-dependent. But on the other hand, you also need bigger infrastructure to balance out the variability here in renewables. Meeting those two dimensions is a difficult task, we have not found the right approach and that's one of the most significant difficulties we see in the energy transition now.

Henrike, would you like to comment on Céline and Bas's points and whether maybe the EU industrial strategy can solve the problem of combining top-down and bottom-up approaches?

Henrike Hahn: The energy transition on a European level is a very complicated thing because it is a very broad playing field. At the moment, I work as a rapporteur in the ECON Committee on the Just Transition Fund and in the ITRE Committee as a Green Shadow and we are discussing on a very real basis whether we are willing to implement the Green Deal, a green industrial strategy and energy transition in Europe. I understand how challenging it is to steer the decarbonisation of the energy mix and industries

from the European level, while considering local heritage, needs and concerns, and the jobs at stake.

It is a complex process because there are many perspectives on that issue, we discuss jobs, fears, health issues, lobbyist interests, environmental and climate aspects etc.

I agree that a successful energy transition requires decentralisation, with energy communities, prosumers, micro-grids, etc. complemented with some large projects, such as electricity corridors and off-shore renewable energy plants. The same delicate balance must be struck also in energy policy. EU energy and industry policies and strategies must set top-down direction, targets and milestones. They are important in identifying the key elements of the green transition, the “no-regret options”, such as renewable energies and energy efficiency. They coordinate national approaches, take up best practice examples, and support and enable local actors to choose their most appropriate decarbonisation pathways.

Céline, what do you think is the most important thing to help incentivise people to be active in the energy transition from the ground level and what kind of incentive could digitalisation be? What digital tools or strategies are the most likely to make people active?

Céline Göhlich: The most important aspect is to integrate and include people in the energy transition and the value it creates. For example, we could make it easier for communities to benefit actively from a wind farm or a PV park, by having some of the revenue from these renewables go into a local kindergarten or into a local hospital – something that is tangible for people. It is important to have regional value creation in order to make sure citizens understand, in very tangible terms, the value of renewables. Studies show that there is a clear link between community wind or solar farms and an increase in social acceptance for these projects. The EU can be a progressive agenda-setter here in order to empower renewable energy communities.

Digitisation is an important tool on many levels. For one thing, it can help to facilitate the inclusion of people by making processes more transparent and less bureaucratic. For another, digital tools will be very important to coordinate sector coupling, for example to make best use of the batteries of electric vehicles when they are parked by storing electricity and allowing the owner to benefit financially. These are just a few examples of how digitisation can expand the scope of solutions for the energy transition.

I would like to come back to Bas again to talk about the ‘Next Generation EU’, the recovery proposal that our European Commission has just come up with and the main aspects when it comes to the policy fields that were addressed. What are the most important things we need to tackle right now in the digital single market? Is there one aspect that would be the particularly urgent?

Bas Eickhout: Ultimately, it is basic connectivity, which is still very poor. It has become visible now because of all the people who had to work from home during the pandemic.

There is also a great danger in the current setup that digitalisation and the Green Deal will become competitors. And to add on to what Céline said, which is that if we are really thinking of moving to a renewable future, then digitalisation becomes key. You need the smart software in order to know when to charge, when to deliver or take it from the net, and so on. For all these kinds of issues, your connectivity must be good, otherwise that entire system will not work. Therefore, another crucial part of a renewable energy system and the Green Deal is connectivity.

So, that is one of the challenges and also one of the dangers I currently see in the setup of the recovery package.

Henrike, do you want to react to Bas's comment? Is there going to be a real danger of digitalisation versus the Green Deal? I would also like to come back to the SMEs and to regional value creation which was mentioned by Céline.

Henrike Hahn: Digitalisation affects so many sectors – from industry, mobility, energy, to agriculture – and they are all at the start of the Green Deal. It is not necessarily a competition; it really has to be woven together, as Bas just said.

One of the weaknesses of the European Commission's current industry strategy is that it focuses on large companies and not on SMEs. We Greens are calling for advice and technical support to small firms, to raise their awareness about what greater environmental sustainability means for them, and to encourage them and give them the tools to participate in the ecological transition, including through greater use of digital tools.

We need to promote the reduction of energy use and we need to cover energy needs from production processes with renewable sources. We want to achieve the broader decarbonisation objectives in line with the Paris Agreement. We have to bundle everything together and define a consistent strategy to implement the Green Deal, which is a great project for the sake of the people in Europe.

lems that have to be dealt with. But unfortunately, that results in quite little, because of the resistance from the proponents of pushing on with this industrialisation of agriculture.

Thank you very much everyone.

The conversation took place on 5 June 2020.



Bas Eickhout

Bas Eickhout is a member of the European Parliament for The Greens/EFA. In addition, he is a member of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and a substitute member of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Committee on Budgetary Control. He is also a member of the Delegation for relations with the People's Republic of China and a substitute member of the Delegation for relations with the United States. Eickhout is delegation leader of the Dutch Greens in the European Parliament. He has worked on several projects relating to international environmental problems, such as climate change, agriculture, land-use and biofuels. He co-authored the IPCC report on climate change which received the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize.



Céline Göhlich

Céline Göhlich is co-founder of Everyone Energy, a do-tank enabling transformative energy projects to empower renewable energy communities. She also works as project manager for the 100 percent renewable foundation. At the Stiftung Neue Verantwortung, a policy think-tank, Göhlich concentrated on the area of 'digital energy transition' and co-authored a policy brief, examining new policy principles for the transition to a renewable energy system.



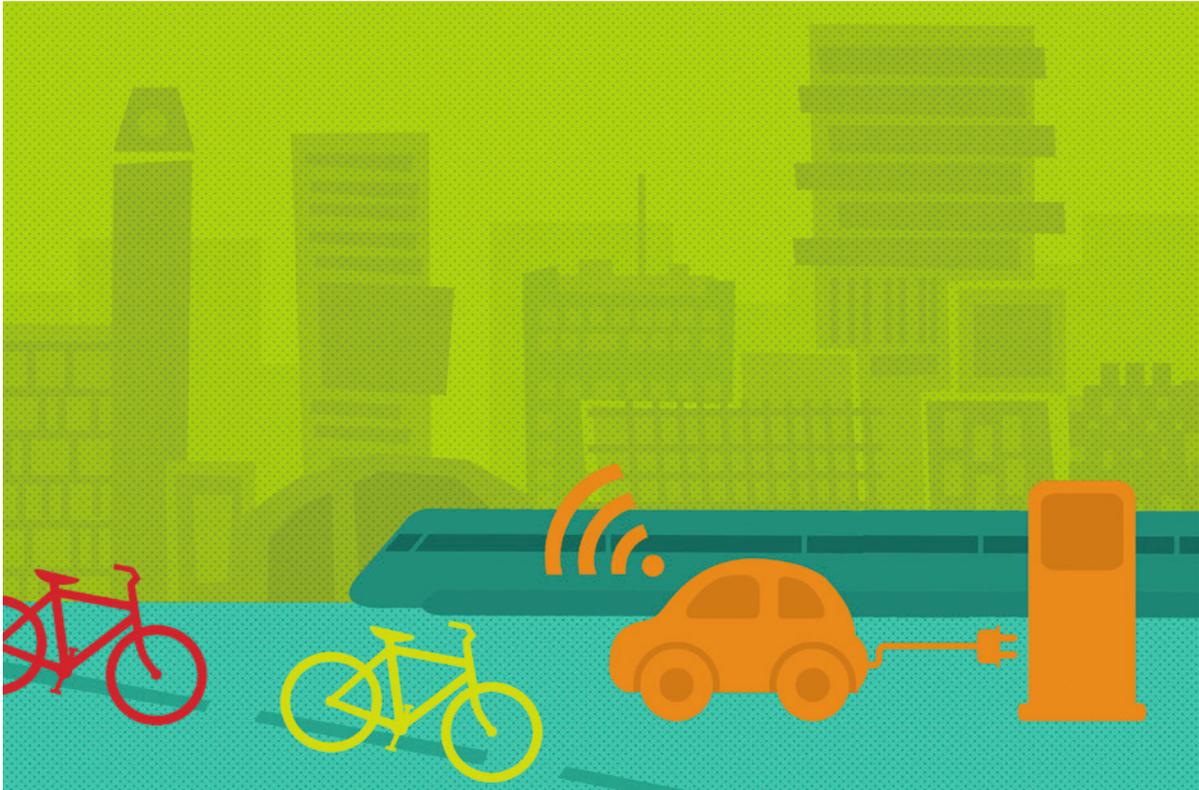
Henrike Hahn

Henrike Hahn has served as a Member of the European Parliament for the Greens/EFA since 2019. She is a member of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) and a substitute member of the Committees on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON) and on Budgets (BUDGET). She is the speaker for industrial policy of Alliance 90/The Greens' "Europe Group". Hahn has gained many years of experience in business consulting for technology-based companies with a focus on market analysis.



Martin Keim

Martin Keim has been Head of Programme for European Energy Transition at the European Union office of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung in Brussels since July 2019. He is responsible for all issues related to the ongoing energy transitions in Europe, including EU legislation, internal energy markets, digitalisation and external energy relations with third countries. Before joining the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, he worked as a research assistant at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) in Berlin, within the project 'The Geopolitics of Energy Transformation'. Martin holds a BA in 'International and European Governance' from the University of Münster and a MA in 'International and European Governance' and 'Strategy, Intelligence and Risk Management' from Sciences Po Lille and the University of Münster.



2. The European Green Deal

2.3. The European Green Deal and the Future of Mobility

Dr. Jens Althoff

Transport is one of the sectors that were hit the hardest by the coronavirus pandemic. Can the German EU Council Presidency find a way out of the crisis and boost sustainable mobility for Europe?



Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg and Karima Delli, both Member of the European Parliament, The Greens/EFA, and William Todts, Executive Director of the Transport & Environment (T&E) NGO network in a conversation with Dr. Jens Althoff, Head of Paris Office, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung France.

Jens Althoff: Welcome, everyone, and thank you for joining the conversation. Karima, given the European Green Deal and this stimulus plan which are now being discussed, what role can the transition in the transport and mobility sector play in this plan, and can this crisis also be a sort of opportunity to really push a transition in this sector?

Karima Delli: First of all, it must be said that transport is the backbone of our societies, meaning that without transport, we can't do anything. As such, proper management of it also represents access to employment, health, education and all other services. However, it's also one of the most polluting sectors; in Europe, the transport sector is responsible for 30 per cent of greenhouse gases, and it's the only sector that hasn't cut greenhouse gases since 1990. We haven't really made the climate and the connection with transport a priority. If we look at things on a global scale, transport is the second largest contributor to greenhouse gases after the production of energy and electricity. We have also seen the explosion of aviation in recent years. Today, air pollution causes 80,000 premature deaths every year in Europe. So, that's why we need the Green Deal, and why we need to invest, and why we, the environmentalists, are putting all our efforts behind sustainable mobility. Because it's also an issue that concerns health and climate, as well as being an immediate way of creating jobs, and it's our desire to say that alternatives to the most polluting modes of transport should be pursued. For example, night trains, we'll talk about them later, but they really are the alternative for trips of 600 to 1,800 kilometres. The bicycle is reappearing in cities, and it really makes it possible to avoid using your car. Then there's rail freight, trucks on trains, rivers. There are plenty of alternatives, I think we absolutely must stop funding companies that are still dependent on fossil fuels. Aviation doesn't take its share of the responsibility, especially with respect to the climate, and that's why we support a tax on jet fuel.

Since the pandemic, the European Central Bank has injected seven billion euros into fossil fuels, and that is untenable. Our imperative is very clear: we, transport, see it as a lever for action for the social objective, for a climate imperative, for a health imperative, but above all for well-being, which includes accessibility. We are fighting in the European Parliament, but also with the elected representatives of the territories who do a wonderful job, to show that mobility must be inclusive and accessible to everyone. Today, we are talking about those who are in a precarious situation with regard to mobility. It's

all those who can no longer get around because transport is too expensive, or because they are not in areas served by transport. Our job is to provide a specific response in the lives of these people in a way that allows them to get around in a sustainable way.

Karima you underlined that this transition should be at the heart of the European Green Deal. However, it is quite likely that we will not have as many financing possibilities as are proposed by the current stimulus plans. Anna, in this context, I would like to ask you, if we are now to move forward with this at the European level, shouldn't Germany and France, the two key partners, set the example, and be exemplary with their own stimulus plans? There are already current stimulus plans in France and Germany, which also support the transport sector quite a bit: how do you see these recovery plans for the Franco-German partners?

Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg: The answer is going to be a little mixed. I see very positive elements, but I also see certain areas where there is talk, but it's not yet certain whether that will deliver results. Regarding the relationship between Germany and France, I prefer to talk about rowing than a tandem, because it's not just the two of us involved. For rowing, everyone has to go in the same direction. There are also other European countries on board with us, but it's certain that if Germany and France take another direction, it won't work at all. We saw that in the recovery plans, at the beginning there were the words that were expected, the rebirth of rail transport, and, gradually, plans that moved forwards and various papers that we received. But there was still a little water in the wine. In the end, there are large sums, but it's not yet quite clear whether infrastructure will be put in place on the borders. Quite specifically: Freiburg - Colmar, or perhaps, the north of Alsace, Karlsruhe/Rastatt - Hagenau up to Saarbrücken via the Vosges, there are very well-known and very concrete plans which could really advance rail services in Europe and between the Franco-German border, but we don't really yet know if the commitment is there.

Member States will still have a very important role in the recovery, because the amounts put forward will still be decided nationally, in particular, and it's not yet certain that transport will have the place it should have. There's a lot of talk about the freight, maritime and tourism sectors, which have really been hit hard by the coronavirus crisis and, at the end of the day, transport, as Karima said, is truly the backbone of our wealth and our European exchanges. But we're going to have to resume these activities in a way that's respectful of the environment, in tune with digital progress and really well thought-out. Politics will have to decide whether it's going to be a real Green Deal, and whether it's going to be a real green stimulus plan or not. We will know more in a few months.

And William, how do you see the situation? After all, a loan of seven billion euros has been allocated to Air France already, and nine billion euros have also been allocated in Germany for Lufthansa. At the same time, there is not yet, for example,

support in France for the SNCF rail system. How do you see what has been decided so far and also, in this context, can we really use this moment and this investment to advance the transition?

William Todts: First, I completely agree with what Karima and Anna said. I would add that transportation is the biggest problem we have, but it is also a huge opportunity. I started my career ten years ago and at that time, people thought a clean car was the Toyota Prius or the diesel car, but fortunately a lot has changed since then. The rise of electric cars, hydrogen for planes and ships and the tremendous energy that we see today in all European cities give me a lot of hope. If we look at the European plan, I think there's a huge battle ahead, especially in France, Italy and Spain, to make sure that these three countries, the big ones, present serious and green plans. If I compare the German plan with the French plan, the German plan is stronger, in my opinion. It's much larger and contains a genuine choice for the future of automobiles, the choice not to finance, to subsidise petrol and diesel cars. It's really a very important step, and it's a very important decision for a government that's not part of the green movement. And in France, there are nice words, there's the decision to award big subsidies for electric cars but, at the same time, for petrol and diesel cars too. So, the German plan is more convincing.

In the airline industry, there are two ways of looking at what's been decided. On one hand, it's clear that for France, Lufthansa and Brussels Airlines have been hit hard by this crisis and while they are companies that pollute, they are also large employers. So, the state has a certain responsibility. On the other, it's very difficult to accept that a company like Air France or Lufthansa receives billions of euros without environmental conditions. The train is part of the solution, but not the sole solution. If we want to decarbonise aviation, we have to do it and we have two options, either we stop flying, or we find a solution to decarbonise either planes or fuels. In this regard, I'm very happy to see that in the German and European hydrogen plan, there is an element of obligations for synthetic fuels. I also see this element in the Austrian plan and I also believe that there are reflections on this subject in France. It's not an ideal solution, it's very expensive, it's not easy, it's not efficient, but, right now, it's the only technological solution that we have, so it must be pursued.

Karima, same question for you, how do you see the recovery plan? Because the French government, in terms of communication, often says that it now wants to move in a green direction, and also use stimulus plans and everything that was decided to support the economy in France to advance an ecological transition, so that would be a question. And secondly, how do you see the consequences of the coronavirus so far? In terms of the use of different means of transport, for example, we are still seeing an impressive increase in France in the use of bicycles. On the other hand, of course, there is a big drop in the use of public transport because people

are afraid. So, what is your view of the economic support that has been decided thus far in France?

Karima Delli: So, for the first question, it's true that we must immediately help workers who, like us all, can do nothing against the coronavirus that has created a shock to society. But concerning the environmental shock, there are things we can do. The Austrians, for example, have forced their airlines to comply with their laws on, in particular, global warming, with very restrictive objectives: for example, all flights of a minimum of two and a half hours that can be replaced by the train, should be replaced by train. It's in black and white, now it must be put into practice.

The coronavirus has shown a collective awareness of aviation pollution since aeroplanes have largely stopped flying, and this is also thanks to the work of environmentalists. This collective awareness makes people say, 'well, we won't necessarily take the plane anymore'. And then it's absolutely necessary to consider the employees of the aviation sector, who will also have to be retrained. The future is train transport. Now, in the automotive sector, Renault's plan is a disaster. Two things: the first thing is that Renault has its subcontractors in countries that are low market, i.e., Turkey and Morocco, which is utterly scandalous. The second is that we are not seeing any future plan. As environmentalists, we're proposing a real forward-looking policy in the automotive industry: in the car of tomorrow, everything must be recycled, we don't need to build more cars. We have to take cars as they are, using fossil fuels, and adapt them to the electric technology, what we call retrofitting. Second focus: everything has to be recycled, the materials, the steel found at the other end of the world. As with the circular economy, we have everything we need to do it right. France must not stay in its own corner, on the scale of an industrial policy; it must reach out to its German partner and energise a new industrial policy in the automobile sector, it's win-win. You also have to tell the car manufacturers 'behaviours will change, you have to provide a service'.

Let's go back to your second question: with the end of the lockdown, the cycling plans of cities exploded almost everywhere. But one doesn't make a cycling policy just by making bikes available: it's the whole economy of cycling, it's infrastructure, it's bike paths, it's creating bike parks. We value intermodal transport, which includes being able to put bikes on trains. There is a whole local economy behind cycling. The second thing is that public transport is the big forgotten aspect of the recovery. Today, there's still a little fear, but it'll be necessary to relaunch public transport, trams, buses, metros. It's good because it has a much smaller impact than when everyone takes their car. Public transport, like cycling, is the everyday mobility of people, we have to gradually wean ourselves off the car. Public transport needs to be part of the recovery plan⁸.

I would like to address a few things that Karima said. It is often said that there are three key areas for a transition of mobility: electrification, which is very important; the digital revolution; and also the connection to smart cities, smart solutions. Anna,

you are now a member of the European Parliament, but you also spent a long time with the City Council of Stuttgart, a city where the automobile was for decades at the centre of everything. What direction do you see things taking? What could we do at the moment to advance this mobility transition within these three areas?

Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg: So, first of all, I would like to chime in on what Karima said, and also William, which is very important in transportation. In fact, we have a lot of problems, but we also have a lot of solutions. We already have a lot of places and a lot of municipalities that are trying very concrete things, which are working. We also have a lot of partners who were slowing down and who now see that what we're proposing is the future, and they're with us.

So, public transport in Stuttgart, we really saw that by changing the prices and also making public transport more accessible we had an increase in the number of people who took public transport. We now have on the main roads – and a few months ago it seemed impossible – new bike paths, and right in the middle of Stuttgart. People appreciate it and are using their bikes. I also think that we have to put the bike at the heart of the economic recovery, because why not support small companies that make cargo bikes, for example. In any event, as ecologists, we try and stick to our principle to try and avoid transport when we can. This is also a social vision. We have now learned to work digitally.

Of course, it should not remain purely digital, because we don't all want to remain in confinement, but I think that there are business trips that can be avoided. This is something that we have to continue to recognise: there are certain things that can be done digitally and there are certain types of transport that can be avoided, while others can be replaced. But in terms of public transport, it's still also very important for municipalities to be supported financially, because setting up networks of trams and subways is expensive, and municipalities cannot do it everywhere themselves. Member States must put this all to the fore to rebuild confidence in public transport and to really have a network which, downstream, connects with cars, – non-polluting, connected and shared cars, of course. I'm waiting for the big automotive companies to come up with these kinds of services, which can offer digital, connectivity and new technologies by saying 'we offer whole packages as real services' and, of course, well-combined with rail services, well-connected with bike services, because this is the future of transport. I think that citizens and consumers are there to use services, but these services also have to be available soon.

William, how should we now move forward in these three areas, electrification, the digital revolution and also connectivity, with the European recovery plan and the recovery plans in Germany and France?

William Todts: Perhaps, first, I'd like to add something on the aviation question. I fully agree that the train, the night train, the long-distance train has a very important role

to play, but it must also be clear that the majority of emissions are not caused by short-haul flights, but by long-haul flights, e.g. between Europe and the United States, between Belgium and Spain, etc. So, the most significant of these famous 'megatrends' is electrification. I totally agree that in cities, cycling and public transport are the future, and I think that the crisis we are currently experiencing is, perhaps, an accelerator. But let's be clear: the car is not going to disappear, from Europe, from the United States or from China, and climate change is a global problem, so it's also necessary to find a global solution. In our opinion at T&E, the electric car is this solution, and there I think that Europe has a very big role to play. T&E fought in 2013–14 for the famous 'Cars CO2' law. It was a great battle with Angela Merkel, but it's thanks to this regulation, this European law, that today manufacturers are selling electric cars. We went from two to eight per cent of electric cars in 2020. This is thanks to this law, and it's good news. This is the kind of policy we need because there's this mythology surrounding the genius of Elon Musk who, in his small garage, created the electric car, but that's not how it was done. California, Europe and China created this market, we created the market for renewable energies, and it also shows us the path we must take, the direction for the future. This, for me, is the heart of the Green Deal, a green industrial policy.

We'll see what Ursula Von der Leyen will do. She talks about the Green Deal, and it's good that she always does so, even in times of crisis, with great passion, but the big test will be in September when the European Commission presents its climate plan. We'll see if she wants to go to 55 per cent reduction of greenhouse gases by 2030. But the more important question is whether the European Commission is prepared to go against the big French and German industries, notably the automobile industry. As far as digitalisation is concerned, I think that the short-term environmental impact will be very limited. Of course, there are possibilities, we can create a more efficient system, but it won't be a game-changer. What could be a game-changer is the driverless car. It's not a given because a driverless car isn't any cleaner than a private car, but there is the possibility of creating a much more efficient system, albeit with some issues: firstly, it has to be a clean car, and we have to limit the number of kilometres that these cars drive, because we're going to switch to a system that is dominated by platforms, like Uber. It is not for tomorrow, but in 10 to 15 years. I think that we are going to head in this direction, and if we have electric cars that are shared and are driverless, individual mobility will become very inexpensive, and that's a great danger. This means that we must rethink taxation today, we must move to a form of taxation based on kilometres, and this is very difficult, but we must work on it today to avoid very big problems in the future.

Thank you very much everyone.

The conversation took place on 10 June 2020.



Dr. Jens Althoff

Dr. Jens Althoff has been Head of Office at the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung in Paris since 2015. Previously, he worked as press officer for the German Greens.



Karima Delli

Karima Delli is Member of the European Parliament and was born in Roubaix, France, in 1979. After her studies and several years as an activist, she was elected to the European Parliament in 2009, 2014 and again in 2019. During her second term, she served on the Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN) after the 2014 elections. In 2017, she was elected as Chairwoman of the TRAN Committee and was subsequently re-elected in 2019. She also a member of the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee. Karima Delli was a founding member of the European Parliament's own-initiative Committee of Inquiry into Emission Measurements in the automotive sector (Dieselgate), where she was Vice-Chair.



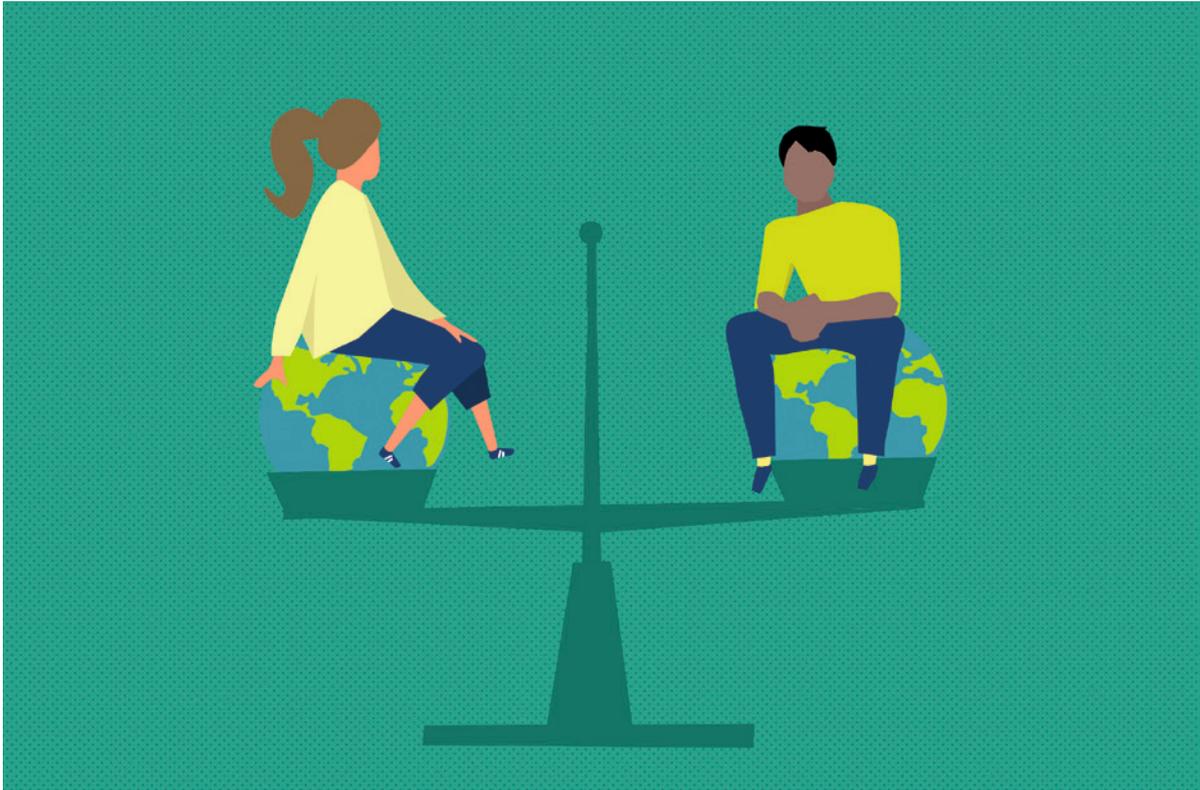
Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg

Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg is a Member of the European Parliament for the Greens/EFA and has been in office since 2019. The French-German-Swiss ecologist and scientist stands up to fight climate change, biodiversity loss, green mobility and for a transformative economy in the Committees on Transport and Tourism (TRAN), Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) and Regional Development (REGI). Currently, she is the rapporteur for "2021: European Year of Rail".



William Todts

William Todts is the Executive Director of Transport & Environment (T&E), a position he has held since February 2017. In his role, he steers the organisation to promote, at EU and global level, policy that ensures cleaner, safer and smarter transport. Before that, he was T&E Director Freight & Climate, where he led the campaign to regulate CO₂ emissions from trucks in Europe. He also led a campaign to get cleaner and safer trucks onto European roads as well as for the 95 grams CO₂ emissions target that new cars must achieve by 2021.



2. The European Green Deal

2.4. The European Green Deal and Gender Diversity

Dr. Ines Kappert

Is the European Green Deal gender blind? How can the EU deal with the danger of a backlash on gender equality in the face of the pandemic and subsequent economic crisis? What options are there to better connect the feminist and climate movements?



Alice Kuhnke, Member of the European Parliament for the Greens/EFA, and Joanna Maycock, European Women's Lobby, Brussels, in a conversation with Ines Kappert, Director of the Gunda-Werner-Institut, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Berlin.

Ines Kappert: I would like to put the first question to Alice. It seems that the European Green Deal is totally gender blind. Does this come as a surprise to you?

Alice Kuhnke: It came as a surprise to me because I had hoped and I believed that Ursula von der Leyen would back up all her great statements about gender equality and the great importance of the gender perspective in making politics more inclusive.

You mentioned that Von der Leyen has always presented herself as a leading politician in supporting gender mainstreaming, but gender equality is also in the Treaty of Lisbon, so it's nothing new. Why has it been ignored?

Alice Kuhnke: There was a lot of pressure on this issue and as you said, the gender perspective is nothing new. We also have all the facts about who is vulnerable, who is poor, who needs to be in focus when doing the big transition, but I think that the conservative forces are very strong and very stubborn. To be able to take a green decision and really change the way we do things, you need to be progressive. You need to make decisions that aren't comfortable for those who have the power today.

Joanna, does the lack of courage from Von der Leyen and her administration mean that we are facing a new backlash on equality and feminism with the European Green Deal on the European scale?

Joanna Maycock: There's a risk of that. It's definitely very disappointing that there was a complete absence of any kind of gender analysis in the proposal. Not only because Von der Leyen has been very vocal about the need for equality between women and men, but also because Frans Timmermans had campaigned very clearly on a feminist platform and he's the Vice-President of the EC responsible for the Green Deal.

If you look at the gender equality strategy that the European Commission launched on 5 March, it's very clear that it's strong on gender mainstreaming, but the pieces aren't speaking to one another. I honestly also think there's a lack of feminist thinking and even the capacity within the European Commission to understand the true meaning of gender equality.

An opportunity has been missed. We know that women's rights have stopped progressing for years at an EU level.

Alice, you stated that you could see some positive signals by Helena Dalli, the European Commissioner responsible for gender equality, when you mentioned to her the total absence of the gender perspective. What kind of positive signals could you see?

Alice Kuhnke: I was deeply disappointed that the word 'gender' wasn't even part of what was presented. But when speaking to Helena Dalli, she makes clear that she understands what a gender perspective is and how you work with gender mainstreaming and so forth. But what I have come to know is that she and some of the other European Commissioners are really working with the wind in their face because they don't have support for this kind of perspective.

On your website, you said that she was blocked and has not been allowed to join the work on the European Green Deal.

Alice Kuhnke: Yes, I think that Helena Dalli is suffering from what so many people who are militating for structural change face. They try to make equality an isolated question. But that's not what gender mainstreaming is all about – it's about being part of all levels and policy discussions. Referring back to what Joanna said, this is a backlash when it comes to feminist and gender perspectives.

When we switch to the role of civil society, we can also see that the intersections of the climate change movement and the different feminist movements are not very well integrated. Does that also play a role in the absence of gender in the European Green Deal?

Joanna Maycock: When it comes to really thinking about the kind of just transition that we need and that we are hoping to be seeing in the coming years, then it needs to be green and it needs to be feminist. That means that we need the environmental movement to think in a feminist way and the feminist movement to think in a green way.

I participated in a round table with the trade unions, the environmental NGOs and some human rights NGOs here in Brussels. The aim is to create a group to start reflecting on the feminist imperatives for the Green Deal, because we recognised there wasn't a space where we could exchange our different perspectives and have a powerful voice in that context. There is more to be done, but there is a good foundation.

Before I ask you about the precise next steps, I would like to add the pandemic, which has worsened the situation for already marginalised groups. Jutta Allmendinger, an important researcher in Germany on women's rights and the labour market, recently said that we are going back thirty years now. She was picturing a gloomy future, especially concerning women's integration into the labour market. Would you buy into this analysis?

Joanna Maycock: I am a hopeaholic. We often have to denounce terrible things, that's part of our job, but I think it's really important that we also offer a narrative of hope for the future.

However, I do think she's right that there is a real risk that if we do not organise and fight for a better future, we could be going backwards. We fear that with what is predicted to be a massive recession, women will be under pressure to leave jobs to care for their children, to work part time, etc. Even if you think about going into teleworking as a new norm, what does that mean for women and men, and what is the feminist perspective on boundary setting and care work?

But my point is that it's not inevitable. So, we have to be organised to avoid women stepping back from decision-making. We have to make this a positive turning point to advance equality between women and men.

Alice Kuhnke: I don't think I am a hopeaholic. I am a flame fanner because I am so mad, and I am always telling people to get mad because what we are seeing right now is totally unacceptable. So, what are we waiting for? I think if we don't get mad, then we start to accept what's happening right now. I can't understand that we still have to argue about gender mainstreaming in 2020.

Do we need to change the idea of saying we need more women because that means more gender equality? Von der Leyen proves that wrong, doesn't she?

Alice Kuhnke: Just because she's a woman doesn't mean she puts political policies in place that are good for women. Experiences matter and the knowledge of being a woman could matter, but that's not the only indicator. We also need to have some intellectual discussion about policies that are good for women with a minority background, for LGBTI people and so on.

What is your perspective on the German Presidency of the EU Council?

Alice Kuhnke: I have so much hope. The Greens in Germany have quite a big influence, so they could put the issue on the agenda. But we also need pressure from civil society organisations, also from the environmental movement, especially the youth.

As far as I have seen, the critique of gender blindness in the European Green Deal hasn't been very prominent.

Alice Kuhnke: There have been discussions on that. I am the coordinator for the Greens in the FEMM Committee, and I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw that gender wasn't part of what was presented. So I wrote a letter to Timmermans along with Bas Eickhout, who led the work with the Green Deal from our side. If we want a fair and just transition, we need to have a gender perspective.

We can certainly agree that the Greens are the most progressive, but still not very outspoken when it comes to feminist issues. Joanna, how do you see it?

Joanna Maycock: Our members are sometimes disappointed in Green parties, especially when in power, for their lack of concrete support for feminist issues. However, there are amazing Green MEPs, many women, like Alice, who are incredible and always ready to take the fight on women's rights for gender equality. But I am a bit disappointed that there hasn't been more outcry, for example from the Greens in the European Parliament, and also beyond in the Member States about how can we have a Green Deal that really doesn't reflect people's reality and women's rights.

What are your tools during and beyond the pandemic to push for these issues? Is there a recommendation you want to share? Is there a political field, a strategy or a specific point where we can start?

Alice Kuhnke: Well, first I would like to underline that we did do a lot of work in the Green group, including the German Greens. When it comes to the gender perspective in the amendments to the resolution, they came from us. But we can also raise our voice, invite European Commissioners, write letters, connect with civil society organisations, etc.

I would like to add something about the anti-discrimination directive that has been blocked for 10 years. That is also something that I hope that the Germans will reconsider.

Joanna, do you want to highlight what should be amongst the first steps of the German Presidency from the gender point of view?

Joanna Maycock: I really like what Alice was saying. And I think we should also talk about reframing what we talk about as a cost and what we value as societies. The project of reframing is very much at the heart of our feminist economics approach. My optimistic side feels that we're closer to challenging the fundamental and patriarchal basis of the neo-liberal economic model than we ever have been.

I am not anticipating the German Presidency adopting a feminist economics model straight away, but there are a couple of things they can do that are absolutely doable: firstly, as they are going to be in charge during the MFF discussions and the recovery fund discussions, they can set up and host conversations. So, absolutely nothing should be happening unless it has a very clear gender impact assessment and what we want is for a gender perspective to be adopted to make sure that women benefit equally from the new funds in the recovery plan and that all programmes and all actions of the EU work for women. The second thing the German Presidency must do is to change the precondition that the ministers for gender equality never meet. They often have informal meetings under some Presidencies, but most of the ministers don't come to those meetings.

So, they could host a formal meeting of gender equality ministers and propose a permanent EU Council formation, it could be linked to the EPSCO Council (employment, social policy, health and consumer affairs) which already discusses gender equality sometimes. And thirdly, I would love to see the finance ministers meeting in autumn, having an entire session on gender budgeting. There needs to be some kind of process of educating our finance ministers and holding them to account for the EU's commitments to gender budgeting.

It's not a given that the EU's gender equality strategy that was adopted in March will be implemented. We are concerned that it will just disappear under the Covid avalanche, so we need to keep it alive. That's also an important thing for the Germany Presidency. We can't take it for granted because some might say "We'll get to the women's rights thing later when we have sorted this particular crisis." Instead, we need to understand that women are half the population and more than half of the solution.

Alice Kuhnke: I agree with Joanna's last words. Thank you for inviting me.

Thank you both!

The conversation took place on 26 May 2020.



Alice Bah Kuhnke

Alice Bah Kuhnke is a member of the European Parliament from Sweden and vice-chair of the Greens/EFA group. She is a full member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, the Greens/EFA's Coordinator in the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, and co-chair of the European Parliament's Intergroup on the Green New Deal. Before she came to the European Parliament, she was Minister for Culture and Democracy in the Swedish government. Her work in the European Parliament currently focuses on the intersection between climate, gender and social issues, also known as Climate Justice.



Dr. Ines Kappert

Ines Kappert is Head of the Gunda Werner Institute for Feminism and Gender Democracy. Her main topics are feminism for immigration society, intersectional feminism, refugees and women, peace and security. She wrote her PhD on: "Der Mann in der Krise. Oder: Konservative Kapitalismuskritik im kulturellen Mainstream", (Man in crisis, or: a conservative critique of capitalism and the cultural mainstream, transcript, 2008). From 2007-2015, she was head of the opinion desk of the German daily taz.



Joanna Maycock

Joanna Maycock has been Secretary General of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) since 2014. EWL represents the diversity of the women's movement across Europe, bringing an independent feminist voice and real women's voices into the EU political arena. Founded in 1990, the European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the largest alliance of over 2,000 women's non-governmental organisations in the EU coming together to campaign for their common vision of a Feminist Europe. A lifelong feminist, Joanna has 20 years' experience in leadership positions in Civil Society.



2. The European Green Deal

2.5. The Social Dimension of the European Green Deal

Marc Berthold

How to prevent unemployment while phasing out fossil fuels as quickly as possible. Is the ecological and social transformation a priority in crisis recovery? Which mechanisms can help to leave no one behind in the transition?



Katrin Langensiepen, Member of the European Parliament for the Greens/EFA, and Pieter de Pous, E3G, Berlin Office, in a conversation with Marc Berthold, Head of the Department for European Union and North America, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Berlin.

Marc Berthold: We need to talk about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the economic crisis and how that influences plans for the European Green Deal. How do you see the commitment of the European Commission and also that of the Member States to continue with ecological and social transformation during this crisis? Ursula von der Leyen and Angela Merkel said climate change is a top priority, but is it in the recovery plan?

Katrin Langensiepen: When Ursula von der Leyen took up her role at the European Commission, we criticised her for not having a real interest in climate policy. And we questioned how strong and focused she really is or whether it is just about saying the right things but not acting on them.

We don't want to block what she proposed. As a Green group, we decided to back her as much as we can to help push her ideas forward. When it comes to serious decisions in climate change, social aspects are weak or not particularly ambitious, so we have to push the European Commission to do more.

Pieter de Pous, if you look at the €750 billion recovery fund proposal, do you think ecological and social transformation combined will be part of that?

Pieter de Pous: I'm cautiously optimistic. I actually spent a long time in Brussels during the Juncker Commission working at an NGO, and to me it's clear that things have changed. My sense is that it's more than rhetorical.

I think one of the weaknesses of the Green Deal is that it is both a European Commission and a European Parliament project, but it wasn't necessarily owned by the Member States. The fact that we had some early, over-publicised opposition from countries like Poland or the Czech Republic probably helped to get countries to take more ownership of it.

We're now starting to move from the rhetorical to the more substantial questions, like what's in the delivery, and I would say the jury is still out. The Farm-to-Fork strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy that came out in late May got quite positive reactions from environmental groups and were criticised heavily by farm unions. But we need to look into the details of the actual recovery proposal by the European Commission. We've heard the rumours that that's when the conditionality might be weakened and I think

that is the biggest test because it's one thing to talk about climate conditionality in a normal situation, but much harder to insist on it when the economy is struggling.

Some countries are more forthcoming or progressive in that respect already. It's going to be very interesting how the debates in Germany will now revolve around coal. Before, everyone saw it like: 'it's not good enough but at least we're doing it'. Now people are starting to realise this might actually lock in a slow coal phase-out instead. As things are really shifting at the moment, I'm cautiously optimistic that we're going in the right direction.

Staying with that thought, we saw that France has already attached conditions and showed how they want to be part of that transition, and Austria as well. In Germany, there's no talk so far concerning Lufthansa, and also the automotive industry, which of course in Germany is key. Is there a dilemma between this acute economic crisis and high risk of unemployment, and the long-term goal that was initially envisioned in the Green Deal to organise this transition in order to save jobs or prevent mass unemployment? Do you have any suggestions on how to manage these different timelines?

Katrin Langensiepen: To me, it's not a dilemma but a question of political will. Ten years ago, when I finished university, my generation became the victim of the financial crisis and its consequences. Young people out of jobs lived at home with their parents, had no possibility to start a real life.

As a social politician remembering that time, I am flagging and raising the issue of what is going to happen. We don't know when the coronavirus pandemic will end. We can open the economy, but the coronavirus will dictate how far we can go. In that sense, the pandemic has got us under control. There is huge pressure from the automotive industry and other sectors, and under this pressure politicians decided to open up society. But what happens after the summer holidays? A second wave? Are we going to close everything because the numbers go up again?

As politicians, we always need to be prepared for the social consequences of health and economic crises. What about minimum wage, minimum income? Minimum wage was a huge topic for Von der Leyen, now she's a bit more silent on that issue. What about UBI (universal basic income) and other social equalising initiatives? A clear social strategy is what we need. The Green Deal doesn't feature it, in my opinion.

Do you agree with this, Pieter?

Pieter de Pous: I would say there are definitely some tensions between the various things we need to be doing in terms of sequencing, and of course they have a lot to do with political will.

From the immediate firefighting stabilisation phase of just throwing money into the system, we moved on to discussions about what kind of recovery we want. For example, one of the things we've been arguing is that you need to take a step-wise approach so when the economy is tanking and everyone is in trouble, everyone can get some help. But the moment we talk about more structural changes, all those groups who have been getting help will be the first to reject a lot of those structural reform measures that we might adopt later on. And that is where you start to see the tension and why it's very important that when talking about the recovery programmes, we make it very clear these are not unconditional payments in the way the initial liquidity support was.

But, if I can just be the optimist here again, five years ago, in the last crisis, there was barely a debate about the car scrappage scheme, it naturally just happened. Right now, the voices speaking against it are a very substantive part of the public opinion: the experts. Now, public opinion seems to have a different view on this. It's much less certain that it's going to happen and if it does, under which conditions? You see something changing there and right in the middle of the pandemic, everyone is worried about a lot of things. People realise subsidising a few luxury car companies is not going to help us.

And who are your partners in crime in keeping all that on the agenda? Is it the European Commission? Any particular Member States? Civil society? Who do you need and where are the obstacles?

Katrin Langensiepen: The obstacles lie within the EU Council, the Member States. You can see that Merkel and Macron have offered a plan, the €500 billion idea, and Austria, Poland and Scandinavia said no. So, where's the solidarity with the Member States?

Pieter de Pous: There's definitely a power struggle going on between the Member States and the European Commission. That's how it's always been. I would hope that in the end, Member States do understand it is also in their self-interest to have a strong European Commission in place to be the fair arbitrator and enforcer, but it's something that they find very hard to accept. We are in a situation with the Green Deal where there is the buy-in in the EU national parliaments and I think the European Commission is making a genuine effort. We need to see how things evolve.

So, I think the real challenge is that the whole Green Deal is a work in progress. We still need to secure the climate target, we need to agree on the Just Transition Fund, on the conditionality, on the CAP reform and much more. There's a whole bundle of things to be decided in the coming months that we will need to get right.

Katrin Langensiepen: Its comparable behaviour to what happened in 2008/2009. It's Merkel and Macron and Austria, the Dutch and the Scandinavians. What about the Southern European Member States? To me, it was disappointing to see that Merkel and Macron made a plan without including Italy, for example. It would have been a better

political sign, and trying to avoid the same mistakes as 2008 and instead show we have a real interest to include Spain, Italy, Portugal, etc.

Let's have a last look at the social dimension of the Green Deal and the Just Transition Fund, mainly focused on regions with energy intensive industries. What's the way forward to really make this work? Are you happy with the Just Transition Fund or do you think there needs to be additional measures?

Pieter de Pous: I've sometimes wondered if we need one, but I think the way the European Commission has gone about it was sensible. I think the key thing with the Just Transition Fund is that it's meant to close the East/West clean energy divides, and that's still relevant.

It could be improved, though. One weakness is that the way the money is allocated to the Member States doesn't reflect the ambition in terms of climate or phase-out schedules of coal. It's very weak in the general sort of climate conditionality in terms of things that can be strengthened. We need to agree on a Just Transition Fund that makes very clear that for any solidarity between the EU on the energy transition, those receiving it, like Poland, will need to show they are going to move on clean energy, on phasing out coal and everything else. Then it can work. So, that remains relevant and the question of recovery comes on top of that.

The recovery issue is again a North/South problem, not because the South has a worse health system, but simply because they were the ones who were hit the worst and economically, they are very dependent on tourism and that is where they are going to get hit. So, there are several reasons beyond their own control why they are now going to need more solidarity under the recovery mechanism.

We need the agreement and the details and adjustment funds first, to get the right blueprint and then we can add more money to it. The amount of money to be added to it will need to be a reflection of both the old gap we are trying to close between East and West plus the new/old one, because the North-South isn't actually new, we've had it before in the past.

Katrin, since Germany is taking the EU Presidency in the summer, with all these challenges, what are your expectations and what are your demands of the German government in managing the situation and this compromise that needs to be found?

Katrin Langensiepen: Everybody is looking at Germany and at how they are planning to solve the crisis. To me, helping and funding and supporting countries is related to the question of how you treat people in your own country.

Look at the situation of LGBTIQ in Poland and the situation of refugees in Italy and in Greece. Greece was the weakest and poorest country in 2008 and 2009 and there was no solidarity at all. I hope that that is going to change now. We as Greens must be fighting for these people; we shouldn't forget about that and try to connect it to demands and say, if you want to get our help, you need to find a solution for that.

Pieter, what would be your benchmark at the end of 2020 to say 'This was a successful German Presidency'?

Pieter de Pous: I think an agreement on a Climate Law would be a major achievement, but also starting to get the rest of the world to come along with this. For example, using the conversation with China to ask what they are going to do in terms of coal pipelines, using the fact that Europe is already putting a lot of its efforts into phasing out coal. Also, getting a deal on recovery would be a goal. My guess is it won't be much more than that, given the general constraints upon the Presidency, and if there won't be physical meetings, it will be a very limited agenda. But we're trusting in the German, Portuguese and Slovenian cooperation to pick up what can't be resolved this year.

Thank you so much.

The conversation took place on 25 May 2020.



Marc Berthold

From January 2018 to July 2019, the political scientist supervised the “Security in Transition” programme at the Center for Liberal Modernity in Berlin and from 2014 to the end of 2017, he managed the office of the then federal president of Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, Cem Özdemir. His positions at the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung included heading up the Israel office in Tel Aviv from 2011 to the end of 2013, after having worked as a foreign policy and security policy advisor for four years. Between 2001 and 2007, he coordinated the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung’s Transatlantic Climate Dialogue in Washington, DC.



Katrin Langensiepen

Katrin Langensiepen was elected to the European Parliament in 2019. As the only woman with a visible disability in the European Parliament and Vice-Chair of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, she fights for a social and inclusive Europe. In 2011, she became councillor in Hannover for Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen and served as spokesperson for social affairs. She was also the spokesperson of her party’s working group for persons with disabilities.



Pieter de Pous

Pieter de Pous leads E3G’s Coal Transition work in Europe as well as covering gas and land-use. His roles focuses on advising the European diplomatic community as well as civil society on opportunities for accelerating Europe’s coal phase-out. Prior to joining E3G, Pieter spend 14 years working for Europe’s largest NGO, European Environmental Bureau, including 7 as its policy director. In this role, he helped to advance the EU’s environmental agenda in areas ranging from chemical safety, biodiversity to energy and the circular economy.



2. The European Green Deal

2.6. The European Green Deal and the Multiannual Financial Framework

Lisa Tostado

How to meet financial needs that live up to the European Green Deal and support economic recovery? Which mechanisms can bridge new and existing divisions? What should spending priorities be?



Rasmus Andresen, Niklas Nienaß, both Members of the European Parliament for the Greens/EFA, and Patrick ten Brink, European Environmental Bureau, in a conversation with Lisa Tostado, Head of International Climate, Energy & Agriculture Programme, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union.

Lisa Tostado: On 27 May, the European Commission presented a new Recovery Plan under the umbrella of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and there have been discussions on the spending priorities of these new investments, their nature and their conditionality. While there is a great need for additional funding in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, there is also an investment gap in the ambitious objectives laid out in the European Green Deal.

So, my first question concerns the European Green Deal itself and how to finance it. The European Commission has pledged to mobilise up to €1 trillion of additional climate-related investments over the next decade and half of that is expected to come from the next seven-year EU budget. Studies show that an additional yearly funding of up to €180 billion is required to deliver the 2030 climate energy targets alone. How can these needs be met, both within but also beyond the MFF? Does the proposed MFF as it stands live up to the European Green Deal objectives and what exactly should spending priorities be?

Rasmus Andresen: The proposal from the European Commission suggests spending €500 billion on grants for public spending and an additional €250 billion on loans. While we are facing the biggest economic crisis since World War II, we need to be careful to not just act in crisis mode, but rather in a way that also aids the transition to climate neutrality by 2040, as the Greens are proposing, or by 2050, as the European Commission says.

Having welcomed the proposal in general, we have to look at the details, where we can see some problems. We can see that the European Commission is still proposing that 25% of the MFF be spent on climate investments, which won't be enough to transform into a climate-neutral society. We are proposing 50% and the European Parliament is saying at least 30%.

I would like to add that it's not just about spending more money on climate-friendly infrastructure, it's also about looking at what projects we are spending money on and what the climate-harming element is. Awarding fossil fuel subsidies under the European budget, for example. We need to spend more money on infrastructure and transport and change the way we spend money on agriculture and energy. As of now, we can't see any major changes here.

What is the view of the European Environmental Bureau on whether the MFF proposal actually stands up to the European Green Deal objectives and how these could be met?

Patrick ten Brink: There are some elements which are very good, for example the commitments on building renovation and the vision for renewable energy, but there are also a range of areas that are lacking or weak, such as support for agro-ecological practices and a real push beyond waste for the full set of circular economy measures, i.e. supporting repairability. Each of these are labour-intensive activities, creating jobs for Europe while supporting climate and the wider EGD.

The MFF is substantial. With the 1% of GDP plus the additional measures, it should be around €3 trillion. But this is arguably not much compared to the amount of money that the national governments have and far from sufficient to address the actual climate challenge. The investment gap you cited refers to the 2030 GHG reduction target. The investment gap will of course be higher with a reformed 2030 target - the target that we currently have is too weak and is expected to be strengthened.

So, what we need is to make use of the money from the MFF as important leverage. In addition, we need to make sure there's more national funding and we also need to make sure that national funding focuses on the right priorities. In addition to the public funds at a national level, you also need to have private sector funds, and this is where the progress on the green taxonomy is particularly welcome and we need to make systematic use of the green taxonomy tool.

And finally, of course, citizens play a role as well through domestic spend, whether it's on building insulation or solar panels. Furthermore, we need to be particularly careful about the fact that we only can spend the money once, so we need to make sure spending is geared towards investments that save money and provide returns. For example, energy efficiency will save households money; renewables will save countries money in terms of import costs of fossil fuels. Each of these things improves resilience in the future, so we need to focus on future-oriented spending that moves us forward and supports economic and social resilience.

My next question concerns the rising inequalities and different gaps that exist within European countries and which the pandemic deepened even further. A new coronavirus-adjusted MFF may shift funding from the East to the South, which may create dissatisfaction for some Member States, especially if political strings are attached. It also requires higher payments overall. There are some countries that are wary when it comes to common debt. How do you think we can obtain a compromise that all Member States and regions can live with? What role do other finance mechanisms linked to the Green Deal, such as the Just Transition Fund (JTF), play?

Rasmus Andresen: I think these debates are directly linked to each other because you will not get a greener society without having an equal society. That is why we need to look at all things together. Regarding the MFF, that means we need to fight for a strong MFF in the upcoming weeks to ensure that it benefits not just the Member States hit hardest by the economic crisis, but also those that need support on a social dimension and on a greening dimension.

It is important that we make the old cohesion policy, whereby Eastern European countries are awarded a lot of money, greener than before. But having a strong climate conditionality doesn't mean that we are not interested in a strong social dimension; we need to combine these elements so that we are fighting inequality and climate change at the same time.

Niklas Nienaß, can you elaborate on the political divisions in the groups that you are active in and how to overcome them?

Niklas Nienaß: The classic problem that we saw, for example with the JTF, is that of the "frugal four" and the friends of the cohesion policies. So, that's basically North versus South-East. Then we also have this division between East and West.

It's interesting that the Northern countries who want to save more money usually want to do a little bit more against climate change, rather than the friends of the cohesion policy, which just want to get money unconditionally. This divide was taken into consideration in the JTF in that it made sure everybody gets money out of it, even though the JTF is supposed to support the phase-out of coal in coal regions primarily. Now the second issue is conditionality, for instance on the rule of law, but also ecological criteria. But now with the coronavirus crisis, we see that this is being taken back and especially the rapporteur for the JTF dossier from Greece, which wants to transform its economy into a gas-driven one and therefore wants to support gas infrastructure with the JTF.

So, we need to be very critical on those issues and the fights will be very hard in the next weeks, especially concerning phase-out dates and further investment in fossil fuels with a lock-in effect. We have little time and need to be finished by 1 January 2021.

Patrick, do you want to add anything on the political problems? How could Germany play a role in bridging the divides between the East, West, North and South?

Patrick ten Brink: First of all, I agree with what Niklas Nienaß and Rasmus Andresen said about the Just Transition mechanism conditionality and I would also like to point out that transparency is another key aspect, so people can actually see where the money goes.

I also fully support the growth in the funds allocated to the Just Transition mechanism. The European project really needs European solidarity at this moment. So, there is a

need for using all the instruments possible and the Just Transition mechanism is a good way of getting certain countries on board.

The issue of some sort of debt mutualisation is also important in light of the political context. In terms of the German Presidency and the recent change in position by Chancellor Angela Merkel, I think it is very positive to now have created an opening or a willingness to think about having bonds in the times of the coronavirus. But again, it can't just be something that is offered without any conditions.

Niklas Nienaß: I think it is very important for Germany to not just be the supporter of the West, but really to bridge over to the East and bring those Member States into the community of everybody, rather than just having two fronts against each other.

My last question concerns the debate on generating own resources, which has just picked up again. Could that be a way to reconcile the “frugal four” and other countries that have called for greater solidarity during the crisis? What are the risks and opportunities associated with such own-resource approaches and what are the major political barriers that need to be overcome? And what could that mean for European democracy?

Patrick ten Brink: Just to start on the environmental side, I think there is a need to move towards a proper carbon tax. But it needs to be done together with the ETS reform, linked also to the border adjustment mechanism to make sure that there are no concerns for international competition. Additionally, it's fundamentally important to ensure that it's linked with a range of wider social measures to ensure equity, affordability and fairness. At the same time, it needs to be launched in a package with the energy tax and the plastic tax, for example, and the revenues could usefully be earmarked to facilitate the green transition in the countries.

Also, none of the coronavirus packages should pay any money to anyone who doesn't pay taxes in the EU. If they have their companies in offshore non-taxable areas, there should be no government support anywhere in Europe for them; it has to be a fair game between paid taxes and getting taxpayer support.

Rasmus Andresen: For me, the best option would be to have some strong European taxes. Some taxes will be a higher burden for certain Member States, maybe some states will be hit harder by the crisis than others and there is an argument there. But in a way, I think we need to overcome these national distribution measures and for me, that means that we need to look at what kind of concentration we have in our society and where it makes sense to tax, based on the priorities we are setting, and the first priority is the green priority. Another priority is the digital sphere.

We need not just a few commitments from the European Commission, or more vague political declarations; we really need to look at how to implement them now. My fear

is that at the end, there will be a political declaration about the need to work on the digital tax for the next years and nothing will happen afterwards because there is no political pressure for some of the Member States voting in favour of that.

Niklas Nienaß: Nobody wants to tackle the tax debate because nobody wants to pay taxes. To explain why we need them, it's important to talk about equality. Nobody came into this crisis because of anything they did wrong, it's a disease and we have to do everything to help everybody in the EU to get out of the crisis again. And to pay for that, we need to look at how to finance it and then we can really see that the taxes proposed do make sense.

Even though we can't earmark taxes directly, we need to explain what we want to use that money for and in what direction it will go. One thing that Europe can really show is that Europe is the people and the German Presidency can focus on supporting the regions, the municipalities and the cities to get direct funding, to have their own climate action plan at hand.

Thank you so much for all your insights.

The conversation took place on 29 May 2020.



Rasmus Andresen

Born in 1986, Rasmus Andresen grew up in Flensburg, where he attended a Danish school before studying Communication Sciences in Denmark. He has been involved in Green politics since the age of 14. Rasmus was first elected to the regional parliament (Landtag) of Schleswig-Holstein in 2009, where he was in charge of budgetary affairs and digital policy. During the last term, he also held the office of the Vice-President of the Landtag. Since 1 July 2019, Rasmus Andresen has been a Member of the European Parliament and coordinator for the Greens/EFA in the Budget Committee. Furthermore, he is Substitute Member in the Committee for Industry, Research and Energy.



Patrick ten Brink

Patrick ten Brink is the Director for EU Policy at the European Environment Bureau. He is responsible for the EEB's EU Policy Unit as well for a range of horizontal dossiers, including the European Green Deal and the 8th EAP, fiscal reform and the MFF, horizontal work on the EU Presidencies, and better regulation. Before joining the EEB, Patrick was the Director of IEEP-Brussels and head of its Green Economy Programme. He has worked extensively on green tax reform, subsidy reform, circular economy and marine litter, climate change and transport, biodiversity policy and the benefits of EU law.



Niklas Nienaß

Niklas Nienaß, born in 1992 in Marl, Germany, has been a Member of the European Parliament in the Greens/EFA group since July 2019. He is the coordinator for the Greens/EFA group in the Committee on Regional Development. As member of the EP's Committee on Culture and Education, he has also positioned himself as a proponent of the cultural and creative sector. Furthermore, he is part of the "Spinelli Group", a group of pro-European Members of the European Parliament from various political groups. Living in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania since 2013, Niklas Nienaß describes himself as a child of the German reunification and as a European.



Lisa Tostado

Lisa Tostado has been Head of Programme for International Climate, Energy & Agricultural Policy at the European Union office of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung in Brussels since November 2019. She is responsible for issues related to the coherence of EU policies for sustainable development, especially with respect to their impact on developing and emerging countries. Before joining the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, she worked as a project manager in the circular economy sector in France, where her main focus was reusable and recyclable food packaging. Lisa also gained experience in international development cooperation at the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), where she focused on topics related to the adaptation to climate change impacts. Lisa holds a BA in Political Sciences and Economics from the University of Mannheim and the University of Ottawa, and a MA in Environmental Policy from Sciences Po Paris and the University of Liège.



2. The European Green Deal

2.7. Facing the Climate Crisis

Lisa Tostado

How does the European Green Deal respond to the climate emergency? What are its strengths and weaknesses? What main economic and political barriers have to be overcome to achieve higher ambitions?



Jutta Paulus and Michael Bloss, both Members of the European Parliament for The Greens/EFA, and Klaus Röhrig, EU climate & energy policy officer at Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe in a conversation with Lisa Tostado, Head of Climate, Energy & Agriculture Policy Programme, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union.

Lisa Tostado: In this conversation, I would like us to explore the European Green Deal. How does the European Green Deal live up to the climate emergency that was declared by the European Parliament? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Climate Law and other initiatives under the European Green Deal that we already know about? How do they contribute to the overall objective of climate neutrality by 2050?

Michael Bloss: Those are really important questions that you're asking, but the answers to them are not so clear because we don't really know what the European Green Deal means. How the initiatives within the Green Deal will become tangible is still very much politically contested.

Moreover, the framing of the Climate Law puts us on the wrong path because it presumes that becoming climate neutral by 2050 will save us from the climate catastrophe, but that's not true. We have to start reducing our CO₂ emissions now! So the real question is not what happens in 30 years, the real question is what are we can achieve in the next five or ten years, and this is where the European Commission's proposal for the Climate Law is really lacking. It doesn't even define a clear number for the greenhouse gas emissions reduction target by 2030; instead, it defines a range of minus 50-55%. But it's already clear from climate science that the 55% reduction target is not enough; we need to cut our emissions by up to 65% just to retain the possibility of limiting the temperature rise to 1.5 degrees.

It's not the European Commission that has the last word; it's the European Parliament and the EU Council of Ministers, and the majority of the EP is in favour of substantial improvements of the Climate Law.

Jutta, do you want to add anything from the point of view of the European Parliament and other initiatives that you have been working on?

Jutta Paulus: The Green Deal consists of a lot of initiatives and up to now we have only seen legislative proposals, we have seen the Climate Law, but we have to make sure that the other initiatives, such as transforming industry and biodiversity strategies, are at least as important as the Climate Law itself.

I would like to focus a bit on the biodiversity strategy which was issued recently, albeit watered down from the first proposals. It must complement the climate approach because we need biodiversity so much to make sure that we can preserve our carbon sinks and even enlarge them – which is urgently needed.

Thinking about biodiversity, we really should make sure that we preserve our national parks, because they can help us mitigate climate change and they can help us become more resilient to climate change. We must see nature as being part of development because humans are part of nature. If we keep on pretending that we can exist without nature, we won't get anywhere.

Klaus, what is the perspective of your organisation and the various environmental NGOs on the European Green Deal? What are the biggest barriers to such a Green Deal, and how can they be overcome politically, economically and socially?

Klaus Röhrig: Climate Action Network is very happy about the kind of growing understanding of the challenge of climate change, and it's important to put that at the heart of the next policy cycle because, as Jutta and Micha mentioned, it's important to understand that every sector needs to maximise their efforts.

At the same time, we also see a mismatch between the climate emergency declaration and very weak proposals, with the EU Climate Law for example. It should really enable the maximisations, bring all the sectors together and define the new targets that we need in order to actually honour the commitments of the Paris Agreement. We need to maximise our efforts for short-term greenhouse gas reductions as well, because we are aware that greenhouse gas emission cuts are essential to safeguard the 1.5 degree target.

How can we ensure that Europe's climate targets are not undermined by efforts to offset emissions in Europe by claiming emission reductions results elsewhere, and do you think that Europe should stick with climate neutrality or aim to go fossil-free? What are the different narratives and discourses in European Parliament and in society at large about these different notions? Is there an actual debate on them?

Jutta Paulus: Some argue that Europe will not be able to reach its climate targets without Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS), and while it's important to be realistic, we shouldn't just say, 'Well, we'll just do CCS so we can just go on burning fossil fuels.' It must not be a lifeline for fossil fuels, but we must talk about CCS for the cement sector, for example, where you have not only the energy-related emissions but also the process-based emissions. We should speak about the role CCS could play at the end of the day, but we must not count on CCS as the major instrument to reduce our emissions.

We should make sure that we reduce our emissions domestically as far as possible and if we talk about climate neutrality and storing carbon somewhere, we should always look

to the natural options first. If we reconstruct wetlands, for example, if we keep our carbon sinks, if we let our forests go wild in order to preserve carbon in the ground, because most of the carbon is not stored in the tree trunk but actually underground.

Michael Bloss: We cannot talk about climate neutrality without talking about fossil fuels in Europe. We need to talk about subsidies. There's even a push to prolong subsidising coal. Phasing out coal is something that we can do quickly, except that the German government doesn't seem motivated to do so.

As we talked about the locking-in of fossil fuel infrastructure and subsidies to fossil fuels, I would like to briefly address the current crisis and the enormous amounts of money that are being spent right now. We have two tendencies. The CO2 emissions in Europe dropped because of the pandemic and many have demanded that the European Green Deal objectives now be at the heart of the recovery programmes. At the same time, the dire economic consequences of the pandemic may lead countries to prioritise indiscriminate GDP growth over climate action or to bail out GHG-intensive sectors. How do you think the EU has been dealing with the climate agenda in the face of that crisis and what are the ways forward?

Klaus Röhrig: We are seeing some positive signals. Following a Danish initiative from the environment ministers, we have a large European coalition calling for recovery to be taken as an opportunity to make sure that the recovery packages do not just recreate the world the way it was. We should make sure that we create a real, enabling framework so that all the investment that we are putting into the system really sets us in the right direction.

This moment should be a moment to reflect on the industries of the future. It will be absolutely necessary to make sure that we don't hand out cheques or just bail out industries that we see as totally incompatible with that future – these industries will drag us down again and they will prevent us from becoming a climate-resilient economy and society.

While there is a lot to be done, the current European Council discussions are showing a bit more progress, but then the devil is in the details. If we don't manage to make the new annual financial framework really climate-proof, there is definitely the risk that we will take decisions now that will lock us in a fossil fuel infrastructure and that we should try to avoid.

What are the political dynamics with respect to what Klaus just said about the recovery programmes and the locking-in of infrastructure, etc., and what do you think Germany's role – with the upcoming German Presidency – is?

Jutta Paulus: I'm not sure how much the German Presidency can actually deliver. Germany should focus on enabling the transition and enabling the transformation. A great

opportunity would be for Germany to focus on renovating: insulating buildings and making them use less energy will bring us forward in our climate ambition and it is also a chance to roll out renewables. Additionally, domestic jobs are created.

Has Europe been inward-looking itself? Is the European Green Deal too Eurocentric, and in what respect is the European Green Deal sensitive to the international dimension of climate change? How can the EU's role in climate diplomacy be strengthened and how can the blueprint for personal climate neutrality by 2050 become an inspiration for other countries?

Jutta Paulus: In the EU, we have sort of a contradictory policy. While we are focussing on Green Deal objectives, we are still working on trade policies in which those Green Deal objectives are not reflected at all. I am very interested in the development of the carbon adjustment mechanism coming up in the next months, which will show us whether there is really an international approach to climate policy.

Paris would never have happened had the French not conducted so much climate diplomacy in the years leading up to it and so I think that the EU also has a responsibility to take this role.

Michael Bloss: I would like to point out that the next Climate Conference will be the most important one since Paris... It's where all Member States have to submit their Nationally Determined Contributions, which have to be ambitious enough to collectively stay below the two-degree warming threshold. At the moment we are a long way from that.

If we work quickly in Europe and agree on very ambitious targets, basing our NDCs on those, that could really be a signal to the world that Europe is taking it seriously and pro-actively. It could also create a kind of competition, not only over who is the best climate saver, but also who is the first to create the technologies that bring us there. So this kind of upwards spiral is the best-case scenario.

One major demand of the civil society movement has been climate justice. Klaus, how do you think that demand has been integrated and how could that be improved?

Klaus Röhrig: There is still a lot of work to make this better. But this is where we as civil society organisations have a little hope that the European Parliament will shape the discussion and be a defender of the equity principle and of climate justice for the domestic ambition level and the EU's role internationally. How should Europe's international responsibility reflect outside of its domestic ambition?

Michael Bloss: One last point. In Copenhagen, the industrialised countries promised that from 2020 onwards, they would ensure that every year there would be €100 billion for

the Global South, to finance adaptation and mitigation efforts. We are nowhere near this amount and the coronavirus crisis will in fact worsen the situation, as countries will have more budgetary constraints and are likely to transfer less money to the Global South. This is one of the big problems, because they will need it even more. They are affected by the climate crisis much more than we are by the coronavirus crisis. If Europe wants to be a global leader, then it also really needs to make it tangible and put the money there.

Jutta, would you like to add anything?

Jutta Paulus: If we step back and try to look at the situation from above, then I think we really have a turning point in history because this pandemic has put the last nail in the coffin, so to speak, of the US as a global leader. Because their government has had such a pathetic approach to this crisis, it has become clear to the whole world that not only the technological, not only the geopolitical, but even the domestic organisational standards have just gone away out of the window.

At this point, the question is who will take over this position, which might be China of course, or there could be a situation in which we have a lot of players who are more or less on the same level of geopolitical influence so to speak, like the EU, China, Russia. I think the way this turns out will also define the approach to the environmental crisis we are facing together on this planet.

Thank you all for taking the time.

The conversation took place on 25 May 2020.



Michael Bloss

Michael Bloss grew up in Stuttgart and studied International Relations and Globalisation and Development in Dresden and London. He worked as a consultant for the United Nations Development Group, in the regional parliament of Baden-Württemberg, and for the MEP Ska Keller in Brussels, before he was elected to the European Parliament in 2019. There, he is a full member of the Committee on Industry and Energy and a substitute member of the Committee on the Environment. He is also the coordinator of the Climate Core Group and shadow rapporteur for the Industrial Strategy and the European Climate Law for the Greens/EFA Group.



Jutta Paulus

Jutta Paulus has been a Member of the European Parliament for The Greens/EFA since 2019. She is a member of the Committees on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI), Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) and Transport (TRAN). Paulus is the rapporteur for the revision of the EU MRV regulation. She has dedicated her political work to climate, energy and environmental challenges. She aims to ensure that the European Union takes effective action against climate change and that human beings, animals and nature are protected from destruction, pollution and poisoning.



Klaus Röhrig

Klaus Röhrig works on the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) and on fostering ambition in EU climate and energy policy. Prior to joining CAN Europe, Röhrig was Research and Policy Officer at Green Budget Europe, promoting environmental fiscal reform through the European Semester and advocating a more sustainably-oriented EU budget. He has worked with Greenpeace Germany and the Policy Department for Budgetary Affairs in the European Parliament. He holds a Masters in European Studies and has studied in Maastricht, Grenoble and Konstanz.



3. The Future of the EU

3.1. Safeguarding the Rule of Law in EU Member States

Joanna Maria Stolarek and Gert Röhrborn

In recent years, the rule of law has been dismantled in the EU, especially in Hungary and Poland. Who and what measures can guarantee the safeguarding of democracy and citizen's rights? And how will the situation develop in Europe?



Dr. Sergey Lagodinsky, Member of the European Parliament, Małgorzata Tracz, Member of Sejm (lower house, Polish Parliament), Polish Green Party and Dr. Benedek Jávor, Representative of the City of Budapest and former Member of the European Parliament in a conversation with Joanna Maria Stolarek, Head of Office, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Warsaw and Gert Röhrborn, Head of Democracy and Human Rights Programme, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Warsaw.

Joanna Maria Stolarek: I would like to start with a provocative question. Are the European Commission's measures to protect the rule of law enough to address democratic backsliding or should the European Commission do more?

Sergey Lagodinsky: To be honest, I don't see that many measures have been taken by the European Commission, especially during the coronavirus crisis. We had our questions regarding the situation in Hungary and in Poland. The European Parliament has stated its concerns in several resolutions, but European Commissioners Didier Reynders⁵ and Vera Jourová⁶ were basically giving a blank cheque to countries for all the measures that I personally and most parliamentarians see critically. I wish that the European Commission had introduced more legal measures and had not been as timid as they were during this crisis.

Joanna Maria Stolarek: Małgorzata, what do you think? How similar are Hungary and Poland regarding the attacks on the rule of law or is it better to avoid comparing these countries?

Małgorzata Tracz: The patterns are similar. We had a very specific situation in Poland, where the presidential elections that were supposed to be held on 10 May 2020 just didn't happen. There was legal chaos about it and now the first election was held on 28 June and the second round on 12 July 2020. There are two main similarities between Poland and Hungary. Firstly, the ruling party "Law and Justice" (PiS) in the coalition that has the absolute majority in the Polish Parliament. Secondly, there is the important role of the so called 'public media', which is public in name only, but is in fact 100 percent government-controlled and used for propaganda. Their entire news coverage is directed against the opposition and geared towards promoting pro-government ideas. There is a lot of disinformation, fake news, and all this is steering public opinion in favour of "Law and Justice" (PiS).

Joanna Maria Stolarek: What is your opinion, Benedek? Can we compare Hungary with Poland? Is it justified regarding the rule of law?

Benedek Jávör: Yes, it's possible to compare them. The two countries have many similarities, as both Poland and Hungary create a very difficult case for the EU. However, there are strong differences as well: PiS hasn't yet achieved complete control over the state. In Poland, they still have the existing checks and balances, institutional opposition to the ruling of the government party, whereas in Hungary, most of those oppositional or institutional counterbalances have already been destroyed or occupied by the government.

On the other hand, if you talk about the similarities, we see that the local level, the municipal level, is important in the resistance to illiberal populist governments. To illustrate, the mayors of both Warsaw and Budapest are from the opposition. In other larger cities, the opposition has a relatively strong position in local politics and local governments as well.

Gert Röhrborn: Sergey, I have a question to widen the perspective. Who is actually working in the EU to safeguard the rights of citizens? Not only looking at Poland and Hungary, but also at what happened under the coronavirus pandemic. After the beginning of the restrictions, there were voices complaining about the constraints upon civic rights. Who has a role to play, as well as parliaments?

Sergey Lagodinsky: Your question actually contains two questions: who has a role and who has an effective role? This is an important difference within the EU's structures. Civil society plays an important role. From my perspective, they are the most important voices because they uncover, they unmask deficiencies.

The European Parliament also plays an important role. We monitor, there is a 'Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights Monitoring Group'⁷. All political groups are represented and right from the beginning of the pandemic, we met every week and closely observed the situation.

I believe that the one effective actor that we will be seeing is the European Commission, because the two pressure points that we have are legal proceedings and money.

Gert Röhrborn: I would like to follow up with a question to both of you, Benedek and Małgorzata: Which of the measures that we've discussed are going to bolster trust in the EU? Or is the EU giving these governments more arguments against European integration?

Małgorzata Tracz: The conditionality of the recovery plan and rule of law are very important topics, and also priorities of the German EU Council Presidency.

We have to be aware that the reaction of the EU on breaking the rule of law in each Member State is actually protecting the citizens. You can compare it to quarantine.

Quarantine is never popular, but it is designed to protect us against a larger societal crisis, which is why people can understand and accept its purpose. However, it is crucial to understand that if European cohesion and green transition funds are frozen, over rule of law concerns, a portion of the money won't be redirected to local governments and non-governmental organisations, who are fighting for green and democratic values.

It takes a lot of 'grass-roots work' to explain to people that the EU is so much more than just a fund for economic development or for fighting the crisis.

I would also like to refer to the role of civil society, because during the pandemic in Poland, the government was cynically using the restrictions on public gatherings to shut down civil society. There were disproportionate fines for protesting on the street, even while keeping two metres distance and wearing face masks. Yet despite the obstacles, many organisations found a way to spread their message and protest in a way that was not a danger for public health. It was very impressive and I think that we as Greens or as opposition politicians should wholeheartedly support this type of civic engagement.

Joanna Maria Stolarek: Benedek, what is your take on this?

Benedek Jávör: You cannot stop the Hungarian government speaking against the EU, so it makes no real difference. Yet, it is true that you would generate some negative feelings towards the EU in the pro-government public in Hungary or in Poland by introducing rule of law conditionality⁹. However, you also have to take into consideration the level of trust in the EU institutions in the rest of the public, where there is an increasing disappointment over the EU doing nothing against illiberal tendencies. And the trust is eroding in net contributor countries as well because people believe that the money they pay for the EU is being used in the wrong way and there is not enough control over it. It's about public confidence towards the EU in the pro-European public. They are the important ones for the leaders of the union or the political background of eurosceptic and anti-European governments.

I agree with Malgorzata, the EU should not simply find a way to control EU funding for Member States and in some cases sanction them; it should try to find partners in those countries. There are progressive civil society actors or municipalities in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania and Bulgaria who are trying or are willing to join the European efforts in the fight for EU initiatives and regulations. They should be supported.

Joanna Maria Stolarek: Sergey, what do you think about the suggestion to support local partners? How can the EU do this?

Sergey Lagodinsky: I think it is important that we are talking about partners. This is part of European regionalism and that is why it is worth exploring. I am very interested in how we can earmark funds for municipalities. We should also be supporting civil society.

Financial support for NGOs, independent media and non-profits is of the utmost importance. This is something that I am championing because civil society will be particularly vulnerable in the post-pandemic recovery: they will be at the mercy of their national governments. We are also concerned about the amount of money going to civil society, but also for anti-racism training, as part of the justice and values framework instrument. It is supposed to be cut by 20% according to the current MFF plan.

This is unacceptable and we must ensure that any government participating in the recovery programme guarantees the distribution of funds to a broad range of non-governmental actors and independent media. Rule of law is as critical for the EU as its economies.

Gert Röhrborn: According to your assessment, is there something the EU could do to directly support judges and the judicial systems of the Member States? Or at least counter the destructive argumentation of elements of the Polish ruling party, which claim the EU has no competences at all in this field?

Sergey Lagodinsky: Generally, we should continue investing in programmes that foster training and support justice officials. Where judges are under pressure from their own governments, the EU should not hesitate to introduce infringement procedures. It is especially important to implement fast interim measures that are linked to monetary penalties in case the governments of these countries do not fulfil the orders. By doing so, we can secure a safe space for judges to operate in.

Benedek Jávör: Independence of the judiciary system is and should be a real red line for the European Commission. Years ago, Vice-President Frans Timmermans stated during our discussions around the democratic developments in Hungary that touching it would be a game-changing move by the Hungarian government. And that should be the same in the case of Poland. The proper functioning of the independent control institutions is a key factor of the Rule of Law Mechanism in the next multiannual financial framework (MFF) as well. It should be made crystal clear by the European Commission that further undermining of the independence of the judiciary would trigger painful reactions, including those related to the access to EU-funds.

Małgorzata Tracz: We need to remember that the legal order of Member States is part of the EU's legal order. Judges of Member States also act in their capacity as EU judges. This in itself is a good reason to ensure that they enjoy protection and support from EU bodies. Poland is part of the EU legal order as long as it remains a Member State. The EU competencies follow automatically from this fact.

However, it is true that at the moment, the EU lacks strong means of providing positive support, as opposed to sanctioning powers, for breaches of fundamental principles of EU law and treaties. In my view, this is something that should be remedied and judges across the EU should enjoy stronger protections for their independence to make sure it cannot be easily eroded. One potential solution for the protection of judicial inde-

pendence could be to be vested with a specialised EU-court for judicial affairs. Such a court could be composed of judges from all Member States and exclusively competent to decide as the highest appeal court on disciplinary measures against judges sitting in national courts. This would ensure a level playing field with respect to the protection of judicial independence across the EU. This would require treaty change in order to be implemented.

More broadly, it will be important to keep a close eye on the European Commission's upcoming Annual Report on the Rule of Law, the reception it receives and whether it sparks a debate on this topic. We need more ideas about strengthening judicial independence across the EU and a new way of thinking about preventing encroachment, particularly in light of Polish and Hungarian experiences.

Joanna Maria Stolarek: The last question to all of you. Can you make a prediction as to how the situation will develop regarding the rule of law in Europe, especially in Poland and Hungary?

Sergey Lagodinsky: I think we will only be able to create change if we empower actors within those countries and this will be the sine qua non for the future of the rule of law. That's number one. Number two, rule of law was not on the agenda of the European Commission or of many Member States for too long, but that has changed. There is a new awareness of this topic and this gives me hope that we will go beyond rhetorical commitments.

Małgorzata Tracz: We need to change attitudes towards the EU by showing that it is a community of values and each of the actions taken by the European Commission is actually meant to protect citizens. In many countries, certainly in Poland, the idea persists that the EU is nothing but a piggy bank from which we take money for our national interest. This has to change. We Greens need to initiate a debate about the benefits of the EU membership. Paradoxically, thanks to the closure of the borders during the pandemic, many people discovered how important it is to freely move between countries, visit families and work cross-border. 'Europe will be forged in crises,' said Jean Monnet, one of the founding fathers of the European Union. We need to make sure that we use the political momentum of this crisis, to better explain to citizens how the European Union works. That it is not all about Brussels, the Institutions and the capitals, but it is about people. A people-centric Europe is what I would call it.

Benedek Jávor: If you ask about the state of the rule of law in the EU, and especially in Hungary and Poland, the picture is quite sad, and democracy is in decline – there is democratic backsliding in these countries. This is also an answer to the first question. The European Commission isn't doing enough against this democratic backsliding.

Still, there is some good news. I completely agree with Sergey that local partners are extremely important.

If you have a look at the recent Polish presidential elections, there was a good chance that after the senate, perhaps the presidency could have been gained by the opposition. It was a close race. However, Andrzej Duda's election victory will underpin the PiS party's de facto monopoly of power until the parliamentary elections in 2023.

In Hungary, last October in the municipal elections, half of the bigger cities were won by the opposition, including Budapest. It is an extremely important message to the EU.

Is the EU able to give a helping hand to partners, municipalities, organisations, or politicians to fight against nationalistic illiberal governments? This fight is quite unequal and if they are left alone, they will eventually lose. Here, the EU's role is really to have a look at the situation and find a way of cooperating better with local partners in those countries. The changes can and should be made only in Member States by local citizens, by local politicians and decision-makers and not from the outside, but their fight can and should be backed by the EU.

Joanna Maria Stolarek: Thank you very much, we need the EU more than ever.

The conversation took place on 15 June 2020.



Benedek Jávor

Benedek Jávor is a Hungarian biologist, environmentalist and politician, a former leading member of the Politics Can Be Different (LMP) party, and current leading member of the Dialogue for Hungary (PM) party. Jávor was a Member of the Hungarian Parliament (2010-2014) and Member of the European Parliament between 2014-2019 in the group of The Greens–European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA). He is currently the Head of the Representation of Budapest in Brussels.



Sergey Lagodinsky

Sergey Lagodinsky is a Member of the European Parliament, Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance. Until June 2019 he was the Head of European Union and North America Division of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung. His specialist expertise lies in transatlantic relations, international and constitutional law as well as law and politics of diversity and integration.



Gert Röhrborn

Gert Röhrborn has coordinated the Democracy and Human Rights programme in the Warsaw office of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung since September 2014. He is political scientist, project coordinator and certified EU fundraiser. He studied politics, European Union studies and history at Leipzig, Newcastle upon Tyne and Berlin. He has previously worked as a research assistant at Dresden Technical University, executive officer of the network Citizens of Europe in Berlin and project coordinator at the Robert Schuman Foundation in Warsaw. Röhrborn is interested in civic engagement in social space, politics of memory and education. He has published articles mainly on Polish, European and Eastern matters in various journals and portals including Kommune, v4/revue, TransConflict, Slovo Blog, Magazyn Miasta and Kontynent Warszawy.



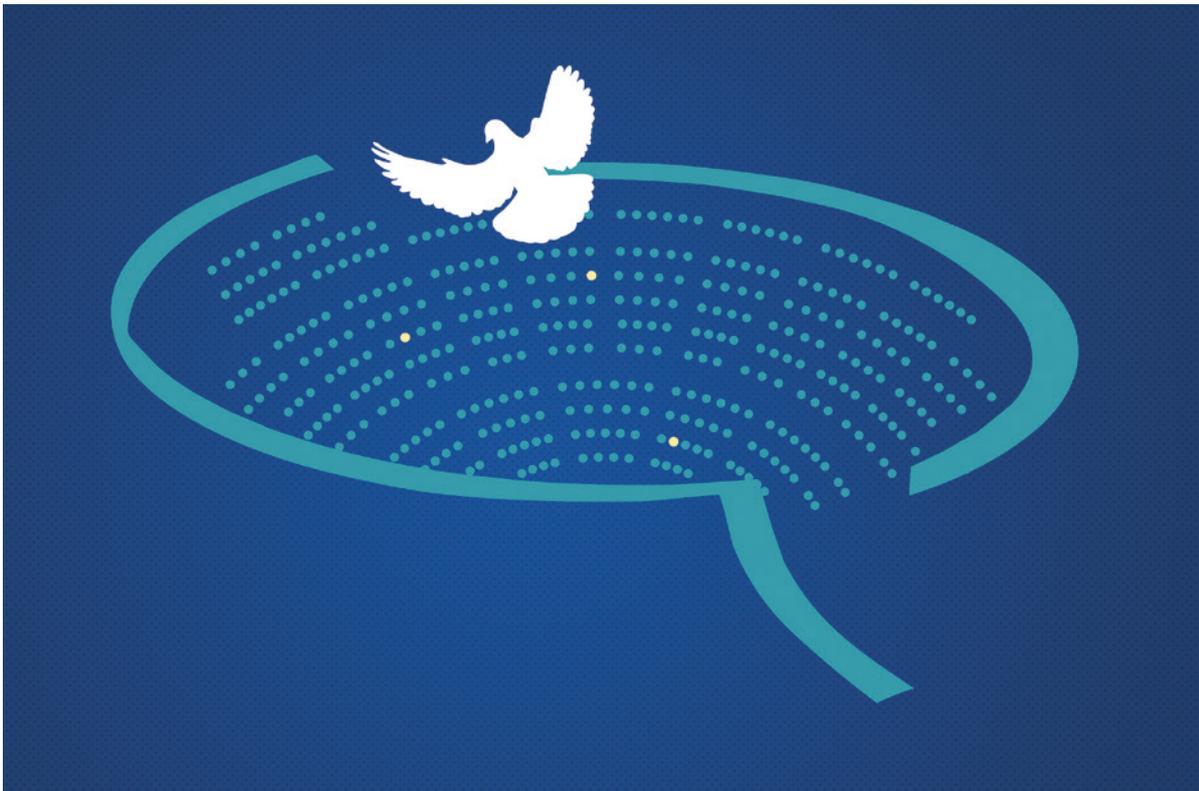
Joanna Maria Stolarek

Joanna Maria Stolarek has been the Head of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung's Warsaw office since October 2019. She studied German, Slavic and Spanish philology at Karls-Eberhardt-Universität in Tübingen. Before embarking on a career in journalism, she worked as a researcher at the faculty of economics and business law at HfWU Nuertingen Geislingen University in Geislingen/Steige. After studying journalism at Munich, she worked as an editor and political commentator at Südwest Presse in Ulm, in the Märkische Oderzeitung in Frankfurt an der Oder and in the Neue Berliner Redaktionsgesellschaft in Berlin. Her commitment to diversity – including in the media – took her to the NGO Neue deutsche Medienmacher, which promotes diversity in the media and works to ensure that texts and articles are written with sensitivity to cultural diversity. There she sat on the board and managed media projects. Stolarek publishes in various media, taking a Polish–German perspective. She specialises in politics – German and Polish politics in particular. She likes to write about and discuss Polish–German relations and to analyse the political situation and social changes in both countries. She explains Poland to the Germans and Germany to the Poles. She is an active mentor, particularly supporting women in their professional development.



Małgorzata Tracz

In November 2019, Małgorzata Tracz became one of the first members of the Green Party to be elected to the Parliament of Poland. She has been the co-president of the Polish Green Party for six years. Tracz is a member of the Polish Women's Congress (Kongres Kobiet) and Ecological Association EKO-UNIA. She is also a supporter of Lower Silesian Smog Alert (Dolnośląski Alarm Smogowy).



3. The Future of the EU

3.2. Conference on the Future of Europe

Dr. Christine Pütz

The conference on the Future of Europe was supposed to allow citizens to get involved in identifying priorities for a more democratic, sustainable and efficient EU. However, political conditions have changed dramatically since the pandemic.



Daniel Freund MEP, The Greens/EFA, and Gisela Erler, State Counsellor for Civil Society and Civic Participation in a conversation with Dr. Christine Pütz, Senior Programme Officer European Union Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung in Berlin.

The initiation of the Conference on the Future of Europe¹⁰ was an important step taken by the new President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, at the beginning of her tenure last year. The conference was supposed to begin on Europe Day on 9 May this year, with the aim of getting EU citizens involved in identifying the key policy priorities for the next few years, and to make the EU more democratic, sustainable, and efficient. The political conditions have changed dramatically with the Covid-19 pandemic. The question now is whether the conference should still be a priority. Daniel, should the EU and the current German EU Council Presidency expend energy on the Conference on the Future of Europe or should they prioritise combating the economic and social effects of the pandemic?

Daniel Freund: There are two answers to this question. We cannot look several years into the future at the height of a pandemic, in which thousands of Europeans have lost their lives. We must first work on the real issues surrounding the fight against this pandemic. The short and direct response to the crisis by Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron, with their push for a Recovery Plan¹¹, was the right one. At the moment, we need money to respond properly to the healthcare issues and the economic consequences. Given that the infection rates are declining significantly, the restrictions are being relaxed everywhere in Europe, borders are open and people can holiday in Europe again, it would be odd to say that we should not talk about the future. For a long-term response, we need the conference now more than ever. We are facing what is probably the most severe economic crisis since the Second World War and the last economic crisis ended only recently. Greece has just started having slow growth rates for the first time in ten years. The fact that we in the EU have taken longer to overcome the last financial crisis than, for example, the USA or the UK, is because of the faulty financial and economic policies in the EU. I very much hope that the economic crisis that is upon us does not again continue for an unnecessarily long period. But to make sure that it does not, we need institutional changes. And that is what we are supposed to discuss in the Conference on the Future of Europe. It is unacceptable that we in Europe lurch from one crisis to the next and keep saying, "but now we are in crisis once again, and so we cannot deal with the basic issues". It is precisely these basic problems that plunge us into crises time and again and prevent us from managing crises efficiently.

Gisela, what is the Conference on the Future of Europe supposed to be about?

Gisela Erler: The pandemic has made it clear that certain things need to change, e.g. in the transnational healthcare policy or in the economic policy. We have to fundamentally redefine how we distribute funds and how we want to work together. Should we organise centrally or decentrally? The pandemic has shown that we need both. On the one hand, we need a centralised budget and on the other, we need strong decentralised structures. When we look at France, we can see that it is not necessary to manage healthcare and crisis policies centrally. Now the question is whether we will have to amend EU treaties to achieve that, or if we can find other ways to deal with this. Many warn against amending EU treaties because they think it could backfire.

Daniel, you spoke about a long-term response. The Conference on the Future of Europe is supposed to address political priorities as well as institutional changes. Gisela just spoke about economic and healthcare policies. What should be our main priorities, in your opinion?

Daniel Freund: I would focus on continental issues. Issues related to climate protection, the lack of a tax policy, which allows large corporations to use loopholes, dealing with digitalisation and its effects on our lives. Economic policy and the question of solidarity in a crisis are also important. And of course, Europe's role in the world. How can the EU defend its values and interests with a highly unreliable President in the White House and a rising China? These are the main issues. And then there are institutional and democratic questions. How should European democracy work? How do we elect the European Parliament, should there be transnational lists, should the President of the European Commission be elected directly?

You are coming to a critical point here. Gisela mentioned the voice of sceptics: "Be careful, stay away from the EU treaties". What do you think about that?

Daniel Freund: Firstly, I have to say that here we are talking about a conference, not about a convention or a constituent assembly. I find it strange that we want to have an exchange with citizens from all over the EU about the future of the EU, but at the same time we say "let's talk about the future, but not about a future where we change anything". There should be an open debate where citizens discuss their vision for the EU. It's irrelevant to them if decisions are finally made based on a "Passerelle clause" in the European Council, or through budgetary adjustments, or through new EU taxes, or by amending a treaty. I think we should not start this debate by looking at red flags, we first need to have a discussion and then talk about how we can implement good ideas.

Gisela, this is another key issue. Daniel just said that he would like citizens to have an open debate. How can we have such a dialogue so that at the end of the day, citizens also feel heard and actually involved in the decision-making process? This is an important question because we have to ensure people don't feel frustrated about 'pseudo-participation'. As the State Counsellor, you advised the state govern-

ment of Baden-Württemberg for many years on how Citizen's Dialogues can be held properly. What are the criteria for success in your experience?

Gisela Erler: I would suggest a model in which citizens are selected randomly. Daniel and I agree on that. In this process, randomly selected citizens will be brought together across borders from all over EU. A citizen consultation with people from Finland to Malta will not only give us a Maltese or a Finnish solution, but it will enable transnational compromises. We will have some clever recommendations from all the experience, recommendations not only from Baden-Württemberg, but also from Vorarlberg, England and Ireland. How citizens deal with issues elsewhere won't be just a footnote, it will be the main point. What should we do to actually involve them and to give them a voice? That's the most difficult question. We cannot tell citizens that their ideas and suggestions will be implemented wholesale. This process is not direct democracy. However, we must ensure that citizens' recommendations are actually considered seriously and, if possible, implemented. This is not trivial. In all the dialogues, my experience has been that people find this process feasible. They respect the existing institutional structures and do not assume that they are replacing the parliament or the government. But the pre-requisite is that in the European Parliament, in the EU Council and in the European Commission, recommendations made by citizens must be actually accounted for.

I really believe that we can make headway with this kind of method, compared to something like the European Citizens' Initiative, which often turns out to be pointless because it is not sufficiently embedded and most of all, it is not sufficiently representative. Powerful stakeholders and lobby groups are legitimate and necessary for a democracy, but they are not the same as a citizen consultation, which captures representative opinions and gives them further impetus. Unlike referendums, citizen consultation can be convened several times. People can form an opinion in small groups. Just like in the European Parliament and in the EU Council. People don't come in with a fixed position, they have a European experience and they form an opinion. In this way, it differs from direct democracy, where people come in with a fixed opinion and then they cannot make any compromises.

Daniel, Gisela spoke about two important criteria for success. Firstly, a randomly selected representative body of citizens that guarantees a political and regional balance and convenes multiple times to be a part of an opinion-forming and decision-making process. Secondly, European institutions being accountable for dealing with the outcomes and recommendations of these citizen consultations. This should enable a real deliberative process which makes negotiation and implementation of outcomes transparent. You have been a Member of the European Parliament for a year now. Do you think the European Parliament can fulfil the last criterion we talked about?

Daniel Freund: Absolutely. The essence of the European Parliament lies in listening to the citizens. In this Parliament, we have to represent, negotiate and add concrete legislative initiatives for what the voters want. The European Parliament generally urges other institutions to take this process seriously as well. Now let me tell you how it should not be done. The way the citizens' dialogues of the European Commission have been conducted until now. The European Commission and even the European Council have organised hundreds of citizens' dialogues. Emmanuel Macron introduced this with his "Grand Débat", and he then pushed other administrations to do the same. Such dialogues then followed with sometimes greater or sometimes lesser enthusiasm. And what happened at the end of this process? It was discussed in the European Council for 90 seconds. A 90-second debate. Without any particular outcome. After having talked to thousands of citizens. This is exactly why people get frustrated and disillusioned with the European Union. That should not be the case for this Conference on the Future of Europe.

We cannot promise that whatever the citizens recommend will be implemented as it is. However, at least it should be clear from the start that all the involved institutions will take the recommendations seriously. Then this process can be successful. I don't think it depends on the European Parliament in the end. We see this over and over in the European decision-making process: the European Commission puts forward good proposals, the European Parliament develops them further, and at the end many good ideas die in the EU Council. It is because of the resistance of individual governments. Often no one knows which proposal was actually blocked by which government in the EU Council. For me, this conference is a tool that will hopefully increase public pressure on governments in such a way that they let go of their proposal-blocking mentality and do not stand in the way of European solutions for European problems.

Gisela, would you like to add anything? What mistakes should we avoid at all costs when organising these Conferences on the Future of Europe?

Gisela Erler: The biggest mistake would be to raise false hopes which would disappoint people. There is a great wish for direct democracy in the population, yet at the same time people are scared of it. I don't think direct democracy through referendums in the EU can be ruled out a priori in the future. However, an idea of direct democracy where every Member State decides about different topics and by organising a referendum, with nationalistic and sometimes very populist debates, is wrong. We need real transnational European discourse among citizens. Now the task is to enable this mechanism. Many people thought primarily we would have national dialogues and then somehow add them up into a European discourse. But that would be something completely different. This mistake should not be made. This approach would only deepen divisions in the EU.

Let's come back to the current situation. How would such a Citizen's Dialogue work in the near future, given the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic?

Gisela Erler: At present, we are better positioned for this project than before the coronavirus crisis. As Daniel said, the European Council was always the black hole where everything disappeared. In the EU Council, time and again an intergovernmental and non-European strategy prevailed. My view is that the German federal government has now understood because of the corona pandemic that this crisis cannot be handled only at the national level. This is an opportunity to have a citizen's dialogue. The old concern was always that citizens could make too many pan-European demands wherever possible. The recent citizen's dialogues have shown European governments that citizens are asking more for Europe in many fields. An anti-European sentiment was never seen.

Daniel Freund: The digital solutions that we developed in response to the pandemic showed us that on the one hand, many problems can be solved digitally. On the other, here in the European Parliament we are also experiencing the limits of digital communication when it comes to real debates and finding compromises. The lesson I learnt for the conference process is that we will need to enhance and improve the process with digital media. Having twenty-four official languages and participants from twenty-seven countries would be a huge challenge in itself. And since we will be involving people of all age groups and all social backgrounds, that could be another challenge. And that is why I would prefer waiting a few months until we are able to control the health situation to the extent that citizen consultations can be conducted in person, instead of having to do them solely digitally. This doesn't mean that digital media cannot or should not be used in the process, but I think for the citizen's dialogues alone at present, I would prefer to conduct them in person.

Gisela Erler: I would like to answer that differently. I would like to be brave and say that we should start the dialogue. Unlike you, I think we can do a lot more digitally. For example, I have just organised meetings in villages in the Balkans, where grandchildren set up Zoom for their grandmothers and they were able to speak to us about the Danube Strategy. We have the momentum now, people are open now to topics related to the renewal of Europe. We should use this momentum. I would insist on starting the process now. In the end we can top it off with one or two physical meetings. In the current scenario, it will be easy to bring together even more people digitally. The more I use digital media, the more I realise that now there is almost a "free highway" for citizens.

What should the next steps be? What exactly should the German Council Presidency do?

Daniel Freund: A clear guideline to the German EU Council Presidency is to make sure that the Conference on the Future of Europe starts ambitiously, that the process be given the necessary gravitas by keeping it at the highest level. The European Commission, the European Parliament and the EU Council must issue a joint statement before the summer break. We must bring the three institutions together and tell them how we intend to conduct the conference. Ideally, it should start in September under the German

EU Council Presidency. Of course, we will need a few months to prepare for the citizen consultations, but the three European institutions can come together now for the inaugural event. Then conferences can be carried out for the next two years.

How optimistic are you that there will be a successful Conference on the Future of Europe in this legislative period?

Daniel Freund: It is our job to make it happen. Obviously, I would not put in so much time and energy if I didn't believe in it.

Gisela Erler: In the last fifty years, I have seen a lot of things fail, but I still have high hopes. I do really hope now that we can take this project in the right direction.

Gisela, Daniel, thank you for this conversation.

The conversation took place on 8th June 2020.



Gisela Erler

Since 2011, Gisela Erler has been the State Counsellor for Civil Society and Civic Participation for the State government of Baden-Württemberg and Member of the Council of Ministers. Gisela Erler was born in 1946 in Biberach an der Riss and is the daughter of SPD politician Fritz Erler.



Daniel Freund

Daniel Freund has been a Member of the European Parliament for the Greens/EFA since 2019. He works on topics such as transparency, democracy and fighting corruption. He leads the work of the Greens for the Conference on the Future of Europe.



Dr. Christine Pütz

Dr. Christine Pütz is Senior Programme Officer European Union in the international department EU/North America of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung in Berlin. Until 2007, she worked for various research and education centres such as Centre Marc Bloch (Berlin), Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES) and CEVIPOF in Paris. In the fields of political science and education, she focuses on the EU and France as well as party politics. Pütz is also a trainer and coach in communication and the art of interviewing. Her key activities in the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung are the future of the European Union, European democracy and the Franco-German relationship.



3. The Future of the EU

3.3. The EU's Neighbourhood and Enlargement Policy

Walter Kaufmann

Expectations for the German EU Council Presidency on EU-Enlargement in the Western Balkans. From previous disappointments and disorganisation to the desire for stability and peace in the region.



Viola von Cramon, Rapporteur in the Foreign Affairs Committee for Kosovo, Romeo Franz, Chair of the Delegation for Relations with Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo – both Members of the European Parliament for the Greens/EFA – and Petar Todorov of the Institute of National History (Skopje), member of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung’s Western Balkans Strategy Group¹² in a conversation with Walter Kaufmann, Head of East & Southeast Europe Division of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Berlin.

It is great to have you all in this round discussing the EU Enlargement Policy, focusing on the Western Balkans, which are key in the enlargement policy for the upcoming EU Presidencies. Petar, I would like to start with you as a representative of the region and a member of our strategy group on the Western Balkans. Last summer, when we discussed the upcoming Croatian and German Presidencies, there was some scepticism, but still quite a bit of cautious optimism for these upcoming Presidencies – governments that have at least some experience with Balkan policy would be taking over. Then came October, when the European Council, in response to the French and Dutch veto, refused to open accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania, against all previous promises.

At the March summit, the October decision was reversed: Albania and North Macedonia finally got the green light for accession talks¹³. Recently, we had the Zagreb Summit that reiterated former commitments regarding the integration of the ‘West Balkans Six’. Where are we today? Has the EU recovered from the October shock and has the region recovered? Looking at North Macedonia, where do you see the EU’s credibility today and North Macedonia’s perception of the EU?

Petar Todorov: October’s decision was a huge blow for the EU’s credibility, particularly in North Macedonia. There was a wave of frustration and it was huge because of what North Macedonia’s government did in regard to relations with neighbouring countries. Speaking about the agreement for good relations with Bulgaria and then the agreement with Greece, the October decision was very disappointing.

Luckily, Macedonian society did not repeat the same mistake they made after the 2008 Bucharest Summit and the Greek leader’s veto for NATO membership. True, they did decide to go on with parliamentary re-elections, but there was not the wave of nationalism that we experienced in 2008. They did not exploit the disappointment over the EU’s decision of October for nationalist anti-EU sentiments, instead they kept on with their pro-EU-orientation. The main decision to open accession talks has gone virtually unnoticed due to the coronavirus pandemic. People were more concerned about public health and how the institutions of the state will handle the problem than

thinking and talking about EU accession talks and negotiations.

The topic was debated in the media, but it was not topic number one. The EU's credibility in the region was more endangered by some of the decisions it made during the pandemic. How would the EU handle the pandemic? Where are the Western Balkans in this situation? Some people in the Balkans thought that the EU did not show solidarity with the region, that the region was going to be left to fend for itself. Later, the situation improved and there was support for public health coming from the EU, but also very much needed financial support for the economies of the region.

There was an attempt by some external actors to show that the EU is completely disorganised, an attempt to spread a feeling of disappointment in EU institutions, but I have to say that compared to other countries, such as Serbia, North Macedonian society was much better in this regard – the government and political parties did not heed this discrediting of the EU.

Viola, Petar was just talking about the discredited EU enlargement policy from an external perspective. In many ways, enlargement is also discredited internally among EU Member States. Sometimes, regional governments promote 'EU fatigue', saying 'oh, the EU is not delivering, we have other options', and so on. With the Greens, is there a commitment towards EU enlargement regarding the Western Balkans? What are the discussions on how to overcome this form of fatigue, how to handle a resistant political elite?

Viola von Cramon: Yes, there is commitment for the Western Balkans from the Greens, also for the enlargement process. It was always there, and it will be there, but, and this is important, that shouldn't be taken for granted. We obviously look at the impact on the citizens, so it must be in our interests to look at what kind of reform agenda the different governments have proposed and how that affects and influences the situation of citizens.

We have always said that the key issue of our common foreign and security policy in the European Union is enlargement to the Western Balkan states. In the context of the current pandemic, the EU gave this region 3.3 billion euros. This is a lot of money, so we therefore also need highly controlled monitoring. This is a two-way process. We see the necessity to enlarge, and we see the interests of many external actors, such as China or Russia. They are flooding the region with propaganda and disinformation, so the EU needs to be better at communication.

We have to work on better describing the situation of the Western Balkan states to other Member States, but on the other hand we also need to put more pressure on the highly authoritarian states, such as Serbia, which are reluctant to meet the conditions for accession. This is the dilemma we are facing.

Romeo, I know that you have been to Bosnia & Herzegovina several times. This year is the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre and the Dayton Agreement, and after 25 years Bosnia is quite behind regarding the EU integration process. How would you approach Bosnia & Herzegovina? Does the EU need to be more proactive, and why should we care?

Romeo Franz: Bosnia's fragile stability depends largely on Serbia and Croatia. Zagreb and Belgrade bear direct responsibility for the situation in Bosnia because they have a great influence on the Serbian and Croatian ethnic groups there. The national and ethnic conflicts flare up again and that is really dangerous; that happened during the Bleiburg commemoration¹⁴.

Leading politicians in Bosnia & Herzegovina as well as in Croatia must acknowledge that national chauvinist policies are dangerous. The stability of Bosnia must receive attention during the German Presidency. EU cooperation with the Balkans is also important because of the external borders, specifically Croatia's border with Bosnia & Herzegovina.

How do you see the role of Croatia and how do you assess the Croatian Presidency? They had the Zagreb Summit that could not take place because of the coronavirus pandemic but had to take place online, and they are still promoting themselves as the bearer of the EU enlargement flag. What is your assessment of Croatian Balkan policies, Viola?

Viola von Cramon: I cannot assess Bosnia that much, but for the region, I think it was good that Croatia had the Presidency because it was an important signal to the region that the online summit could take place despite the pandemic. This helps to show that the EU still has a big interest in integrating the region; even if you have very sceptical Member States, the majority must be aware of the importance and the developments in the region. Without further integration of the Western Balkan states, we will never have stability in the region.

When I was in Belgrade and Pristina talking to the people, I understood their perspective, especially in Kosovo, to be that they will finally get the green light for visa liberalisation. This is overdue, and it is an embarrassment for the Member States and the EU Council that it hasn't happened. I hope this is one of the highest priorities on the agenda for the German Presidency.

Petar, what were your thoughts when you read the Zagreb Declaration¹⁵? We have the role of EU Member States bordering the region, be it Croatia itself with Bosnia, and Bulgaria, with Greece and North Macedonia. They all have their own problems and the Zagreb Declaration mentions good neighbourly relations several times as a priority. Where are we with this?

Petar Todorov: Good relationships with your neighbours are crucial. Even without a European context, we should have good relationships with neighbouring countries. Regarding the last experience we witnessed in Bosnia with the Bleiberg commemoration or with what is happening in Serbia, or in other countries in the region, whether EU members or countries aspiring to become EU members, we can see that history plays an important role. Historical perspectives can be conflictual and have the potential to destabilise the region. As an historian and someone who is involved in the work of the bilateral committee trying to solve this historical political dispute between North Macedonia and Bulgaria, I found this very important.

When it comes to the credibility of the EU, it can be undermined by not starting accession talks with countries, but it can also be undermined by how EU member countries in the region treat their neighbours. Whenever it comes to a very nationalistic statement from officials representing the Bulgarian government, the Croatian government or any government that borders the Western Balkan countries, it endangers EU credibility among citizens.

Romeo, on EU credibility and its values, I think another policy field where credibility has been undermined over the last years is policy regarding ethnic minorities.

Romeo Franz: We must see that the topic of minority policies is very special. I have good minority connections in the Western Balkans and the information I get from them is sometimes very sad, it can be very dangerous for them, and particularly for people with a Romani background, for example. It's a delicate topic to speak about minority rights and the reality on the ground.

For the concluding question, let's focus on the upcoming German EU Presidency. For the upcoming months, where do you see priorities? Recovery is one, and the Zagreb Summit has committed some money to the region, but where should the EU stand on the Western Balkans under the German Presidency? Petar, would you like to start?

Petar Todorov: The coronavirus pandemic revealed all the problems that exist in our societies. We noticed a number of symbolic divisions, and here I refer to the discrimination against people with a Romani background that Romeo mentioned. These divisions can be used to identify the underlying problems that can destabilise the region, but that are important issues for the development of a society. The institutions and civil society in the region should deeply analyse the performance of societies during the pandemic. We will have to work hard to improve the problems that we face – symbolic divisions, the economic performance, the public health system, etc.

My opinion about the German Presidency and the region is that we need to continue working on the problems that exist within society in regard to nationalism and relations with neighbouring countries that could destabilise the region. We who live in the region

have to work on this, but we also need support from EU countries: they must support liberal agendas and condemn nationalistic agendas.

In regard to the Green policies, I think the German Presidency should be aiming to support societies and to fight air pollution. This is something that will really show the people, the citizens living in the region, that there are some positive effects of the EU in the region.

Romeo, what are your priorities for the upcoming Presidency?

Romeo Franz: From a Green perspective, we have to try to change course and convince the EU enlargement sceptics, like Germany, that there is no alternative to EU enlargement that includes the Balkan countries. From a geopolitical point of view, we do not want our direct European borders to lose democratic influence or economic dominance. Furthermore, and this is very important to us Greens, the Balkan War was not long ago and people are still suffering from the consequences today. Peace is very fragile because there are still national and ethnic conflicts and because minorities are still not protected. So the EU has a special responsibility to both maintain peace in the region and strengthen democratic forces.

Viola, looking at the upcoming six months, what are the kind of immediate issues or immediate battles to be fought?

Viola con Cramon: I would like to stress as a Green that all six Western Balkan states signed the Energy Community agreement in 2005, which means they are committed to a more green energy direction. The implementation of this treaty – and now in the pandemic we can see that the health of people in the region is poor, as Petar mentioned – has an impact on the overall economic cost as well as the health of the people. And this is very much linked to another point: we need better oversight, we need better controls as to where the money goes.

A second point concerns the enormous pressure the media are under in some states. For Germany, I think it would be a very important signal to name the states where the media are under heavy repression. After all, for the economic and cultural development of a region we need checks and balances, the rule of law, but also independent and strong media.

Thank you all very much.

The conversation took place on 25 May 2020.



Viola von Cramon-Taubadel

Mrs Viola von Cramon-Taubadel has served on the Committee on Foreign Affairs since her election to the European Parliament in 2019. There she is also the Standing Rapporteur of the EP for Kosovo, having acted as the Chief Observer of the EU Election Observation Mission during the early legislative elections in the country in Oct 2019.



Romeo Franz

Romeo Franz is a Member of the European Parliament for the Greens/EFA group. He is engaged in minority rights and anti-discrimination policies; he is Chair of the Delegation for relations with Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo, Vice-chair of the Culture and Education Committee and substitute in the LIBE and EMPL Committees. Before he was elected, he was the Chair of the Hildegard Lagrenne Foundation in Germany.



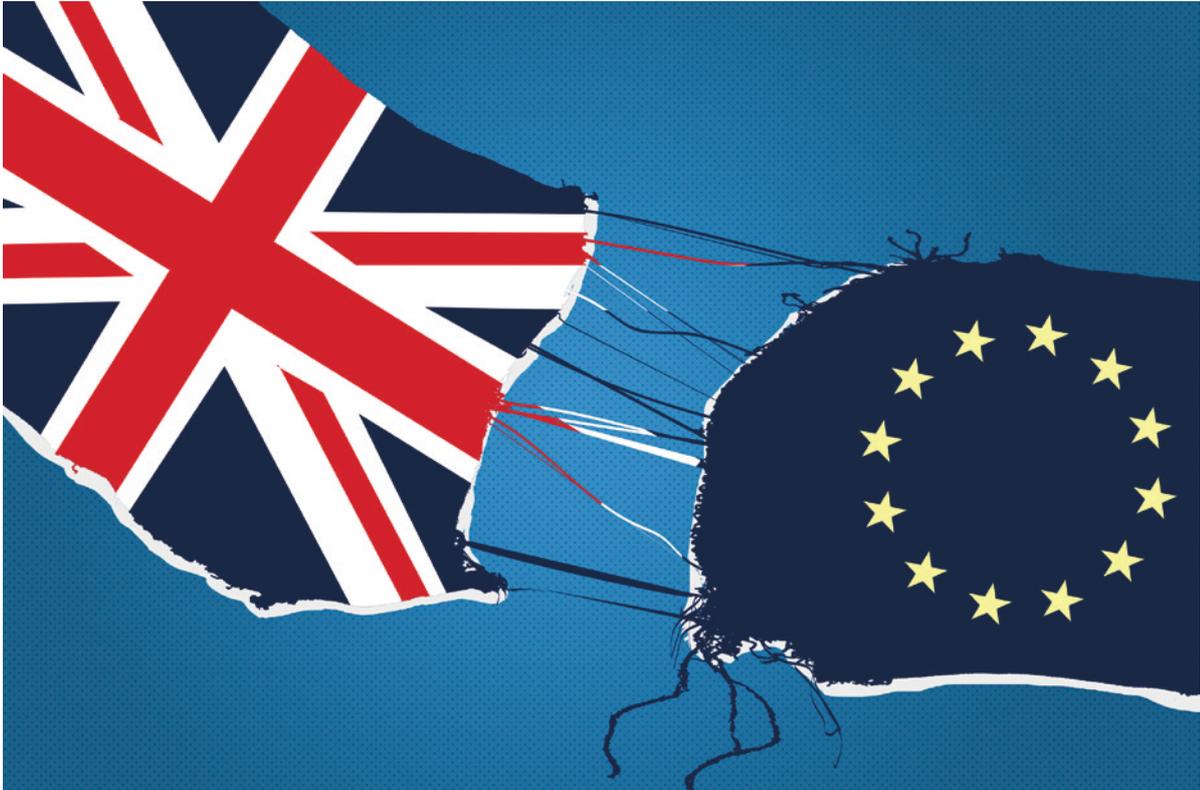
Walter Kaufmann

Walter Kaufmann M.A., born 1966, Studied Eastern European History and Slavic Literature at Tübingen, Berlin and Wolgograd. He has worked at the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung since 1995. Between 2002 and 2008, he was the director of the Foundation's South Caucasus Regional Office in Tbilisi, Georgia. Kaufmann is currently Head of Department for East and Southeast Europe and the Caucasus at the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung's headquarters in Berlin.



Petar Todorov

Petar Todorov studied History at the Saints Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje, earned his M.A. from the Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales – EHESS in Paris in 2006 and his PhD from the Saints Cyril and Methodius University in 2013. His research interest focuses on the social and urban history of the 19th- and 20th-century Ottoman Empire and South-Eastern Europe. He also deals with history, education and the use and abuse of history in contemporary societies.



3. The Future of the EU

3.4. Post-Brexit: What Future for the EU-UK Relationship?

Florian Christl

To what extent is the coronavirus pandemic affecting the current Brexit negotiations? Is Brexit one of the priorities for the German EU Council Presidency? And what is the outlook for the future EU-UK relationship in the next decade(s)?



Florian Christl in a conversation with Molly Scott Cato (former Green MEP for the South West of England and Gibraltar), Terry Reintke (MEP for the Greens, Germany) and Dr. Fabian Zuleeg (Chief Executive and Chief Economist of the European Policy Centre).

The Brexit negotiation process is sequenced into two distinct phases: one for withdrawal matters, the other for future relations between the EU and the UK. The first phase came to an end with the Withdrawal Agreement¹⁶ reached on 17 October 2019 and entered into force on 1 February 2020. What has been achieved on both sides? Can the Withdrawal Agreement be regarded as a success for the EU?

Terry Reintke: I would say that having the Withdrawal Agreement was an important first step because it answered a couple of questions, such as the rights of EU nationals in the UK, and the financial questions were at least outlined and clarified, while the question of the border in Northern Ireland was also addressed. If the solution is going to be workable and under what conditions, I think there are still a lot of questions that were not clarified in the Agreement, so it should only be seen as a first step.

Molly Scott Cato: Terry and I have had quite a few discussions about this because I actually voted against the Withdrawal Agreement as a European, and that's because I think that Michel Barnier essentially folded at the last minute. The British government didn't negotiate in detail. They just used a pressure strategy which they are using again now, and in the end Boris Johnson gave way on the Irish border, which is bad for everybody for political reasons and Barnier gave way on the level playing field, which was bad for the European Union. The level playing field moved out of anything that's legally binding and into the discussions that are happening now, which I think put the European single market under stress and that's why I voted against it.

Fabian Zuleeg: I think what is clear is that it was a necessary step because in the end, what is the alternative? The only alternatives would have been that either the UK reconsider leaving the EU, which was not on the cards, or we could have ended up in a situation without even a Withdrawal Agreement, which would have been even worse in terms of citizens' rights, in terms of the financial obligations of the UK and the situation in Northern Ireland.

However, the initial expectation was that the Agreement would enable us to get into the next phase of the negotiations with some things already settled, and with other things, we would at least have an idea of what direction we're headed in. But that second part hasn't actually happened because what we are seeing now is that the UK government

seems to entirely disregard the political declaration and that the agreed commitments have not been pursued. On the Northern Ireland border, progress is extremely slow and we have just had the House of Lords report which actually says that unless something happens very quickly, it will be impossible to meet the deadlines.

I think one of the most concerning things is that despite the progress that has been made, we are still looking at the situation in which no deal remains not only a possibility at the end of this year, but probably the most likely outcome.

You already pointed out that the Withdrawal Agreement is not a guarantee that the ongoing negotiations on future relations between the UK and the EU will end well. What are the most significant differences of principle remaining with regard to a future trade deal?

Terry Reintke: I think the main and most fundamental fight that we are having right now is whether we are going to have a comprehensive agreement that is going to take all the different sectors and all the different issues into consideration and then we are going to find a package that somehow works for both sides. This is how the EU usually deals with difficult situations: you find a package deal and then everybody can bring home something. But this is not what the British side wants anymore; they want to have a minimum agreement probably on financial services, I believe that this is probably the field where the damage that would be done to the British economy would be the highest. This is obviously not what the EU can work with.

Molly Scott Cato: We're not hearing anything like enough about financial services, which is at the end of the day what the British government really cares about; a lot of European finance also goes through London, so it matters to both sides that there's an arrangement on financial services. Also, because banks are going to become unstable due to the coronavirus pandemic, there will be a lot of non-performing loans, and so the need to stabilise that is absolutely crucial. So I think some arrangement will be reached over financial services whatever happens with the overall deal.

Do you think that not even the looming economic consequences of the pandemic will incentivise the British to be more willing to reach a compromise for a future trade agreement?

Fabian Zuleeg: Well, there are some people who have actually said that the pandemic makes the impact of Brexit less. I disagree. It might make it easier to hide that impact, but that's not the same as not having it. Leaving the EU makes the UK much less attractive, so it actually amplifies the economic effect. So, if you look at this from an economic point of view, then it's very clear that the pandemic should lead to a reconsideration of Brexit and at the very least should lead to an acceptance of an extension to the transition period to try to avoid the worst effects.

If you look at it from a negotiation perspective, it also gives a very strong indication that because of coronavirus, negotiations cannot function in the way they should. You need political negotiations, not just technical negotiations, and they are not taking place at the moment since countries are dealing with the pandemic.

Molly Scott Cato: In Britain at the moment, we have 50,000 people who are preparing to do the paperwork on the border, but we have only 20,000 people contact tracing for the coronavirus, so you can see the priority of the government is still to push through Brexit at any cost. We are indeed heading for no deal and it becomes clear that this government is only working for England, because the three other governments that make up what is called the United Kingdom all are demanding an extension now because the damage will be huge if we don't do that. But that's been just completely ignored by the Westminster government.

Terry Reintke: I believe that the British government is completely underestimating the economic consequences that this crisis is going to have, and I think that they are really still not aware of how deeply the situation after the transition period is going to affect the British economy. Furthermore, there is no ongoing powerful campaign for an extension to the transition period in the UK at the moment and I think that this is also because, obviously, the attention and the discussion are somewhere completely different and if there were calls from civil society, rather than just the governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, this might actually change the political dynamic, but it's not there, at least not to my knowledge.

What can be expected of Germany, which is taking over the EU Council Presidency on 1 July 2020? Is Brexit even a priority, given the massive challenges created by the coronavirus pandemic?

Fabian Zuleeg: I think the German Presidency is important, but not because of Brexit. It is important because there are many issues that need to be addressed, including the European response to the pandemic and how much progress we can make towards getting the multi-annual financial framework passed. Brexit is not, and even before the pandemic, was certainly not at the top of the list of issues for the EU27. What hasn't changed is that ultimately, the European Union has some red lines and unless those red lines are accommodated, there simply will not be a deal. A deal with the UK is important. It has an economic impact, but it is far less important than the principles of the European Union and it is far less important than the unity of the European Union in this, which also means protecting the single market.

In case of a No-Deal Brexit, what is your outlook for the next decade(s) of UK-EU relations? How can the UK stay close to developments within the EU?

Molly Scott Cato: It's a gloomy prognosis for Britain, but where I see hope is that young people understand very clearly that their future is with Europe. Now, how we

mobilise younger people at a time that will be an extreme crisis to them, because they are bound to suffer the worst with unemployment, and how we convince them and work with them so that they understand that their future is in Europe is a challenge and Terry's friendship group¹⁷ helps with this.

Fabian Zuleeg: We have to recognise that the EU and, to an even greater extent, the UK need each other, but if we have no deal this will make cooperation on a number of issues more difficult. It will make it more difficult to cooperate, for example, on foreign policy and security policy, in which the UK is a very important factor. It will make it more difficult to have a united European front in global issues, whether it is the global multi-lateral system, whether it's about sanctions policy, whether it is about how we deal with China, how we deal with the US, all of that will be more difficult if we don't have a deal. What we are actually looking at is an acrimonious situation, even up to the point at which we might have open conflict on some issues. What happens if we have French fishermen trying to enter British waters? There are still some issues that have real political heat and could well lead to a situation in which the relationship deteriorates. So the coronavirus reemphasises that we actually need to cooperate, but what we might end up with is exactly the opposite.

Terry Reintke: That's why it's even more important to bring the civil society actors in. There are a lot of entry points where you can actually fight for UK-EU cooperation and it starts on a local level. It's even more important that we have these things, we continue to work with each other and then I don't think it's going to be something that everybody is going to change their mind about five years from now and realise that it was wrong what happened, but I think that in the long run, if we keep these ties, we can turn this around and this is always what we need to bear in mind, not just thinking in cycles of five or maybe ten years, but 15 to 20 years.

Finally, to sum up, I would like to ask each of you for a short concluding statement. What would be your recommendations to policy-makers in the UK and the EU at this stage?

Molly Scott Cato: The EU should not show flexibility! I think that's the most important thing. And then in terms of what I say for Britain, my energy has to be to try and turn Britain into a better democracy, and I've been trying to do that all my life, but every year that passes it becomes clearer we need decentralisation of power, more power to regions and local governments.

Terry Reintke: If I could have one thing, it would be for the UK to stay in the Erasmus programme because I think that that is exactly the type of exchange that will be needed for future cooperation.

Fabian Zuleeg: For Europe, the key thing is that we shouldn't be distracted by Brexit. There are many big challenges out there and we will have to prove over the next years that the EU is an answer to those global challenges we are facing. If we can do that, then I think there will also be a longer-term impact on the relationship with the UK.

Thank you all for taking the time.

The conversation took place on 3 June 2020.



Florian Christl

Florian Christl studied French Philology, Historical Studies and Intercultural European Studies at the Universities of Regensburg, Strasbourg and Clermont-Ferrand. During his studies, he worked as Research Assistant at the Institute of Romance in Regensburg and gained professional experience in the field of European politics through the EU Programmes & Democracy Traineeship at the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union. Since August 2019, Florian has supported the Director of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union Office in the planning, coordination and evaluation of the Foundation's programmes in Brussels and in communication with European and international institutions.



Terry Reintke

Terry Reintke, 33 years old, from Gelsenkirchen in the German Ruhr-Area, has been a Green Member of the European Parliament since 2014. She works on civil rights, democracy and rule of law in the LIBE Committee and is an activist for the rights of LGBTI in Europe, chairing the LGBTI Intergroup since 2017.



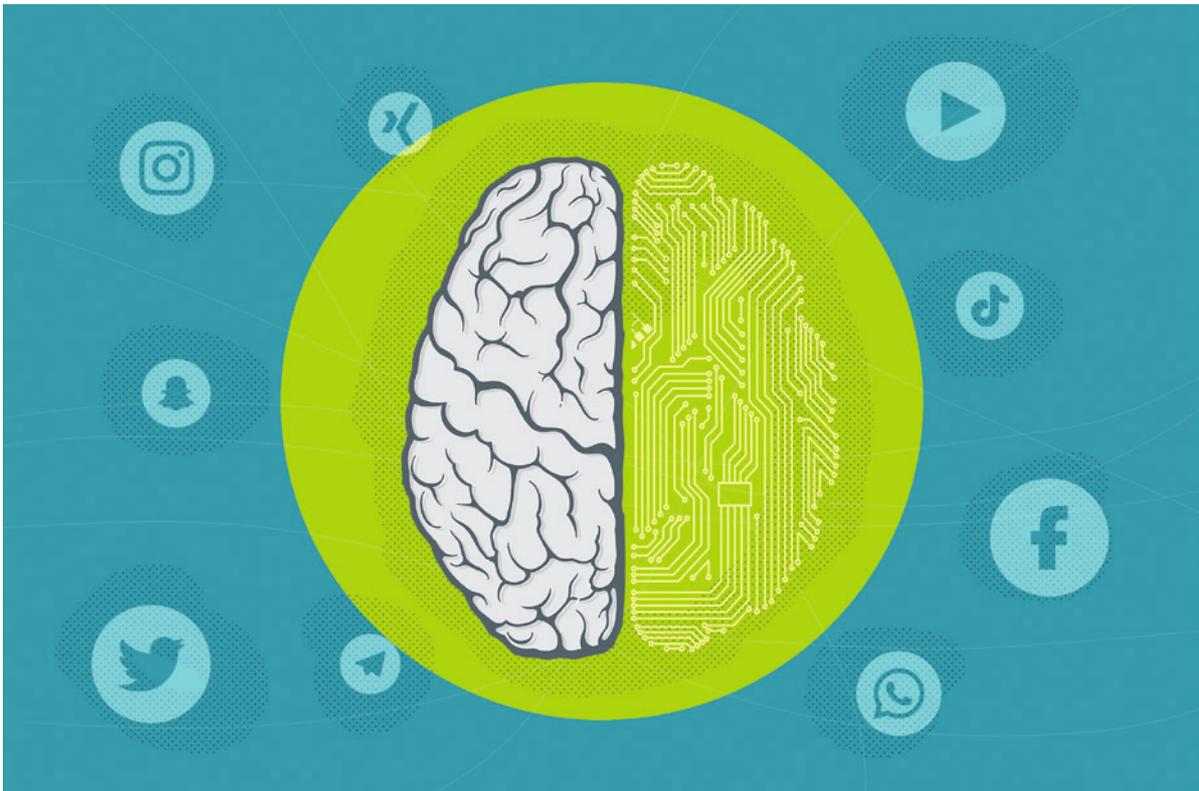
Molly Scott Cato

Molly Scott Cato is an economist and writer who has campaigned for green politics all her adult life. Between 2014 and 2020, Molly represented South West England in the European Parliament, where she worked on sustainable finance, regenerative agriculture and trade policy. Molly studied Politics, Philosophy and Economics at Oxford University and later gained a doctorate in economics from Aberystwyth. She continues to be a Professor of Green Economics at Roehampton University.



Dr Fabian Zuleeg

Dr Fabian Zuleeg has been Chief Executive and Chief Economist of the European Policy Centre since October 2013. His analysis focuses on EU economic policies, including economic governance at EU/Eurozone level, the single market, digitalisation, industrial policy, Better Regulation and the EU budget, as well as EU international economic relations. He has a long-standing interest in the political economy of European integration, with a particular focus on the UK-EU relationship, analysing the impact of Brexit on the UK and the rest of the EU, as well as the process of separation.



3. The Future of the EU

3.5. The EU's Digital Policy

Zora Siebert

How did the coronavirus impact digital rights, the introduction of contact tracing apps, as well as the daily use of digital tools and artificial intelligence? What does this mean for current and future policy? 22 June 2020 by Zora Siebert



MEP Alexandra Geese and EDRI's Diego Naranjo discuss contact tracing apps, the daily use of digital tools and artificial intelligence with Zora Siebert, Head of EU Policy Programme, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union.

Thank you very much for joining this interview on the EU's Digital Policy. The first topic I would like to address is policy-making and the coronavirus. The coronavirus pandemic hit us very quickly and on a large scale, and has changed our lives completely in the last months. What has changed in your work and, since we're talking about EU Digital Policy, what do you think about the impact of the coronavirus on digital rights?

Alexandra Geese: We are all more aware than before of the importance of digital tools, and therefore of how important digital policy is. A big change is that we now use video conferencing more, which allows us to keep working on policies. We are also aware of the security issue, of how important it is to have a European infrastructure for this. Digital policy really is now at the centre of thinking.

In practical terms, formal politics is working astonishingly well. It is possible to have committee meetings via video, though legislation takes a little bit longer, but mostly because people are working from home and schools and childcare facilities are closed. So it's not because of the lack of physical meetings that policy-making is delayed.

I do miss person-to-person interaction, but it's been amazing to see how many people we can reach with video conferences and webinars. We're doing these German-Italian webinars that are absolutely great, there are 1,000 to 2,000 people online – that would have been impossible to organise without people being ready to participate in a digital meeting. I think that's very positive, and it opens up interesting opportunities for European politics.

What I really miss is to be in touch with people who don't use technology or don't attend digital meetings for other reasons. That's worrying because it enhances the feeling of living and working in a bubble. This is a great danger at the moment.

We've also followed the discussions on tracing apps and there is a threat here in terms of surveillance. People are ready to give away a lot more of their privacy if they are promised security, safety and good health, so that's also a danger. But in some countries in the EU, we have had a victory with the choice of decentralised storage for tracing apps. The debate around this was very good and fruitful; it gives me hope.

Diego, do you want to jump in?

Diego Naranjo: At EDRi we thought that when the lockdown started we would have more time to do research or reports, but that wasn't the case. We are working more than before. The use of technology during the pandemic has put a lot of weight on our shoulders. We were very quick to react with a statement in March¹⁸: if you want to use technology to prevent the expansion of the pandemic, please follow requirements ABCD, and were glad that the European Commission has taken the right approach and included our recommendations in their toolbox and guidelines; we also follow the European Data Protection Board¹⁹ and the European Data Protection Supervisor²⁰ on the implementation of these guidelines.

We have a good basis now with what the European Commission has said²¹, and some of our members have accessed a guide on dos and don'ts²², so that's good. The problem that we saw from the beginning, however, is that, as with any kind of surveillance, we run the risk of normalisation. By implementing surveillance for an emergency such as the pandemic, we will have that as the norm in two years' time, and we need to avoid this technology going beyond what is needed. More positively, what is better than before the pandemic is that we are actually able to talk to European Commissioners now. Before the crisis, they had many external meetings and limited time for us. Now, some of them have found time to hear our opinion on the impact of the coronavirus.

It's good to hear that you can all keep on working in a proactive way, and even though the workload has increased for all of us with all the digital meetings, I'm glad to hear that the law-making process keeps going. One of the most important upcoming laws for this term is the Digital Services Act (DSA). With the DSA, the European Commission hopes to update the liability regime for all digital services. This new law is also supposed to tackle questions around content moderation. Diego, why does the Digital Services Act matter to consumers?

Diego Naranjo: We see the DSA, the reform of the e-commerce directive, as a good opportunity for everyone to really shape the internet we want to see in the next years. We have defended the e-commerce directive quite strongly the past. On the other hand, we see that platforms which might have been neutral ten or twenty years ago are actually not neutral. They create a power imbalance between citizens and the owners of those companies. The business model is linked to many other problems: misinformation, hate speech and illegal content etc., which need to be tackled. We believe there should be an update of the rules governing how the content is moderated.

We also want to tackle the problem that we have in advertising technology. That's going to be a different strand, which we have not worked on publicly. We are putting together a position paper on the issue in general. Some of our members have worked on this quite intensively, Panoptikon²³ Foundation or Open Rights Group²⁴ for example. We needed to ask for an in-depth reform of the micro-targeting business model. That's why

the DSA is important for everyone: either we control how the technology works, or the technology will control how we work.

Alexandra, would you like to add something to that? The underlying problem of the reform is also that online platforms are just so big. How can we tackle this?

Alexandra Geese: I'd like to pick up on what Diego said, especially on the ad-tech issue. There is a huge problem with the ad-tech industry and that is the root of many of the imbalances we are experiencing with online platforms. But nobody was really able to tell us what to do about it. For lawmakers, this is a really difficult situation to be in, so I'd be curious to see what EDRi comes up with.

What I've been stressing, as I'm the shadow-rapporteur on the DSA Report, is transparency of decision-making and of algorithms. What was lacking from the report was transparency of how the algorithms work. This is what we absolutely need, maybe together with a ban on ad-tech. We need to know how a company chooses some content over other content.

What is also important in the European discussion is the distinction between social networks and online marketplaces. Many people in EU businesses and consumer associations are really insisting on having stricter rules for products being sold on the internet. There are so many products that do not comply with our European safety and health standards being sold on the internet, and they are a lot cheaper than European-made products which do have to comply with our laws. If there is no liability and no obligation to know which company is offering those products, it's very difficult to combat.

I talked about algorithm transparency, which is important for freedom of expression because there are many people who are so targeted by hate speech that they don't have freedom of expression on the internet. A lot of people tell me 'well, you know, I don't have a Twitter account, I'm not on Facebook, because I get so much hate. I don't go on talk shows anymore because the day afterwards, I get letters with pictures of my kids in front of their school.' These people are completely excluded from the public debate and those are the voices we need to hear.

We have the choice to trust companies to self-regulate or to trust governments to make rules and enforce them. In Europe, we have Poland and Hungary, where Viktor Orbán is attempting to decide what's on the internet, people might prefer Google or Facebook to decide. What should we do?

My idea would be to have what I call 'social media councils' without the companies being represented. They would consist of advocacy groups, experts from different fields, etc. – all the people who are affected by internet and freedom of speech. They should be the ones to look into the practices of companies; they should look into companies' trans-

parency reports. I think the added value of a social media council composed this way would allow for a very transparent public debate.

We have these huge companies which have more power than governments. So we have to figure out where normal citizens come in. The citizens' council that was implemented in Ireland, for example, had good results. We should try to develop an idea like that for social networks as well. This is something I've been pushing for and I would be interested in getting it into a public debate and talking about it.

Thank you, Alexandra. It's great that you have so many ideas and strategies already. Just as a context for our readers, you were referring to an own-initiative report in the European Parliament, right, because there is no official proposal by the Commission yet? You were also referring to transparency in algorithmic decision-making, which is a good lead-in to our third and final topic: Artificial Intelligence (AI). The EU would like to draw up rules for the use of artificial intelligence. Diego, what do you think are the most important things that should be in such a legislative proposal?

Diego Naranjo: We've been having a discussion within the EDRI around AI to the effect that it should be human-centric and not innovation-centric. When it comes to personal data, we are very clear that we don't even want to talk about reopening the general data protection regulation. Keep it as it is!

There is room for additional legislation and that can include algorithmic transparencies, as Alexandra was mentioning. There is the risk of discrimination and part of that discussion is about biometrics. In the context of the AI discussion, biometrics is a sub-issue, but for us it's one of our main campaigns this year. We are asking for a ban on the use of biometrics for mass surveillance in publicly accessible spaces.

We are concerned that when AI is used in specific areas, such as public services, there should be democratic oversight, transparency and evidence to support and justify the need or purpose. We are talking about, for example, predictive policing, or the use of AI technology by judges to choose sentencing. That needs to be very clearly discussed even before it is implemented.

Thank you, Diego. Alexandra, would you like to add anything? Key suggestions for the new AI framework? I know you have a lot of ideas.

Alexandra Geese: I do, yes, since I am the rapporteur for the own-initiative report of my committee. I totally agree with what Diego said. We put in place very clear obligations to combat bias in our report. I was positively surprised to see that all political groups in the European Parliament seemed to be going along with that.

As Diego pointed out, AI is based on huge amounts of data and the way data are collected is not gender-neutral, it's not race-neutral. It's not an easy problem to solve because

you can't just change the data. We have to be aware of this and we need to think of a way to deal with it.

We suggested a risk-based approach for the regulation of AI. This is not the same approach as the European Commission's, which distinguished between low- and high-level risk. The European Commission's approach is not nuanced enough. The German Data Ethics Commission²⁵ made a much more nuanced proposal, with different levels of risk. This allows us to not hamper innovation where it's useful.

You have the high-risk category for things that should be banned, and another category for those that need ex-ante assessments. You also have some space in the middle for things that you don't know whether they entail risk or not. You can start using them, but you should have means of redress in case there are any suspicions. This is where civil society and participation come in, because we are suggesting that everyday citizens have redress mechanisms to address this and can ask a national authority in charge of oversight to look into the documentation of this AI tool, or to test that AI tool.

AI may sound like something in the future, where you need to be a technical expert and to have to have studied IT for ten years in order to operate it, but it's not. It's about basic rules, it's about basic fundamental rights in society. You need to try to explain it in a way that everybody can understand, and we need to reach out to communities that are most affected by it and most at risk – it's important to involve them in the whole debate.

Thank you very much to both of you, this was a great exchange, I've learned a lot.

The conversation took place on 29 May 2020



Alexandra Geese

Alexandra Geese is a Member of the European Parliament with the Greens/EFA group. She was elected in 2019 and now serves as a full member of the Committees for Internal Market and Consumer Protection and the Budget. Her political focus is on digital policy, fundamental rights and gender budgeting.



Diego Naranjo

Diego Naranjo joined EDRI, where he works as Head of Policy, in October 2014. He leads the policy team work for the protection of citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms online in the fields of data protection, surveillance and copyright and other dossiers. Earlier in his career, Diego gained experience in the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) and the Free Software Foundation Europe. Before that, he worked as a lawyer in Spain. He was part of the expert group on digital rights of the Spanish Ministry of Energy, Tourism and Digital Agenda between 2017 and 2018.



Zora Siebert

Zora Siebert has been Head of Programme for EU Policy at the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union in Brussels since January 2019. She focuses on democracy within the EU, migration, EU neighbourhood policy and the digital transformation of our economies and societies. Before joining the Foundation, Zora worked as an accredited parliamentary assistant in the European Parliament focussing on data protection, IT security and emerging technologies. She holds a French-German Master's degree in European Studies and International Relations from the Universities of Passau (Germany) and Strasbourg (France).



4. The EU's Role in the World

4.1. EU-Africa: A Close and Intense Relationship

Claudia Simons

The need for equal EU-Africa relations, the importance of recognising the historical background and what Europe can learn from Africa.



Dr. Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana, Member of the European Parliament for the Greens, Germany, and Alfonso Medinilla, Policy Officer at ECDPM (European Centre for Development Policy Management) in a conversation with Claudia Simons, Senior Programme Officer - Africa Division, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Berlin

The Cotonou Agreement has been extended until the end of the year, after which it will expire. We're therefore in the process of negotiating a new document setting out a new agreement. What do you expect from this new agreement? What aspects should be changed?

Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana: When we look at the relations between the European Union and Africa, we know that they are very intense and intimate, but they are also marked by pain and suffering. The past plays a role for the future as well as for the present. All the more so since relations between Europe and Africa are not isolated, and in the Cotonou Agreement²⁶ we could perhaps remove this somewhat "paternalistic" aspect. For example, with regard to the EPAs (Economic Partnership Agreements), there is a need for transparency that could lead to successful partnerships. Something that is close to my heart and which where he works as Head of Policy during my field trips, whether in Nairobi or Kigali, is: "in these agreements, we've been overlooked". It cannot be denied that the protection of women and girls has not been clarified. In economic terms, the problem seems even more obvious to me. When we have a surplus of milk in Europe, we send it to the African markets. In so doing, we're destroying the economic basis of many women who work in this field and who see their livelihoods destroyed overnight.

Alfonso Medinilla: In a way, the Cotonou Agreement symbolises the old and often paternalistic model of engagement with Africa. The EU has historically pursued a double approach, with a development-oriented partnership on the one hand and political partnership with the African Union on the other. This has led to a number of contradictions, including the fact that regional integration in Africa, as well as European interests in Africa have outgrown ACP-EU relations. What really needs to change now is to go beyond this traditional partnership based on the transfer of development aid from EU to ACP governments. The parties also need to ensure that a future Cotonou Agreement will be able to support – or at least not obstruct – regional integration in Africa (including with the African Continental Free Trade Area). There is also an urgent need to redefine the approach to political dialogue, focusing less on one-sided demands and more on opportunities and joint initiatives.

In March, we learned what the European Commission's priorities were regarding EU-Africa relations. Do you see a willingness to change the relationship in favour of

more respectful and egalitarian relations, or does it still seem insufficient?

Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana: We appreciate the fact that the European Union wishes to include a new strategy in relations with Africa. Our aim is to give a positive image of Africa that breaks with the traditional image of a continent adrift. However, we are going to have to make this a reality, because we can say and write whatever we want without anything changing. We have to shoulder our responsibilities, by also agreeing to change our way of life and developing our economies. We must now try to help achieve “sustainable development”. On this point, we still have some interesting possibilities in Africa. I’m thinking in particular of digital transformation, when I see that in Africa there are women who can neither read nor write but who are digitally literate. I could also criticise the fact that there is a tendency to focus this transformation solely on young people, whereas I have seen women around my age using digital technology.

Environmental protection is just as important because if we destroy the environment and strive to develop local economies at all costs, we are simply giving with one hand and taking away with the other. The climate crisis is obviously a problem. I believe that we can manage this crisis together if we are prepared now to talk to each other as equals and always taking into account what our partners want.

With Ursula von der Leyen as President of the European Commission and with the German EU Council Presidency, Germany currently carries enormous weight in the European Union. So, how do you assess Germany’s influence on the EU’s relations with Africa?

Alfonso Medinilla: It’s very clear that Germany is playing a fairly important role in view of Ms von der Leyen’s position at the head of the European Commission and also in view of the German EU Council Presidency. What I observe is rather the dynamics of the Member States in general with Africa and the strengthening of the European Commission’s position in the field of foreign affairs. An increasing number of Member States are now also developing their own Africa strategies. There has also been a change in rhetoric: while the use of the narrative of “equal partnership” is certainly not new – we have had several versions of it since 2000 – this is now also coupled with a change in the diplomatic process, with much more intensive engagement on both sides.

There is also a real emergence of a stronger leadership dynamic, with the African Union more visibly engaging in the foreign affairs of its Member States. There are real opportunities to change the tone of this commitment and to move towards a kind of counter-offer on the part of the African Union. More specifically on migration, but also on the issue of climate change. We can also see that some African leaders are beginning to notice that they agree in principle, but that there are nevertheless [other] elements that need to be taken into account. The EU’s “Farm to Fork Strategy”²⁷, for example, may pose some problems for the agricultural sector in some parts of Africa.

Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana: And we had the impression that Germany would make Africa its strong point when it took over the Presidency. On the eve of the Presidency, this is not at all as clear as it was when we attended the meetings. That's a pity because the African continent has high hopes in Germany, and it was convinced that a very strong change would take place because Germany wanted to get involved. After all, Germany is still the most powerful and largest country in the European Union, and if it now really gets involved, we will also see changes at the level of the European Union, and Germany could even influence those states that do not have strong connections with African countries.

If one of the priorities of the European Union is the establishment of balanced partnerships, what should be done in the field of migration to balance this partnership between the European Union and African regional partnerships, the African Union and bilateral partnerships?

Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana: Our position within the Greens corresponds to the position of African countries that advocate and demand legal migration channels. Therefore, migration is an asset. If it is possible that we need labour from Africa to come and work here, then it is also possible to bring in this labour, or skilled people who can come directly. On this point, we can always agree on the ways and means. Those who are coming now are students, people who have finished their studies. We are organising a kind of "brain drain" - this is unacceptable. What's more, people talk about migration as if it always goes from south to north. However, there is also migration from north to south. When we say that we are going to talk to someone on an equal footing, it means that we are going to consider all the problems and find solutions that will be favourable to everyone in a post-Cotonou Agreement..

Alfonso Medinilla: First of all, the debate on migration is polarised and politicised. In Africa, frustration with the European Union's migration policies has only increased in recent years. It is clear that there is a demand from African countries to facilitate migration through legal channels and a more respectful policy. However, at the same time, the process has always been extremely fragmented in EU-Africa relations, and the EU Member States do not easily agree on migration. There is a potential for change within the framework of the Europe-Africa process by prioritising the continent-to-continent level on migration. A link also needs to be made with regional integration in Africa and the various ongoing initiatives for the free movement of people. On the African side, there is a demand not only in terms of the evolution of migration policy, but also in terms of diplomatic relations and negotiations, calling to go through AU systems rather than ad-hoc arrangements. The European Union has made its interests in the EU-Africa partnership very clear and has a lot riding on its Green Deal and transition objectives, for which it also needs partners to work multilaterally. By making a link between the different areas and themes, there is a possibility of creating a stronger negotiation dynamic.

It has been reported that many European countries have managed the Covid-19 pandemic very badly. So, what has become of this famous image of Europe? What will the long-term consequences be for relations between Europe and Africa?

Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana: Covid-19 primarily revealed the flaws in the European system. Europe is no longer a super-powerful continent. Some European countries have also managed their own problems catastrophically, while Africa has managed this crisis quite well in general. This catastrophe has at least had the advantage of making us look at why things work. We should take a more holistic approach to the virus – some African countries have had successes against it with herbal medicines that we should at least have a look at.

How do you see the “Black Lives Matter”²⁸ movement, which is certainly not new, but which has been given much more media coverage recently, and been much more criminalised at times as well, but has raised the general public’s awareness? Do you see a real change today in the relationship with Africa in light of these events?

Alfonso Medinilla: There is not really any substantive debate in European countries beyond the symbolic level. As a Belgian citizen, I support the demands for the decolonisation of the public space, and I believe local authorities have an important role to play in this. That said, these demands are but a secondary expression of the deep-rooted tensions that exist within European societies. At the diplomatic level between the European Union and Africa, and especially between countries like France and African countries, however, there is not really this kind of debate. It’s probably difficult on the diplomatic front, but I don’t see any inclusion of the issues around the mistreatment of the African diaspora. Listening to the speeches of African leaders, however, I was positively surprised with Moussa Faki’s press release²⁹ and the reference he made to Malcolm X, which remains incredibly relevant today.

Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana: I would say there is a change. That’s undeniable. Just look at the number of protesters in the streets. Now, we are perhaps forgetting that the diaspora is also playing a role. This diaspora has become a European diaspora with the second and third generations. There are many who were born and grew up in Europe, but also remain very connected to Africa. Who really knows the history of Africa and the atrocities perpetrated in the name of the civilising mission? Who knows about the genocide of the Namibian people by the German authorities in their former colony?

In my opinion, colonial history as it was, not as it has been presented, should be introduced in all European history books. Let us take the case of Belgium. Who knows that the Congo is 80 times larger than Belgium and that the King of the Belgians, Leopold II, made it his private property, even though he never set foot in the country? Who is aware of the atrocities and violence of all kinds that have been committed in the Congo and in all the former colonies? I welcome the decision of the current sovereign to apologise to

the Congolese people³⁰ for all the abuses committed by Leopold II - after 135 years. The violence against black people is in fact something of a remnant of colonial laws. Police brutality against black people still exists.

If we succeed in changing the syllabus and teaching history as it actually happened, then we will be able to heal the old wounds and those that are disrupting Europe-Africa relations. It is at this price that we will build a future in which human rights apply to everyone. Then it will be possible to live together in a world where peace will reign.

The conversation took place on 26 June 2020.



Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana

Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana was born in Bamako (Mali) and grew up in Senegal; her mother is from Cabo Verde and her father from Guinea-Conakry. She was the first African woman to run for political office in Germany, a former student of Classe de Lettres Supérieures (Hypokhâgne) and the Sorbonne Paris, and of the Universities of Munich, Trier and Erlangen-Nuremberg. As a Green Member of the Erlangen City Council (2005-2019), she was the spokesperson for Education, Social Affairs and Health, Migration/Integration, Refugees and Women Committees. In 2019, she was elected as a German Member of the European Parliament (MEP) as a candidate for the Green Party Alliance 90/The Greens.



Alfonso Medinilla

Alfonso Medinilla, a Belgian national, is a Policy Officer in ECDPM's Economic and Agricultural Transformation and European External Affairs programmes and the Institutional Relations team. He has worked on the implementation of the EU's engagement with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in its external action and was part of the core ECDPM team that conducted a political economy analysis of EU-African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) relations.



Claudia Simons

Since 2016, Claudia Simons has been Senior Programme Officer in the Africa division of Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung. Between 2011 and 2016 she worked as a researcher in the research division Middle East and Africa of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP). From 2005 to 2010, she studied political sciences (Freie Universität Berlin), international security (Sciences Po Paris) and peace and conflict studies (London School of Economics).



4. The EU's Role in the World

4.2. Between Cooperation and Systemic Rivalry: The EU-China Relationship

Katrin Altmeyer

How will EU-China relations look in the future? Which priorities need to be set? Opportunities for the German EU Council Presidency.



Reinhard Bütikofer, Member of the European Parliament for the Greens, Germany and Dr. Janka Oertel, Director, Asia Programme and Senior Policy Fellow, European Council on Foreign Relations in a conversation with Katrin Altmeyer, Head of Asia Division, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Berlin

I would like to start with the EU-China Strategy³¹ that was published in March 2019 and aims to introduce a shared, comprehensive China policy. How did this discussion evolve in Brussels? How did the Member States react to it? What will the strategy that follows the paper look like?

Reinhard Bütikofer: The publication of this paper was a great breakthrough for realism. We are systemic rivals. This Big Bang became possible because the European Commission circumvented a couple of the typical bureaucratic routes in Brussels; it did not give much influence to those that would have watered down the text before it came to light. On the other hand, that meant limited participation for the Member States. Overall, the paper met with a lot of positive resonance, because it very adroitly managed to integrate multiple perspectives of European China policy. This allowed different positions to accept it. The paper does not bid good-bye to cooperation with China, even though we are systemic rivals. However, it ends the dominance of the win-win rhetoric. But in recent discussions, one weakness has become apparent: cooperation and competition with China have to be shaped by understanding what it means that we are systemic rivals. The convergence theory failed; rather, the divergences are increasing. The simple juxtaposition of cooperation, competition and rivalry thus remains imprecise.

Janka Oertel: Over the last couple of years, Europe's relationship with China has changed markedly. The Strategic Outlook document of March 2019 was a milestone that was achieved towards the end of the last EU Commission's term. The same holds true for the Connectivity Strategy³². Both of these key topics have to now receive new attention, because unfortunately, the 2019 consensus is already outdated. Partner, competitor, systemic rival – it no longer suffices to merely name these elements of the relationship in parallel. Europe has to define in concrete terms what these aspects entail. The emphasis has shifted. A European China policy that takes systemic rivalry seriously means to clearly define red lines in certain areas and to actively decide against cooperating if it increases dependence and reduces Europe's strategic sovereignty. The current 5G debate is a good example. The German government had months to define its own path – European at the core, economically sensible, and with a clear-eyed understanding of the security risks at play. Now we face the impact of even more fierce US restrictions on Chinese companies and are reactive instead of active. It is sad that

we have been unable to come to an independent and clear political decision within a reasonable timeframe – Germany really could have played a leading role in this area.

How can the balancing act of pursuing a constructive policy with a rival system work? How can the EU set priorities? Where do you see the greatest conflicts of interest between the individual Member States with respect to the Format 17+1?

Janka Oertel: China policy starts at home – and it can only be effective if it is embedded within a strong EU. We must also begin to think through the uncomfortable scenarios of greater confrontation with China and listen closely to the statements coming from Beijing to understand how priorities are shifting, so that we can be prepared for what may come.

China's climate policies are a good example. We need China on board to combat climate change effectively, but we currently see limited to no ambition on the Chinese side to really become active. We need to ramp up the pressure on Beijing to deliver. If China wants to be our partner on climate policy, declarations are no longer enough – we need to see real action.

The other key factor is European solidarity. At the outset of the coronavirus pandemic, it proved way too easy for China to divide Europeans in its attempt to re-shape the narrative of the crisis.

Europe needs to define its own policies in a much more confident way. This requires us to focus on our strengths and interests. With regard to formats such as the 17+1, we need to think about the opportunities as well. This is a format that includes twelve EU Member States and five accession candidates! We have a huge interest in fostering cooperation and integration among those twelve and five. All of these countries have agency in this, they have their own interests and can contribute to a more constructive overall European China policy. The format has evolved a lot since its founding and has shed much of its mystique for its European members.

Beijing is currently prioritising technological leadership in its attempt to boost the domestic economy after the health emergency and the resulting economic shutdown. This includes the construction of 600,000 5G base stations by the end of the year and 2 billion US dollars of investments in the tech sector over the next five years. This could give China a real advantage in the sectors that build upon 5G-technology. Europe needs to urgently follow suit and invest in its own competitiveness – the green economy and digitalisation. Connectivity is key. But certainly the questions 'Where do we invest? Which jobs need to be secured?' have the potential to be a real test for European unity. We have to decide whether the coronavirus crisis marks the beginning of something new or whether we want to continue with the same policies as before. Recalibrating our relations with China will be absolutely key in defining Europe's economic future.

Reinhard Bütikofer: Federica Mogherini repeatedly spoke of Europe as a superpower. She was not alone in suggesting that Europe's role could lie in constructing a sort of G3 world with China, the U.S. and the EU as three poles of global power. This G3 world will never exist. The best development, from a European perspective, would be a world in which multilateralism was re-invigorated and developed so that the hegemonic competition between the two superpowers could be reined in. Europe should play a leading role towards this goal. This approach can only succeed if Europe aligns with like-minded partners in other regions of the world. Actors in the global south in particular could be attracted, because this would allow them a higher degree of agency. We also must reflect on alliances within the EU. On his last visit to China, President Macron brought a German minister along. That was a good political signal. But German-French cooperation alone is not enough, is too narrow. Why can't the German government systematically get our European partners involved in our intense relations with China? Think European!

The salient point with respect to 17+1 is that the 17 countries gain a better understanding between themselves. At the moment, the entire management of the 17+1 process is de facto in Chinese hands. That's not how it has to be. As regards the German role, we should display a constructive attitude towards the 17+1 and at the same time attempt to relativise that format by finding novel ways in which European partners can partake in and benefit from German strength vis-à-vis China. That the majority of the smaller countries to wait in hope that at some point a few crumbs will fall from the German table will not do as a basis for a solid European policy.

In the course of the coronavirus pandemic, economic ties have become much more apparent and questions of economic dependency have gained a new dimension. At the same time, China is also attempting to expand its bilateral influence. How do you see the long-term consequences of the pandemic for the role of the EU?

Janka Oertel: From the Chinese side, there is a clear prioritising of the money to be spent in order to bring its own economy back up to speed, especially in the technology sector. The measure aiming to build 600,000 5G stations by the end of the year is enormous and could provide China with a qualitative advantage in all new technologies based on 5G. Countries in Europe should invest in two things at the same time: the green economy and digitalisation. The questions 'Where should we invest? What jobs do we need to secure?' can turn into a crucial test. This is also visible in China. We in Europe also have to weigh precisely whether we should consider this a 'new start' moment. However, it must be crystal clear that the redefining of our relationship with China is the absolute key underlying premise for the question of how our economy can be shaped.

Reinhard Bütikofer: The coronavirus crisis looks like an historical milestone. China is acting with great self-confidence as a global power with leadership ambitions for the first time. They are seeking to re-define the framework for international relations. And they believe now is their opportunity for important advances. Look at the conflicts in the immediate periphery of China: in Hong Kong, against Taiwan, India and even Bhutan, around Japan's Senkaku islands or all over the South China Sea. Beijing is playing aggressively for the expansion of its political power.

What sustains my optimism, though, is the fact that the EU does not stand still in the face of these problems. Internally, the agreement for the Recovery Fund is an unprecedented and important leap forward in the integration of European economic policy. That helps to strengthen the internal market, which is our strong economic pillar. Internationally, the WHA provides an example of how 'Leadership through Multilateral Cooperation' can work. It was the Australians and the Europeans who demanded an investigation into the development of the coronavirus, including China's role. China originally opposed that, while the US played the stubborn loner. Nevertheless, we managed to win over 130 countries to co-sponsor the motion, and it was successful. We also have obvious weaknesses. In technology policy, we must bolster the sheer volume of investments and we need more conceptual discussions. China is working on its own cyber currency, which would facilitate absolute state control over the economy. That would be a whole new dimension of totalitarian utopia. And where are we? In the context of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), China is working on getting the global community to commit to a new internet protocol, that of a top-down internet, which would offer every authoritarian government a censorship switch. There are other ideas, from the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI), for example. But these debates are still getting too little political attention.

Janka Oertel: A lot of the thinking about these issues is currently taking place in Brussels, but the transfer to the Member States does not always work super well.

Reinhard Bütikofer: I am for a whole-of-government effort, but we also have to address the need for an all-of-society approach in order to deal adequately with the Chinese challenge. Building up competencies across institutional borders is key. Sweden is leading the way with a national China Strategy and a China Competency Centre.

I would also like to ask you what, from your point of view, are the most important topics for future EU-China relations? Since the 'Leipzig Format' (a summit planned for September in Leipzig, Germany) has been cancelled or postponed, the starting point is different.

Reinhard Bütikofer: In the negotiations concerning the investment agreement, our motto is substance over speed. The investment agreement can only be successful if Beijing moves substantially on three fronts: market access, fairer conditions for com-

petition, which especially involves the role of state-owned enterprises, and sustainability. Europe's market is very open and China's is not. For that reason, we are not willing to meet China halfway. That would be strategic defeat. Apart from investment and trade, contentious issues must also be raised in high-level contacts with the Chinese leadership. For example, the question of the systemic repression in Xinjiang with forced sterilisations on a brutal scale and the imposition of forced labour on the Uyghurs. With respect to the Belt and Road Initiative, we should very critically push back against China's policy of promoting the export of coal technology.

Janka Oertel: We must revisit the question of whether Beijing is willing to adhere to commitments and international treaties after the new Security Law in Hong Kong has been pushed through. This really cuts to the heart of our relationship with China. In Europe, we really need to think about reducing dependence on China to strengthen our negotiation position in all questions that really matter to us. Focussing less on China is not the end of globalisation and the beginning of the erosion of the international economic order - quite the contrary! It includes more active engagement with our partners in East, South and Southeast Asia, but also in Africa to find new avenues of cooperation and enhance connectivity. Additionally, we are beginning to realise that we should not only coordinate better with partners outside the EU, but also within the European structures. It would be extremely valuable if Europe could manage to establish sustainable mechanisms in this regard, even without the Leaders' Meeting, which was envisaged by the German EU Council Presidency. Germany has a specific responsibility. We have to put Europe first in our China policy. If our European partners do not trust us that this will always be the case, we are actually reinforcing China's attempts to divide and rule.

Many thanks to both of you for the conversation!

The conversation took place on 25 May 2020.



Katrin Altmeyer

Katrin Altmeyer was Head of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung in China until 2012. Previously, she spent more than four years in Beijing, most recently as Head of Marketing and Communications at WWF China. Katrin Altmeyer came to Beijing in early 2002 as part of GTZ/CIM's expert programme to support local environmental organisations. After studying communications science and anthropology in Munich and Berlin, Altmeyer worked for ten years as a television journalist for the international programme of Deutsche Welle, then for several years as a media specialist for the environmental organisation WWF in Germany.



Reinhard Bütikofer

Reinhard Bütikofer is a Member of the European Parliament (Greens/EFA). He sits on the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET), where he serves as Greens/EFA foreign affairs spokesperson, and on the Committee on International Trade (INTA) as a substitute member. He is the Chair of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with the People's Republic of China as well as a member of the Delegation to the United States and a substitute member of the ASEAN Delegation.



Dr Janka Oertel

Dr Janka Oertel is the Director of the Asia Programme at the European Council on Foreign Relations. She previously worked as a Senior Fellow in the Asia Program at the German Marshall Fund of the United States' Berlin office, where she focused on transatlantic China policy, including emerging technologies, Chinese foreign policy and security in East Asia. Prior to joining GMF, she served as a programme director at Körber Foundation's Berlin office.



4. The EU's Role in the World

4.3. EU Trade Policy: More Transparency, Environmental and Climate Protection!

Jörg Haas

Trade policy as an instrument of climate and environmental protection? What would be the effects of a supply chain law?



Anna Cavazzini, Member of the European Parliament for The Greens/EFA, and Cornelia Maarfield, Trade and Climate Project Manager at Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe in a conversation with Jörg Haas, Head of International Politics Division, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Berlin.

A few years ago, the free trade agreement with the US known as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) was on everyone's lips. Millions of people signed petitions and took to the streets to protest against the agreement. The EU Commission is currently negotiating an agreement again, this time with the Trump Administration. Anna, what is the current status of these negotiations and what demands are the Greens making of an EU-US trade agreement?

Anna Cavazzini: Ursula von der Leyen announced at the World Economic Forum in February that an agreement would be concluded shortly. To date, however, it has not happened. The current negotiations have been quite trimmed down, concerning only certain areas and are mainly intended to bewitch Trump so that he doesn't impose any further tariffs. We fear that in the area of genetic technology approval and standards, concessions will be made to the US. They are not in the current text of the agreement, but are being made in other policy areas and will come in through the back door. In the area of agricultural standards and the approval of genetic technology, we demand that no faster procedures are allowed and no standards are lowered just to prevent the US from imposing additional tariffs on European cars.

One of the central critical points on the TTIP and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) was the lack of transparency in the negotiations. At that time, the EU Trade Commissioner, Cecilia Malmström, promised improvement. How do things look today?

Anna Cavazzini: I would say that the European Commission is negotiating more transparently thanks to the pressure from civil society and the European Parliament. One also sees differences between the various trade agreements. Where there is more publicity, the EU Commission will pay attention; in other areas, less is published. The basic problem remains that European Parliament ultimately can only vote aye or nay. Both we and German civil society demand that the European Parliament has a role in deciding on the mandates. Additional suggestions are that European Parliament also should be able to add suggestions and that an assessment of the effect of the trade agreement is conducted after a certain time. Additionally, we demand that the European Commission report on the progress of negotiations in public committee sessions of the European Parliament.

Cornelia Maarfield: I find the procedure completely unacceptable. Far too much is happening in backroom deals. For example, in summer 2018, Trump and Juncker agreed that the EU will import more liquefied natural gas from the USA. That led to a 563 per cent increase in imports of liquefied gas within a year and a half. Just as we are talking phasing out fossil fuels. I find it simply scandalous that neither the public nor the European Parliament has a say in this.

Despite many protests, the General Directorate for Trade of the EU Commission is pursuing the Mercosur Trade Agreement with Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay full throttle. What do you think of this agreement?

Cornelia Maarfield: This agreement cannot be allowed to go ahead. The EU-Mercosur Agreement creates new sales markets for environmentally harmful vehicles. It also contains extremely problematic provisions that would hinder the transition to a climate-neutral agriculture here and in Latin America. More meat, sugar and soy products would come to Europe without any safeguards that this will not lead to additional deforestation in Mercosur countries. The parliaments of some EU countries have demanded that their governments do not approve this agreement. We call on the German government to put this agreement on ice.

Anna Cavazzini: In the EU-Mercosur Agreement, it is especially clear that many regulations on environmental issues and provisions prohibiting deforestation are toothless. They only appear in the sustainability chapter. Proponents of the Mercosur Agreement argue that they can be used to hinder and limit what Bolsonaro is doing right now. I think the opposite is the case: the agreement increases the pressure on the Amazon. Deforestation will increase. Anchoring the Paris Agreement and protection against human rights violations and environmental crimes in the text is important, just as are enforceable environmental and social standards. None of these is implemented in the Mercosur Agreement.

Since the topic of environmental protection is quite important to the shared future of us all, how heavily does trade policy influence the possibility to take climate action?

Cornelia Maarfield: There are a number of provisions in trade and investment agreements which restrict or contradict climate policies. To give one example, there are many agreements that give corporations the right to sue a state for compensation if political rules change and this negatively affects the company's profit. But in the course of the climate crisis, we will have to massively change the political rules. For that reason, these rights of investors to bring legal action must be dismantled now to avoid a scenario in which climate policies can be legally challenged and made prohibitively expensive. Other examples are rules in the trade agreement which assess climate policy measures from the perspective of whether they constitute a hindrance to

trade. In light of the climate emergency, we have to reverse this logic: we must assess trade policy measures to ensure they do not constitute a hindrance to climate action.

The so-called Energy Charter Treaty is highly relevant to climate policy. Germany has already been sued, amongst other things, on account of the Moorburg coal power plant in Hamburg, but also on account of the nuclear phase-out. What is the Greens' position on this controversial Energy Charter Treaty?

Anna Cavazzini: The treaty is still based on the antiquated arbitration system and makes the exit from nuclear and fossil fuels impossible in many areas. The EU Commission is attempting to reform it. The argument is that it contains a so-called Sunset Clause, whereby the investments are still protected for 20 years, even if the treaty were to be revoked right now. We are following this with constructive criticism. We are glad that the European Commission is making a suggestion for reform, but don't put much stock in its chances, since all reforms require unanimity. For that reason, the EU Commission should negotiate, but also assign an end date to the whole thing as well a date on which the exit from the agreement will occur. It is important that different legal opinions exist as to whether the Energy Charter is also applicable to disputes within the EU. One could very easily put an end to these cases if all EU states negotiate a termination agreement. That would clean up more than 60 per cent of the cases.

Cornelia Maarfield: From our point of view, the reform process will definitely not render this treaty harmless. The required changes are not even on the negotiation table. The reform process will discuss neither ending the protection of fossil fuels, nor removing the dispute settlement mechanism that allows corporations to sue states. The elimination of the Sunset Clause won't be discussed either. Since the reform is a failure from the start, the EU and the Member States should make plans now to exit the treaty and conclude an additional agreement to exclude future investor claims between them.

China and many African States are preparing to sign on to this treaty. That would be a disaster. China is investing heavily in new coal power plants in Turkey and the Balkans. These investments, as well as oil extraction sites and pipelines in Africa, would be protected under this treaty. This would make the phase-out of fossil fuels considerably more difficult.

Let's step away from the Energy Charter and move on to the no less controversial topic of corporate group legal action rights, which are also known as courts of arbitration. What is the international situation in this dispute, and what is the Greens' position on corporate group legal action rights?

Anna Cavazzini: The reform of the protection standards is still insufficient. It is better than nothing, of course, but these impressive-sounding but vacuous clauses such as 'fair

and equitable treatment', on which very many claims are based, remain untouched. My ideal would still be to see courts of arbitration not anchored in any agreement worldwide. But that is unrealistic. So, the best way forward is to reduce the protective standards.

The question of the multilateral investment court is a bit more difficult. We Greens don't approve of it, as long as certain minimum standards are not assured and civil society has no access to legal actions. At the same time, it replaces several thousand bilateral agreements. Civil society needs a more precise discussion of how to deal with this dilemma.

Another hot topic in trade is supply chains. Anna, can you explain how that works and what the current status is?

Anna Cavazzini: A supply chain law has long been a demand from German civil society and the Greens. It's a very important matter to me too. The idea is to use the power of the internal market of the EU and require all companies that operate here to exercise care and diligence all along their supply chain. They would thus be responsible for assuring that no human rights violations or environmental crimes are committed. They have to accept liability for this and they can be subject to legal action. After great pressure was brought to bear from the European Parliament, especially by us Greens, Justice European Commissioner Reynders announced such a Supply Chain Law for 2021 four weeks ago at an event we held. He also hammered down a couple of very good parameters: environmental crimes are part of the law in which sanctions are provided for and it affects all sectors. Many initiatives will be introduced in the next six months in the European Parliament, which will define what such a law should look like in detail from our perspective. The German government should also use its EU Council Presidency to prepare the law.

Cornelia Maarfield: Due diligence legislation is also a topic for the climate movement. Without social justice, there is no climate justice. Moreover, this legislation could ensure that no products that contributed to illegal deforestation can enter the European market. A lot of the damage we Europeans do to the climate and people in other countries is through our imports. That's why it is so important to ensure clean, green and fair supply chains.

Thank you both for your time and input.

The conversation took place on 22 June 2020.



Anna Cavazzini

Anna Cavazzini is a German Member of the European Parliament for the Greens/EFA group. She represents constituencies in Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt, neighbouring the Polish and Czech borders. In the Parliament, she sits on the International Trade Committee and the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee. She is the Vice-Chair of the Parliament's Brazil Delegation and has a specific interest in Central and Latin America. She co-leads the German Green delegation.



Jörg Haas

Jörg Haas heads up the International Politics division of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, covering international financial and economic affairs and global governance. He studied Geography and Ethnology in Trier in the 1980s, with postgraduate studies at the Seminar for Rural Development, Berlin. 1990-92, he worked for GTZ on a rainforest project in Ecuador. From 1993, he led the Latin America Division of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, switching over in 1997 to head the Ecology Division. He remained there until 2008, with a focus on climate and energy policy and the ecological governance of globalisation. He also served as Programme Director Global Climate Policy of the European Climate Foundation supporting the global climate negotiations with technical and economic analysis, and in bilateral climate finance initiatives after the Copenhagen climate conference. From 2014 to 2017, he worked at Campact, a progressive digital citizen's movement.



Cornelia Maarfield

Cornelia Maarfield works on the interlinkages and contradictions of EU trade, investment and climate policies at Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe, Europe's leading NGO coalition fighting dangerous climate change. She has been campaigning for a fair and sustainable trade system for over 15 years, for example as the Campaign Manager of the Stop TTIP and CETA Citizens' Initiative that collected over 3 million signatures.



4. The EU's Role in the World

4.4. The EU Migration Policy: More Solidarity Is Needed!

Anna Schwarz

Looking ahead to the future of the EU asylum system, what is the impact of Covid-19 on solidarity within the European Union? A debate on the dysfunctionality and possible solutions.



Erik Marquardt, Member of the European Parliament, and Josephine Liebl, Head of Advocacy at the European Council on Refugees and Exiles in a conversation with Anna Schwarz, Head of Global Transformation Programme, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union.

At the beginning of the year, the EU Commission announced that it would be publishing a ‘New Pact on Migration and Asylum’. The release has been repeatedly delayed, likely due to the coronavirus pandemic. Aside from the pandemic, what’s holding it up? And what are your expectations and fears for this pact?

Erik Marquardt: I think the European Commission itself does not precisely know when the right point in time will be for publishing the pact and what it should contain. The member states are very far apart on this topic. It is therefore neither the European Commission nor the European Parliament that is blocking a reform of the European asylum systems, but the national states.

There is already a European legal framework. In practice, asylum policy simply departs widely from it. I fear the new pact will not bring any improvement, but turn practice into laws: people are denied access to the procedures of the rule of law; they are humiliated and must generally live for years in ignoble conditions. That has nothing to do with European values or European opportunities for helping people. I can only hope that the debate about the new asylum system makes clear that migration is not a bad thing. The EU has a success story to tell on migration. For that reason, we should see ourselves as visionaries for a global migration policy. A vision for the future has to be developed and thus a robust asylum system, which places human dignity at front and centre and assures good management of immigration movements.

Josephine Liebl: There are many fears on our part: one concern is the current trend of outsourcing responsibilities for asylum. At this time, all member states are of the opinion that third countries should take on more responsibility in asylum and that the solution for everything lies in increasing the number of people returning. Another major fear is that nothing will change in the dysfunctionality and the inhumane nature of the current asylum systems. The discussion and the suggestions for mandatory border procedures are a great indicator that this lack of solidarity within the EU will continue. What we hope is that there will be an investment in functioning, just asylum systems in all EU member states. A principled path to a joint asylum policy entails respect for the procedures of the rule of law in all EU member states. Another important question for us is that of inclusion: how do we treat people who have arrived in Europe?

In recent years, the situation for people who cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe has worsened. Right now, in the course of the pandemic, Italy and Malta have announced that people rescued at sea will not be allowed to enter their ports. How can we get out of this completely muddled situation?

Erik Marquardt: The decision not to save people in distress at sea is totally inhuman. The EU Commission and the German government have, however, repeatedly asserted that rescuing people in distress at sea does not lie in its area of responsibility. Moreover, the EU has an absolutely hypocritical attitude toward Libya. On the one hand, they give speeches on foreign policy and defence policy about how terrible the situation in Libya is. On the other, the European Union clearly does not see itself as responsible for assuring a safe escape route for people fleeing the Libyan civil war. Organisations and people who want to protest the policy of sealing off Europe are turned into criminals. To resolve the situation, it would be possible for individual Member States to send rescue ships. Even the German Federal States would be able to provide support for help organisations working in sea rescue, either with their own ships or with financial assistance. It is important that actors at various levels work together. There are many communities and regions in Europe, and also the German Federal States, which would be happy to accept people. Even here, it is the national government that is blocking things. Seeing things from a broader perspective, we need a European sea rescue organisation and a distribution mechanism whereby that cannot be a precondition for organising sea rescue.

Josephine Liebl: What we are seeing right now in Malta is the terrible result of the dysfunctionality and inhumanity of the current asylum system.

The reaction of the politicians of the Mediterranean states can in part be explained by the lack of solidarity within Europe. We have seen in the past how right-wing populists such as Matteo Salvini were able to exploit this division between EU Member States at the expense of people seeking protection and safety in Europe.

The EU has suspended its Resettlement Programme indefinitely in reaction to the pandemic. What is the most important thing in coming years from your point of view when it comes to resettlement?

Josephine Liebl: In recent years, there has been an increase in both the number of refugees who were resettled by EU Member States and the number of countries participating in resettlement. In the last year, it was possible for something like more than 25,500 people to begin a new life through resettlement in sixteen EU Member States. In December 2019, the EU jointly decided to accept 30,000 refugees in 2020. This is an increase and should be welcomed. However, in a situation in which, according to the UNHCR, 1.4 million people need resettlement, this is still not sufficient. We are very worried that the temporary suspension of resettlement due to Coronavirus

will mean that the objective for 2020 will not be achieved. We assume that it will also have an influence on the numbers in the following years. There are of course other possibilities for accepting people. Family reunification is one option, as well as humanitarian evacuations, especially from Libya.

Erik Marquardt: Many states have made it very easy to suspend the Resettlement Programme in the shadow of the pandemic and further limit family reunification. This demonstrates solidarity with those who are in the greatest need, at least. The objective should be to meet the goal of 30,000 in any case. Additionally, one has to think about how to deal with people who are coming to Europe irregularly right now in very small numbers.

The topic of return has also become very important to the EU Commission in recent years. It has repeatedly demanded an effective return policy from the Member States, by which it means returning as many people as possible. What are your concrete demands for a European return policy?

Josephine Liebl: The suggestion that it is possible to operate a functioning and humanitarian asylum policy only by increasing the number of returns is demonstrably false.

If, however, governments do return people, three preconditions have to be met. The first is a fair asylum system within Europe, which can thoroughly assess whether a person there is entitled to protection and if there is any danger of human rights violations in the event of repatriation. In our opinion, that has not yet been established, which can be seen with a mere glance at the divergence between the rates of recognition of asylum between the various EU Member States. Secondly, we need a fair return policy and processes. The priority should always be given to voluntary repatriation, in which the individuals as well as their families and the societies in the countries to which they return are supported. The third point is the necessity of fair and transparent partnerships with third countries, which have to be subject to monitoring by the European Parliament. Additionally, the use of development funds to incentivise third countries to cooperate with EU Member States in the area of returns has to stop. This contradicts all principles of developmental cooperation and leads to ineffective and mismanaged developmental cooperation. This is another way that the EU makes itself susceptible to extortion and thereby reduces its standing as a principled actor on the global political stage.

Erik Marquardt: What really disturbs me about the debate is that vulnerable people are deprived of their rights and this is just taken for granted. But with respect to returns, the implementation of the rule of law is what is called for. It is to everyone's disadvantage if the only lasting prospect for remaining in the country means a life outside society without any right to work and without legal status. In the individual

case, it is important to see whether and how legal status can be granted. In principle, no one can be returned to warzones or areas in crisis. And one has to give people enough time and opportunity to create the legal and financial bases to build a life for themselves in the respective country. Deporting people without any prospects for the future will most likely lead to them wanting to return to Europe again. In this context, it is also very important that we offer immigration options to low-skilled workers. The pandemic should be a lesson to us: it is above all these people who perform indispensable work in our system.

Thank you both for the conversation!

The conversation took place on 27 May 2020.



Josephine Liebl

Josephine Liebl is Head of Advocacy at the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). ECRE is a pan-European alliance of 106 NGOs protecting and advancing the rights of refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons. Josephine previously worked as Humanitarian Policy Advisor at Oxfam and as a Senior Policy Officer at the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office. Prior to that, Josephine held positions at the European Coalition for Corporate Justice, the German Institute for Human Rights and UNRWA.



Erik Marquardt

Erik Marquardt is a Member of the European Parliament and the spokesperson of the German Greens in the European Parliament on asylum and migration. Before he engaged in politics, Erik Marquardt worked as a photojournalist documenting the situation of refugees on the Balkan route, in Greece and the Mediterranean, among others. He organised many exhibitions and presentations to illustrate the situation of refugees and to promote greater understanding. He has also been involved in rescuing people in the Mediterranean and supports NGOs engaged in search and rescue.



Anna Schwarz

Anna Schwarz has been Head of Programme - Global Transformation at the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union in Brussels since 2019. Before joining the Foundation's office in Brussels, Anna worked as an accredited parliamentary assistant in the European Parliament in Brussels and as an officer for the German Federal Voluntary Service at 'Internationale Jugendgemeinschaftsdienste' in Berlin. During her studies, she worked as a research assistant at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt. Anna holds a bachelor's degree in European Studies from Osnabrück University and a master's degree in International Studies/Peace and Conflict Studies from the Goethe University Frankfurt.



4. The EU's Role in the World

4.5. The EU Must Speak With One Voice: Its Role in the Middle East

Dr. Bente Scheller

A debate on the US influence, Covid-19, restricted individual freedoms and how the EU should define its role.



Dr. Hannah Neumann, Member of the European Parliament for The Greens/EFA, and Dr. Lina Khatib, Director of the Middle East and North Africa Programme at Chatham House in London in a conversation with Dr. Bente Scheller, Head of Middle East and North Africa Division at the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung in Berlin.

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, there are strict entry conditions at the EU external borders. How do you think we can go back to a situation that enables those seeking protection in the EU to actually make it here? How can the conditions be addressed in such a way as to give people protection and asylum once again?

Lina Khatib: Even before the coronavirus crisis, one of the EU's main concerns regarding the Middle East in general was the people arriving from that region as refugees and this had a huge impact on the way the EU dealt with the region and how governments across Europe handled domestic policies. The crisis should be used as an opportunity to think about social protection policies across the board, since it has exposed inequalities in Europe and migrants happen to be a sub-set of that the community. So now is a good time for European countries to look at their policies in general and reflect on whether they contribute to effective and viable social protections.

It's nice to hear that you are hopeful that now is time to do this. Hannah, as a politician you have been very active in advocating for refugee issues. How realistic do you think this kind of change is, and what needs to be done to get there?

Hannah Neumann: At the moment, things haven't gotten easier because of the crisis. Almost no one can enter the EU, unless on business grounds. This situation shows once more that we need to find ways for people to make their asylum claim without crossing the border. That is the political challenge we are facing.

Looking at the countries many refugees come from, in the past decade many people have protested for their civil rights and were met with oppression and violent responses. Hannah, do you feel that the coronavirus crisis comes as an additional layer of repression for people in the Middle East trying to secure rights in their own countries?

Hannah Neumann: It is clear that individual freedoms need to be restricted to fight the health emergency. But these restrictions need to be proportionate and time-limited. And people need to be able to debate them. This is not always the case in the Middle East and some rulers are certainly abusing the pandemic for additional repression. But I think we need to look at it country by country, because the region is very diverse. In a

number of countries, like Egypt or Turkey, we see restrictions that are disproportionate and not time-bound and where we really need to be cautious that the pandemic is not being used as a pretext just to reduce political freedoms. In some countries, it is no longer even a matter of shrinking space for civil society anymore, but of no space at all. And we also need to look at the economic situation. It's completely different to have a lockdown in countries like Germany or the UK, where people can buy food and toilet paper and can store it in their homes, or in other countries, where being stuck at home for one or two days means you starve because you don't earn the money you need to buy food. That puts pressure on people to infringe lockdown regulations, and if then the lockdown is enforced with violence, as we have seen e.g. in Iraq, people must fear for their lives either way.

Lina, do you have any examples in mind where you can clearly say civil freedoms are being restricted and might potentially remain like that? Or do you think people are using their power in a meaningful way?

Lina Khatib: The coronavirus crisis has played out in different ways in the region, and in a place like Tunisia, civil society has played a very important role in helping at the local level, especially in peripheral regions. However, in a place like Lebanon, the government announced an extension of the measures and it caused general mobilisation, which is basically the emergency measures taken under the umbrella of limiting the spread of the coronavirus in the country. Many civil society actors see this as a political measure because the general mobilisation rules prevent people from gathering in large numbers. The coronavirus pandemic in Lebanon came on top of a very severe economic crisis. People who were reliant on daily labour lost their livelihoods as a result of this economic crisis and the country's very weak social protection measures meant that these people had no recourse to any public support. Civil society actors are saying this move is now not a public health issue but a political issue on the part of the government, and so we are seeing this crisis often play into the hands of autocrats across the region using it as an opportunity to crack down on freedom of expression. We're seeing this crisis unfortunately play out in a kind of negative way in most places in the region.

Certainly, we will have to see what comes out of it, but let's take a step back and look at the broader picture of EU policy towards the Middle East and North African region. Sometimes the EU has been speaking with one voice, and sometimes different Member States have different approaches to states depending on their relationships. Lina, would you say that it would be better for the region if the EU spoke with one voice?

Lina Khatib: I think it's highly important for the EU to speak with one voice even though it's becoming increasingly difficult. Add to that the fact that many European countries are very much concerned with their internal and regional issues in Europe and within their own borders so that policy towards the Middle East is not a priority

for them. The last time the EU developed a comprehensive strategy towards the Middle East was 1993. So, there is a huge gap when it comes to EU policies aimed at harmonising a European position. The lack of coherence within the EU has obviously had a huge impact on European leverage when it comes to key issues in the region. Germany is as guilty as France and the UK of taking a very soft stance towards many autocrats in the region. All of this is very much at odds with the EU's own principles when it comes to human rights at the very least.

Hannah, are you afraid that if we now try and develop a common strategy inside the EU towards the Middle East that it might be less favourable than earlier approaches?

Hannah Neumann: If the EU manages to speak with one voice, it will have an impact, because then it's not just the EU and the EU institutions, but it is 27 Member States that can bring a lot of economic pressure to bear, and thus also a lot of diplomatic power. Libya is a good example of this: the Berlin Conference on Libya was supported by all Member States and it was somehow successful, but then everything fell apart again because some Member States did not stick to what they had agreed upon. They continued supporting opposing sides of the conflict. Another window of opportunity for the EU might be the question of who will pay for the reconstruction of Syria and who is going to pay for the humanitarian aid, as Russia is not going to. That could be a bargaining chip for the EU. But the EU can only use this bargaining chip if all agree on what they want to bargain for.

At the moment, the US is sort of absent and with an unpredictable policy towards the Middle East, so I think that this is a new challenge for the EU. How do you think the EU can strengthen its own role independent of the US?

Hannah Neumann: I don't think the US is absent, and that's part of the problem: they are acting completely arbitrarily. So, what is the role of the EU? Many in the Middle East take the EU as a role model showing how people can live together in peace again following conflicts and wars. That is something I think we can build upon. I think the EU is often perceived as placing importance on fair play, as a player with "convener power", which means a largely neutral actor which has the potential to bring together different countries in the event of conflict. This can help in the region. And also, the Green Deal has some good potential for cooperation in the region, where most of the countries have signed the Paris Agreement. If we in Europe aim for climate neutrality by 2050, but everyone else around us continues as before, we have not solved the problem. I hope the new European Commission will make the challenges of the MENA region a foreign policy priority.

Lina, what do you think? What can the EU do and how much does it matter that the US is playing a different role now?

Lina Khatib: Since the Obama Administration, the US has been taking a step back when it comes to engagement in the Middle East and that was part of a wider shift in the US priorities so that by the time Trump came into power, the Middle East was not a very hot issue for US foreign policy. The Middle East was reduced really to the issues of terrorism, oil and Israel. In all of these areas, the US has made things more difficult for the EU because many things, such as the US sanctions against Iran, are crippling the region, and thus further complicating the EU's own ability to act independently. So, this inequality in the relationship between the EU and the US is having very visible impacts in the region but at the same time, we go back to the issue of lack of coherence because the EU is not coherent internally in formulating a strategy.

Thank you very much, Lina and Hannah. It was such a rich discussion.

The conversation took place on 5 June 2020.



Dr Lina Khatib

Dr Lina Khatib is the Director of the Middle East and North Africa Programme at Chatham House. Her policy interests focus on the international relations of and regional dynamics in the Middle East, as well as on the Syrian conflict.



Dr. Hannah Neumann

Dr. Hannah Neumann is the Peace and Human Rights Coordinator for the Greens/EFA Group, Vice-Chair of the Human Rights Committee (DROI), Member the Committees on Foreign Affairs (AFET), Security and Defence Policy (SEDE) and Chair of the Delegation for Relations with the Arabian Peninsula (DARP). Neumann studied and earned her PhD in media sciences and peace and conflict research in Ilmenau, Berlin, Manila and Monrovia.



Dr. Bente Scheller

Dr. Bente Scheller is Head of Middle East and North Africa Division at the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung in Berlin. In 2012, she became the Head of Office of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung's Middle East office in Beirut, a position she took after directing the Foundation's Afghanistan office in Kabul between 2008 and 2012. She holds a doctorate in political science from the Freie Universität Berlin and specialises in Foreign and Security Policy. From 2002 to 2004 she worked at the German Embassy in Damascus, Syria. She later took over the Berlin Aspen Institute's Syria programme. In November 2013, her book 'The Wisdom of Syria's Waiting Game. Foreign Policy under the Assad' was published in London. Scheller is a frequent commentator on current affairs in the region in newspapers and radio, among others BBC, Die Zeit, taz and The European. She blogs at Heinrich von Arabien.



4. The EU's Role in the World

4.6. Democracy Support Outside the EU

Dr. Cornelia Hoffmann

In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy was adopted. What is the role of civil society and the future of EU democracy support in the context of the Covid-19 crisis?



Heidi Hautala, MEP, The Greens/EFA and Vice-President of the European Parliament, and Richard Youngs, Senior Fellow in the Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program at Carnegie Europe, in a conversation with Dr. Cornelia Hoffmann, Head of EU Programmes and Democracy at the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union.

On 25 March 2020, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy was adopted as a sign of the EU's continued support for democracy and human rights worldwide. In parallel, negotiations on the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument as the main instrument for EU democracy support outside the EU in the scope of the new Multiannual Financial Framework are ongoing, albeit with deadlines postponed; the country programming which sets the EU's priorities on the ground is also likely to be adapted to the current situation.

Without a doubt, we are facing one of the biggest challenges countries all over the world have had to confront in years. These challenges go far beyond reflections on our health care systems, the economy and education systems. This crisis puts our democracies and their resilience to the test as well. So I'd like to jump straight into the conversation with my first question to both of you.

In your opinion, what does the coronavirus pandemic mean for the EU's support of democracy outside of the EU?

Heidi Hautala: I believe that we are facing more and more self-confident autocrats, unfortunately in the EU as well – just look at Hungary and Poland. In order to be able to defend democracy and human rights outside the EU, it's essential that the EU works with these systemic failures of the rule of law and democracy within the EU.

Autocrats all around the world have given in to the temptation to put limits on people's freedoms and rights in the shadow of the coronavirus crisis.

All of a sudden we are seeing censorship, aggressive rules governing certain minorities or cultural practices as well as restrictions aimed at migrants, ethnic minorities or LGBTI people. We are seeing violations of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights; access to abortion has been restricted in many cases, with dramatic consequences. We have to identify situations where the pandemic has actually made human rights even more precarious in the world.

Richard Youngs: I would say that the pandemic will make it more difficult to take forward the EU's new democracy strategy, but I also think it makes that new strategy more

necessary. So I think there are two problems: the first set of problems are those that Heidi talks about, that authoritarian behaviour has gained ground as a result of the crisis, not everywhere, but at least in a significant number of countries.

I think the most repressive regimes are becoming more autocratic, hybrid regimes are probably losing their more democratic elements and in many democracies, the overall quality of democracy seems to be suffering as well. There is quite a wide range of different challenges that will make it harder for the EU to maintain the effectiveness of its democracy support. But secondly, there are also the EU's own internal challenges. Obviously and understandably, the priority for some time will be the internal health situation and internal economic recovery, while the programmes dedicated to external democracy and human rights will have to fight in a context in which resources couldn't be more scarce.

I think that means that democracy programmes need to reframe themselves in a way as contributing towards the post-pandemic recovery, but I think that internal and external challenges will make the situation very challenging. But precisely because of that, I think this new action plan, this new strategy is more necessary than ever, and in that way it's good that the EU has just agreed to this whole new framework for taking forward its democracy and human rights support. It will very much be needed.

Richard, what role do you see for civil society in this situation, to support democracy outside the EU?

Richard Youngs: I think the role of civil society is very important and interesting, but also quite complex and varied. The negative side of the story we know: new government restrictions against democracy around the world; the slightly more positive side of the story is that there seems to have been a kind of civic backlash unleashed against these restrictions. Of course, civil society is having to deal with very difficult national contexts, so I don't mean to suggest this is all good news for civil society, but at least in some countries we are seeing quite an impressive dynamism emerging within civil society actors. And that's something that might be able to be harnessed positively in support of democracy and human rights.

That's not to say that all this new civil society activism linked to the pandemic is necessarily good for democracy. Some of it is not; many of the protests we're seeing of course are against lockdowns, are against governments' pandemic measures, which in a way could be seen as problematic for democratic norms. But at least some of the civic activism does involve local communities organising much more systematically and involves different factions of society getting together to work on common problem-solving.

So without overstating this potential and this positive trend, there may at least be some potential there for EU democracy support to latch on to.

Heidi Hautala: I think we have to see that fake news is also spreading within civil society and it is part of the populist, anti-elite movement, and we have to make sure that these movements are counteracted by open discussion, open exchanges. But of course, overall our chief focus should be on how to promote the democratic function of civil society and there's a lot we can do.

Heidi, given the important role and also the potential of civil society for vibrant and resilient democracies, could you tell us what efforts are being undertaken by the EU right now to support civil society?

Heidi Hautala: The democracy promotion programmes are even more important in the situation that Richard has just described, and we have to make sure that the financial support continues. We have just agreed on important financial support for civil society organisations in the eastern partnership area, in the Western Balkans, also in the southern neighbourhood, so I think this really has to continue strongly.

And it's always appropriate to point out that human rights are essential to all the EU's external relations, and we should not avoid talking about the responsibility of the EU delegations to defend and actively promote the role of civil society and human rights.

There is an interesting element of the discussion now on the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic for supply chains and the role of businesses. I've been focusing for quite some time now on business and human rights and I see a new opportunity to discuss sustainable, transparent and accountable supply chains, including (the mainstream discussion about) how to make these supply chains shorter so that we understand what is actually being imported from around the world to the EU in terms of components, raw materials and products. Here I see a golden opportunity to point out that we have to shed light on those supply chains in terms of human rights.

I am very pleased to see that the EU Justice Commissioner has now announced that in 2021, we will have a European Commission proposal on mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence of supply chains. This will be a game-changer because it would show that Europe is complicit in many human rights violations through its trade policies and through the activities of companies operating in Europe. So that's something where I think we have new opportunities now.

As you say, there is a lot we can do, which brings me to the last question. In the EU's global response to the pandemic, Josep Borell said 'This is a global fight that we will either win or lose together.' How can we make sure we win it?

Richard Youngs: I'm not sure I have a simple answer to that. I think the sentiment behind the statement is absolutely correct. For our area of concern, democracy and human rights, there will be a very difficult balance that the EU has to strike in its international

response. Why? Because a lot of the international coordination related to the pandemic will necessarily involve cooperating with non-democratic regimes.

That requires quite a difficult challenge for those interested in democracy and human rights: How can one keep a focus on very important human rights considerations while also dealing with a whole range of political regimes in order to try and combat the global dynamics of the pandemic?

My policy suggestion would be that the EU should ensure, as Heidi alluded, that the civil society dimension, the rights-protecting dimension, is always present within the coordination of its support. It may mean a slightly less direct or politicised approach to democracy and human rights, but it should enable the EU to make sure it keeps supporting civic actors, the vibrancy of the rights communities, in countries around the world. And to try at least to ensure that they don't suffer increased political repression as a result of the health emergency.

Heidi, what's your take on this?

Heidi Hautala: Well, first of all I think that multilateralism and the rules-based international system is more and more at stake here, and hopefully after this pandemic the realisation of this will get more support. The EU has to be there to point out that we need multilateral, international, even transnational cooperation to manage this kind of crisis.

There are predictions that after the pandemic, maybe everything will go back to business as usual, but we can and should make the case for multilateral, global decision-making to be considered even more important than it was before the crisis.

And it's also about solidarity. Within Europe, we have seen this kind of fierce, quite bitter discussion between the southern and northern Member States about sharing the financial consequences of the crisis. We have to show that solidarity is the best way forward – by helping others, we can also help ourselves.

Our focus will have to reach out also to the other regions of the world and help to make sure that numbers of people living in extreme poverty, or where there are human rights violations, do not increase in the shadow of this crisis. So indeed, we need to revise some of the EU's programmes so that we may be able to identify more groups, more minorities, that are under serious threat in these times and beyond.

Thank you very much for your time and for your replies.

The conversation took place on 18 May 2020.



Heidi Hautala

Heidi Hautala is Vice-President of the European Parliament, Member of the European Parliament in the Greens/EFA group and former Minister for International Development and State Ownership Steering in Finland. She was elected as a Vice-President of the European Parliament in October 2017 and continues in the office. Heidi serves on the Committee on International Trade, the Sub-Committee on Human Rights and as a substitute on the Committee on Legal Affairs of the European Parliament. In 2017, Heidi established a Working Group on Responsible Business Conduct in the European Parliament.



Dr. Cornelia Hoffmann

Dr. Cornelia Hoffmann is Deputy Head of Unit - Global Support for Democracy and Head of Programme - EU Projects and Democracy at the European Union office of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung in Brussels. She is responsible for the worldwide supervision of EU projects, capacity building of project partners and closely following the EU's external democracy support policy. She has a special focus on EU-Latin America relations in the fields of democracy and human rights. Since April 2019, she has been Coordinator of the European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP). Before that, Cornelia worked as research fellow at the University of Antwerp, where she obtained her PhD and provided policy recommendations for the Flemish Government in the scope of the Policy Research Centre "Governmental organisation - Decisive Governance" (2012-2015). Previously, she worked as Consultant at the Governance Directorate of the OECD in Paris. Hoffmann also has professional experience within a number of other institutions, such as the Scientific Council for Government Policy in The Hague and the European Liaison Office of the German Research Organisations (KoWi) and the European Office of Bavarian Local Authorities, both in Brussels. Cornelia holds a BA in European Cultural History from the University of Augsburg (Germany), an MA in European Union Studies from the University of Leiden (Netherlands) and a PhD in Political Sciences from the University of Antwerp (Belgium).



Richard Youngs

Richard Youngs is a senior fellow in the Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program, based at Carnegie Europe. He works on EU foreign policy and on issues of international democracy. Youngs is also a Professor of International Relations at the University of Warwick. Prior to joining Carnegie in July 2013, he was the director of the European think tank FRIDE. He has held positions in the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and as an EU Marie Curie fellow. He was a senior fellow at the Transatlantic Academy in Washington, DC, from 2012 to 2013.



4. The EU's Role in the World

4.7. The Future of Multilateralism

Bastian Hermisson

How is the current pandemic influencing multilateralism?
What role can the European Union play in shaping its
future? A debate.



Dr. Franziska Brantner, Member of the German Federal Parliament, and Dr. Annegret Bendiek, German Institute for International Security Affairs (SWP), in a conversation with Bastian Hermisson, Head of Office, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Washington, DC.

Thank you both for giving your time to talk about the future of multilateralism and the European Union's role in the world in the context of the upcoming German EU Council Presidency. We are in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic and we have not seen the kind of high-level global summits we have in previous crises. We have also not seen sustained US or EU leadership. Do you think this is unique to this particular challenge or is it part of a long-term trend of the lack of effective multilateralism?

Annegret Bendiek: It's a long-term trend. 100 years ago, the League of Nations was founded, which led to the United Nations and a certain idea of multilateralism. And after the Second World War, Germany built its foreign and security policies on this idea of democratic multilateralism. And indeed "effective multilateralism" was mentioned in the European Security Strategy of 2003, which called for international conflicts to be resolved in cooperation with strategic partners. As strategic partners, the EU mentioned the US, China, Russia, India and Canada. But these relationships have changed over time, and today governments seem to have different understandings of multilateralism. So the EU urgently needs to work to strengthen the idea of democratic multilateralism again in these times. Authoritarian states are very much in favour of a functional understanding of multilateralism.

Franziska, do you see it similarly? Are we witnessing the unravelling of the liberal international order, and what has brought us to this point?

Franziska Brantner: Worldwide, there are forces that reject and fight liberal democracies and multilateralism both within and outside the "western partnership". The long-standing idea that global cooperation creates a win-win situation for partners has been unravelling for a while now – a notorious Trump populist talking point – but it is also a recurring claim of autocratic leaders worldwide. But more profoundly: how is it possible that people no longer believe that international cooperation creates win-win situations? I think part of the answer is the problems that came with the economic globalisation regime, such as rising inequality, tax evasion, the social and environmental race to the bottom to gain market shares, etc.

There have been attempts to deal with this reality. We have seen a Franco-German initiative on the EU Member State level that strives for an "alliance of multilat-

eralists". But how far do you expect this to go, and what kind of ambitions are realistic on a broader EU level?

Franziska Brantner: The question is whether we are prepared to fight for what is necessary, to keep our expectations high. I'm not sure if governments are just paying lip service to the idea of multilateralism. The present American administration is not supporting the international regime the US put in place after WWII, so the question is, who will pick up the baton? The EU or Germany and France have yet to show they are willing and prepared to jump in, which would among others mean turning the Euro into a global reference currency, having a joint European 5G policy focusing on European Digital Sovereignty, and having a joined-up China strategy not dominated by a German car policy.

As Franziska mentioned, Annegret, previous effective multilateralism depended heavily on a functioning and ambitious Trans-Atlantic partnership. How do you see future Trans-Atlantic relations in this context?

Annegret Bendiek: First of all, it is important to mention that the EU itself is a multi-lateral construction. The EU is a community of law and therein lies the sleeping beauty of this organisation and construction. I think it is absolutely necessary that you have a strong power that supports the idea of multilateral cooperation, and I think the EU can play this role, when it comes to policy areas which are linked to internal market policies – in the field of climate change, in the field of digital policy, in the field of environmental policy. It can set standards, which can be transferred to the UN level and to multilateral forums. There is a lot of work to be done to convince the EU Member States as well as the US to support these upcoming standard settings on a supra-national level. So I think there is a chance for transnational and Trans-Atlantic cooperation.

The coming election in the US will happen during the German EU Council presidency, and as Annegret mentioned, there are a couple of topics that would be essential for the EU to focus on, when it comes to multilateral governance. What do you think specifically should be the focus of the German Presidency? What are the most crucial topics of a multilateralist agenda looking into the future?

Franziska Brantner: A top priority has to be the protection of the climate and biodiversity. After all, if we are not able to address these topics jointly, multilateralism itself stands to lose its very *raison d'être*. A second issue is global health. If the US leaves the WHO, how do we keep it up, how can we ensure a transparent world health system? A third priority should deal with all the proliferation issues, nuclear as well as non-nuclear. Today the issue seems to have no priority on people's radar, which I find worrisome given the consequences an unfettered process would have. I think the EU has to get actively involved; an incomplete weapon proliferation regime is still better than no regime at all. The fourth priority is undoubtedly the US-China rivalry; the EU has to become the

third pole for all those actors who do not want to be sucked into a new bipolar competition. For this to happen, Germany will have to play a prominent role. I think the German Presidency is the appropriate moment for us in Germany to debate the role we want to play both in the European Union and in the world, and the price we are prepared and willing to pay for the daunting tasks lying ahead of us.

What are your thoughts beyond the German role in the context of the coronavirus pandemic? On the one hand, we've seen an enormous amount of global scientific cooperation, but at the same time borders have been closed, walls have gone up again in many countries and there is an attitude of everyone for themselves. What are your thoughts on how this pandemic will play out for multilateralism? Will it be a force that accelerates the trend towards the dismantling of the liberal order, or could it be a turning point to reinvigorate global and regional cooperation and frameworks?

Annegret Bendiek: There are a lot of citizens in this country, but also in Europe, who believe accretively in the role of the nation-state. The other way of thinking is that at the moment we are witnessing a clearer view of how a G-2 world will look, where all the middle-range powers have to find their position, therefore I see a strong role for regional organisations in the future. What I hope for is that under the German Presidency, we will see a stronger role in European foreign and security policies, and the adoption of Qualified Majority Voting in the EU Council, but this is not enough. We have to empower the people and strengthen the parliamentary role in the EU, on all levels of policy-making. In the EU's Global Strategy of 2016 it is rightly stated: "A resilient society featuring democracy, trust in institutions, and sustainable development lies at the heart of a resilient state." The EU as a community of law can promote democratic multilateralism if it is itself democratically legitimised and subject to parliamentary control, including in the CFSP.

Franziska, how do you think we might come out of this crisis? Are you more hopeful, pessimistic or somewhere in between?

Franziska Brantner: Let me first reply to Annegret, I think it's all well and good to say we need more parliamentary control in the EU but what kind, where is it lacking, specifically? Today's reality is that the European Parliament has a much stronger role than many national parliaments.

Bastian, at the beginning of the crisis I was quite pessimistic about the EU. The low point in the unfolding drama was when Germany adopted an export stop, including in the EU, for medical products. That's when I thought the entire EU single market was coming apart, because if we did not deliver the products that had been ordered and paid for, the internal market order would lose its purpose and eventually unravel. I was quite happy that President Von der Leyen threatened Germany with a quite high fine, if they did not

reverse that decision. I was also surprised how many citizens called and demonstrated for open internal borders. I never thought that the German-French border would be the theatre where citizens demonstrated every Saturday and said 'I want this border to be open.' So in some perverted way, it might have helped us all to realise what closed borders feel like and that we do not want to go back to border control, either economically or politically.

Thank you for this interview.

The conversation took place on 4 June 2020.



Dr. Annegret Bendiek

Dr Annegret Bendiek is a political scientist of the research division "EU/ Europe" at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP). Since 2005, she has been researching fundamental issues of European foreign and security policy and is a lecturer on the postgraduate programme "Master of European Studies" at Freie Universität Berlin and Technische Universität Berlin. In addition to her research and publication activities, she advises governments, international institutions and companies on European foreign and security policy as well as on regulatory issues in cyber security and digitisation at EU level.



Dr. Franziska Brantner

Franziska Brantner has been a Member of the Deutsche Bundestag for the constituency of Heidelberg since 2013. She is spokesperson for European Policy and parliamentary whip of the parliamentary group of Alliance 90/The Greens and member of the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union as well as deputy member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.



Bastian Hermisson

Bastian Hermisson has been executive director of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung's North America office since 2015. Prior to that, he directed the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung's European Union office in Brussels, and was head of the EU/North America department as well as the department for foreign and security policy of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung's headquarters in Berlin. Previously, he directed the programme for transatlantic relations at the Foundation's office in Washington, DC. Before joining the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Hermisson served for three years as advisor on foreign, security and environmental politics to MP Katrin Göring-Eckardt, caucus leader of the Greens in the German Bundestag. He holds an MA summa cum laude in cultural anthropology and geography, having studied at the Humboldt-University as well as the Freie Universität, Berlin, the Albert-Ludwigs-University, Freiburg, and Connecticut College, New London, CT.



5. Policy Recommendations – Key Green Ideas for the Future of Europe

Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union

In the context of the Covid-19 crisis, the German Presidency of the EU Council of the European Union faces major challenges. Considering that the conditions and circumstances will constantly change, and that the EU will face increasing uncertainty and unpredictability, we need to reflect on how it should respond to vital challenges in the long term.

On 1 July 2020, Germany took over the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Given the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the German EU Presidency faces major challenges. Considering that the conditions and circumstances will constantly change, and that the EU will face increasing uncertainty and unpredictability, we need to reflect on how it should respond to vital challenges in the long term. Additionally, the pandemic has already led to severe economic, social and political distress in the most vulnerable EU Member States and in our neighbourhood, too. As the crisis will most probably deepen in the coming years, it is essential for Member States to work together in solidarity and find common solutions, while also providing decisive aid and support outside of the EU.

A major task of the German EU Council Presidency will be the negotiations on the 2021–27 EU budget (Multiannual Financial Framework, or MFF) and the new recovery instrument 'Next Generation EU'. In this context, the German government has to act as an honest broker. At the same time, however, it needs to show that it is prepared for conflict, especially when it comes to ambitious targets concerning democracy, the rule of law and climate action.

Below, the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung presents key ideas on the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, the opportunities of the European Green Deal, the future of the European project and Europe's role in the world. These ideas stem from 20 conversations with Green decision-makers and civil society actors, in the frame of our dossier Green Ideas for the Future of Europe.

European responses to the current crisis – solidarity and transformation now!

- It is vital to agree upon a strong European response to the current crisis. This response must be based on the principle of solidarity and foster a sustainable transformation of our economies and societies.
- The European Commission's proposed recovery plan is a very important step in the right direction. The fact that the EU heads of state and government agreed on a joint EU borrowing scheme in July 2020 is an historical step. However, the negotiations between EU leaders led to unacceptable budget cuts in the new MFF, especially in areas that are crucial for our future, such as climate action, health-care, research and innovation. It will be important in the upcoming months to fight for a more ambitious MFF.
- Through a proactive monetary policy, the European Central Bank (ECB) has averted a worse outcome. Although this has been crucial to avoid a financial crash, it is problematic that the ECB is propping up a financial system that was already flawed and in need of in-depth reform. We need a discussion about the future of EU monetary and fiscal policy and on the mandate of the ECB.

Align all policies and investments with the objectives of the European Green Deal and make it the engine of the recovery!

- In the face of the climate emergency, the EU must take climate action now. Instead of focusing on a less contested climate neutrality goal for 2050, it is of utmost importance to wrap up negotiations on the EU Climate Law by the end of 2020 and increase the EU's climate targets for 2030 to a 65% reduction in emissions, to match the Paris Climate Agreement.
- The Biodiversity and Farm-to-Fork Strategies deserve just as much attention. Climate targets are out of reach without progress in these areas. Given the large share of the Common Agricultural Policy in the EU budget, it is crucial to use these large sums better and promote a shift away from resource allocation according to farm size to rewarding ecosystem services and investing in more regional structures to increase environmental, social and economic resilience. The EU budget must better account for these priorities, with a minimum spending target for biodiversity-related expenditures. The European Council Conclusions on the next MFF and the Recovery Instrument mention a climate-spending target, but no equivalent for biodiversity.
- Investments in the aftermath of the crisis need to cater to sectors with benefits for both the environment and job markets, such as circular economy, agro-ecological farming, the cycling industry and public transport. Addressing the transport sector is key to tackling the climate crisis. Any further subsidies in fossil fuel infrastructure bear the risk of dangerous and uneconomical lock-in.
- Own EU resources must focus on mechanisms that help achieve the European Green Deal objectives: for example, tackling non-recycled plastic waste, all while ensuring that equity, affordability and fairness are part of any considerations.
- On a similar token, money from the Just Transition Fund ought to reflect the respective Member States' climate ambitions.
- Gender impact assessments for any money spent in the framework of the MFF and the Recovery Fund must be mandatory, to make sure that all genders benefit equally.
- The attention that the European Commission devotes to digitalisation, listed as a priority, must also foster the European Green Deal objectives, by using digitalisation to coordinate and strengthen sector-coupling and boosting the decarbonisation of industry, transport, energy and agriculture, among other sectors.

Strengthen the EU of fundamental rights, democracy and justice: binding standards for the rule of law and active citizenship!

- The Covid-19 crisis has revealed how quickly democratic systems can become tenuous. We must therefore actively defend the independence of the judiciary, freedom of the media and civil society as well as the fundamental rights of citizens in the EU.
- The introduction of more effective levers to tackle violations of the rule of law and fundamental rights is necessary to address democratic backsliding.
- It is unacceptable that the proposal of a rule of law mechanism by the European Commission was watered down in the July 2020 European Council conclusions, due to the pressure of the Polish and Hungarian governments. It will be crucial to fight for embedding an effective rule of law mechanism in the MFF during the upcoming months.
- The negotiations on future EU-UK relations must be concluded by the end of 2020. Therefore, it is ever more important that the EU speaks up for fundamental European principles and shared laws in order to achieve a comprehensive deal. We must, however, be prepared for all possible scenarios.
- The EU must help to strengthen democratic forces in its direct neighbourhood and uphold the commitment to the EU enlargement process with the integration of the Western Balkans – a key issue of its common foreign and security policy.
- In the digital arena, the EU must stand up for effective legal redress and transparency on digital platforms to address the challenge of illegal content online. Algorithmic recommendation systems must be kept in check to avoid the amplification of illegal content and disinformation on social networks. It is of the utmost importance to have clear criteria on the legality of artificial intelligence, including democratic oversight, to prevent fundamental rights abuse.
- We need a debate on the future of the EU – now more than ever. The Conference on the Future of Europe is the ideal forum to make the citizens' wish for more Europe a reality. We should use the momentum and start the dialogue now.

Strengthen the EU's role as a democratic, value-based political actor in the world!

- In times of a changing world order, it is vital that the EU uses its weight in policy areas such as environmental and digital policies to set standards in multilateral forums.
- In future EU-China relations, the EU must define comprehensive and coherent red lines for its cooperation with China. Furthermore, Germany should Europeanise its China policy by strengthening cooperation with other EU Member States and harmonise its approaches with theirs.
- With regard to the negotiations of the Post-Cotonou Agreement and the Comprehensive EU-Africa Strategy, we urge the German EU Council Presidency to advocate for an equal partnership between the EU and Africa.
- The EU migration policy crisis has shown that more efforts have to be undertaken to create a robust asylum system, which prioritises human dignity and assures good management of immigration movements within the framework of the planned reform of the European asylum and migration policies. This includes supporting European regions, cities, local authorities and civil society in engaging in Search and Rescue (SAR) and taking responsibility for the relocation of refugees inside the European Union and from its neighbouring countries.
- The EU has to play an important role in the Middle East. A comprehensive and coherent political strategy towards the countries in the region is needed, which includes questions of human and other fundamental rights. The EU must use its diplomatic and political clout and its reputation as a 'neutral' actor in order to mediate in cases of conflict in the region.
- With several trade agreements being currently negotiated, the EU has to show a strong commitment to ensure that EU trade policy does not constitute a hindrance to climate and environmental protection. In this context, the expected draft for a supply chain law must include the responsibility of companies to ensure compliance with environmental laws and human rights.
- Supporting democracy and human rights ultimately also contributes to the post-pandemic recovery. Civil society plays a crucial role for democratic systems, and even more so in systems in which democratic rights and freedoms are not fully developed or are under attack. This role must be fostered and promoted by keeping up the support of civic actors and emphasising the human rights dimension in EU external action.

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