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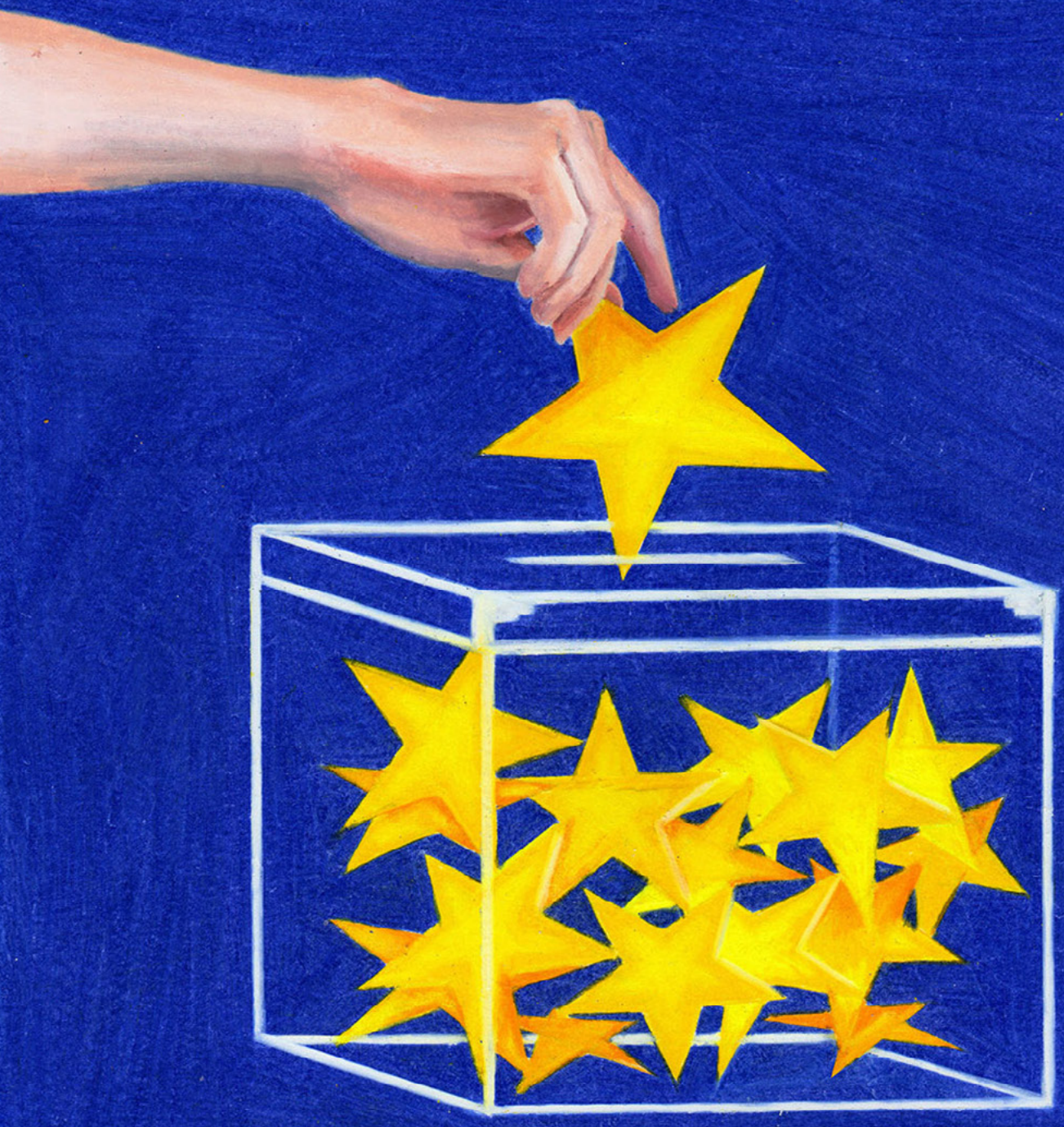
Optimism: Timothy Garton Ash on the longing for freedom

Civil courage: Agnieszka Holland on her new film, *Green Border*

Future: Robert Habeck on the European Green Deal

The magazine of the Heinrich Böll Foundation



Europe – A Promise

The European Union is facing historic challenges: a war in Europe, an exacerbating climate crisis, Europe's position in the global power structure. In 2024, eligible voters in all EU Member States will set the course on many of these key issues as they head to the polls between June 6 and 9 to cast their vote in the tenth round of European elections in EU history.

There is a lot at stake. This election is about future support for Ukraine, the two interconnected tasks of EU reform and EU enlargement, implementing the European Green Deal, sparking a new economic dynamic, and promoting social cohesion. This election will also, and not least, shape the self-image we project to the world and the role we play in it. Most importantly, it will determine the future of democracy in our union: Current polls indicate a rise of right-wing populist parties, which are stoking fears and stirring anti-Brussels sentiment, yet fail to offer any solutions to the problems we face, at a time when Europe urgently needs positive and bold ideas.

There have been encouraging signals, among them the last parliamentary elections in Poland and pro-democracy protests against the far-right party AfD in Germany. They may give cause for optimism, but should not make us complacent.

In this issue, you will find articles on the state and future of the European Union. I hope that many of the approximately 400 million voters will head to the polls and make the statement we need right now: a resounding "yes" to the promise of Europe!

Jan Philipp Albrecht

Jan Philipp Albrecht,
President of
the Heinrich Böll
Foundation

Europe must grow larger and stronger

Many of the anniversaries we mark in 2024 will remind us of how we overcame separation and division, but also of the fact that the task of reuniting Europe is yet to be accomplished. EU enlargement is in our own best interest – after all, a safe and stable neighborhood makes us all safer and Europe more stable.

Texts by Anna Lührmann and Jan Lipavský

Photo: Jeremy Segrott

“Europe must grow larger and stronger”

Anna Lührmann

▲ Anna Lührmann

Photos: ©Anna Lührmann (left) / Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic (right)

On May 1, 2004, almost exactly 20 years ago, I stood amid a euphoric crowd on the Oder Bridge between Frankfurt (Oder) and Słubice. At midnight, the then Foreign Minister Fischer and his Polish counterpart Cimoszewicz opened the border between Poland and Germany. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of people across Europe celebrated the accession of the ten new EU Member States Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Cyprus. That night, the EU grew from 15 to 25 members.

I had traveled to Frankfurt in my role as member of the Bundestag to witness the historic moment in person. A lot has happened since then. Since joining the EU, the new Member States have made huge gains in economic strength. In the Czech Republic, for example, the gross domestic product in 2004 was US$11,700 per capita; after almost 20 years of EU membership, it has nearly tripled to around US$30,500. Lithuania even quadrupled its economic output per capita in the same period (statista.com, October 2023). Since then, countless people have started families, made friends, or built businesses across these open borders.

EU enlargement is a success story that we should continue to write because the future of Ukraine, Moldova, the Western Balkans, and Georgia also lies in the EU. The countries of the Western Balkans have been sitting in the waiting room for a very long time. Its people are losing hope, and the EU is losing credibility. Putin knows how to exploit this and is trying to weaken Europe by destabilizing the entire region with money, hatred, and fake news. At the same time, he is bombing Ukraine day and night because the Ukrainians have opted for a future in the EU. For Ukraine, the EU is a promise of a life in peace, freedom, and security. We must deliver on this promise. Enlargement not only benefits the people in the future Member States, but it is also in our own best interest – after all, a safe and stable neighborhood makes us all safer and Europe more stable.

The EU must speak with one voice and act as one on the global stage

But we must also face the reality that a larger EU is not automatically a stronger one. Even now, we are often not agile enough, not fast enough, not united enough. That is why we must press ahead with EU reform alongside enlargement. Currently, the entire EU can be incapacitated by a single Member State. This must end. We must introduce more majority voting on matters of foreign affairs, enlargement, and tax policy to become more agile and to function better. We want the EU to finally speak with one voice and act as one on the global stage, defending our values and interests against autocrats.

However, we must not only defend our values to the outside world, but also within the EU. We must protect the foundations of our Union – freedom, democracy, and human rights. We must not compromise on any of these, neither for current nor for future EU members. Instead, we should sharpen our tools to enforce the rule of law in the EU, putting democracy and the rule of law at the very center of our reform debate. Lastly, the EU needs adequate funding, which is why we need to consider ways to increase its revenue.

The debate on EU enlargement and reform will be a major campaign issue in the upcoming European elections. Our goal is clear: We want to enlarge and strengthen Europe! Once again, I want to stand in a euphoric crowd, celebrating our next EU enlargement in Tirana, Sarajevo, Belgrade, Skopje, Podgorica, Kyiv, Chișinău, or Tbilisi.

Dr Anna Lührmann is Minister of State for Europe at the Federal Foreign Office and Member of the Bundestag for the district of Rheingau-Taunus-Limburg. Until 2021, she worked as a junior professor and democracy researcher at the University of Gothenburg.

“It’s time”

Jan Lipavský

In 2024, Europe and its citizens will mark a number of anniversaries of their recent shared history. We will celebrate 35 years since the fall of the Iron Curtain, the event that ended the division of the continent into a liberal West and an illiberal East. For decades, citizens had to live under the yoke of Soviet Communism. 2024 will mark 20 years since most Central and Eastern European countries joined the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) and the European Union. My country took the first step in this direction back in 1999 when it joined NATO.

▲ Jan Lipavský

The past 20 years have changed the Czech Republic, German-Czech relations, and the European Union. Both sides harbored fears, which did not materialize. The German labor market was not flooded with Czech workers. Instead, some business sectors in Germany are thriving today thanks to Czech skilled workers, whether they work directly in Germany or in the subsidiaries of German companies in the Czech Republic. Crime did not spike in the borderland between Poland and Germany. Many people in Germany had fears that turned out to be unfounded, and many were surprised by the development we are seeing today.

However, these anniversaries also remind us that the task of reuniting Europe is far from accomplished. To this day, Ukraine, Moldova, and the countries of the Western Balkans have been left out. This has created gray zones, which Russian dictator Vladimir Putin is only too happy to exploit as he constantly seeks out opportunities to prop up his regime by way of external aggression.

There were warning signs pointing to this danger in Eastern Europe. We all overlooked them and are now reaping the bitter fruits of our failure, not only in the bloody war against Ukraine, but also in the rise of populist parties in the EU. We had no idea how much energy it would cost us to battle against authoritarians, dictators, and extremists; we anticipated neither the ease with which they would spread fake news nor the destructive effect this would one day wreak on our societies. It is all the more urgent now to strengthen the EU’s external borders and our common defense policy.

The Czech Republic wants to offer other countries the same assistance it once received

We are aware that our accession to the EU was a strategic decision. More than 20 years ago, the EU opted against the “regatta principle” that would have had candidate countries compete for accession. Enlargement was a decision made at the political level. The issue of meeting the accession criteria was tackled later. I believe we must take the same approach in the next rounds of enlargement with the countries of the Western Balkans, Ukraine, or other Eastern European states.

The Czech Republic wants to offer the candidate countries and war-torn Ukraine the same assistance it once received itself. Our citizens are still enthusiastic about the EU. We want to work for positive change. Our level of support for Ukraine and its refugees per capita is quite extraordinary compared to the rest of Europe.

We want to contribute to a more transparent European policy that is closer to its citizens, which is why our aim is to uphold the principle of subsidiarity.

True freedom of movement also means uncensored internet and the free exchange of goods, services, capital, and people within the EU. I believe that the Czech Republic can use its voice in the EU to support all candidate countries – as a country that has mastered the learning curve of a new Member State and greatly matured to the point that, a year and a half ago, it was able to confidently serve its six-month Presidency of the Council of the EU under the most difficult circumstances.

In a human life, a span of 20 years – the period that has elapsed since the most recent wave of EU enlargement – is enough time to gain experience, but not yet lose momentum and courage for change. It is time to strengthen the European Union and facilitate more efficient cooperation between the Member States. It is time to complete the work that European leaders began after the collapse of the Soviet bloc in the late 1980s and to unite the European continent into a region of shared security and prosperity.

Jan Lipavský has been Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic since December 2021. He was a member of the Czech Parliament from 2017 to 2021, where he served as Deputy Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee and of the Defense Committee.

The EU and the European elections explained simply!

Dossier:
Melanie Bernhofer and
Joan Lanfranco

27 EU Member States

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

The next European election will be the **10th** direct election to the European Parliament.

The European elections take place every **5** years.

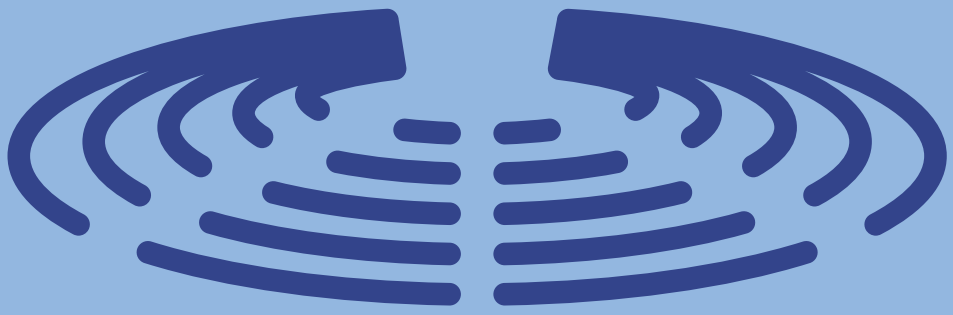
Date of the next European elections

June 6–9, 2024

Graphics: State, Berlin

Key EU institutions

7 political groups



European Parliament (EP)

is elected by the EU citizens and adopts EU legislation together with the Council of the EU.

European Commission

consists of 26 Commissioners and 1 Commission President. As the executive branch of the EU's political system, it enforces EU treaties, represents the common interests of the EU, and proposes EU laws.

European Council

consists of the Heads of State and Government of the 27 EU Member States and defines the EU's general political priorities.

The following European political parties are currently represented on the European Council: European People's Party/EPP (9), Democrats for Europe/ALDE (6), Party of European Socialists/PES (5), European Conservatives and Reformists/ECR (3), Independents (4). (As at: November 2023)

Council of the European Union

represents the views of national governments and negotiates European legislation. Comprised of the ministers of the Member States, the Council meets in ten different Council configurations.

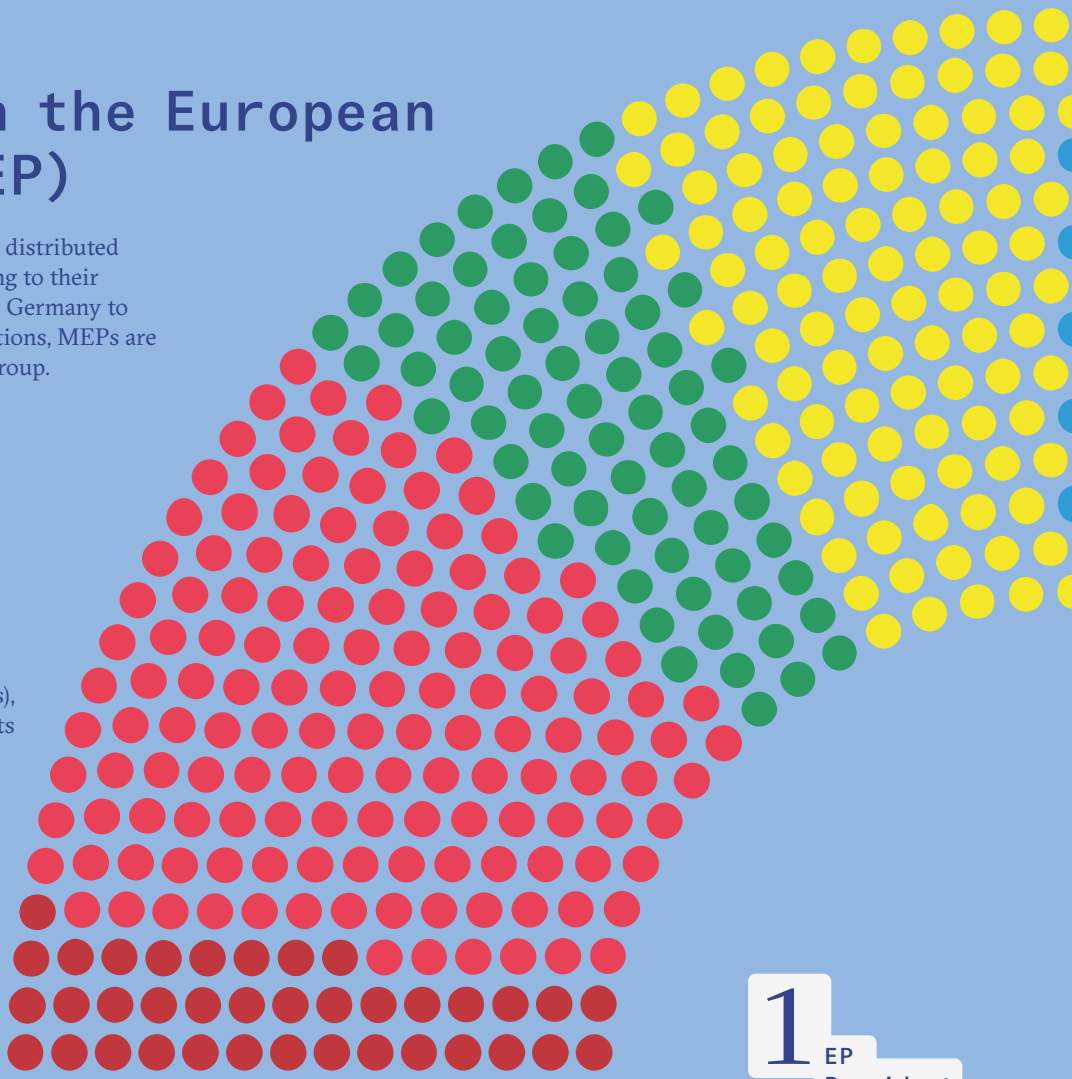
- **EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE**
  is the diplomatic service of the EU.
- **EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK**
  is the central bank of those EU countries that use the euro as their currency.
- **COURT OF JUSTICE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (CJEU)**
  monitors the application of EU law.
- **EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS**
  audits revenue and expenditure in all EU policy areas, thus fostering accountability and transparency.
- **COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**
  represents local and regional authorities throughout the EU, issuing opinions on new legislation.
- **EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE**
  represents employee and employer organizations and other stakeholders. It submits opinions on EU issues to EU institutions, thus forming a bridge between decision-making bodies and citizens.

Majorities in the European Parliament (EP)

The EP currently has 705 seats, which are distributed among the 27 EU Member States according to their population size, ranging from 96 seats for Germany to six seats for Malta. Following the EP elections, MEPs are grouped not by country but by political group.

There are currently seven political groups in the EP:

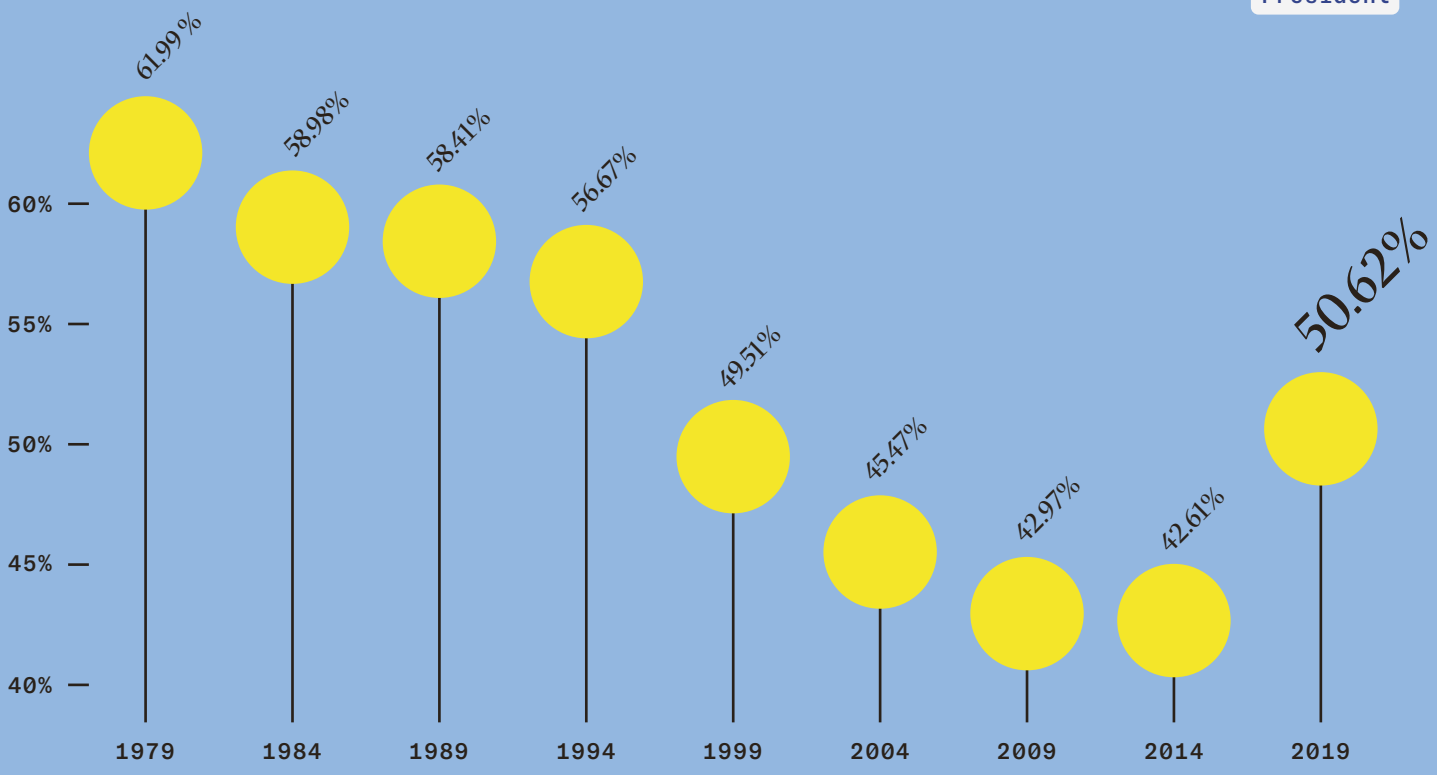
- The Left GUE/NGL (37 seats),
- Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D, 140 seats),
- Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA, 72 seats),
- Renew Europe (102 seats),
- European People's Party (EPP, 178 seats),
- European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR, 68 seats),
- Identity and Democracy (ID, 59 seats), and
- 49 independent MEPs.



Political groups in the European Parliament

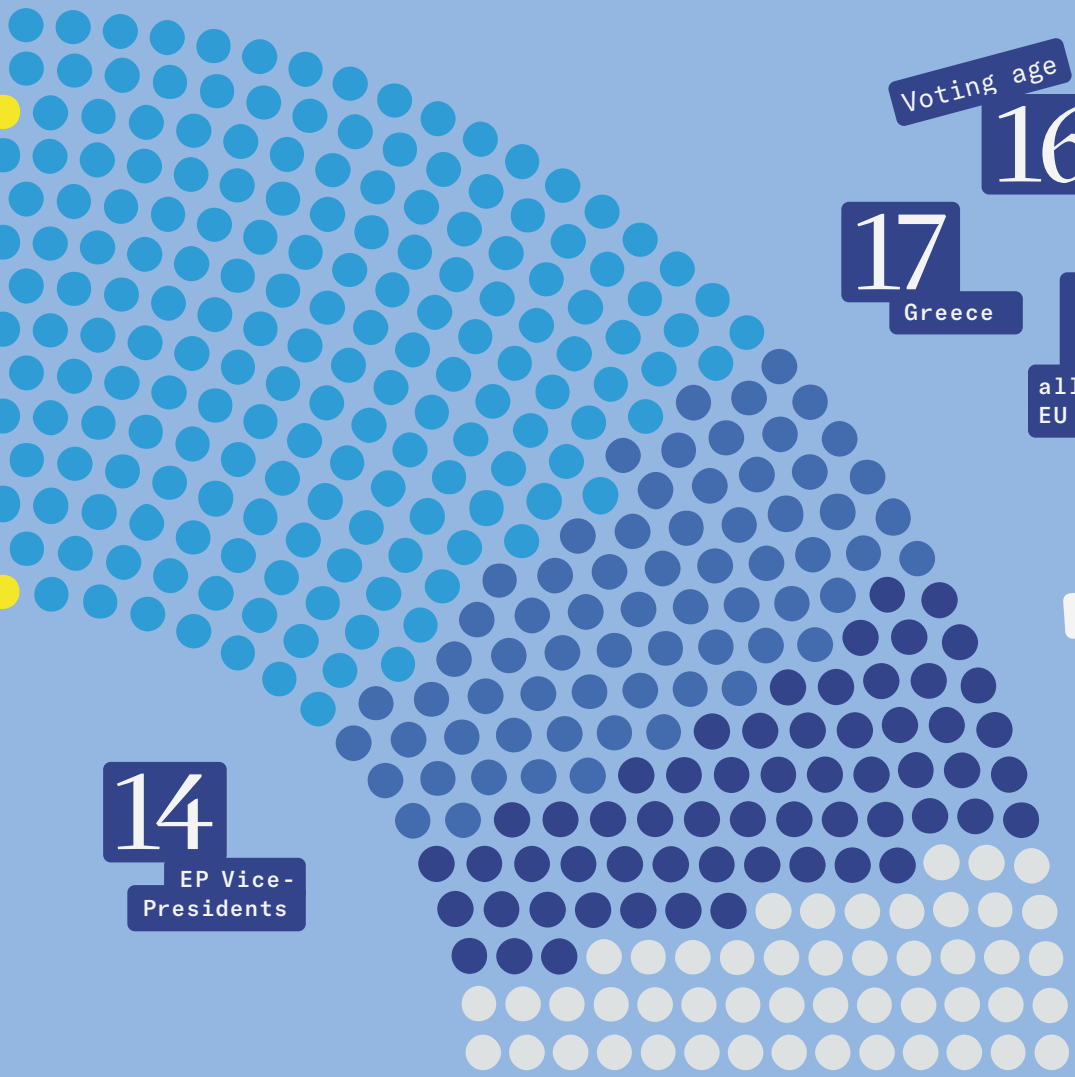
As at: March 2024

1 EP President



Voter turnout in the European elections from 1979 to 2019

Source: Statista 2023



Voting age

16 Belgium, Germany, Malta, Austria

17 Greece

18 all other EU Member States

14 EP Vice-Presidents

Compulsory voting

Belgium
Bulgaria
Greece
Luxembourg

720 MEPs in the next European Parliament

Voter turnout in the 2019 European elections 51%

What happens after the European elections?

1. The parliamentary groups are formed.
2. The European Parliament elects its President.
3. The European Council proposes a President of the European Commission, taking into account the results of the European elections.
4. The European Parliament votes on the proposed President of the European Commission. If the candidate is rejected, the European Council must submit a new proposal within one month.
5. If approved, the elected President asks the Member States to submit their nominations for Commissioners, with each Member State proposing its own candidate (currently 26 Commissioners).
6. Candidates are confirmed by the Committees of the European Parliament after confirmation hearings.
7. The European Parliament votes to approve the entire proposed European Commission.

Timeline of EU history

1957
The Treaty of Rome creates the basis for a European Economic Community (EEC), European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), and common institutions such as a parliamentary assembly, a court of justice, and an economic and social committee. The term "European Communities" (EC) comes into use.

1951
Six founding Member States (Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands) establish the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).

1967
The executive bodies of the three Communities (ECSC, EEC, and Euratom) merge.

1973
The United Kingdom, Ireland, and Denmark join the EC.

1974
The Heads of State and Government of the EC decide to meet regularly as the European Council.

1979
The European Parliament is directly elected for the first time.

1981
Greece joins the EC.

1985
The Commission presents its White Paper on Completing the Internal Market. The Schengen Agreement, including a gradual abolition of border controls at internal borders, is adopted by Germany, France, and the Benelux countries.

1986
Portugal and Spain join the EC.

1987
The 12 Member States sign the Single European Act to enable the free movement of people, goods, services, and capital (the "four freedoms") and create a single European market by 1992.

1989
Peaceful revolutions take place in Central and Eastern Europe. The Iron Curtain falls.

1993
The Treaty of Maastricht establishes the European Union as we know it today. According to the Treaty, the EU is based on three pillars: the European Communities, Common Foreign and Security Policy, and Common Justice and Home Affairs. The conditions and timetable for introducing an economic and monetary union are also defined.

1994
The Committee of the Regions is constituted. The Schengen Agreement enters into force.

1995
The EU grows to 15 Member States (adding Austria, Finland, and Sweden).

1997
The EU foreign ministers sign the Treaty of Amsterdam, which comes into force in 1999.

1999

The euro is introduced as an electronic currency in the eurozone. The Treaty of Amsterdam comes into force, providing the key prerequisites for enlargement of the EU. The Treaty strengthens the European Parliament and the EU's ability to act externally, appointing a High Representative of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Turkey becomes a candidate for EU membership. A convention to draft the European Charter of Fundamental Rights begins its work.

2000

In Nice, the Heads of State and Government agree on a new treaty (Nice Treaty) to prepare the EU's decision-making system for enlargement. It enters into force in 2003.

2001

At the Laeken Summit, the European Council decides on a comprehensive reform of the EU and the establishment of a Convention on the Future of the European Union.

2002

The euro becomes legal tender. The European Council in Copenhagen decides to admit ten Eastern and Central European states and develops the Copenhagen accession criteria.

2003

The Convention on the Future of the EU completes its draft of a European Constitution. The Intergovernmental Conference begins drafting a constitutional treaty and agrees to establish an area of freedom, security, and justice.

2004

Ten countries join the EU: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Cyprus.

2005

The endeavor to introduce a European constitution falls flat after failed referendums in France and the Netherlands. North Macedonia becomes a candidate for EU membership.

2007

2007: Bulgaria and Romania join the EU. Following the failure of the Constitutional Treaty, the 27 EU states instead sign the Treaty of Lisbon, which amends the previous treaties.

2009

The Treaty of Lisbon enters into force to facilitate more democratic and efficient decision-making processes, for example by affording greater powers to the EU Parliament and introducing the European Citizens' Initiative.

2010

Montenegro becomes a candidate for EU membership.

2012

Serbia becomes a candidate for EU membership.

2013

Croatia becomes the 28th EU Member State.

2014

Albania becomes a candidate for EU membership.

2016

The United Kingdom votes to leave the EU in a referendum (Brexit).

2020

The United Kingdom leaves the European Union, which is thereafter referred to as the EU27.

2022 and 2023

Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia become EU accession candidates.

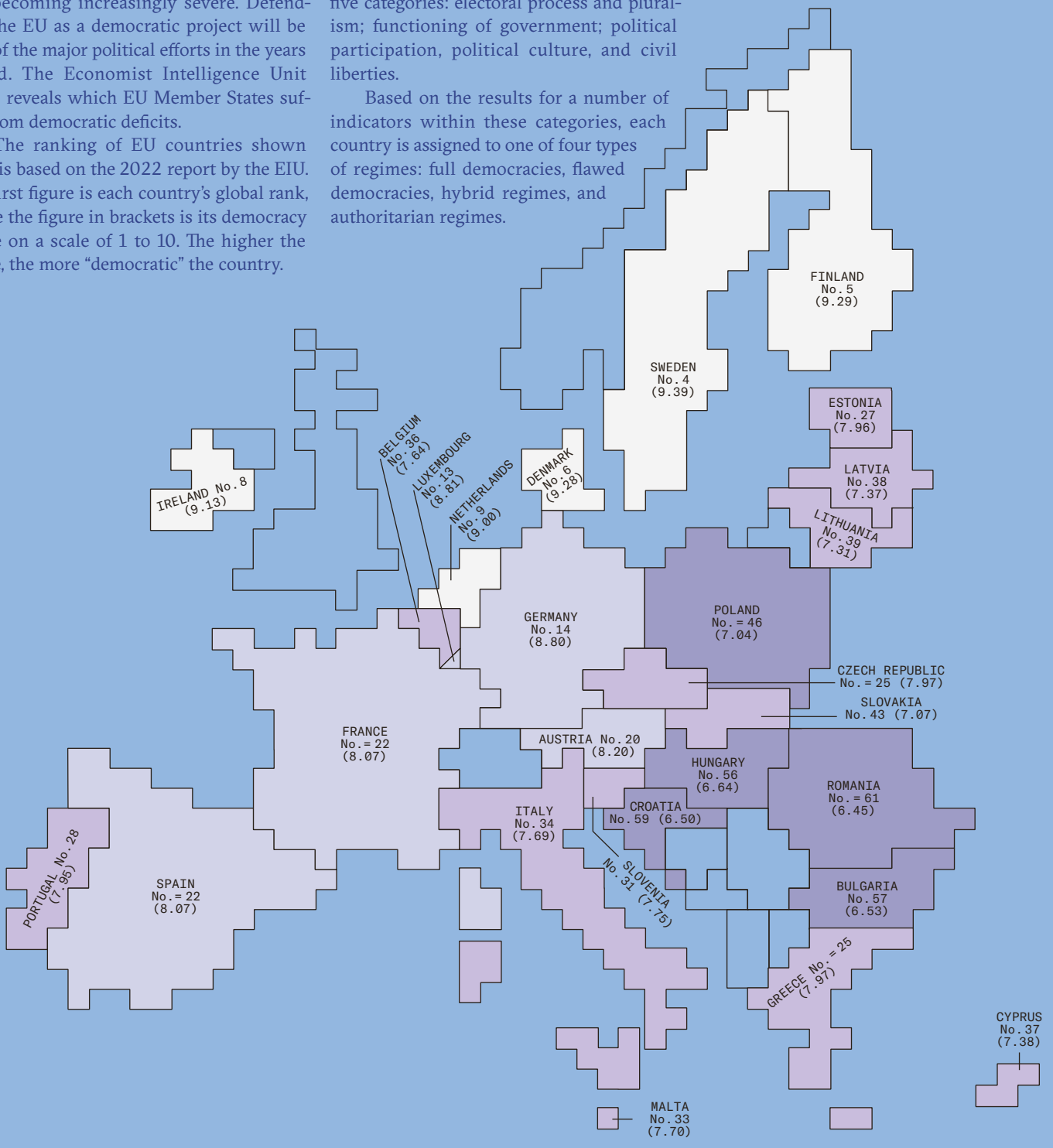
Democracy in the EU – an index

Democratic deficits in EU Member States are becoming increasingly severe. Defending the EU as a democratic project will be one of the major political efforts in the years ahead. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) reveals which EU Member States suffer from democratic deficits.

The ranking of EU countries shown here is based on the 2022 report by the EIU. The first figure is each country's global rank, while the figure in brackets is its democracy score on a scale of 1 to 10. The higher the score, the more "democratic" the country.

The score is made up of the following five categories: electoral process and pluralism; functioning of government; political participation, political culture, and civil liberties.

Based on the results for a number of indicators within these categories, each country is assigned to one of four types of regimes: full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes, and authoritarian regimes.



"DEMOCRACY SCORE":

full democracy		flawed democracy		hybrid regime		authoritarian regime		
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Ranking (score): Democracy Index 2022 (Economist Intelligence Unit 2023)

Source: 2023 The Economic Intelligence Unit Limited.

Melanie Bernhofer is Program Manager for Climate, Trade, and Agricultural Policy at the Heinrich Böll Foundation's EU Office.

Joan Lanfranco is Head of Communications and Outreach at the Heinrich Böll Foundation's EU Office.

“We don’t have another 30 years”

Resolute action has never been one of the European Union’s strengths. Swift decision-making is not one of the advantages democracies offer. But are the other advantages enough in times of war, as in Ukraine now, when every moment of hesitation costs human lives?

by Juri Durkot

A few days after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, in early March 2022, I wrote a somewhat sentimental text about Europe. Overwhelmed by a flood of text messages, emails, and other messages, too many for me to answer, I was grateful to my friends and acquaintances in various European countries. Everyone offered help and promised me and my family refuge – in Germany, France, Austria, Norway, Poland, and other places. I went on an imaginary trip across Europe, crossing various countries that I’ve visited before, from north to south. Mind you, these were not all the countries I have ever set foot in. My random route included Member States and non-Member States of the European Union, this political entity that is generally considered a success of European integration, that many in the world’s poorer countries admire as a continent of prosperity and that various right-wing populists demonize as the source of destruction of the sacred nation state. It is a community that only one of its members has ever chosen to leave so far, seduced by its island pride. It is a community that is routinely undermined by only one of its members, the one that is nestled in the vastness of the Carpathian Basin, likely trying to destroy the EU from within, much to the delight of radicals of all stripes across Europe and the dictator in Moscow.

But my imaginary journey, one I could well have taken in real life at a different time and under different circumstances (and I actually might, once the war is over), served a different purpose: I want to explain to my readers why I’m not leaving my home country. For in those early days after the invasion, giving up wasn’t even an option for me, nor for many other Ukrainians (in contrast to many Western politicians and pundits). Our mind was set on fighting for our freedom. At this time, European capitals had already expressed clear solidarity with Ukraine – with words, but not yet with weapons.

▲ Juri Durkot

Based on their own experience, the Eastern European EU states responded differently

I have written many texts since then. Some of these pieces I wrote under the impression of the tremendous support from ordinary people in Poland, Germany, France, Italy, and other countries. Another time, I wrote a rather despondent piece about the German government’s political failure and refusal to approve the delivery of armored medical vehicles. In yet another one, I expressed my delight with volunteers in Europe who provided us with all kinds of relief supplies. Then I was irritated by European pacifists who refused to call evil by its name and failed to distinguish between the attacker and the victim. Once, I wrote about European politicians who constantly sought new – and pointless – talks with Putin and who hesitated to provide resolute military support lest they provoke the Russian dictator. “To prevent an escalation of the situation,” as they word it in their political jargon, as if the constant bombardment of Ukrainian cities and the murder of civilians were not an

Photo: picture alliance / Monika Skolimowska/dpa-Zentralbild/dpa | Monika Skolimowska

escalation. The Eastern European EU states, which had experienced the horror of Stalinism and the almost unimaginable brutality of Soviet occupation firsthand, responded quite differently.

30 long years until the decision to start accession talks

Quick decisions and resolute action have never been among the EU's strengths. A community that relies on the consensus of its members can only move slowly. Democracies have many strengths; swift decision-making is not one of them. Striving for political and social compromise has rendered the EU more stable than it might seem at first glance, albeit not immune to manipulation and hatred from the world of social media. But is that enough in times of war, when every delayed decision costs human lives? The gulf between a country at war and a country at peace seems almost insurmountable, as I discovered in October 2022 at the Frankfurt Book Fair on one of my now very rare trips abroad. A society at peace is driven by entirely different concerns.

It took almost 30 years from Ukraine's declaration of EU membership as a strategic goal until the European Council decided to open accession negotiations. Would we be starting accession talks now if the country had not been invaded? I doubt it. However glad we are, this leaves a bitter aftertaste. Why do so many people have to die for decision makers to set the course toward the future (and even then not without resistance)? Apparently, visionaries have become rare in the age of Facebook.

Of course, Ukraine's path over these 30 years has not been a straight line. We have seen two attempts to impose an autocratic regime, and both times the people responded with an uprising. In the Orange Revolution of 2004 and the Euromaidan of 2013–2014, we may not have achieved the best outcome, but we prevented the worst. As one Ukrainian political scientist once sarcastically remarked, at times, the dialog between Ukraine and the EU sounded like a conversation between an autopilot and an answering machine. The government in Kyiv insisted on an official document spelling out an explicit prospect of accession, yet without any legal obligations or a binding schedule, and it didn't make very much effort to push through the necessary reforms either. Brussels duly pointed out that every country has the right to join the EU if it meets the Copenhagen criteria. It didn't really seem that there was strong political will on either side.

The new Generation Independence is unsentimental about the past

Yet this 30-year period saw a generation grow up that was not born in the Soviet Union. Those children who were born in the waning years of the USSR, but have no conscious memory of it, could also have been included here. In a survey conducted in August 2021, however, it was the cohorts from 1991 onward that were symbolically named Generation Independence. To most of these young men and women, the Soviet Union is indeed completely alien. Unlike their peers and society at large in Russia, this generation has no nostalgia for Communism and the Soviet imperial past. According to Rating, a sociological research institute, only 10 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds and only 15 percent of 25- to 30-year-olds voice regret about the collapse of the USSR. More importantly, as early as 2013, the majority of Ukrainians had shed any nostalgia they may have felt for the USSR, and the number of people in favor of a Communist empire has continued to decline since then. Polls in Russia show a clear trend in the opposite direction. Six months before the Russian invasion, USSR enthusiasts were already in the minority across every age group in Ukraine. The Russian invasion did the rest.

Although Generation Independence has not yet risen to political leadership positions, it already played an important role in the Euromaidan of 2013–2014. And even back then, it was all about European integration. The protests, initially student-led, began after the Ukrainian government in power at the time suddenly refused to sign the negotiated association agreement with the EU (incidentally, directly following a visit by the then Ukrainian President and would-be dictator Viktor Yanukovych to his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin).

In 2022, almost 90 percent of the population were in favor of EU membership

Even back then, the majority supported the country's accession to the EU. This majority has grown steadily, with around two thirds of the population in favor of membership in 2021. Approval of EU accession spiked sharply and dramatically in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Since March 2022, approval has been just below 90 percent across all regions and age groups.

I don't know if any other country has ever attained such numbers. But these are all just metrics. There are other figures that could be used – the numbers of casualties. The Euromaidan left several dozen dead or wounded. The war in the Donbas, started by Russia in 2014, killed or wounded thousands. Now, following the massive Russian invasion and daily terror against civilians, the figure is in the tens or even hundreds of thousands. It would be an exaggeration to say that each victim died for European values. But they all wanted to live in freedom, peace, dignity, and prosperity. Dictators don't like that. That is why they are prepared to invade independent countries and kill people. We must not forget this truth behind the dry statistics. We Europeans don't have another 30 years.

Yuri Durkot, born in Lviv, is a journalist, translator, interpreter, and writer. He studied German language and literature in Lviv and Vienna and has worked as a freelance journalist for Austrian newspapers. From 1995 to 2000, Yuri Durkot was press spokesman for the Ukrainian Embassy in Germany. Since the end of 2000, he has worked as a freelance journalist, publicist, translator, and producer for the German-language press and public broadcasters.

▲ Daniel Cohn-Bendit

“We have to ask ourselves: Why are attitudes so hardened?”

Interview* by Marc Berthold

Photo: Thomas Rabsch/laif

Daniel Cohn-Bendit on facets of antisemitism and racism in today's Europe, deep divisions in pluralistic societies, and the need to recognize the other side's pain.

How was October 7 a turning point for you and for societies in Europe?

DANIEL COHN-BENDIT: October 7 was a turning point for all of us. Nobody could have imagined that this kind of pogrom was possible. It was a turning point for Europe as a whole, and for Jews in Europe, albeit in different ways. Jews in Europe were once again reminded of their identity. Before that day, they didn't have to be constantly mindful of their Jewish identity in their daily lives. And it was a turning point for Europe because the event made European societies realize just how divided they are. We are clashing over attitudes toward Israel, antisemitism, Palestine, and the Palestinians with an intensity that I did not expect.

Is there a chance for us to raise awareness in these pluralistic societies so we can fight racism and antisemitism together?

First of all, the depth of division in our societies is frightening. For instance, division runs so deep that on November 25, at a large protest to mark the International Day of Violence against Women, feminists were ousted from the march because they had called for solidarity with rape victims in Israel. Parts of our European societies are turning a blind eye to the suffering of the people in Israel after October 7. And there's another thing I find unsettling, not just in a public context: Many Palestinians refuse to condemn Hamas. I believe we can only overcome antisemitism by making a concrete offer to solve the situation on the ground. And that can only be the two-state solution.

You also say that to overcome antisemitism and racism, everyone must be able to see the other side's problems.

Yes. As a Jew or Israeli, I must acknowledge the Palestinians' issues with the Nakba, which occurred in the wake of the founding of the state of Israel in 1948, and what it meant for the people. And as a Palestinian, I have to understand why the state of Israel came into being after the pogroms in Eastern Europe and after the Shoah. We can only overcome this division if we try to understand the other side's point of view. Also, the fight against antisemitism, whether Christian or Muslim, is a long-term task. Hannah Arendt once said: "The only place where we can still be safe from antisemitism is the moon." And perhaps that won't be true for much longer either, since Elon Musk wants to fly to the moon.

To acknowledge the suffering of others: Why is that so difficult for both sides, even here in Europe?

Isn't that odd, actually? Hundreds of thousands of Muslims have been killed in Yemen, many of them women and children. In the spring of 2015, IS and Assad destroyed a Palestinian refugee camp in Syria, killing thousands. No response. But when Muslims or Palestinians are killed by Israelis, there is outrage. This also has to do with the "anti-imperialist" and "anti-colonialist" thought patterns of the political left here in Europe, which go back to the 1950s.

In what direction should these thought patterns be modified?

The current dispute plainly confronts the political left with the question of what this anti-imperialist solidarity means for us. We, the left, stood in solidarity with Cuba, with Fidel Castro, and Che Guevara. What became of it? A dictatorship. Vietnam, Vietcong? What became of it? A dictatorship. Nicaragua? A dictatorship. The challenge for left-wingers of all shades is to question their solidarity with armed struggles for freedom. Where did our thinking go wrong and why? What could we have done differently? And that's why I advise everyone to re-read Camus in his confrontation with Sartre and see that the Algerian liberation movement also followed the pattern that led to dictatorship.

You are intimately familiar with the political left both in Germany and in France. Are there differences in their attitudes toward the conflict in the Middle East?

I believe that radical anti-Zionism, which can also breed antisemitism, is stronger in terms of numbers

in France. In Germany, German history alone is enough to impose limits. But structurally, we have the same problems. I have the impression that Jews have a special position on the left, as in society at large, because they are difficult to grasp. And so an attitude has gradually developed that Jews are a nuisance. I think part of society even feels a secret, tacit sense of satisfaction: The Jews are always lecturing us and now they are experiencing what it's like to be on the receiving end.

How can we enlist the support of Muslim and Arab populations to join the fight against antisemitism and racism without making them feel attacked or subject to blanket suspicion?

We are not trying to get the Muslim and Arab population to back Israel. We must first recognize how deep the rift is. We know how hard-hearted many Arabs are toward Jewish suffering. And we need to understand why. I believe it has developed from a sense of defeat among Muslims toward modernity; a feeling that they have succumbed to a "colonial power." Though I think that in the case of Israel that doesn't make any sense at all.

What can we do about it?

We have to ask ourselves: How can we create a situation in our everyday lives in Germany or France that enables us to have a different form of debate? How can we include the Islamic and Arab population in this debate? Both sides are struggling to articulate their sympathy, their horror, or their helplessness. Even in my private life, I have noticed that very few Muslims are prepared to articulate sympathy. And conversely, only a small minority of Jews can articulate their horror, their helplessness in the face of what is happening in Gaza at the moment. We have to break down these walls, we have to ask ourselves: Why are these attitudes so hardened? Otherwise, it won't work.

The political right in Europe is focused solely on "imported antisemitism." Have they forgotten their own antisemitism?

We must acknowledge that new right-wing leaders like Giorgia Meloni and Marine Le Pen are very skillful. And perhaps they even believe they have overcome antisemitism in their own history; and philosemitism on the right is, of course, a very useful vehicle for even more radical Islamophobia. But of course, antisemitism can also be found in their own parties. Here's an interesting observation about the large-scale protests against antisemitism in Paris: Marine Le Pen was there, behind her two or three rows of her party members, but most members of the Rassemblement National were absent. In other words, a large part of the French, Italian, and German right wing remains antisemitic.

What role can the EU play in combating antisemitism and defending pluralistic immigration societies?

The way I see it, there are three levels of action: The first one is our attitude toward the Middle East conflict. The EU must radically throw its weight behind the two-state solution and try to enforce it. The second level is immigration and migration policy, which the EU must first figure out for itself. There must be a distinction between asylum and labor-based migration. The EU also needs immigration legislation. The economy at large, large corporations, small entrepreneurs, craftsmen, and agriculture all need workers. And this is an issue that can be addressed very well at the European level. Once a system is in place, we can have a very different debate about the issue of asylum seekers, which, as a matter of principle, cannot be capped with quotas. If we fail to do this, we will not change any of our misdirected debates in the EU.

You spoke of three levels ...

Yes, the third level is honesty. In France, there is a heated debate about legalizing illegal immigrants. Opponents say that it constitutes a pull factor, drawing more and more people into the country, and that we should instead be deporting more people. But does anyone really believe we can deport 300,000 people? Of course not. That argument is simply dishonest. In Germany, recent changes to immigration law may result in perhaps 600 additional deportations per year. You can see the scale of the problem. Also, the countries of repatriation are not cooperating at all! And there are many countries to which we cannot and do not want to repatriate people for humanitarian reasons. We need to discuss all these questions with honesty if we are to have a more rational debate about migration and refugees.

*The interview was conducted in November 2023.

Daniel Cohn-Bendit is a Franco-German publicist and politician with Alliance 90/The Greens and Europe Ecology – The Greens. As a long-time member of the European Parliament, he has championed many Green and progressive issues. He continues to advocate for a peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict.

Marc Berthold is Director of the Heinrich Böll Foundation's Paris Office. From 2011 to 2013, he headed the foundation's Tel Aviv Office.

In the election in October of 2023, Polish citizens took a strong stance against the illiberal tendencies in their country. Reforming the state in the face of cronyism and openly declared resistance will be no easy task for the new Polish government. But the country will now play a constructive role at the EU negotiating table based on a democratic and pro-European mindset.

Text: Joanna Maria Stolarek

A glimpse of hope in Europe

On October 15, 2023, Poland chose Europe and democracy. With an unprecedented voter turnout of 74 percent – in some large cities such as Warsaw, it even hovered around 85 percent – the Polish electorate took a strong stance against the illiberal tendencies in its own country, and therefore also in Europe. This political spring in Central Eastern Europe seems like a glimpse of hope in dark times.

For eight years, a right-wing alliance led by the national conservative PiS party governed the country, trying to transform it into an autocratic state. The separation of powers was practically abolished, the principles of the rule of law were violated, and the judiciary was instrumentalized and politicized, as were the state media. Human and women's rights were restricted, while state institutions, education, and culture became political tools. In European policy, PiS turned its back on common values and violated EU treaties, risking a possible exit from the EU. Its rhetoric was based on a strongly anti-European, deliberately anti-German narrative that poisoned the political debate and polarized society. Not least for this reason, Poland witnessed one of the dirtiest and most brutal election campaigns in Polish history. Despite all this, the opposition successfully mobilized broad sections of the electorate, including a large number of young people (over 25 percent more than in the previous elections) and women.

The democratic opposition won the majority of the seats. PiS received the most votes as a single party, but fell short of the absolute majority it needed to form a government. The incumbent PiS government and the PiS-affiliated President obstructed the opposition's process of government formation, delaying the constituent session until December 13, 2023, almost two months after the election.

How can Poland's shattered legal order be restored?

The governing coalition – a three-way alliance (Civic Coalition KO, Third Way, and the Left) comprising a total of nine parties – is facing major challenges. Not only Polish society, but also the European public is watching with interest: How can a country whose democratic principles were dismantled by a previous government be reformed? How can Poland's shattered legal order be restored? Current conditions are more than challenging: The President, who is close to PiS and has already announced that he will make extensive use of his right of veto, must approve the necessary legislative changes, for example in the area of justice. Cooperation with him will be riddled with constant conflicts and crises. In order to reform the judicial system and restore the rule of law, the government needs the collaboration of the Constitutional Court, which is staffed by appointees of the previous government and shows little inclination to cooperate; instead, it is behaving like a highly politicized instrument of the PiS party. The new Minister of Justice is faced with the task of cleaning up the legal chaos caused by the PiS government. A similar situation applies to reforming state media. It will take considerable time to achieve tangible success. All committed democratic forces in the country will have to muster the necessary patience.

The new government will have to focus on domestic policy to deal with its current internal situation. This is an additional challenge given our current geopolitical crises, not only for the Polish government, but also for European politics. The country has become a frontline state and an important security guarantor, not least because of Russia's attack on Ukraine and the ongoing war. Poland has returned to the European family, where it will proactively voice its positions and interests on issues ranging from EU security strategy and migration policy to energy policy and EU reform. This doesn't mean that it will always be easy. However, it is encouraging that Poland, as one of the largest Member States, is now a constructive participant at the EU negotiating table, based on a democratic and pro-European mindset.

Joanna Maria Stolarek has headed the Heinrich Böll Foundation's Warsaw Office since 2019. A trained journalist, she studied German, Slavic, and Spanish Studies in Tübingen. She spent several years working as a political and business editor for regional daily newspapers. As a member of Neue deutsche Medienmacher, a German network of journalists, she advocates for diversity in media coverage. She is a sought-after expert in the field of German-Polish relations.

2004 was a year of new beginnings – what hopes for the future do we have today?

May 1, 2004, was a day of celebration in many Central and Eastern European capitals. With the largest round of enlargement in its history, the EU ended the division of Europe. There was great euphoria and joy at finally joining the European family, which grew from 15 to 25 members.

How do people in the region look back on the past two decades? What can we learn from this experience for future accessions? And what are the hopes that make people in our neighborhood want to join the EU today?

Poland

"The eastern perspective is urgently needed"

Poland must commit to EU reform. The Weimar Triangle, a Franco-German-Polish cooperation format that has been dormant for several years, could become a vehicle for change.

Text: Marek Prawda

Poland has become a model of effectiveness of the "European convergence machine." No other place in the world, except part of Asia, has ever created such a coherent area of economic development as the European Union. EU integration made Poland one of the fastest developing countries in the world compared with its development level upon accession. This was fueled by three key processes: integration into the internal market and legal protections, the cushioning of social costs of the transformation, and integration into international supply chains. It was equally important to embed the state into Western structures of liberal democracy. EU membership also helped Poland overcome its ill-fated geopolitical situation and thus its security vacuum.

Current accession candidates should use the pre-accession phase as effectively as possible. During this phase, candidate countries can begin to leverage procedures and resources that will help them enormously further down the road. In their own best interest, candidate countries should make every possible effort to adapt to EU law. We consider the period from 1990 up to our official EU accession in 2004 as a process of real *rapprochement* with the EU. It took Japan the same amount of time (30 years, from 1950 to 1980) as Poland to grow its per capita GDP from 33 percent of Germany's GDP to 60 percent, for example. Poland attained this growth in the period from 1990 to 2018, in the phases both prior to and following EU accession.

Growing importance of security in the EU too

In the context of future enlargements, it will be more important to reduce "gray areas" in European security, especially since we are now living in an EU that considers itself more a community of destiny rather than a bureaucratic machine spewing rules and regulations. In a world of newly arising threats, the aspect of security is gaining importance – in the EU too. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is right when she says that EU enlargement will cost us less dearly than a failure to enlarge. Under the impression of Ukraine's war experience, Eastern European voices are becoming an indispensable element of European identity. Their expertise is urgently needed to counter the threat of imperial Russia.

This creates new tasks for Poland within the EU. Poland should define its new "indispensability" in the context of the enlargement process. It must push for EU reform as a prerequisite for enlargement. Poland could also bring Germany closer to countries in northern and eastern Europe that consider security and enlargement as their priority. The Weimar Triangle, a Franco-German-Polish cooperation format that has been dormant for several years, should become a vehicle for these changes in the EU. Everything speaks in favor of a revival of the Weimar Triangle: Germany's talk of a *Zeitenwende* (a turning point in history), Paris launching military initiatives, and a new prospect of future enlargement. Meanwhile, Poland, as a NATO frontline country, has announced a significant increase in its military spending.

Marek Prawda is Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland. From 2016 to 2021, he served as Head of the European Commission Representation in Poland, and from 2012 to 2016 as Poland's Permanent Representative to the EU. He served as Polish ambassador to Sweden and Germany and held senior positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the 1980s, he was a member of the Solidarność movement.

Slovakia

"Toward active European citizenship"

The Slovakian public primarily perceives the material benefits of the EU. And "evil, bureaucratic Brussels" is a popular scapegoat in many a populist politician's speech. We must overcome this separation between "us" and "them."

Text: Oľga Gyárfášová

In 1989, many of my generation who had grown up and studied on the "wrong side" of the Iron Curtain hopefully followed the iconic Round Table talks between the Polish opposition movement Solidarność and the Communist Party, the cutting of barbed wire fences on the Hungarian–Austrian border, and finally the fall of the Berlin Wall. Shortly thereafter, the regime in former Czechoslovakia fell just as rapidly. Václav Havel became President and the miracle of freedom began. The European integration process was an important milestone on Slovakia's winding road to democracy. EU accession on May 1, 2004, remains the finest hour in the Slovak Republic's recent history.

Slovakia is and has been a net recipient of European funds, which were used to build and renovate roads, railroads, schools, pre-schools and hospitals, renew public squares, and build science parks. Hundreds of projects have been implemented to promote regional development, research, health, and environmental protection. Overall, more public investment stems from the European Structural and Investment Funds than the national budget.

After Slovakia joined the Schengen area in 2007, most intra-European border controls were abolished. The citizens of

Slovakia make intense use of their fundamental European freedoms – they travel, study, work, and start companies throughout the EU. The country's membership of the eurozone since 2009 has also promoted trade and reduced transaction costs. All these are undeniable advantages.

For many, the EU is more of a "cash machine" than a community of shared values

The people of Slovakia are aware of this. According to the Eurobarometer of fall 2023, 83 percent of respondents believe that our country benefits from EU membership (compared with the EU average of 72 percent). It is all the more surprising that in the same survey, only 44 percent have a positive perception of the EU, 38 percent are neutral, and 18 percent even hold a negative view.

Surveys repeatedly show that the public emphasizes the material benefits of membership rather than the values on which the EU is based – democracy, peace, human rights, the rule of law, and solidarity. For many, the EU is more of a "cash machine" than a community of shared values.

There is certainly no danger of Slovakia leaving the EU, but "evil, bureaucratic Brussels" is a popular scapegoat in many a populist politician's speech. The public discourse fails to address values that have no price tag but are of priceless value. Solidarity is a concept we expect others to show toward us. In order to promote active European citizenship, we must overcome the division between "us" and "them."

In the future, the EU will likely be enlarged to include countries that will need our solidarity. Slovakia will transition from a net recipient to a net contributor. In the years ahead, it will therefore be essential for the Slovak public's perception of EU membership to shift away from mere material benefits toward an appreciation of the EU as a community of values that unite us.

Olga Gyárfášová is a sociologist and professor at the Institute for European Studies and International Relations at Comenius University in Bratislava. She is also a founding member of the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO), an independent think tank. Her work focuses on public opinion, electoral research, European integration, and political culture.

Hungary

"20 years on: broken promises and unbroken hope"

Text: Márta Pardavi

On May 1, 2004, I was one of thousands attending a festival to celebrate Hungary's new opportunities for economic growth, social progress, and deeper integration into the European family. At the time, the EU was a place we Hungarians had been yearning for. The process of political and legislative harmonization with EU standards was based on our commitment to uphold the values of the Copenhagen criteria: democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

Back then, we failed to fully understand that our newly founded democratic community lacked regular "health checks." We did not appreciate the dangers of undervaluing the role of civil society. Today, we are facing our country's failure to comply with the basic values laid down in Copenhagen.

Hungary's 2004 commitment to democracy and human rights is barely recognizable today. Since 2010, Hungary has been in a constant state of high alert because its government disrespects independent institutions and the rule of law, tramples on fair competition and media freedom, runs incessant populist campaigns, and pursues xenophobic and homophobic policies.

A clear signal against attacks on journalists, judges, and activists

EU institutions, which have at times been slow to react, are now confronting the threat that Prime Minister Orbán poses to the very fabric of the EU by undermining the principle of democratic governance and the rights of citizens and businesses. The EU is trying to combat corruption and attacks on the rule of law by taking legal action and suspending EU funds. Such measures will not bring about democratic change in Hungary, but are nonetheless valuable tools to support the independence of the judiciary. They also send a clear signal to discourage direct attacks on journalists, judges, and human rights activists.

Even though the celebration of the 20th anniversary of EU accession has been rather marred by disappointment with my country's policies, I still firmly believe in the transformative power of democracy, human rights, and the European project. Like many people in other European countries, most Hungarians stand by these values. More than 70 percent are still in favor of Hungary's EU membership. Many EU citizens still believe in the original project of the EU: peace, prosperity, and the well-being of its citizens.

Today, the EU has a number of strategies and instruments in place to protect fundamental rights, the rule of law, and democracy. But we need many more. To make progress on this path, we must invest heavily in our project of democracy and fundamental rights before Hungary's example becomes a disturbingly familiar phenomenon in other European countries. Strong EU values are our common interest and responsibility – in every current and future Member State. To nurture them, we must support independent institutions, a free civil society, and free media, and we must empower them to resist the siren songs of authoritarian leaders and their false promises everywhere.

Márta Pardavi is co-chair of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, a leading human rights NGO in Budapest. A lawyer by trade, her work focuses on threats to the rule of law and encroachments on the space of civil society in Hungary and the EU, as well as on strengthening alliances between human rights defenders in the EU.

Photos: (Marek Prawda) private, (Olga Gyárfášová) private , (Márta Pardavi) Polina Georgescu

Roma in Europa

“Europe as a space and a home for all citizens”

Roma must be included in all political decision-making processes everywhere, but particularly in countries affected by political crises.

Text: Gabriela Hrabaňová

We are currently experiencing multiple crises – Covid-19, an energy crisis, war in Ukraine. Not only in times of crisis but particularly then, it is crucial to defend democratic values and protect the human rights of minorities. Short-term, patchwork solutions will not resolve the consequences of centuries of discrimination, as our minority has experienced.

One thing that remains certain is the need to ensure that civil society has the independence and financial resources to act as a watchdog and hold national and local governments accountable. With shrinking spaces for civil society, we lack positive obligations to ensure a safe environment for them. This would include access to civil dialogue mechanisms, in line with international human rights standards on freedom of association, expression, and assembly.

Regarding the participation of Roma in policy processes, the Fourth Status Report by the OSCE and the Roma Civil Monitoring reports ascertained insufficient consultation with Roma as well as very few participatory and inclusive mechanisms for civil society participation at the national level. Importantly, there has been no progress toward further empowerment of Roma.

It is clear that Roma must be consulted and included in all the policies concerning our future – not only Roma-related policies – across all states, including those countries where crises hit the hardest. For example, it is of utmost importance for the future of Ukraine to involve minorities, including Roma, in rebuilding the country.

Responding to antigypsyism and raising awareness in society and with authorities

The ERGO Network is a strong advocate in fighting antigypsyism. Through our members, we are closely following processes in the Member States to empower our participation. We are convinced that positive changes for the Roma are possible if antigypsyism is recognized and combated as the root cause of inequality and exclusion, and if the Roma are empowered to participate in social life as equal stakeholders. Member States must commit to effectively responding to antigypsyism in all its manifestations. They must allocate adequate resources to raising awareness in society and among authorities.

In view of the upcoming European elections, and in the context of increasing extremist parties, Europe bears great responsibility to enforce human rights, among other things, and to ensure that Europe remains a safe space and a home to all its residents. To do that, the electoral processes need to ensure inclusivity, for instance, by way of shortlisting candidates that are truly reflective of the diverse societies we live in.

Commitments have been made, but action is missing. Our fight against antigypsyism will only succeed if all aspects of inclusion are addressed.

Gabriela Hrabaňová is a human rights activist from the Czech Republic. She has many years of experience in protecting, promoting, and advocating Roma rights. She has been a member of the European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network since 2011 and currently serves as its director.

Turkey

“Let’s not give up on the prospect of accession”

If a different constellation of actors and factors within the EU and Turkey interlocks and interacts, a virtuous dynamic may well be set in motion again. Both sides should definitely continue a dialogue on the political norms and standards of the EU, fostering a process of gradual *rapprochement*.

Text: Senem Aydın-Düzgit

Turkey has been an integral part of Europe’s centuries-long history and has enjoyed structured relations with the EU almost since its inception. In the past, both sides have aimed at cultivating a closer relationship, as is evident from the depth and breadth of their economic, societal, cultural, and political connections over the years.

Yet the future of the EU–Turkey relationship currently seems bleak. Turkey’s accession to the EU is not a realistic option for the short to medium term. Since the opening of accession talks in 2005, Turkey’s accession negotiations have proceeded at a snail’s pace, with 16 chapters opened and only one chapter provisionally closed. No new chapter has been opened since June 2016.

While Turkey’s move away from democracy toward a highly authoritarian, hierarchical, and centralized regime has consolidated a *de facto* deadlock of its accession negotiations, its waning accession prospects meant that the EU has had little leverage left over the trajectory of Turkish democracy. It also meant that Turkey–EU relations have now entered an era of increasingly transactional relations that are uncoupled from the at least partly values-based accession

agenda. Turkey's de-Europeanisation and de-democratization, coupled with a more unilateral and assertive foreign policy, have also fed a spiraling circle of antagonism and distancing between the two sides. Over the past two decades, Turkey's status in relation to the EU has thus gradually transformed from a candidate country on the path to full accession to a neighbor, and finally to an adversary.

The vast majority of the Turkish public supports EU accession

At the time of writing this article in December 2023, this continues to be the prevalent dynamic. However, the history of the relationship suggests that it may change in future. As and when a different constellation of actors and factors within the EU and Turkey interlocks and interacts, a virtuous dynamic may well be set in motion again. Recent public opinion polls and studies in Turkey suggest that despite the downturn in relations, the vast majority of the Turkish public supports Turkey's EU accession and holds favorable views of the EU. In the event that Turkey returns to democracy and normalcy, there is significant potential for deepened cooperation in various policy fields, extending beyond migration to the customs union and the economy, green transformation, security, and energy. This could take the form of a differentiated integration of Turkey into the EU, where accession prospects would not be abandoned, but complemented by gradually advancing convergence with the norms and standards of EU governance. This is why it is important that the accession perspective for Turkey, although currently frozen, should not be abandoned. In the context of the new enlargement architecture that is evolving in the wake of the Russia–Ukraine War, it might be the only instrument through which the EU can forge a meaningful and cooperative relationship with a future Turkey that is back on a path to democracy.

Senem Aydın-Düzgit is a Professor of International Relations at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of Sabanci University in Istanbul and Senior Scholar and Academic Affairs Coordinator at the Istanbul Policy Center. She is currently based in Berlin as a Richard von Weizsäcker Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy.

Western Balkans

"Overcoming 'enlargement fatigue' – toward a new beginning"

EU cooperation with civil society organizations and reliable, democratic forces could help stabilize the entire region.

Text: Lejla Gačanica

Back in 2003, when the European Council announced that the future of the Western Balkans lay within the European Union, the perspective seemed realistically challenging, but optimistic enough. 20 years later, there are many more challenges and less optimism. While the geopolitical arguments in favor of enlargement are stronger today, the process is likely to face more obstacles than it did back in 2003. Instability in Europe has increased, and the EU accession process has stagnated.

The brief history of EU enlargement for six Western Balkan countries was not a straight line, and the EU's commitment to enlargement has suffered numerous setbacks. Unjustified delays, obstacles, and vetoes have undermined the credibility of the EU integration process and its capacity to drive progressive political transformation in the Western Balkans. Western Balkan countries, on the other hand, have been backsliding in democracy, the rule of law, media freedom, and fighting corruption. Reforms are lacking real progress and transparency. Tensions in the Western Balkans are growing, and the influence of Russia and China is increasing as they take advantage of political and security instability.

Still, EU accession has the potential to be the true driving force in the Western Balkans, including necessary reforms. A reminder of the transformative power of the enlargement policy is a much-needed incentive for exiting the circle of uncertainty in which the EU and the Western Balkans are stuck. Preconditions for an effective accession process are already in place. What we need now is for the EU to pursue a strategic approach toward the Western Balkans instead of ad hoc actions without long-term results. We need to strengthen transparency and accountability of EU officials who are involved in the negotiations. The EU must finally give up on "stabilitocracy," since it has proven to be the wrong strategy with Western Balkan political representatives.

The countries of the Western Balkans should commit to implementing the necessary reforms

Despite the curbed optimism at the moment, the EU is the right path for the Western Balkans, and vice versa. The importance of stability in the region and in Europe is beyond dispute, and for this reason alone, accession negotiations should never be abandoned. This will require several interventions in the current state of play, starting with a stronger and more determined EU that will lead an honest, credible, and value-based process of enlargement in the Western Balkans.

EU accession should be primarily based on meeting the accession criteria. The Western Balkan states should not rely on the EU softening its enlargement criteria due to the current geopolitical momentum, but rather commit to delivering on reforms, while the EU should keep holding the Western Balkans accountable for meeting the requirements.

The EU must effectively confront issues of bilateral disputes by some EU Member States toward candidate states. Issues that are not part of the accession criteria should be dealt with separately from the accession process itself.

The role of civil society is of utmost importance for enlargement. The EU should partner with civil society organizations and reliable democratic forces, often in opposition, which will actually contribute to a democratic political culture across the region.

Lejla Gačanica currently works as an independent researcher and political analyst. She has more than 15 years of experience working with international and civil society organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkans region.

Photos: Gabriela Hrabaňová; Lucian Oprea for ERGO Network; (Senem Aydın-Düzgit) private ; (Lejla Gačanica) Imrana Kapetanović

"We have to demonstrate that free societies do things better"

Interview* by Roderick Kefferpütz

RODERICK KEFFERPÜTZ: In 11 books of political writing, you have charted the transformation of Europe over the last half-century. How does your latest book, *Homelands,* relate to your other pieces of writing?

TIMOTHY GARTON ASH: This book basically took me 50 years to write. It is, on the one hand, a summation of all my previous work on Europe. I look back on all the events I witnessed, all the people I met, and all the scholarship and thinking on Europe over the last half-century. Beyond this "history of the present," however, it is also a critical reflection. Taking advantage of hindsight, I ask: How did things turn out so badly? What did we liberal Europeans get so wrong, leading us to what I call "the great downward turn" after 2008? This cascade of crises, from the Russo-Georgian war and the financial crisis to the refugee crisis and annexation of Crimea by Russia, leading us all the way to February 24, 2022, and Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

What did we get wrong?

This is also a book of self-criticism. I plead guilty to some of the many varieties of hubris and illusions that led us into this cascade of crises. For example, we believed that the arc of history was moving towards greater freedom, democracy, and liberal open societies. Like many others, I genuinely believed that when the countries of Central and Eastern Europe joined the European Union, their EU membership would safeguard their democracy. After all, that is how it is meant to be. This is the constitutional theory of the European Union. No sooner had I reached that conclusion than Viktor Orbán started proving me wrong.

He already started systematically dismantling Hungarian democracy back in 2010 ...

That's right, and now he blackmails the entire European Union on one of the most important strategic issues of our time: support to Ukraine. At the last European Council meeting in December 2023, he held the EU hostage over Ukrainian accession and then blocked further financial aid that is necessary to support Ukraine. Ukraine also shattered our illusion of perpetual peace. We believed we were heading for an idyllic eternal peace; that we no longer needed to worry about the hard military component of security. This naïveté has been completely blown out of the water. That is why I argue that February 24, 2022 is the beginning of a new historical period.

...and with it, the end of what you describe as the "post-wall" period. The "post-war" period after 1945 and the

In his latest book, *Homelands*, Timothy Garton Ash, one of the greatest writers on European affairs, tells the story of how Europe emerged from the ravages of war in 1945, recovered, rebuilt, and moved toward the ideal of a Europe that is "whole, free, and at peace" – until Russia's invasion of Ukraine. A conversation about shattered illusions, the war in Ukraine, democratic backsliding, and the fight for freedom.

Photo: ANNA HUIX/NYT/Redux/laif

▲ Timothy Garton Ash

"post-wall" period after 1989 are the conceptual framework through which you analyze Europe's development in your latest book.

And they really are overlapping periods. This is very unusual for the European order. Normally, when you have a big historical turning point in Europe, the cards are all thrown up in the air and they come down in a new pattern, like in 1815 or 1918. However, the post-wall European order essentially kept the post-war order intact. It simply extended the Western European order – defined, for instance, by freedom, liberal democracy, the EU, and NATO – to the other half of the continent. But with this extension, in the post-wall period we developed this series of illusions regarding the progress of peace, freedom, and democracy. In the post-war period, people didn't think that way at all. They knew everything was under challenge. They knew how important military security was.

February 24, 2022 reminded us of that fact.

Exactly. It shattered our illusions and thereby signifies the end of the post-wall epoch. And this new period that is now beginning is incredibly important. Because in life, as in relationships and in politics, beginnings matter. Take 1945. The first few years after 1945 shaped the European order for decades to come, as did the first years after the Fall of the Berlin Wall. What we are doing now is intrinsically more important than what we were doing in 2003 or 2013.

But is Russia's invasion of Ukraine then really the end of the post-wall period, or is it rather a return to the post-war period? As you mentioned, we did not harbor any of these illusions of perpetual peace and freedom before the fall of the wall. So do we need to return to that kind of thinking?

No one ever steps in the same river twice. The world we are in today is significantly different. From 1949 to 1989, we had a fairly stable bipolar world. The world we have come back into is neither like the post-war nor like the post-wall world. It rather more resembles late 19th century Europe. It is a world of *realpolitik* where war is back as an instrument of politics and where there is no clear bipolar structure, but multiple greater middle powers. This is an *à-la-carte* world where countries like India, Turkey, Brazil, or South Africa feel no compulsion to align themselves with the West or the East, with us or China, with us or Russia. They are quite happy having multiple partnerships. This is very different. And I think this is something we Europeans are having great difficulty adjusting to.

Europe has reacted to Russia's war of aggression, and a change in thinking has taken place. With Ukraine entering its third year of war, how do you judge Europe's and particularly Germany's response, highlighted by the expression that was used in this context, *Zeitenwende*, a turning point in history?

Your readers know the crisis theory of integration, which dates back to Jean Monnet, and the belief that European integration advances through crises. Every time the EU faces a crisis, it responds and is strengthened by the integration that was driven by this crisis. The truth is: Sometimes it does, and sometimes it doesn't. I challenge anyone to tell me how the refugee crisis of 2015/2016 actually advanced the cause of European integration!

But in the case of Ukraine, the mechanism of challenge and response has clearly worked.

Clearly. There has been impressive unity and rapid change. Who would have thought on the eve of February 23, 2022 that the EU would be using the European Peace Facility to finance arms and ammunition for Ukraine? That is extraordinary. The question is, can we keep it up? Are we capable of doing more? With rapidly fading US support for Ukraine, we have to do even more to help Ukraine achieve something that can plausibly be called victory. And settling

"When people have a little experience of un-freedom, they start to long for freedom. Poland is a great example. Or take Ukraine. We have this wonderful Ukrainian word *volya*, which means both freedom and the will to fight for freedom."

for the current territorial division, in which Putin's Russia occupies nearly one fifth of Ukraine, is not a victory. That's a defeat. Let's be very clear about that.

What does this mean for the *Zeitenwende*? Shouldn't we revisit this concept, two years into the war?

Germany has come a long way. It took roughly a year from Chancellor Scholz' *Zeitenwende* speech to the point when Germany actually drew the right consequences and started significantly arming and supporting Ukraine. Now Germany is the second largest supporter of Ukraine. But now is also the time to step up. We need a second turning point inside the *Zeitenwende*. This one would be to understand that we have to do whatever it takes to actually get Ukraine to something that can seriously be called victory. Something that will be seen by Ukrainians as a victory, by Russians as a defeat, and by the rest of the world as a victory for Ukraine and a defeat for Russia. Public opinion polling shows that the rest of the world thinks that the West is at war with Russia, and that Russia is winning. Our Western and European credibility is at stake. This is the next step that has to be made with the second anniversary of the *Zeitenwende*.

***Homelands* not only describes the mood and political courage of ordinary Europeans, but also highlights how political leaders such as Helmut Kohl, Margaret Thatcher, and Mikhail Gorbachev shaped history. Who are those political leaders today? Putin, Xi, Zelensky: Is historical leadership to be found outside the EU today?**

History is always the interaction between deep structure and process on the one hand and conjuncture, chance, and individual leadership on the other. And it needed both for us to enter the "post-wall" period. In terms of shaping European history today, I'm afraid you're right. The stand-out names, bad and good, are outside Europe – Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping, Donald Trump on the negative side, or Volodymyr Zelensky on the good side. We do have some good leaders in Europe. Ursula von der Leyen has been very impressive in leading the EU response to Ukraine. Kaja Kallas in Estonia has been fantastic. Robert Habeck has also done a fantastic job in Germany. But if we are to shape this new period, we need to go to a new level.

What exactly do you mean by that and how could we attain it?

One problem is that national government leaders in Europe don't really want the big hitters in the top jobs in the EU. They don't like the competition. They want to run the show themselves. So it is absolutely crucial that this year, after the European election, we go for the absolutely best people when it comes to the top jobs in Brussels. We need a new quality of European leadership to take us into this new period.

2024 also marks the 20th anniversary of the biggest enlargement in EU history, the accession of the new democracies from Central and Eastern Europe. During those last 20 years, as you mentioned earlier, we have seen democratic backsliding and an erosion of the rule of law, especially in Hungary. While the election in Poland was a bright light in that darkness, authoritarian tendencies overall are increasing. How do you explain this development?

The Polish election was incredibly important. It shows: You can still win elections, even with a nationalist, populist party advancing state capture to such an extent that the election was procedurally free, but certainly not fair. It is also about how this election was won. On June 4, 1989, when the Poles had the chance to end 40 years of Communism, only 62 percent turned out to vote. On October 15, 2023, 74 percent turned out. More women than men. One study showed if only the men had voted, the Law and Justice party would have remained in power. Also, more voters under the age of 29 turned out than over the age of 60. That is unheard of in Europe! Usually, it is always the old who turn out for every vote. So there's a real lesson there.

But what about the setbacks you mentioned?

There are many reasons, of course. One is the hubris that I talk about in my book, which is that liberalism was largely reduced to just economic liberalism. This financial globalization and type of capitalism simply didn't work for other parts of our societies. That's when populists come along and claim to have all the answers and claim to speak for the people against these dreadful, liberal, cosmopolitan metropolitan elites. This is a powerful, nationalist narrative, with conservative cultural policies and left-wing economic and social policies. A big role for the state and big handouts. It's a very effective formula.

And in Central and Eastern Europe, they come up against fragile state institutions. They are not fragile because they are Eastern European, of course. This is not culturally determined. But because they are very new democracies, so naturally, the institutions are more fragile than in old, established democracies.

You are particularly critical of the European Union's inability to prevent this development. In some parts of your book, you argue that the US was taking more action on Hungary than the EU was.

Absolutely. It is one of the great failures of the EU, already since 2010 when Orbán took office. Do you remember how long his Fidesz party was still a member of the European People's Party (EPP)? People were always telling me that Orbán was actually perfectly cooperative, it was just a small problem, that we were being hysterical. Look where we are now. We now have Viktor Orbán holding the future of Europe hostage. So yes, I am very critical. I think it was a vastly underestimated issue.

What could have been done better?

Let's take Germany, for example. To be perfectly honest, I think this was a specific failure of Germany. Germany has extraordinary influence in Hungary. The Hungarian economy depends hugely on the German car industry. But Germany did not use its power. My friend Michael Ignatieff, former President of the Central European University in Budapest, who was kicked out by Orbán, wouldn't mind me sharing this. Michael once said to me: "You know, the one thing that might have kept us in Budapest was one single telephone call from Angela Merkel to Viktor Orbán." One phone call. But that call never came.

What enlargement lessons does Europe need to learn and what does Europe particularly need to do better for others, like Ukraine?

We have had a virtual paralysis of the process of EU enlargement. One country, just one – Croatia – joined the EU in the 15 years from 2008 to 2022. Now we have a new energy with Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, and the Balkans. Yet, I think this time around, enlargement will have to be done very differently. It can't be like North Macedonia, a candidate country since 2004, sitting in the waiting room for 20 years, waiting for all of the 267 boxes to be ticked and fulfilled. We cannot continue like that. I believe it has to be done incrementally. Especially when you are bringing in a country at war that has been devastated by a brutal war of aggression. For Ukraine, links will have to be made between reconstruction and reform inside Ukraine and coming closer to the European Union in different areas.

What advantages could this approach offer?

First, you create a positive feedback loop. You do something, you get something. It provides an incentive for Ukraine and others to take the next step. Second, it means that the really big politically difficult issues, such as how to integrate Ukraine into the Common Agricultural Policy, or the question of voting rights, come later in the process. It gives us more time to do the essential reforms the existing EU requires while keeping a sense of progress for the candidate countries.

Your work's flagship causes have always been freedom and Europe. Both are under threat and in a completely new context of a world in disorder. What gives you hope and optimism during these times?

When people have a little experience of un-freedom, they start to long for freedom. Poland is a great example. Or take Ukraine. We have this wonderful Ukrainian word *volya*, which means both freedom and the will to fight for freedom. Or look at some other societies. Many young Chinese, many young Russians have left their countries. Or when you ask South Africans or Brazilians: Where do you want to live? Nobody says Russia. Almost nobody mentions China. They want to live in Europe or the United States. And that's not because we are rich. China is also quite rich now. It is because we are free. I have great confidence in the profound appeal – universal appeal – of freedom to heads and hearts.

What do we need to do to rally more Europeans around this cause?

What we have to demonstrate is that free societies do things better because this is where we have fallen short. We have not been able to deliver on equality, on welfare for the other half of our societies, on climate change. It is for us to turn that core human desire for freedom into effective policies through good politics.

*The interview was conducted in December 2023.

Timothy Garton Ash is a British historian, commentator, and author writing on the contemporary history of Europe with a special focus on Central and Eastern Europe. He is Professor of European Studies at Oxford University.

Roderick Kefferpütz is the Director of the Heinrich Böll Foundation's EU Office in Brussels.

▲ Timothy Garton Ash

Photo: ANNA HUIX/NYT/Redux/laif

The Europe of shared problems

Demographic change, environmental crises, and social fragmentation – given all these challenges, generous social policy cannot be the sole solution for a European social model for the future. Rather, it must be a new form of "solidarity-based adaptation," by which all citizens take responsibility and proactively drive change.

by Heinz Bude

In the early years of this century, much thought was given to the future of the European social model. At the time, it was already clear that Europe had several varieties of social models. There is the liberal Anglo-Saxon model, which grants state benefits only to those with a verifiable need, but otherwise leaves individuals to obtain social security on the market for themselves. There is the conservative continental European model, which ensures coverage for the entire population through a state-regulated, contribution-based social insurance system. And there is the social democratic Scandinavian model, which emphasizes tax-financed social citizenship. The aim has always been to reconcile the equality-based principle of democracy with a capitalist system and its inherent inequalities. In the words of Wolfgang Streeck: Once the systemic competition between capitalism and socialism had been overcome, the concern was how to make democratic capitalism work.

Today, we know that the European social model – of whatever variety – was conceived in the absence of war, climate change, migration, financial market crises, and labor shortages. In Denmark, the welfare state is battening down the hatches as it is becoming overburdened by immigrants with a high demand for benefits; Tony Blair's Britain fell for the misconception that future capitalism would generate value in a deindustrialized service society driven by a nice fat finance industry in the City of London; and Germany is coming to the realization that Russia's war in Ukraine has wrecked its strategy of a major socioecological transformation, which had relied on gas as a transitional technology on its path to climate neutrality. And all European service-based societies have run out of service providers.

Europe is now just a community of values without a foundation. We argue over the erosion of the rule of law in Hungary. We fear the emergence of a narco-state in the Netherlands. We dare not even think about what may happen to France after Macron. And there is still no European army to speak of.

Given all this, Europe's future really does not reside in its values, but in its problems. Hungary's decline sheds light on the post-Soviet legacy in Europe. The mostly urban, pro-EU sections of Hungarian society are facing a disgruntled majority that still mourns the comfortable social cushions of the Soviet era. Both groups are united in their distrust of Western values acting as accessories to murderous capitalism.

The result is a toxic mixture of cynicism, resentment, and indifference to which generous European social policy is not an effective antidote. Frans Timmermans, who campaigned and fought for a Green Deal in the EU like no other, led a Green/left-wing alliance that won 25 out of 150 seats in the last parliamentary elections in the Netherlands. They came in as the second strongest force, second only to resurfaced right-wing populist Geert Wilders and his one-man show PVV (Party for Freedom), which claimed 37 seats. And in the European wonderland of Portugal, an independent but sloppy judiciary has forced the resignation of the head of government. Europe can neither be saved by Brussels nor by an active civil society. The citizens of Europe must wake up and realize what is at stake for the former First World, which in 30 years' time will account for a mere eight percent of the global population in a multipolar world.

▲ For Italian photographer Oliviero Toscani, diversity and inclusion form the basis for progress and a future worth living. Pictured here is his installation "Germans of the 21st Century" at Potsdamer Platz in Berlin.

The transformation will not succeed if we rely on experts to show us the way

The first problem is demographic in nature. Across the board, European economies lack people who think and act proactively. Intelligent coexistence cannot develop against, but only hand in hand with the economic forces in our societies. There is enough to do. Just think of the smartphone economies in Africa or vertical farming in China.

A climate-friendly conversion of our production and consumption model will not be a "great transformation" if we merely follow the lead of experts. It will have to be a joint and fair effort by all of us. We must change our habits and bear the costs for green steel, tasty tomatoes, and a functioning international transport system in Europe. Then Europe would change from a continent of "great transformation" to one of "solidarity-based adaptation."

In addition, as we discuss our shared problems, Europe will discover the inestimable value of the individual. In European thinking, the individual is not a fixed entity, but a link in a system of moving targets. Individuals muddle through, latch on, and suddenly discover an empty space. Individuals engage in democratic politics, make scientific discoveries, and try their hands as "entrepreneurial entrepreneurs," as Schumpeter defined them. They do this not posing as victors, but knowing that they as individuals are a riddle to themselves and to others, and that is what makes them a source of new ideas and other forces.

Today, more than ever, Europe is a community of states and not a federal state. Each country upholds its own ideas, institutions, and interests. And these ideas often diverge widely. However, Europeans are also beginning to understand that there is a geopolitical conflict of hegemony between the US and the Chinese "way of life and power." The US seems to have become a country of detached and aloof individuals who would rather go bowling alone than have fun together. In China, on the other hand, people engage in a state-organized game where those who best serve the common good win privileges in a digitally perfected "social scoring" system. The US is in danger of collapsing under its own pathos of freedom, while China's only response to its people's longing for personal freedom is more coercion. The US defends its position of power with the world's most readily deployable army; China, on the other hand, is building an international Silk Road with lots of credit and little ideology. Both states failed in the pandemic: the US because it was unable to enforce an effective lockdown, and China because it was unable to legitimately come out of its lockdown.

Europe has nothing to offer in response to all this it if cannot define itself as a union of differences. Europe grappled with the pandemic in both unity and freedom, juxtaposing Sweden's strategy of mild "natural selection" with Italy's strategy of "strict containment." The aspect of unity arises from the need for European solidarity. Solidarity is based on reciprocity, generosity, and the counterfactual idea that the time of Europe as an accomplished entity is waning, but the time of a "developing" Europe is dawning.

Heinz Bude was Professor of Macrosociology at the University of Kassel from 2000 to 2023. He has served as founding director of the documenta Institute since October 2020. His latest work, *Abschied von den Boomern* ("Farewell to the Boomers"), was published by Carl Hanser Verlag.

Photo: Olaf Schuelke/Polaris/laif

Sustainability in Europe – the major challenges:

→ Climate change, sea level rise, and extreme weather events
→ Loss of ecosystems and biodiversity
→ Environmental pollution and health effects
→ Social justice in the transformation process

Key facts at a glance.
By Patrizia Heidegger

A joint response:

the

European Green Deal (EGD)

The goal:

make Europe the world's first climate-neutral continent

The EGD is an economic and climate package featuring a variety of measures to make Europe the first economically successful climate-neutral continent. It includes new and improved European laws, climate and energy policy strategies, and instruments for financing the economic transformation.

Goals to be attained by 2050:
→ No more additional greenhouse gas emissions ("net zero emissions")
→ European economy working as resource-efficiently as possible
→ No person or region left behind in the transformation process

Core areas of the EGD

- Zero pollution and toxins
- Transition to a circular economy
- From farm to fork: sustainable food system
- Conservation and restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity
- Sustainable transport systems
- Climate neutrality
- Clean, reliable, and affordable energy
- Energy- and resource-efficient construction and renovation

Accompanying measures:

- Financing the transformation
- Justice ("leave no one behind")
- Research and development

Graphics: State, Berlin

Selected key dates:

December 2019
European Commission (EC) presents the EGD

January 2020
European Parliament approves the EGD with requests for improvement

May 2020
EU budget and Covid-19 emergency aid package ("Next Generation EU"), earmarking 25% for climate protection

July 2020
New rules for sustainable investments ("taxonomy") enter into force

May 2021
Presentation of the Zero Pollution Action Plan

July 2021
European Climate Law comes into force: Climate neutrality by 2050 and a 55% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030 become mandatory

July and December 2021
EC presents the Fit for 55 package, setting the path toward a 55% greenhouse gas reduction in various areas

March 2022
REPowerEU: joint action for affordable, secure, and sustainable energy

December 2022
Ban on deforestation-linked goods, establishment of the Climate Social Fund

March 2023
Energy consumption to be reduced by 38% by 2030

October 2023
Revised Renewable Energy Directive, including the higher target of a 45% share of renewables in energy consumption by 2030

November 2023
European Parliament votes in favor of restoring ecosystems on 20% of EU land and sea areas

December 2023
Revised electricity market rules, e.g., for more investment security for renewables and price stability for households and companies

Did the EGD do too little, too late, and cave in to pressure?

Environmental associations, scientists, and environmental politicians have criticized the weak points of the EGD, including:

- Greenhouse gases in the EU would have to drop by at least 65% by 2030 in order to achieve the 1.5°C target.
- Important steps such as improving the Chemicals Ordinance or a law for sustainable food have been temporarily suspended under pressure from industry associations.
- There are currently no targets for reducing resource consumption: What are the future limits on raw material consumption?
- The new environmental and climate laws are not tied strongly enough to social policy and a fair tax policy.
- EU international trade policy continues to serve economic profit in the Global North, while poorer countries supply labor and raw materials.
- The Member States watered down stricter requirements for energy-efficient building renovation (and blocked uniform rules for energy taxation, which means fossil fuels can still be subsidized).

European elections 2024: What comes after the European Green Deal?

→ The new EU political leadership still has to meet the goals set by the EGD.

→ It is time for a European Green Deal 2.0 – featuring powerful tools for financing and implementation and new laws to close existing gaps!

Patrizia Heidegger is Deputy Secretary General of the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and Director for European Governance, Sustainability and Global Policy.

European Green Deal: Full speed ahead!

Five years ago, the European Commission presented its new sustainability and growth strategy, the European Green Deal (EGD), the goal of which was to drive the transition to a competitive and sustainable economy and become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. The foundations have been laid, but what are the next steps?

Green ministers of climate and economy from Germany, Austria, Ireland, and Belgium take stock of the EGD, outlining the necessary steps toward success.

Photo: BMWK / Dominik Butzmann

Germany

"Europe's task, Europe's strength"

If the EU is to assume its geopolitical responsibility and hold its own in the global competition between systems, it must meet the objectives of the European Green Deal and strengthen social cohesion in Europe.

Text: Robert Habeck

For a long time, the visionary promise of peace, freedom, security, and prosperity was the magnet that drove European integration. But then, just as the EU welcomed ten new members, referendums on a European constitution failed in France and the Netherlands, breaking our trust that this narrative of progress would continue to advance in a straight line. Then came the euro crisis, Brexit, and diverging refugee policies. Climate protection and nature conservation were mostly considered antithetical to successful economic policy, especially in times of economic downturn. The European Green Deal was a courageous and necessary response to this gridlock. It was a historic step forward, spelling a concrete vision for the future: a community of highly industrialized, democratic states was to become the world's first climate-neutral continent.

The 2015 Paris Agreement had set the framework, but it was the European Green Deal that first linked economic prosperity and value creation with climate neutrality as a key objective for humanity, with a powerful, concrete action package to achieve it. The EGD created a benchmark for all Member States, regions, and municipalities.

The EGD contains measures and laws across all economic sectors. It includes the EU's historical Fit for 55 climate package with the European Climate Law at its core. Europe has agreed to significantly enhance

and expand EU emissions trading and to adjust targets in areas that do not fall under emissions trading. The Climate Social Fund is our first joint instrument to cushion negative social effects of climate action. The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is designed to stem carbon leakage to other locations, which would create unfair competitive conditions for our companies. Renewable energies across the EU will be doubled by 2030, energy consumption will be massively reduced, and a Nature Restoration Law will impose stricter protections for our natural environment. We have reached agreements between the Member States and the European Parliament on almost all of our dossiers, from the electricity market to the circular economy. The EGD was a good starting point for us to tackle economic, climate, and environmental policies as one coherent issue.

We must not fall behind in the competition for future technologies

But it is also true that our challenges have only grown in recent years. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has fundamentally changed the geopolitical situation. It has driven home the urgent need to strengthen our economic security and societal and social resilience. The climate crisis continues to advance. The US has passed an ambitious legislative package around the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) to counter climate change with massive support for its industry while also reindustrializing the country. This is good news for the climate. Europe must take the IRA as an incentive to keep up in the race for the technologies of the future. It is the only way to preserve our prosperity and to let our citizens partake of this prosperity in the future.

This is why in the years ahead, the EGD must focus even more on a climate-neutral renewal of our European industry. For instance, green steel will likely prevail as the leading global steel technology. We must decide whether this transformation will take place here in Europe or whether we will be importing green steel from elsewhere. Industry is not just about products, however, but also about solid, future-proof jobs, our future economic model, and not least about our social fabric and sense of community. That is why I believe that Europe must remain a strong industrial location, especially for the many medium-sized companies that form the backbone of our economy.

By passing the Net Zero Industry Act, we are heading in the right direction. Key climate-neutral technologies underpin our economic security. But one thing is clear: Europe must act far more resolutely, both in terms of EU state aid law and cutting unnecessary red tape, including planning and approval processes. The EU's next Multiannual Financial Framework will have to reflect this, since it will determine financial policy priorities of the EU well into the next decade.

Europe's promise came back to the fore when the Covid-19 pandemic hit and certainly when Russia began to wage a war of aggression against Ukraine. Living up to its geopolitical responsibility will be a key task for the EU in the years to come. If we are to summon the necessary strength and hold our own in the global competition between systems, we must meet the objectives of the EGD. We also need to strengthen social cohesion in Europe in order to garner broad support for this transformation among our population. We must master the dramatic upheavals of our times to stay our European course of peace, freedom, social rights, security, and prosperity and to retain its appeal in the future.

Robert Habeck is Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Austria

"It's a question of survival"

After scoring some initial key successes in climate policy, the European Green Deal must enter a second legislative period. It must make the EU competitive on the market for the best green products, while also ensuring social justice and prosperity.

Text: Leonore Gewessler

In 2024, the EU will set the future course in a number of areas. The parliamentary elections will decide whether we can continue on our course of transforming the continent toward climate neutrality. But the fight against global heating and environmental destruction is more than a campaign issue – it is a matter of survival.

And yet, in times of multiple geopolitical crises, it is not easy to rally people behind these goals. A global health crisis, Russia's brutal, illegal invasion of Ukraine, and terror and war in the Middle East: All of these crises leave many people unsettled and concerned for their financial future. Political extremists are exploiting this challenging situation, stoking prejudice with lies, and attempting to derail any serious debate.

Courageous climate policy has also been a target of such attacks in recent months. Instead of conveying a message of hope and optimism, some try to spread gloom and skepticism. As a politician, my job is to counteract this: We need confidence and courage, especially in difficult times. We have to get our message out and communicate our successes. Europe is on its way to becoming the first climate-neutral continent. We can be proud of that.

Just four years ago, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen presented the EGD as a blueprint for our transition to an environmentally sustainable society. The Fit for 55 package and its new guidelines and

regulations put us on the right track. The EU will reduce emissions that harm our climate by more than 55 percent by 2030. Many of the laws in the package have now been passed. This is an achievement that hardly anyone would have thought possible when the package was first presented in July 2021.

Ambitious climate policy combined with ambitious economic policy

Here in Austria, too, we have taken action to bring the EGD to life: We introduced the *KlimaTicket*, or climate ticket, which is valid on all public transit and costs €3 a day. With our eco-social tax reform, we introduced national CO_2 pricing, including a climate bonus for everyone, and we are converting our electricity system to run on 100 per cent green electricity by 2030. Our target is to attain climate neutrality by 2040.

Yet we must not rest on our laurels. An ambitious climate policy goes hand in hand with ambitious economic policy and social justice. The EGD must therefore enter a second legislative period. This European Green Deal 2.0 must tackle the next steps in climate action, make the EU competitive in the global contest for the greenest products, and guarantee social justice and prosperity. We must be clear that none of this will happen on its own, however. It will require determined and assertive action by climate activists and Greens.

Our common goal is a habitable planet for us and our grandchildren. A healthy climate for today and tomorrow: This is the historic mission of the Green movement, especially in this European election year 2024.

Leonore Gewessler has served as Federal Minister for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology of the Republic of Austria since 2020. From 2014 to 2019, she was Managing Director of the environmental organization Global 2000.

Ireland

"We can become the world's first carbon-neutral economy"

The EU has both the capacity and the ambition to achieve its collective climate goals for 2030. However, we should not underestimate the scale of the challenge associated with this transition.

Text: Eamon Ryan

The launch of the European Green Deal in December 2019 reset the EU's approach to green growth, fundamentally changing the way the EU economy operates to one where growth is decoupled from pollution and resource use, and where our natural capital is protected and developed. This is a huge project, and while we have a long way to go to our end goal, a considerable amount of progress has been made across the board already, particularly in relation to the protection of biodiversity, action on chemicals, and policies addressing pollution to air, water, and soils. The European Climate Law has set into legislation the aim for a climate-neutral EU by 2050, increasing the EU's 2030 target to a 55 percent reduction in emissions, underpinned by the Fit for 55 program.

I am proud that with the Green Deal, the EU and its Member States have established themselves as leaders in climate action with some of the most ambitious climate targets in the world. While the framework, capacity, and ambition are there to achieve our collective climate goals for 2030, we should not underestimate the scale of the challenge associated with this transition.

Energy security is best ensured by harnessing our renewable, homegrown resources. Critical to this is the transformation of our energy sectors to clean energy across all sectors of the economy. Energy price volatility and the cost of living crisis are perhaps the key challenge to this objective. Governments across Europe are being forced to make difficult decisions on energy mix and supply. However, while this is a challenge, it is also an opportunity. The energy crisis precipitated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shown that energy security is best ensured by harnessing the full potential of our renewable, homegrown resources.

The steps required for the transformation of our economies have been well established with the new Green Deal. What is essential now is that all EU Member States and institutions deliver on its ambition at speed and at scale.

The Commission is currently preparing a proposal for a union-wide climate target for 2040. This target will provide another important stepping stone between the EU's 2030 targets and the end goal of being the first truly carbon-neutral global economy.

Eamon Ryan is the Irish Minister for Transport and the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications as well as Chairman of the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas of Ireland.

Photos: (Leonore Gewessler) Cajetan Perwein, (Eamon Ryan) Irish Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), (Tinne Van der Straeten) Jesse De Meulenaere

Belgium

“We are not yet on the right track”

Solar power from the south, wind energy from the sea, and hydropower from the mountains must flow freely throughout Europe to supply energy to citizens and industry.

Text: Tinne Van der Straeten

Europe’s “man on the moon” moment: This is the image that Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, presented in December 2019 when unveiling the European Green Deal (EDG). The ambition matched the stakes: a roadmap, about 50 actions, to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent.

Amid successive crises, some European political leaders warned that legislation should not be “overloaded”; they suggested taking a break. However, the right response was not a step back but genuine progress. And progress means pushing ahead in our fight against global heating. The Green Deal has touched on numerous areas, and there is still much work to be done in terms of implementation. We cannot hit the pause button on our ambitions now.

We are not on the right track yet. Even before the end of 2023, we already knew that it would be the hottest year ever recorded since the pre-industrial era, with global heating causing suffering worldwide. The window of opportunity to keep the 1.5°C target within reach is closing rapidly.

We must act at every level of authority and work together on an effective climate policy at the EU level. The era of “every man for himself” is over. The war in Ukraine has reminded us of the urgency to break free from our dependence on fossil fuels. It has prompted almost all European countries to rethink their energy policy.

We must be able to act on taxation, end subsidies for fossil fuels, introduce a carbon price across almost the entire economy, set standards to decarbonize transportation and buildings, support the energy renovation of our homes, and implement policies that promote sustainable mobility, leaving no one behind.

Green electricity for every European family: We must deploy an integrated European electrical network

Last April, nine North Sea countries committed to making the North Sea the largest sustainable power station, multiplying our offshore electricity production by ten by 2050. With 300 GW of green electricity from the North Sea, we can provide affordable electricity to 300 million families.

Working together is necessary. For every European family to have access to green electricity, we must deploy an integrated European electrical network that allows solar electricity from the south, wind energy from the seas, and hydropower from the mountains to flow freely across Europe, providing citizens and industries with green, affordable, and competitive energy to meet their needs. This is a focal point of the agenda of the Belgian Presidency of the EU Council, which began on January 1, 2024.

Tinne Van der Straeten is Belgium’s Minister for Energy. She previously served as a member of the Federal Parliament (2007–2010, 2019–2020). She has been a board member of various organizations, such as the King Baudouin Foundation and the Center for General Welfare (CAW) in Brussels.

The anti-environmental backlash

A commentary by Matthias Quent

> It's not radical climate activists we need to worry about. The real threat is the lack of solidarity, panic, and ignorance among "mainstream" society.

During a brief moment of the Covid-19 pandemic, it seemed as if the global climate movement had finally managed to break through the resistance and paralysis in the socioecological transformation to mitigate the climate crisis. But, as is so often the case with social movements, every step forward is followed by a reactionary backlash. In 2023, anti-environmental resentment reached a new level of virulence in Germany. Even democratic parties reproduced narratives that used to come primarily from the far right (including slurs such as "energy Stasi," "ecofascists," and "climate dictatorship"). Back in 2021, it was the extreme right-wing that waged a dirty election campaign against the Greens as the party of climate protection. Now, in 2023, anti-Green polarization has reached the democratic center, who accuse the Green party of "climate ideology."

None of the parties in the German Bundestag nor the government is pursuing a policy that would enable us to meet the 1.5°C target. There are many reasons and motivations, influences and disinformation at play. The aim is to protect the interests of fossil fuel industries, destabilize democracies in general, and block socioecological transformation in particular. Years ago, Putin's digital information warriors were already helping to promote fossil fuels in the West, agitating against the ecological transition. For decades, it has been known how large Western fossil fuel companies exert influence by funding PR campaigns, foundations, think tanks, the media, and more. In the US, organized manipulation by oil companies is particularly well documented. Journalists and scholars are currently investigating these issues, and litigation for compensation is underway.

Under increasing pressure to take action to counter the climate crisis, new political formations and alliances against decarbonization and climate justice are emerging. Neoliberal and plutocratic ideologies and practices are radicalizing into new extremes of right-wing libertarianism, negating society and critical of the state to the point of hostility. One example and role model for this is the newly elected Argentinian president and climate change denier Milei. Ideologically, in keeping with Hannah Arendt's notion of the "extremism of the worst," it is logical that climate change denial, classism, Social Darwinism, and racism go hand in hand with decreasing social solidarity on the far right; this often also includes antisemitic conspiracy narratives. Much of the hatred is now directed at the governing Greens as a proxy for the state as such in its regulatory role. The democratic state has a political mandate to guarantee social security and provide social balance while making sure that citizens do not exercise their freedoms at the expense of the freedoms of others. Right-wing libertarians, however, seek to weaken or dismantle the state.

In fact, with our overconsumption of environmental resources, we are not only systemically depriving future generations of their freedoms, but also destroying the foundations of life and opportunities for freedom of those people and regions that are particularly threatened by climate change. Government compensation should primarily demand change from the wealthiest and most powerful, who bear the main responsibility for global heating. In addition to culturally and economically ingrained mechanisms of racism, classism, and sexism, those who suffer most from industry-driven climate change are those who bear the least blame for causing it: non-White, poor people and, disproportionately, women. Global and intersectional inequalities and the apparent hopelessness of the situation are accelerating radicalization and the decline in political solidarity and are driving isolationism, both from other countries and from lower strata of society. In the process, the beautiful value of "freedom" is being reinterpreted as a right-wing ideological battle cry that simply means securing one's own privileges. EIKE, for example, the radical right-wing pseudo-institute of the German climate denial scene, usurped the term "freedom" in its slogan: "It's not the climate that is under threat, but our freedom."

The threat does not emanate from radical climate activists, as some claim, but from the lack of solidarity, from panic, brutalization, and ignorance among "mainstream" society. This – combined with increasing isolation and a lack of solidarity brought about by structurally and institutionally violent means – serves to protect the relative privileges of the status quo of global social inequalities, which the climate crisis highlights and exacerbates.

Dr Matthias Quent is Professor of Sociology at Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences. In 2022, he and his coauthors Christoph Richter and Axel Salheiser published a book on climate racism entitled *Klimarassismus. Der Kampf der Rechten gegen die ökologische Wende* (published by Piper).

“We have to deliver”

Interview* by
Eva van de Rakt

Can the EU accomplish the urgent agricultural turnaround? Hannes Lorenzen, agricultural expert and President of the Agricultural Rural Convention, on the causes of the farmers' protests, the EU's poor planning and misguided decisions, and why the Common Agricultural Policy is in need of a complete overhaul.

For decades, you have been working to reform the EU's Common Agricultural Policy as an expert, political advisor, and representative of civil society. What are the biggest issues in this key EU policy area?

HANNES LORENZEN: The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has been a never-ending contruction site for decades. What's concerning is the fact that there is no recognizable blueprint. Since the 1980s, we have been putting up scaffolds everywhere for renovation projects that cost a lot of money, but never come to fruition. Issues like protecting the environment, animals, and the climate are making no significant progress because we keep making cosmetic changes in an attempt to patch up outdated agricultural policy structures.

What do these outdated structures mean in practice?

Farmers are still being driven in the wrong direction: Regardless of the consequences, they are encouraged to keep growing and keep increasing production. This is harming our environment, soil, water, diversity, and the climate. More and more farmers are falling by the wayside. Increasing amounts of food are wasted. Meat exports keep rising – and we are left with the manure. The CAP was once a pillar of cooperation and integration in Europe. Today, it is a sad reminder of the Member States' and the Commission's inability to reconcile our food system with the great challenges of our time: We need to transform agriculture into a culture that is compatible with people, the climate, and nature.

What kind of Common Agricultural Policy do we need to finally finish this endless contruction site and make a significant contribution toward the objectives of the European Green Deal?

Ursula von der Leyen has announced the Green Deal as a “man on the moon” moment, the great leap forward that would have Europe break new political and economic ground, leading the whole world by example. But if you take a closer look at the progress we've made in agricultural policy, the rocket hasn't even taken off yet. On the contrary, we are chipping away at the engine and control units of the Green Deal, allegedly because the rocket is too heavy for lift-off. Together, the agricultural industry and the farmers' associations that support it are currently pulling agricultural policy reform out of the Green Deal. The measures that have been announced, such as the “farm to fork” strategy, the legislative framework for a sustainable food system, the Nature Restoration Law, and pesticide regulations – all of them have unfortunately been dismal false starts.

What can we do to compensate for these false starts?

A future-proof CAP would have to be bold enough to start from scratch. Subsidies should only be granted to diverse, small-scale farming and to operations that switch to agroecological systems. Our rural development policy should build the necessary decentralized, critical, economic, and social infrastructures to create local, crisis-proof food systems. Subsidies should not be distributed per acre, but according to progress made in terms of reform and meaningful employment. Farmers should be able to earn their income under fair, competitive market conditions and by cooperating with each other and local food businesses. We must also protect them from imports linked to social and environmental dumping, and we need a public health policy to accompany this new start.

There is currently a huge amount of anger being unleashed by many farmers, not only in Germany. In recent months, farmers have also taken to the streets in the Netherlands, France, Poland, and Romania. There have even been some riots. Why are these protests so violent?

It's because of the never-ending construction sites and because of haphazard planning on the part of the responsible authorities in the Member States and in Brussels. But it is also the public's ignorance and indifference about the situation in which many farms in the EU find themselves. We don't feel their plight at the supermarket check-out. But we can now hear and see it on the streets. The elimination of diesel subsidies was the straw that broke the camel's back, but farmers were already furious long before that. Even farmers who switched to organic farming a long time ago don't see why they should have to meet ever more, and sometimes utterly nonsensical, requirements while their income is constantly fluctuating, declining, or has become unpredictable. Any farmer who is serious about converting their farm is faced with more work and a high economic risk. This is not remunerated appropriately and is barely appreciated. Fortunately, farmers are not completely alone: “*Wir haben es satt*” (“We're fed up”), an annual demonstration during Green Week in Germany, is backed by a large alliance, showing that a broad united front can come together in a joint fight for an agricultural turnaround.

How can and should we respond to this anger?

Kind words, shows of solidarity without any personal political commitment, and lip service in support of small businesses without taking any concrete action – that's no longer going to cut it. On the contrary, it only exacerbates the anger. Cozying up with the farmers' association and tacit agreements with the agricultural and food industry have greatly damaged the credibility of those who announced a big agricultural turnaround.

▶ "Wir haben es satt!" demonstration on 20.1.24 in Berlin

What could be the consequences of this loss of credibility?

We must seize the opportunity to bolster the National Strategic Plan for CAP reform so that it can actually facilitate an ambitious agricultural turnaround. If we fail to do so, advertising bans for unhealthy foods will be of little use. Now, in the runup to the European elections and before the new European Commission is sworn in, our public debate about the future of European agriculture must include an action plan for a new Green CAP. Otherwise, the farmers' protests will only accelerate the rollback in agricultural policy.

In Germany, domestic intelligence services are warning that right-wing extremists could infiltrate the farmers' protests. How do you assess this risk?

It is a high risk. The far-right AfD and its counterparts elsewhere in Europe offer simple answers: Let's get rid of the government, let's get rid of the Greens, the EU, the agricultural turnaround, the entire issue of climate change. Our responses to the many crises in agriculture involve considerable effort. They require explanations, empathy, cooperation, mutual interest, and respect. Just like in real life. The only way forward is to deliver. In 2024, democratic parties could become the minority in some countries and regions. If that happens, our task will be to slow down the big rollback and reposition ourselves on many different levels. The development in Poland is cause for hope, but it also shows how difficult it is to restore insight and reason once it has been lost.

Future enlargement will pose additional challenges for the EU and its agricultural policy. What do we need to consider before Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and the Western Balkan countries become members of the EU?

Ukraine's accession is the elephant in the room as the EU deliberates its next agricultural reform in 2027. Worried that the elephant might move and start breaking things, the Commission does not dare move itself. The established farmers' associations are already upset about the prospect, warning of price competition from the East and demanding compensation payments. In fact, if Ukraine were to join the EU, the CAP as we know it would blow up. Given the size of Ukrainian farms, our current acreage-based payments would either balloon or even bust the agricultural budget. Ukraine's agricultural structures and yields per hectare are comparable to the US. Most farms in the EU could not compete with that. In the Western Balkans, Moldova, and Georgia, small-scale farming prevails. The agricultural turnaround would thus become a necessity, both regarding our structures and Ukraine's need to adapt its agroecological structures. Ukraine will join the EU at some point, not because we keep promising it, but because we need Ukraine. The people in the Western Balkans are already deeply disappointed by eternal stalling and inaction regarding their accession. This is another reason why relaunching our CAP is so vital.

What does this mean for Ukraine specifically?

Ukraine's agricultural industry is currently asserting its interests in Brussels very forcefully. It wants to sell Ukrainian grain and meat surpluses to the EU, which was the initial trigger of the farmers' protests in the Eastern European Member States and now throughout the EU. It would be wrong to support the interests of international corporations operating in Ukraine just because we stand in solidarity with Ukraine. Rather, the conditions for accession and future EU payments must be contingent upon certain criteria in all Member States. These criteria must promote production methods and infrastructures that help farmers treat their livestock humanely, foster soil fertility, and protect the climate in an enlarged EU. Currently, none of these criteria are central, neither in the EU or in Ukraine. Unfortunately, they are falling by the wayside in the current agricultural policy rollback. Without a sweeping overhaul of the CAP that takes realities in Ukraine into account, accession will be a disaster for the entire EU. This can and must be prevented.

*The interview was conducted in late January 2024.

Hannes Lorenzen is an agricultural expert. He served as advisor to the Greens group in the European Parliament from 1985 to 2019. He is the founder of various European networks on sustainable agriculture and rural development, including the Agricultural and Rural Convention (arc2020.eu), which he chairs.

Eva van de Rakt is Head of the EU and North America Division at the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Berlin. From 2019 to 2023, she was Director of the foundation's EU Office in Brussels.

Photo: Moritz Richter / www.wir-haben-es-satt.de

Russia's war of aggression has rallied the countries of the European Union in unexpected unity. At the same time, it has exposed blatant deficiencies in European foreign and security policy and Europe's defense capabilities. In the past, the EU has not made enough use of its potential as an "agent of empowerment."

Russia's invasion of Ukraine: a turning point for EU foreign and security policy

by Jana Puglierin

With the military invasion on February 24, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin made it clear that he is no longer interested in a cooperative European security order based on the Paris Charter. For the foreseeable future, the priority for EU Member States will therefore be to ensure security from Russia rather than security with Russia. In the past few months, Europe has set a course to contain and deter Russian aggression.

In the Versailles Declaration of March 2022, the EU Member States decided to fundamentally reinforce their defense capabilities and significantly increase their defense spending. Denmark held a successful referendum on joining the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), Finland has joined NATO, and Sweden is hoping to join soon.[1] NATO has strengthened its presence on the eastern flank and developed new defense plans for its entire alliance territory. Russia's war of aggression has massively reinforced the importance of military aspects in European foreign and security policy. Though it is yet unclear when and how the war in Ukraine will end, there will be no return to the *status quo ante* with Russia, at least not as long as Putin is in office.

◂ A demonstration to mark Ukraine's Independence Day on August 24, 2023 at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin.

Photo: Sebastian Wells/OSTKREUZ

Less "win-win" and more of a "zero-sum" game

Another consequence of the Russian war of aggression is a changed European mindset with regard to foreign policy. Many policy areas, such as trade, competition, and research and technology, have evolved on the premise that international cooperation is generally beneficial for all parties involved. Even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the EU had become disillusioned with this notion, not least due to China's "mask diplomacy" during the Covid-19 pandemic or America's secondary sanctions against European companies during Donald Trump's presidency. The realization of just how fundamentally their own energy security depends on Russia, a country that exploits this dependency and instrumentalizes it in order to wage hybrid warfare, has been another wake-up call for European heads of state and government. Europe is now more aware than ever that it needs to be capable of independent action to protect its own interests and values. The European Commission now works to reduce asymmetric dependencies, build capacity in strategic sectors, and protect the EU from external coercion.

Unity despite diversity in the face of Russian aggression

However, the war has also forged unusual unity among the countries of the European Union. The EU used to struggle to speak with one voice on foreign policy issues. Now its members reacted resolutely, promptly, and flexibly. They imposed extensive sanctions against Russia, put together large financial aid packages, and cut through red tape to welcome and house Ukrainian refugees. Things that previously seemed unthinkable suddenly became possible. The EU financed weapons and equipment for Ukraine under its European Peace Facility, breaking with a decades-long taboo of not sending weapons to crisis regions. In December 2023, the EU decided to grant Ukraine and Moldova candidate status and open accession negotiations, thus initiating and driving the second major eastward EU enlargement.

Advancing the CFSP and CSDP

At the same time, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's staunch opposition to Ukraine's EU accession exposes continuing deficiencies of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). European foreign policy operates according to the principle of unanimity. Though the Treaty of Lisbon obligates Member States to ensure loyal cooperation to achieve the highest possible degree of coherence in European foreign policy, the principle of unanimity is unenforceable in reality. On the contrary, it encourages states to use

their veto to exert pressure and enforce concessions in areas unrelated to the vote at hand. In December 2023, Orbán leveraged his right of veto to unlock ten billion euros in frozen EU funds for Hungary in exchange for stepping out of the room during the vote on opening accession talks.

The focus of the reform debate is therefore, and rightly so, on how to prevent a total blockade of the CFSP in the future. A transition to qualified majority voting is a sensible proposal, but it requires the political will of all Member States, which unfortunately is currently not evident. In addition to fully exploiting the unused or underused potential of the Lisbon Treaty (including "constructive abstention" and "enhanced cooperation"), we should not stop there, but also consider options outside the formal EU framework to render the CFSP more capable of action.

Dr Jana Puglierin has been serving as Head and Senior Policy Fellow at the Berlin Office of the European Council on Foreign Relations since 2020. Previously, she spent four years at the helm of the European Programme of the German Council on Foreign Relations. Among other things, she worked as a research assistant at the German Bundestag and at the Institute for Political Science and Sociology at the University of Bonn.

Informal alliances of EU Member States

For example, instead of continuing to cave into Orbán's financial demands in order to mobilize additional financial aid for Ukraine within the EU framework, the EU26 should find a way to circumvent Orbán's veto, for example, by making the money available under an extra-budgetary financial package. In the past, an informal alliance of EU Member States was often the only way to pursue at least some form of joint foreign policy, as was the case in the E3+3 negotiations between six states and Iran regarding its nuclear program. The challenge is to collaborate in a way that strengthens the EU framework rather than undermining it. This can be achieved, for instance, by including representatives from EU institutions in the relevant formats. Russia's war against Ukraine also exposed the blatant weakness of Europe's defense capabilities. The cracks in European military capability are enormous, since Europe has been reducing it in recent decades. There is hardly any cooperation between European countries. Efforts to coordinate European procurement are falling flat. Many countries are going it alone, even though national budgets have increased. Because European production capabilities are often too slow to deliver in situations when shortages need to be resolved quickly, many European countries fall back on non-European solutions from the US or South Korea, which increases dependencies. The war has further reinforced the role of the US in Europe. Given the unclear future of domestic politics in the US and the fact that any future US administration is likely to strategically prioritize Asia, this is not a sustainable strategy.

Steering the European armaments effort

It is therefore essential to immediately enable Europeans to better protect their own security. We must finally overcome the pathological fragmentation of the European defense industry. By steering European armaments efforts and creating incentives, the EU could ensure that countries procure interoperable systems and that European armaments companies are not disadvantaged in favor of suppliers from third countries. The EU has launched commendable initiatives, including a regulation to strengthen the European defense industry by way of joint procurement (EDIRPA) and a regulation to drive ammunition production (ASAP). However, they lack the necessary financial strength and political backing among the Member States to bring about significant change. The EU is failing to leverage its potential as an "agent of empowerment" for European defense capacity by providing incentives to develop European capabilities that could also be used within NATO.

1 Sweden officially joined NATO in March 2024. Prior to this, Sweden's membership application was obstructed by Turkey and Hungary.

Setting the course for Europe

By passing a comprehensive support package for Ukraine, the EU has demonstrated its willingness to be an active geopolitical player. To fulfill this role, it must strengthen its defense industry, build its troops, and make them ready for action.

by Andris Sprūds and Imants Lieģis

At the start of her tenure in 2019, President of the EU Commission Ursula von der Leyen promised to turn the EU into a "geopolitical force" to be reckoned with. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 proved to be the perfect opportunity to embrace and develop the EU's geopolitical role, as it caused tectonic shifts in the global geopolitical landscape.

Russia's brutal aggression, reimposing all-out war on the European continent, disrupted the law-based international order. It evoked swift responses by the EU in liaison with other international players. The immediate imposition of sanctions after February 24, 2022, in close cooperation with the US and other partners, undoubtedly surprised Putin. After adopting a total of 13 sanctions packages, their implementation is now high on the EU agenda.

Considerable economic and political support has been provided to war-torn Ukraine by the EU. Economic support, encompassing support for refugees, humanitarian aid, military support, and direct help to Ukraine's economy approached €100 billion in 2023. Political support involved Ukraine receiving EU candidate status in 2022 and the decision to start membership negotiations in December 2023. Military support is ongoing, with another four-year package having been approved in late 2023. The EU should not relent in its efforts to ensure that Ukraine wins the war on its terms and takes its rightful place as a member of the EU and NATO as soon as that becomes possible. The EU faces challenges in foreign, security, and defense policy that will not only define the future of Ukrainians. Meeting the challenges will also help the EU to be recognized as a serious geopolitical player, which in turn is closely linked to Ukraine's success on the battlefield.

Russia's war has exposed the EU's urgent need to produce military equipment and ammunition and ramp up the production of EU industrial defense capabilities. In parallel, the Rapid Deployment Capacity of EU troops needs to be achieved by focusing on force generation through exercises and participation in operations. There is a need to develop and to diversify the European supply chain with a focus on moving it geographically closer to the front line.

Latvia is of the opinion that these measures will contribute to the EU's geopolitical role and will therefore continue to insist on those points. The EU's close cooperation with NATO and the US has kept the transatlantic link firm during the past few years. This link is also crucial to ensure a seamless and speedy reinforcement and transportation of equipment and troops across European borders in a crisis, and the EU focus on military mobility should be maintained. External EU and NATO borders have been subjected to hybrid war attacks by the authoritarian regimes in Belarus and Russia.

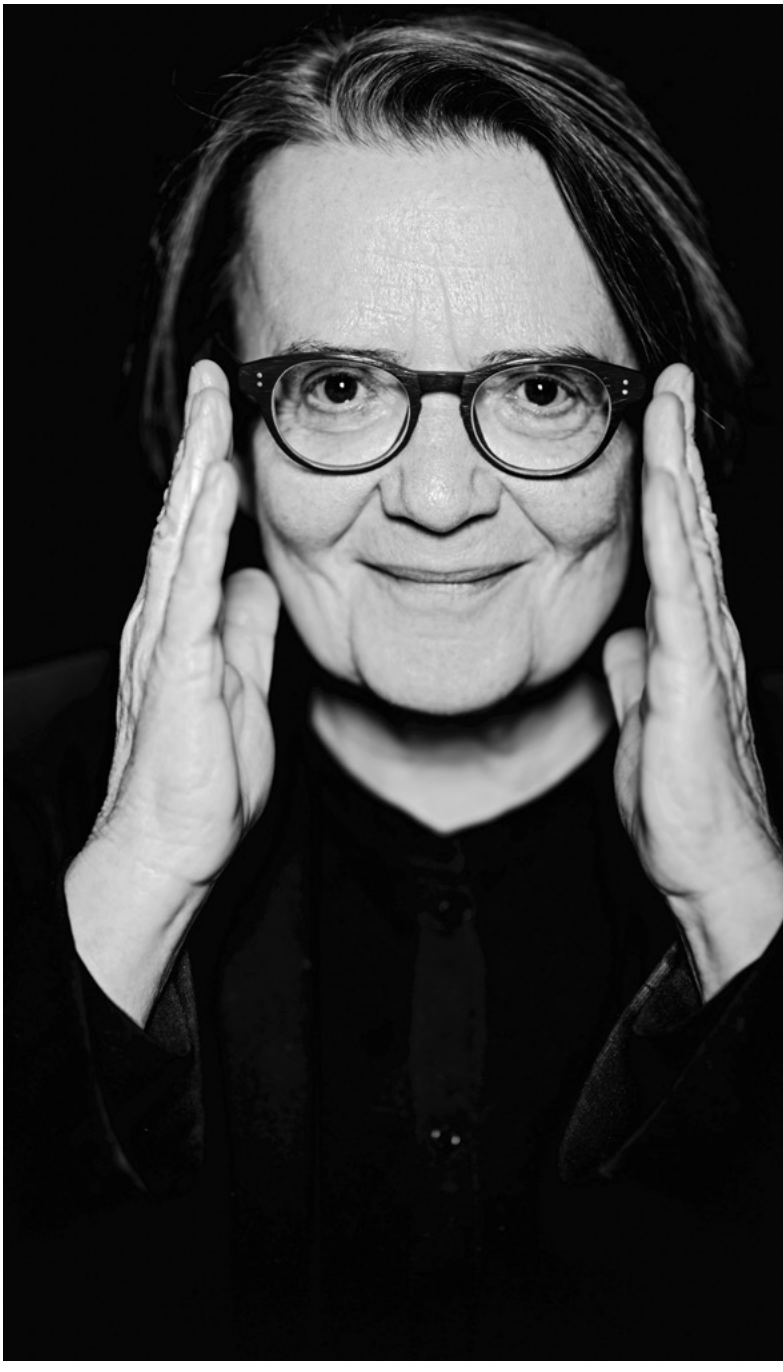
NATO celebrates its 75th anniversary at the Summit in Washington in July. The focus on the collective defense of Alliance territory and the implementation of plans in support of this policy will be high on the agenda. Strengthening "deterrence by denial" will be closely linked to this approach.

This year will be important for the future of Ukraine and the international rules-based order of which the EU is a fundamental part. European Parliamentary elections and changes to the next Commission should continue to increase the EU's geopolitical clout. They should also improve the security of its citizens through a forceful foreign, defense, and security policy.

Andris Sprūds is Latvia's Minister of Defense.

Imants Lieģis is advisor to the Minister of Defense.

“Make empathy great again!”



Working closely with refugees, Polish director Agnieszka Holland created a feature film about pushbacks on the Polish-Belarusian border. *Green Border* won the Special Jury Prize in Venice and has been showing in German cinemas since February. We spoke with the director about a campaign against her film on the one hand, civil courage and empathy on the other hand, and why both make her feel hopeful.

Interview* by Eva van de Rakt

Your film *Green Border* bluntly shows the situation of refugees from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the border region between Belarus and Poland. What motivated you to make this film?

Agnieszka Holland: I wanted to show reality. What is going on at the Polish-Belarusian border is a kind of test, a laboratory of violence and lies. The state, for wider political reasons, legalizes violence against civilians as the right answer to a humanitarian crisis. It is not important to me whether that crisis was provoked by hostile regimes or not. The question is whether we care about human rights and human lives. The Polish–Belarusian border is no exception. The entire EU is turning into a kind of fortress and, due to a fear of mass migration and the rise of populist and fascist parties, accepts violence at sea and on land as the easiest solution.

People seeking protection are exposed to violence from border guards on both sides of the fence. They are chased back and forth in the forest, victims of brutal pushbacks in a lawless space. Some of the actors have had personal experience of being a refugee. How did you work with refugees to include their stories and perspectives in the film?

We conducted extensive research when writing the script. We read a lot, talked to refugees, activists, locals, and border guards as well. By working with actors who had refugee or activist experience, we were able to craft the details and background of the story. They brought their specific knowledge and emotions to the film.

How did the refugees whose stories you tell react to the film?

The general reaction to the film, from those who experienced similar situations and from the viewers who barely knew what is going on before seeing the film, was highly emotional. The people whose story we tell also thanked us for making this film. They found it to be very true, neither manipulative nor exaggerated.

Photo: Piffl Medien 2024

In the film, you show many different facets of the Polish characters and how helplessness, despair, and inner turmoil determine their actions. For instance, there is a border guard who is struggling with his conscience. There are conflicts arising between the activists as they deliberate to what extent they have to defy the instructions of the Polish authorities to save the lives of those seeking protection. In your opinion, what role do civic engagement and civil courage play in the current situation?

All help was and still is in the hands of civil society. Locals turned activists because of the situation. Friends of friends have been forced to make their own decisions in the absence of law, often risking trouble as the state has been criminalizing their assistance. It is very tiring and frustrating. Many activists are suffering from post-traumatic stress. However, they keep doing it, knowing no one else will if they don't. Some have been doing this day after day, night after night for the last two years. They are looking for the missing. But instead of living people, they often only find corpses.

Toward the end of the film, you show the very different behavior of Polish border guards and citizens toward refugees from Ukraine. Why do you think there are such diametrically opposed attitudes of rejection and harshness on the one hand and empathy and helpfulness on the other?

It is much easier for Poles to identify with Ukrainian suffering. Geographical closeness, the similarity of the language, culture, the common enemy Russia, and the fact that in this case the government is supporting their action instead of criminalizing it. In the rejection and the harshness, racism against refugees who do not come from Ukraine plays a role. Racism is coming back everywhere in the world. What we believed to belong to the past is coming back at a dangerous speed.

The Polish Law and Justice party (PiS) has sharply criticized your film. How has the government's campaign against the film affected your life?

I was expecting hostile reactions and that the government would try to use the film for electoral means, spreading a hateful nationalistic campaign against refugees. I was also expecting attacks on myself. But the extent was surprising. The president, prime minister, the head of the ruling party, the minister of justice, and so on, all jumped on me with absurd accusations. That I am a traitor, Nazi, Goebbels, Hitler, Stalin, and Putin. They overdid it, leading to the overall effect that we profited, politically, and at the box office. However, we were afraid that these hateful words could trigger real aggression, so I shortened my stay in Poland around the time of the movie premiere and hired security guards. Fortunately, the democratic coalition won the election, which is almost a miracle, since PiS was doing all it could to make it impossible. After the elections, the situation calmed down for me.

The film premiered at the Venice International Film Festival before the parliamentary elections in Poland on October 15, 2023. How was *Green Border* received in Poland?

It was a huge success, at the box office and in terms of the responses by film critics and viewers. I've never had such powerful reactions before. So emotional, so morally challenging. We are really proud we made the film with all our honesty and courage and we were completely satisfied when we showed it to our audience.

◂ Left: Agnieszka Holland, right: Agnieszka Holland on the set of her film *Green Border*

In which other countries has the movie been shown so far?

As part of festivals, the film only premiered in Poland and the Czech Republic so far. It will feature in more countries in the first few months of 2024, first in Germany, Italy, France, and the Benelux countries and after that in Spain, Britain, the US, and other countries.

What reactions are you hoping for in Germany?

The majority of migrants who succeeded in escaping the trap at the Polish–Belarusian border ended up in Germany. It is also your story, yours, and that of your new fellow citizens. Migration is one of the crucial issues and challenges for Europe's future. I hope the German audience will be sensitive to the topic and sensitive to the humanistic dimension of our story.

What do you think needs to change in EU migration and asylum policy?

Everything. There has to be global, honest collaboration. We cannot put our head in the sand again, hoping that walls or external dictators will keep the situation away from us.

Your film gets under the viewers' skin and rattles audiences; it only shows a few glimpses of hope, for instance when young refugees and Polish teenagers sing a French song together. What gives you hope for the future of Europe?

Youth. Art. Imagination. And – make empathy great again! We are able to open our hearts and homes to strangers. However, we are not doing it – not because we do not have the resources, but because we do not want to.

▲ Film poster for *Green Border*

*The interview was conducted in late November 2023.

Eva van de Rakt is Head of the EU and North America Division at the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Berlin.

THE FILM:
It is the year 2021. Lured by the promises of the Belarusian dictator Lukashenko, Bashir and Amina and their Syrian family, like many other refugees, booked a flight to Minsk to cross the green border to Poland and then get to their relatives in Sweden. But the promise ends up being a trap. Alongside thousands of others, the family is stuck in the swampy no man's land between Poland and Belarus, jostled back and forth by border guards of both countries in the hermetically sealed restricted area, cut off from any help. A polyphonic drama between hope and despair, cynicism, and humanity is unfolding at the border. We cannot look away. This is a matter of life or death.

The film opened in German cinemas on February 1, 2024.

THE DIRECTOR:
Agnieszka Holland was born in Warsaw in 1948. She studied film at the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (FAMU) in Prague and began her film career in 1971 as assistant director to Krzysztof Zanussi. Over the course of her career, she has been nominated for three Academy Awards: in 1985, for *Bitter Harvest* (Best Foreign Language Film), in 1990 for *Europa, Europa* (Best Adapted Screenplay), and in 2012 for *In Darkness* (Best Foreign Language Film). Holland's numerous award-winning feature films include *Olivier, Olivier* (1992), *The Secret Garden* (1993), *Total Eclipse* (1995), *Julie Walking Home* (2001), *Spoor* (2017), *Mr Jones* (2019), and *Charlatan* (2020). She has also directed high-profile television series such as *Treme* and *House of Cards*.

The objective of reforming the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is to control what is called irregular migration. In particular, expanding the number of countries that are considered "safe third countries" and border procedures such as the "fiction of non-entry" are a threat to fundamental asylum rights.

Protecting refugees in Europe: Weakened today, hollowed out tomorrow?

by Neda Noraie-Kia

For years, the European Commission, the EU Member States, and the European Parliament have been trying to reform the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Until recently, reform attempts have failed because of widely diverging positions on the issue. In the fall of 2020, the Commission presented comprehensive reform proposals for a "New Pact on Migration and Asylum". In September 2022, the Council and Parliament agreed on a roadmap, aiming to conclude negotiations before the next European elections. In fact, on December 20, 2023, the Council and the European Parliament reached a political agreement in high-pressure trilogue negotiations in which the Council's positions largely prevailed. The key consensus in the now adopted reform package is to curb what is called irregular migration. Once it enters into force, it will result in sweeping changes to the existing asylum system, with massive consequences for asylum seekers as well as for the EU Member States.

The reform package and the trilogue negotiations

The vast number of legislative changes is a complex challenge in itself. The package approach makes them even more difficult to assess because many sub-areas are interconnected and contingent upon each other. The complexity of the matter definitely has political and practical implications: It has been nearly impossible for legal aid organizations, lawyers, and social workers who apply EU law in their daily practice to critically monitor this complex and nontransparent negotiation process. Given the dire state of European asylum policy, such monitoring would have been indispensable. The package includes three essential aspects that are particularly worth emphasizing:

– The border procedures that have been proposed by the Commission and agreed in the trilogue are to be governed by what is called the fiction of non-entry. It means that EU soil is to be treated extraterritorially, similar to German airport procedures. Combined with the so-called Crisis Regulation, which provides for exceptional rules to apply in times of "force majeure" or "instrumentalization," this would have serious impacts and would further restrict the right to asylum, resulting in even longer detention of refugees in border procedures.
- Expanding the concept of "safe third countries." This will likely largely externalize refugee protection and lower the criteria a country must meet to be considered "safe." Particularly in combination with border procedures, we must assume that refugees will have little or no legal recourse against such decisions.
- Lastly, another key component of the CEAS reform is the distribution of asylum seekers within the EU. Despite criticism, the recent agreement upholds the principle of the Dublin Regulation, under which the country of first entry has jurisdiction over a case. Although there is to be a solidarity mechanism between the EU Member States, countries will be able to pay their way out of accepting refugees (€20,000 for each refused refugee). The funds are also to be used for "migration management," including repatriations.

The right to asylum is an achievement of human civilization

We still have a relatively high legal standard in the EU, but it is often not upheld, to the detriment of many refugees. Now the CEAS reform seems to be adapting the legal framework to the existing discriminatory and sometimes brutal practices of some Member States. This will likely reduce refugee protection in Europe, officially on paper, rather than just *de facto*. As of right now, everyone still has the right to seek protection and have their application for asylum reviewed in a fair and constitutional procedure. This right is an achievement of human civilization and, not least, a historical lesson learned from World War II, when millions were deprived of this right.

Numerous experts and activists across Europe, including partner organizations of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, are advocating for this right. Their commitment is all the more important now in light of the recently passed reform. Human rights and the protection of refugees in Europe must be upheld in the future, especially in view of the erosion of EU law.

Neda Noraie-Kia has headed the Heinrich Böll Foundation's regional program on Migration and Flight at the foundation's Thessaloniki Office since 2020. As a political scientist, she previously spent five years working as a research assistant and office manager for Luise Amtsberg, the then refugee policy spokesperson for the Alliance 90/The Greens parliamentary group in the German Bundestag.

My first time

Interviews: Christina Focken Illustrations: Lucie Louxor

In 2024, minors, too, will be allowed to vote in the European elections in Germany. Austria, Malta, and Belgium also allow voting in EU elections from the age of 16. In Greece, the voting age is 17. As the following six statements from under-18-year-olds and adult first-time voters from six countries show, the EU must do more to reach out to young people.

Francesco, 16, Malta

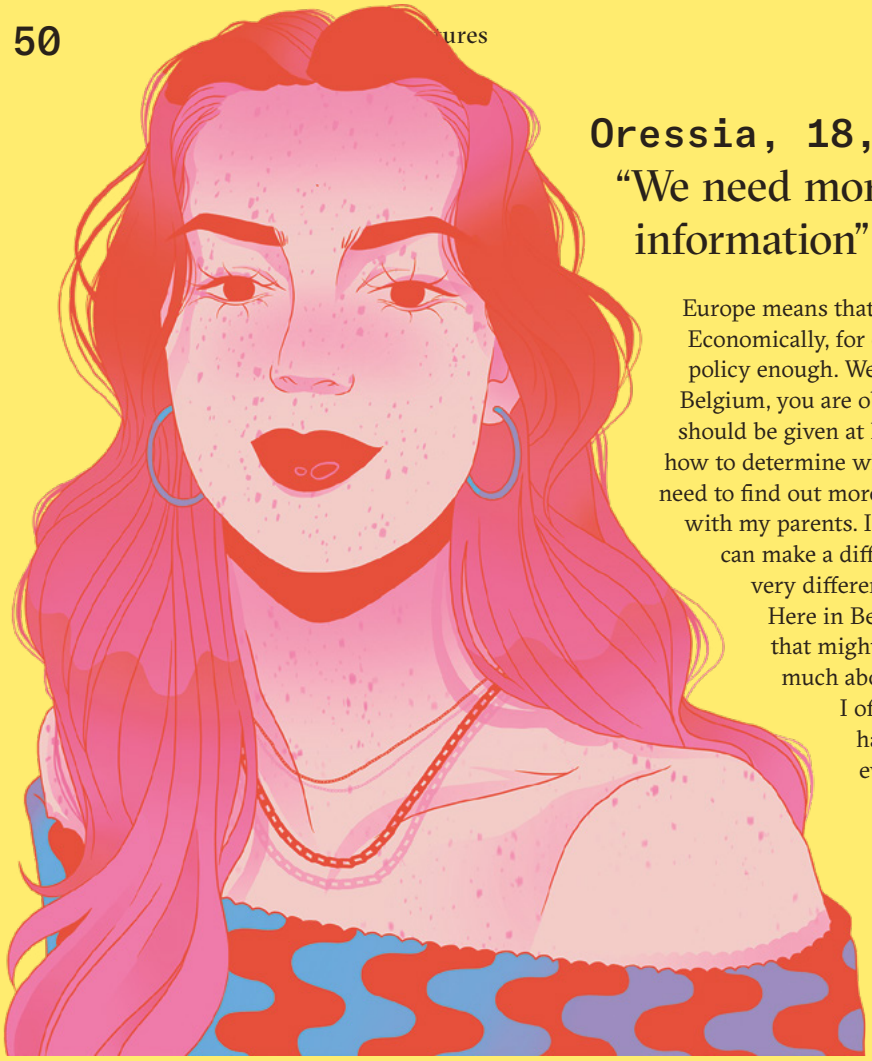
"We should vote so things change"

For me, the EU means community. As a citizen of a very small country, it means having my voice represented in one of the largest democratic institutions in the world. That is very important to me. Not everyone my age is interested in politics because they feel that politicians don't represent them. Some think that something like the EU is pointless, or they see the EU do something they don't like. But if the EU does something you don't agree with, that doesn't mean you shouldn't vote. You should get out and vote to make things change the way you think is right. I hope that the politicians who represent me in the European Parliament will always vote for peace. And I hope they always have the people affected in mind when they tackle social issues, such as the rising cost of living. I'm very grateful that I'm allowed to vote as a 16-year-old. I use public transportation every day. I'm dealing with education policy every day. So why shouldn't my vote count? Many say that young people are the future, but actually, we are the present.

Xenia, 16, Austria

"Perhaps it will be a breath of fresh air in politics"

In my daily life, the EU doesn't really come up as a topic. But since 2017, I've been a member of an Austrian youth organization that holds workshops and discussion groups, sometimes about EU politics too. Whenever I have a chance to learn something about it, I find it very interesting. One of our subjects at vocational school is political education, which we only get to take in the first and third year of our apprenticeships. In my opinion, it should be offered in all three years. I personally read a lot about queerness and how it is handled in other countries. I care deeply about queer people's freedom to live the way they like, everywhere. The first time I was allowed to go to a party, I was really excited about it. I get a similar feeling now that I'm allowed to vote for the first time. Everyone was always talking about it and now I get to do it too! There are a lot of people who think it's a stupid idea because we lack life experience. But I think it's cool. Because maybe if I, as a 16-year-old, am allowed to engage in politics, it will be a breath of fresh air.



Oressia, 18, Belgium

"We need more information"

Europe means that we are all connected in a certain way. Economically, for example. In general, I think we don't discuss EU policy enough. We don't talk about it much, especially at school. In Belgium, you are obliged to vote from the age of 18, so I think we should be given at least some basic information. We should learn how to determine who to vote for. Right now, I have no idea. I really need to find out more about it because I don't just want to go along with my parents. I think there are a lot of us young people and we can make a difference. My grandparents, for example, had a very different life than we do, so age does play a major role. Here in Belgium, you can vote from the age of 16. I think that might be a bit young. At that age, you don't know that much about politics and you might be easy to influence. I often see great division in politics. Some people have very extreme ideas. To me, it's important that everyone is included and that we all work together.

Šimon Hlisnikovský, 20, Czech Republic

"We want people to listen to us"

Although many politicians try to portray European politics as secondary, it is very important for us young people. We are concerned about our future. Our generation is faced with lots of problems that local politicians don't care about and don't want to address because solving these problems would get them fewer votes than their populist policies. That is why the elections to the European Parliament are so important. Many young people have high hopes for European politics. Climate change, cultural issues, and the housing crisis are the topics that weigh most heavily on the minds of our generation. That's why many of my friends, myself included, consider very carefully who we will give our vote to. We are generally willing to get out and vote. We don't want politicians who make big promises and end up doing nothing. We want politicians who listen to us, whom we can trust, and who are prepared to tackle the problems that matter to us. The upcoming elections will therefore not only be a test for democracy as such. They will also be a test for us first-time voters. If we turn out in large numbers, we will prove that we really care about the issues.

Kaan, 16, Germany

"Now I can help shape the EU"

I am politically active in many ways. For example, most recently I joined a youth initiative called Ruhrpott für Europa. I attended the European Parliament Summer Academy in August 2023, which was a very formative experience for me. It showed very clearly that the EU is not that remote from young people's lives. And this year, I finally have the opportunity to vote for the first time and help shape the EU. It's great that young people get to participate in European politics. But I have the impression that many Europeans perceive the EU as an elitist apparatus that operates "up there" and no one really knows what they are doing. That is why the EU must ensure that people realize: Oh, that concerns me too! That's also a problem in schools. In my opinion, we don't learn enough about the EU in class and if we do it is often very boring. Something has to change so young people can also develop an interest in the EU.

Christina Focken is a freelance journalist living in Berlin, where she studied Gender Studies and Regional Asian/African Studies. Her master's degree in Global Studies also took her to Bangkok and Buenos Aires.

Lucie Louxor is a French illustrator based in Lille. With a knack for vibrant colors, she creates energetic, bold illustrations.

Dimitrios, 17, Greece

"Many young people are not mature enough yet"

Politics is front and center in everyday life in Greece. From a young age, you hear your parents discuss politics in the family. We also hear different opinions on political issues at school. So young people engage with it a lot. In 2023, the voting age was lowered to 17. On the one hand, I think that's good because I want to vote. However, I think that many young people are not yet mature enough. In 2015, Greece found itself in a deep economic crisis and some called for Greece to leave the EU. I think that if there really had been a Grexit, we would be worse off now. The euro and the common economy have helped us a lot. I would like to study in Germany one day, which is much easier within the EU. There is still great poverty in some EU countries. Things are a little better in Greece now. I believe that EU countries should support each other to strengthen local industries.

Questioning narratives: Looking for the people behind them

A mysterious box, a Polaroid camera, and a vision: Young Europeans spend a year training in campaign management to promote an open European society on social media and on the internet in 2024. Their guiding question in this project was how to counter widespread racist sentiments in Europe. A look behind the scenes of the Narrative Change Academy of the Schwarzkopf Foundation Young Europe.

by Susanne Lang

The mic is not properly placed. “Where should I put it?” Lejla asks, patting her headscarf, looking for a good place to position her mic. A technician comes over to the table and helps her attach the small microphone. Kübra and Yasmine are seated next to her. All three are a little nervous. The ceiling-mounted spotlight casts a bright light onto a cardboard box on the table in front of the girls. This is the final and most exciting part of their almost year-long work: They are about to shoot a video about the campaign they created.

Lejla, Kübra, and Yasmine are three of a total of 12 candidates selected for the Narrative Change Academy (NCA), a project run by the exchange platform Young Islam Conference of the Schwarzkopf Foundation Young Europe. Launched in May 2023 in Berlin, the NCA is a series of four workshops to train young Europeans aged 18 to 27 from France, the UK, and Germany in campaign management. The second cohort of the academy will start in September 2024, this time in Brussels, and will be open to young people from all European countries.

How can we counter widespread racist sentiments in Europe?

The first cohort is quite diverse: devout Muslims, people of Jewish faith, and people with no religious affiliation, European citizens and non-citizens. They share an academic background and a desire to work toward a common, diverse, and open-minded Europe.

The guiding question of this education project is: How can we counter widespread discriminatory, racist and Islamophobic sentiments in Europe? At a studio in the Neukölln district of Berlin, Lejla, Kübra, Yasmine, and the other participants are sitting in front of a box that holds their answer to this question. The box is part of a campaign they developed in

Photo: @Schwarzkopf Foundation

▶ Aminata holding a James Brown record: "We found a whole new way to get to know each other through all our different objects."

the workshops. It contains personal items that reveal aspects of the participants' preferences, hobbies, and personalities. Lejla, Kübra, and Yasmine are about to start guessing who contributed which object. They are being filmed, and the footage will later be published on social media. The point of the guessing game is to playfully challenge prejudices and show people as distinct and unique members of our society. The idea is to counter the widespread notion that Muslims are a dangerous and threatening group and to replace that idea with memorable facts about individuals.

It's early November 2023 and the fourth and final workshop has begun. The camera crew has set up on the second floor. "Hello everyone," says Lejla, beaming into the camera. "We have a mysterious box here," she adds. "And we're going to unpack it now!" She opens the cardboard box. Its contents rustle as Lejla takes out an object wrapped in pink paper: a Polaroid camera. "Wow, that's heavy!" she exclaims in surprise. Does it even work? She tries to take a photo, examines the camera, turning it back and forth in her hands. She wonders who it might belong to. What kinds of pictures does its owner like to take? And why is that person into instant photo prints?

What do objects tell us about their owners – regardless of religious affiliation or origin?

This is the guiding idea behind the entire campaign, which the Narrative Change Leaders developed under professional guidance and are now implementing in these unboxing videos: to see the people behind the prevailing prejudices about Islam in our European societies. The message sounds simple. Finding it was anything but easy though.

Changing narratives without reproducing prejudices is not that easy

"We want to change the problematic narrative, but it's all too easy to fall into the trap of recycling the language of that very narrative," says Aminata. Take, for example, the slogan: "No human is illegal." The negation confirms the framework of the narrative, i.e., the assumption that people *could* be illegal. What sticks in people's minds is not so much the word "no" but the words "human" and "illegal." For the same reason, the campaigners did not want to tell the well-worn tale of "good" migrants who work hard and are well integrated, usually in professions that benefit mainstream society such as doctors or police officers, because this narrative implies that there are also bad migrants who do not fit this mold, like stay-at-home mothers.

One objective was for workshop participants to find their own narrative. Aminata, a 28-year-old from France, starts her day on the second floor above the studio in the administrative offices. This is where the country-based teams manage the distribution of their digital campaign, which will be shared on Instagram from January 2024. Which influencers could they ask? Which media should they contact? Aminata's desk is scattered with green post-it notes full of ideas: friends, influencers, media, or partners of the Young Islam Conference such as the Allianz Foundation.

Their main target group is the "flexible middle of society" and among them, "pragmatically minded people." According to sociologists, these are younger people who are less politically involved, socially disoriented, and usually fly under the radar of public attention. What is the best way to approach them?

It took a lot of discussion to arrive at a solution, says Aminata. "We spent a lot of time discussing the smallest details, including the wording. We all have the same vision: We want to live together in a just,

safe, and united society," she says. But how can they formulate this vision in a way that also speaks to people who are susceptible to populist narratives and prejudices?

The approach of "hope-based communication" focuses on what people could achieve based on their shared values. It is the belief that change is possible. Working for the positive rather than against the negative. And an awareness of how we talk about others, with the objective of coming closer together.

"Our campaign, the objects in the box, and the personal stories behind them are creating spaces for counternarratives," says Jasemin Seven, head of the NCA. The videos tell the stories of young people, including young Muslims, who have not been given enough space in the public sphere. "Good things happen when we open up," Seven adds. That is why the online campaign asks its viewers: "What's in your box?" Viewers are encouraged to pack three items of their own in a box and share their own story.

How are we led by preconceived notions about other people? What language do we use?

The narrative and campaign experts Thomas Coombes (hope-based comms) and Gesine Schmidt-Schmiedbauer and Philip Doyle (one step beyond) supported and guided the NCA members in developing the campaign. Doyle is very happy with the outcome of the workshops. It was not easy for everyone to assume the perspective of the target group, he said, "but it's important that young people have the confidence to make a change." He feels that the academy has reached its goal of helping young people become Narrative Leaders.

NCA head Jasemin Seven was particularly touched by the group dynamics between the participants. "They debated with each other respectfully, voicing strong opinions while also giving each other space to grow from the discussions."

David can confirm this. As a Fellow of the NCA, he helped develop the concept and strategy for the academy. Born in Germany and of Jewish faith, David is aware of the harmful potential of discrimination and prejudice, but also of his own privileges. After participating in the campaign, he was impressed: "First, you look at people's items, you comment on them, assess them, and think of associations – and then these people reveal themselves, and I just thought: Wow, I did not expect that."

The campaign videos are meant to trigger a similar process in the viewers to reflect and become aware of the assumptions they make about other people. And not least, to be aware of the language they use to talk about others, because language can also bring people closer together. "We found a whole new way to learn about each other through the objects and the conversations," says Aminata. It created a connection that transcends borders.

The Polaroid camera, by the way, was Lejla's item. She loves photography and capturing memories and feelings to share and connect with other people.

Susanne Lang is a Berlin-based freelance editor and journalist.

David contributed a childhood picture: "You look at other people's favorite items, you make associations – only to realize you were way off the mark."

"We want to change the problematic narrative, but it's all too easy to fall into the trap of recycling the language of that very narrative."

A view from the outside: How does the world view the EU?

The European elections are not only relevant to EU citizens. Other countries around the world are also watching with great interest to see what happens in June of this year. They have specific ideas and expectations regarding the EU's role in the world and its cooperation with other countries and regions. After all, many decisions that are taken in Brussels and national capitals affect many people outside the EU as well. Five experts from Argentina, India, the United Kingdom, South Africa, and the US present their view of the EU and their recommendations.

Argentina

"New alliances for democracy"

Photos: Gabriela Mitidieri and Robert Grosse/ cels

Latin America and the EU should focus on developing joint strategies against the far-reaching influence of right-wing forces on their societies.

Text: Gabriela Mitidieri and Robert Grosse

On November 19, 2023, the extreme right won the presidential elections in Argentina in a runoff race supported by the conservative alliance Juntos por el Cambio. The result shocked many, although similar patterns have been observed in Brazil, the US, Hungary, and the Philippines. We must therefore look beyond the regional impact of this government that seeks to destroy the state, persecute activists, and deny climate change. Now is the time to critically assess the potential for new international alliances, especially with Europe, in this global threat situation for democracies and human rights.

Since the return to democracy in many Latin American countries, the EU's primary focus in its "strategic alliances" with these countries over the past 40 years has been to secure advantages for itself: by trading goods and services and via continued extractivism under so-called environmental or energy pacts. But did these alliances ever really foster sustainable, inclusive, and equitable development? Or were they more

likely to harm Latin American societies, their quality of life, their environment, and their democracies?

We feel there is an urgent need to revise the very foundations of our cooperation in order to build a truly emancipatory alliance with Latin America. No trade agreement can be more important than protecting fundamental democratic rights, which are under threat once again in our region and worldwide. Despite their long history of democratic state and society building, Europe's democracies are also under threat from the rise of right-wing parties. We must overcome the historical asymmetries between our regions and stand together against these dangerous developments.

Let's formulate guiding questions and a joint roadmap against the far right

The new manifestations of right-wing extremist movements and their disruptive strategies appeal to young people, particularly in the digital space, bridging the gap to the traditional right. As in other historical moments, they succeed by capitalizing on widespread social and economic discontent, so they are not a new phenomenon. However, we in the progressive camp must realize that we need to rethink our own strategies. A few guiding questions could help us to develop a joint roadmap. We need to look at places that were able to contain the advance of the extreme right and ask: Which international alliances were vital to their success? We need to look at places where anti-democratic actors are already in power and ask: How can we strengthen civil societies through cooperation between democracies? How can we coordinate efforts to stand united in our criticism of governments that ally with authoritarian actors? What can an international alliance of democratic actors do to counter cooperation between far-right governments?

Gabriela Mitidieri is a historian and expert on labor and gender at the Instituto de Investigaciones de Estudios de Género (University of Buenos Aires). She is a member of the team for mobilization/surveillance against the right at the Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS).

Robert Grosse is a sociologist and expert in international development cooperation. He is currently working for the international working group at CELS. He lives and works in Latin America and Europe.

India

"The image of Europe is changing"

Optimism about new synergies: The dynamics of the strategic partnership between India and the EU have gained momentum in recent years.

Text: Jagannath Panda

India is keen to reinvigorate its relations with the European Union and its Member States – from economic, technological, climate, and energy security to multilateral cooperation. This is evident from the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emphasis on personal diplomacy with the European leaders in the last two years. It would be safe to say that the (receding) momentum in the India–EU strategic partnership has in recent years received a fillip – ironically after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, where the two sides have divergent stances. The movement is similar to India's evolving trajectory with the US, particularly on economic, technological, and regional security concerns, even though the details certainly vary. India has begun to appreciate the EU's relevance as a valuable middle power and, more importantly, a balancing power in the complicated, fragile Indo-Pacific affairs that are dominated by the US–China hegemonic competition.

The India–EU relationship is centered on economic ties, with technology becoming a focal point of cooperation, too. That has only been strengthened with the establishment of the Trade and Technology Council (TTC) and the ongoing fast-tracked free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations. There is great optimism in India about the new synergy.

Joint innovation and support to build a climate-resilient infrastructure

Furthermore, from the perspective of civil society and experts in India, climate action is an extremely vital area of collaboration with the EU/Europe. As a pioneer, the EU could not only help in building climate-resilient infrastructure, but could also participate through knowledge-sharing and joint innovation in the renewable energy sector, for example.

In the multilateral arena, a reinforced commitment to effective multilateralism and global governance is a staple expectation from the EU. India looks to the EU to not just champion the principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, but also to support reforms in the international forums, such as the United Nations system.

At the same time, Europe's image among the general Indian populace, including certain civil society and strategic sections, is still colored by its colonial past: a rich, developed region that is hypocritical about framing norms for others, particularly the developing world or the so-called Global South. This is also not a new or India-specific assertion: Besides other issues, overfishing (e.g., "neo-colonial plundering" of tuna) and Europe's energy hypocrisy (e.g., double standards on fossil fuels) have long been in the news globally.

Nonetheless, on the issues of democratic solidarity, human rights, conflict prevention, peace-building, third-country cooperation, and building human-centric regulations on new technologies, among other such themes, the EU is seen as a reliable partner. Moreover, the need for strengthening this partnership is seen as imperative.

Dr Jagannath Panda is the Head of the Stockholm Centre for South Asian and Indo-Pacific Affairs at the Institute for Security and Development Policy, Sweden.

United Kingdom

"A better agreement for both sides is possible"

Brexit has created more problems than solutions. This is a fact understood and absorbed by the majority of people in the UK. The EU and the UK still have one last chance to reset their relations.

Text: Naomi Smith

In 2026, the UK–EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) is finally up for its first review. This represents the last meaningful chance for a reset in relations between the EU and the UK, and thus the last opportunity to achieve a better deal for both.

Brexit has been an unmitigated disaster for the UK. Whether looking at rocketing food prices, reduced opportunities for young people, our ailing health service, our sluggish economic growth, poor productivity or divided families, the signs are evident everywhere.

This is a fact understood and absorbed by the majority of people in the UK, including many of those who voted to leave the EU in the 2016 referendum and now regret it. Indeed, the polling we carried out in May of this year showed that 63 percent of people in Britain thought that Brexit had created more problems than it had solved. Only 21 percent thought the opposite.

Accepting this, many Brits agree that the current arrangement the UK has with the EU isn't working and must be improved. A majority of UK voters now want a closer relationship between the UK and the EU. The Labour Party is among them.

Even post-Brexit, we do have an opportunity to reset our relations

Led by Keir Starmer, the party is on track to win the upcoming general election. This is significant for EU–UK relations because by the time the TCA review comes around, the EU will no longer be dealing with a hostile negotiating partner, but one seeking *rapprochement*.

Keir Starmer has already made this known. He is clear that rejoining the EU Single Market, the Customs Union or as a full member is not yet an option. Yet he has said that if elected Prime Minister, he would use the TCA review to seek a "closer trading relationship" with the EU, a sentiment echoed by a number of other ministers on the Labour front bench.

It is crucial that the European Council, Commission and new European Parliament appreciate the opportunity that the TCA review therefore represents for not only the UK but the EU, too. Instead of driving us apart, the review can, and should be, about bringing our people closer together, for the first time since Brexit, to reach a lasting and more mutually beneficial agreement.

Recognizing this, the EU should get ready to engage with a completely different UK. One that is open and prepared to approach the TCA review in good faith. This opportunity may not come around again. For if the review is a failure, there is a serious risk our relationship will be sealed once and for all, to the detriment of both the UK and the EU. So while the opportunity still exists, it is essential that the EU chooses to grasp it, as the UK will undoubtedly try to do.

Naomi Smith is the managing director of Best for Britain, a non-partisan campaign group in the United Kingdom, whose mission is to solve the problems facing the UK after Brexit.

South Africa

"A watchful eye toward Europe"

Observers and actors from across Africa and the Global South seek to understand how the increasingly fragmented geopolitical landscape and a possible shift to the right in Europe could affect future relations between Europe and the African continent.

Text: Philani Mthembu

The previous elections to the European Parliament took place in May 2019 at a time when the world looked vastly different to the contemporary reality. The Covid-19 pandemic had not taken place, and the conflict in Ukraine had not escalated to its current phase. These events have had far-reaching impacts on Europe's role in the world. The pandemic saw a backlash from Africa and much of the Global South, with European countries accused of adopting nationalistic approaches that played out through the hoarding of vaccines, the imposition of unilateral travel bans with negative impacts on the economies of trade and development partners in Africa, and a failure to support positions advanced by South Africa, India, and many countries from the Global South on a temporary waiver of intellectual property rights to boost vaccine production and distribution in the Global South.

What role can Europe play in maintaining peace and stability?

Observers from across Africa and the Global South are seeking to understand the implications for Europe's relations with the continent in an increasingly fragmented geopolitical landscape, especially as the EU seeks

Photos: (Jagannath Panda) private, (Naomi Smith) private, (Philani Mthembu) RIS India

to tackle issues such as immigration, climate change, economic partnerships with Africa, and EU enlargement. African stakeholders will also continue to observe whether the EU can build up its own defense capabilities, enabling it to play a larger role in peace and stability efforts within Europe, and in Africa and the Global South. This is especially important with the conflict in Ukraine continuing to escalate and with the US appearing to be playing a more proactive role than European stakeholders, despite the conflict taking place in Europe and having far-reaching implications for the economic and social wellbeing of EU citizens and the European security architecture.

African stakeholders will be especially interested in ensuring closer alignment between the EU's trade policy in Africa and the continent's own efforts to enhance regional integration and intra-Africa trade through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The EU will, however, need to address African criticism of its approach to the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), as key African stakeholders have accused the EU of further fragmenting the continent by not negotiating through existing regional economic communities (RECs). It will also be important that the EU focuses less on countering China and Russia in Africa, and more on its own value proposition on the continent through enhanced infrastructure financing, continued development cooperation, and supporting the institutional capacity of Africa's pan-African institutions.

In working with civil society organizations across the continent, the EU should follow a two-pronged strategy of building their capacity, including through institutional funding, while not neglecting the task of building the capacity of African state institutions. Indeed, weak states tend to be bad for efforts to enhance development and growth on the continent and have the potential of eroding democratic gains.

Dr Philani Mthembu holds a PhD in political science and serves as Executive Director at the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD), an independent foreign policy think tank based in Tshwane (Pretoria), South Africa. Prior to that, he completed a joint doctoral program at the Graduate School of Global Politics at Freie Universität Berlin and the School of International Studies at Renmin University in Beijing.

USA

"Get out of the comfort zone"

In the numerous crises that exist and will always exist, the EU must prove itself capable of acting and not as a place where political ideas wither away or are forgotten.

Text: Rachel Rizzo

For American policymakers, think tankers, and members of civil society, the global role of the European Union is both complicated and unclear. The political body is seen as a powerful yet esoteric web of institutions, complex relationships, and major global players. And while it's true that the EU has successfully weathered numerous storms over the last decade – from the Greek sovereign debt crisis to the rapid increase in migration since 2015, to the Brexit debacle of 2016 – it has also remained somewhat stagnant in its ability to truly shape or influence global events. Since the beginning, the EU has viewed itself as a "normative power," a term first popularized by Ian Manners in 2002. The normative power of the EU refers to its ability "to influence the behaviour of others by exporting its values." Further, the creation of the EU represented "a new and distinct kind of actor within the international system" which "transcend[ed] the anarchic and self-interested behaviour of states."

The idea of Europe as a community of shared values, however, simply may not be enough to keep the EU relevant in the future. Gideon Rachman of the Financial Times laid out this case a few months ago. In 2008, for example, the US and EU economies were roughly the same size, whereas today the US economy is nearly one third bigger than the EU's without the UK. Europe is dominated by US tech firms like Microsoft, Amazon, and Apple. China and the US dominate AI development.

Further, the European continent is still woefully dependent on US security guarantees. And even though the block has tried to develop and better integrate its own defense industry, national interests and mutual mistrust between EU members mean that most would rather just buy American.

The EU must figure out new ways to flex its muscles on the global stage

The US is fine with that, too, as it ensures a steady drip of European defense clients buying expensive American equipment like multi-billion-dollar purchases of the F-35. Finally, in terms of foreign policy, the EU simply hasn't been able to flex its muscles on the international stage. For those who have spent time on X (formerly Twitter), most have seen the account "Is EU concerned?" It mockingly tracks every time EU leaders use words like "dismayed," "appalled," "concerned," and "worried" to describe international events instead of responding with any type of policy substance.

For many in the US, especially those who spend time studying the EU, it is well-understood the US–EU relationship is one of the most important in the world. But the EU must figure out new ways to flex its muscles on the global stage. In the numerous crises that exist and will always exist, the EU must prove itself capable of acting and not as a place where political ideas wither away or are forgotten.

Whether that's exploring ways to issue debt to fund joint defense projects, expanding the use of qualified majority – instead of unanimous – voting in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, or finally making EU enlargement a real possibility. It's true that the bloc has been able to change and adapt in response to crisis, but now it must get out of its comfort zone and proactively change and adapt to remain relevant.

Rachel Rizzo is a Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council's Europe Center. Her research focuses on the European Union, NATO, and the transatlantic relationship.

Photo: Atlantic Council

Policy papers on EU reform

Europe is facing enormous challenges. The climate crisis will require an immense transformation. Liberal democracy is under pressure. The European security order has been rattled. The EU must prepare to welcome new members. The EU will only be ready to take on these challenges if its Member States can muster the necessary political will and if the EU itself undergoes major reform. We are currently working on recommendations to make the EU more effective, democratic, environmentally sustainable, and socially just.
www.boell.de/de/reform-und-erweiterung-der-eu

Studies

"Actually European!?"

We partnered with Das Progressive Zentrum to publish the long-term study "Actually European!?", an annual representative survey on citizens' expectations of European policy. Its purpose is to reveal how the Federal Government's actions match up with its citizens' expectations regarding Germany's role in the EU and to make recommendations for Germany to redefine itself for the future. The next study will be published in March 2024.
boell.de/selbstverstaendlich-europaeisch

Women CSO leaders for systemic change

This study highlights progress made in the last decade as well as remaining obstacles and opportunities for women leaders in civil society organizations (CSOs) in Europe. Its key findings reveal a concerning trend toward burnout among female leaders in the CSO sector, which negatively affects efforts to bring about systemic change.
eu.boell.org/en/women-cso-leaders-for-systemic-change

Toolkit

In defence of defenders

This toolkit suggests different communication strategies and ways to take legal action against the criminalization of human rights defenders at the international, EU, national, and local levels. It is currently available in English, Greek, and Serbo-Croatian, with Italian and French translations to follow. Published by the Heinrich Böll Foundation Thessaloniki in cooperation with the Border Violence Monitoring Network.
gr.boell.org/en/media/remote-video/defence-defenders-criminalised-solidarity-europe

Digital map

Moving Cities

Cities have become independent political players in the European migration debate. Our interactive digital map of Moving Cities is the first available overview of municipal strategies for welcoming and accommodating migrants and refugees in Europe. It offers a deep dive into 50 inspiring approaches as well as an overview of all European cities and networks that are committed to solidarity-based migration policy.
https://moving-cities.eu/en

Atlas

European Mobility Atlas

Freedom of movement across borders is at the very heart of the European project. The massive increase in motorized traffic is clearly harmful for climate, nature, and the health of European citizens. The European Mobility Atlas is the first ever overview of the European transport sector and the evolution of various means of transport in Europe. In 20 chapters featuring more than 50 infographics and maps, we also present solutions to make mobility fairer for the environment and people. The atlas is available in seven languages.
eu.boell.org/European-Mobility-Atlas

Dossier

Roadmap to 100% renewable energy in the EU

We now know for certain that we cannot overcome the climate crisis without a rapid and massive expansion of renewable energies. But how can we accelerate the European energy transition in practice? In partnership with Environmental Action Germany (Deutsche Umwelthilfe), our Brussels Office is facilitating a group of experts on the issue with representatives from European institutions, local authorities, science, and industry. Their studies and factsheets show measures that need to be taken after the European elections for a safe and socially just transition to 100% renewable energies.
eu.boell.org/en/renewables-2030

The road to the 2024 European Parliament elections

For the tenth time in EU history, hundreds of millions of people will cast their votes and set the course for EU policy for the next five years. Our European election dossier discusses questions such as: What challenges does the EU face? What should be the priorities for the next five years? And how will the election results affect European democracy and the European Green Deal?
eu.boell.org/en/EP2024

Conference

European Democracy Conference

Every year since 2009, the European Democracy Conference has gathered European experts from academia, politics, and the public to discuss a key European policy issue. Our aim is to put urgent European issues on the agenda, advance debates, and work together on innovative solutions. The next conference is scheduled for July 2024.
boell.de/en/european-democracy-conference

"Today there are no utopias. Rather,
there are dystopias; we talk about
a bad present and future. I believe, however,
that these dystopias are very useful. They teach us
that we should not chase after ghosts, but,
as Voltaire said, we should cultivate
our own garden. When we work on our present,
we can improve our world to a certain extent,
even without utopias.
We don't need any big ideas, no Cockaigne.
If one has learnt that, then one also
understands what liberal
democracy means."

Ágnes Heller,
philosopher
(1929-2019)

From: boell.de/en/interview-with-agnes-heller

Photo: B. Cannarsa/opale.photo/laif

Our work in the European Union

Europe is currently facing enormous challenges, from war and conflict to the rise of authoritarian regimes, climate change, and a crisis-ridden economy. To protect the European project, shape its future and strengthen the role and responsibility of the European Union in the world, it is paramount to safeguard the rule of law and human rights within the EU, promote social cohesion through a just socio-ecological transition, advance the two interconnected tasks of EU reform and enlargement, and spark a sustainability-based economic agenda. Only a democratic and united European Union will be able to deliver on these tasks. We want to help achieve these goals with our activities and efforts.

With regional offices across the European Union, in Brussels, Paris, Prague, Thessaloniki, and Warsaw, the Heinrich Böll Foundation interacts with national, European, and international institutions, civil society, policy makers, academia and the media. We pursue our goals in strategic cooperation with partners who share our values. The backbone of our work is the expertise and experience of our network in different local political and social contexts, enabling us to work towards a more integrated European Union.

Our namesake, the writer and Nobel Prize laureate Heinrich Böll, personifies the values we stand for: defending freedom, civic courage, tolerance, open debate, and an appreciation of art and culture as independent spheres of thought and action.

Our head office is in Germany, our commitment is European.

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Jacques Delors (1925–2023), President of the European Commission from 1985 to 1995, in his speech to the European Parliament on January 17, 1989

“Europe as a partner ... calls for more cohesion, a greater sense of responsibility, and initiative. History is knocking at our door. Are we going to pretend that we cannot hear?”

Böll.Thema 24–1
Europe – A Promise

Fostering democracy and upholding human rights, taking action to prevent the destruction of the global ecosystem, advancing equality between women and men, securing peace through conflict prevention in crisis zones, and defending the freedom of individuals against excessive state and economic power – these are the objectives that inspire the ideas and actions of the Heinrich Böll Foundation. We maintain close ties to the German Green Party (Alliance 90 / The Greens) and, as a think tank for green visions and projects, we are part of an international network encompassing partner projects in approximately 60 countries. The Heinrich Böll Foundation works independently and nurtures a spirit of intellectual openness. We currently maintain a worldwide network with 37 international offices. We cooperate closely with the Böll Foundations in Germany’s federal states, and we support talented, sociopolitically engaged undergraduate and graduate students in Germany and abroad. We gladly follow Heinrich Böll’s exhortation for citizens to get involved in politics, and we want to inspire others to do the same.

www.boell.de/en

HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG