

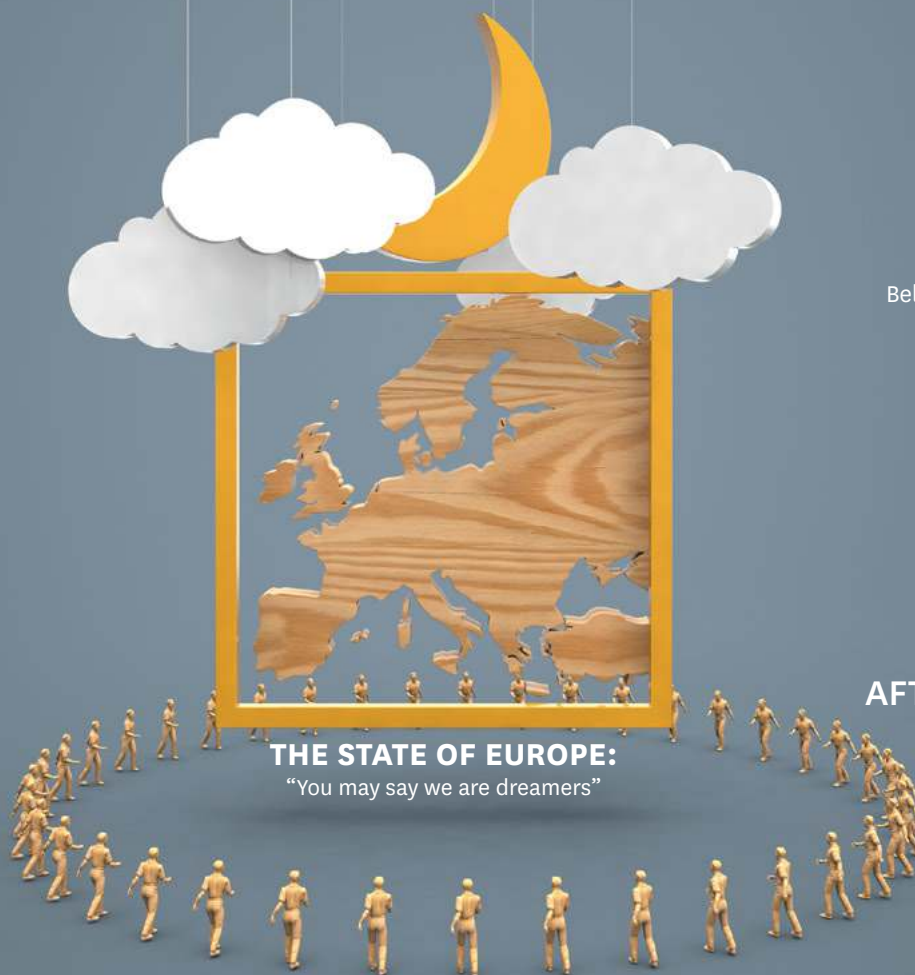
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THE STATE OF EUROPE:

"You may say we are dreamers"

TERRORISM

Belgium and Europe shaken

Paul Magnette

BASIC INCOME

Feasible for the future

Philippe Van Parijs

POLAND'S LEFT

Special investigation

AFTER AUSTERITY?

Re-thinking Europe

Gianni Pitella

A EUROPEAN ISLAM

The EU must take a stance

Massimo D'Alema & Tariq Ramadan

The Progressive Post

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but their ideas and ideals still need a public space.

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CONTRIBUTORS



Mette Frederiksen



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Paul Magnette



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Philippe Van Parijs



Sam Browman



László Andor



Sebastian Dullien



Don Tapscott



Kenneth L. Hacker



Sergei Stanishev



Jacek Zakowski



Michael Laczynski



Attila Ágh



Thomas
Zwiefelhofer



Júlia Iván



Gesine Schwan



Jeroem Dewulf



Jacob
Von Weizsaecker



Gianni Pitella



Sam Island



John Weeks



Eloy Cantú Segovia



Yanyi Yang

TURNING A CRISIS INTO AN OPPORTUNITY

by Massimo D'Alema, FEPS President, former Prime Minister of Italy

One can not condemn the reaction of some European citizens to refugees, without attempting to understand them. Since 2008, we have lived in a long period of social, economic, and financial uncertainty, with youth unemployment rates higher sometimes than 50%.

However, responding to these crises is not impossible. It involves strategic choices vis-à-vis the Mediterranean countries as well as the threat of Islamic terrorists. If the ventures and actions of European countries have created a lot of problems in the Middle East, there are high hopes for a changing dynamic. The landmark agreement on the Iranian Nuclear Deal is one for which Federica Mogherini fully contributed. Moreover, however slowly, negotiations for a peace process in Syria are taking place, alongside a national unity government finally getting to work in Libya.

Responding to these crises, also implies a sort of political leap. In

2014, we wrote to the European Commission, specifically to Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos, to say that the European Dublin Regulation – which relegated that the management of refugees as a national issue – belonged to a by-gone era. We heard the President propose an eponymous plan of € 315 billion to stimulate investment. How many euros have been spent since this lovely announcement? Where is the “triple-A” on social issues, promised by Jean-Claude Juncker? What Commissioner has dared to implement basic income or the European unemployment insurance?

Fortunately for Europe, the European Central Bank has been able to respond but hasn't been able to hide the institutional weaknesses and lack of coordination between Member States. Yet, Europeans commit themselves to the Commission, Parliament, and Council. Unfortunately, they are merely hampered by a complicated decision-making mechanism that favors anti-European personalities

– working against the European spirit, instead of advancing it.

Alternatively, the word crisis – from the Greek “κρίσις” – combines the meaning of “opportunity” and “difficulty”. So far in Europe, we have yet to see a comprehensive grasp of the term. Every day, Europeans are waking up to a headline of a new crisis. Perhaps most alarming, however, is the fact that they are never waking up with real solutions. Even worse, by their frantic repetition and easy associations, these negative comments are poisoning our common values – coexistence is the basis of both our heritage and pride.

On June 23, a referendum will be held on the membership of the United Kingdom to the European Union. Whatever the outcome, the EU will be required to establish and renew enhanced cooperation between those who wish to move towards more political union and those, as in the past, who wish to abstain from it.



ONES TO WATCH

METTE FREDERIKSEN

Mette Frederiksen is the leader of the Danish Social Democrats since 2015. She has been a member of The Folketing, the Danish Parliament, since 2001 and has served in Helle Thorning-Schmidt's government as Minister of Employment from 2011 to 2014 and as Minister of Justice from 2014 to 2015.



— **What prompted you to start a political career?**

METTE FREDERIKSEN: I've never thought of politics as a career path. But since being involved in the student council in both elementary school and high school, I've wished to be a part of change. Later the injustice around the world and the injustice I saw in my local community drove me to engage in even more in politics. I found out that if you want to make a difference and change how things work, you have to get involved in politics.

— **How did your career with the Social Democratic Party begin?**

MF: As a 14 year old, I became a member of my local department of the Danish Social Democratic Youth. I was later elected chair of the department and I joined the national executive committee as well as the international com-

mittee. The international work gave me a lot of experiences within the European and international social democratic family. This is how everything started, and in 2001 I gained a seat at the Danish Parliament for the Social Democrats.

— **What were some of the triumphs and challenges working in Helle Thorning-Schmidt's government as Minister of Justice?**

MF: One very specific event overshadowed everything else during my time as a Minister of Justice: The horrible terrorist attacks in Copenhagen on February 14 last year. The threat of terrorism has come ever so close to our everyday lives in Europe, and it reminds us – the political leaders – that our most important task is to ensure the safety and security for the citizens. The terrorist attacks came as a shock to everyone, but it was at the same time incredibly powerful and overwhelming to

experience how the Danes reacted with unity. That encourages me to believe that we are able to defy and defeat the terrifying evil forces that wish to do us harm.

— **Besides the obvious goal of getting into power what other goals do you see at the forefront of the Social Democratic party?**

MF: For all politicians who seek executive power, the current refugee crisis is the biggest challenge facing our society. We simply have to find sustainable solutions, which not only resolve the immediate challenges, but also work as a long-term response. I believe those responses involve creating far better conditions in the refugee camps in the neighboring countries to Syria and Iraq. Simultaneously, it is important that we continue to strengthen our welfare systems in a time, where they are under a large pressure. We must not compromise on social justice.

SPECIAL COVERAGE

THE NEED FOR A EUROPEAN ISLAM

by Massimo D'Alema & Tariq Ramadan

Europe is in a paradoxical situation. The tragic challenges that shook Europe in 2015 should have encouraged it to pursue greater political unity and to initiate a debate on Islam. However, the fight against “Islamic terrorism” and the admission of refugees are creating feelings of fear and insecurity, which are pushing people in the opposite direction.

On the one hand, in Europe, xenophobia and racism fuel the idea that the European Union should shut itself in and become a fortress cut off from the rest of the world. On the other hand, there are the migration flows. They cannot be stopped, but must be controlled using the maximum foresight required to avoid serious social, cultural and religious consequences. That is the future of Europe.

More and more, Europe is becoming a multi-ethnic, multi-faith, multicultural, multilingual society. But if Europe is not capable of building a sustainable cohabitation space, it calls into question the very existence of the European Union project, and going beyond that, the source of our nations' wealth: the cultural heritage upon which our values are based.



> ABOUT

Tariq Ramadan is a Swiss academic, philosopher, and writer. He is professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies at Oxford University (St. Antony's College and Oxford Faculty of Theology).



That is why, when refugees leave their country, with its war and bombings, there is first of all a moral duty, a duty of dignity that reminds us of our citizenship, which is not just there for our own protection. Unfortunately, it was the photo of a dead child on a beach in Turkey that really caused significant numbers of Europeans to begin to collectively grasp the scope of the refugees' plight. Unfortunately, that momentum was lost. Commission officials are still unable to compensate for the European Council's lack of political vision, although there appears to have been some progress, with the idea that the so-called Dublin regulation – the EU law that determines that the management of refugees is a national issue – belongs to a past century.

➤ **SECURITY, YES, BUT WHAT ABOUT BEYOND THAT?**

It isn't that we are not concerned about the security of our fellow citizens. An effective strategy must be developed for peace in Syria, for stability in Libya and to stamp out the fascism of "Islamic State", but looking beyond that, what is the political strategy? The forces deployed since the attacks on November the 13th and the state of emergency are the means, but what is the end?

It isn't that we are not concerned about the security of our fellow citizens, but we must not forget that education and social diversity are sustainable and essential elements for establishing peace and for living together.

We must not forget that the European Union was created so that nations that were fighting each other could live and grow old together in peace. We regret the lack of European response from Brussels and European vision from our political leaders, but we also have reason to ask ourselves: does European awareness currently exist among the citizens of the twenty-eight member states?

➤ **ISLAM IN EUROPE**

At the same time, we must discuss an issue that has never been addressed. What is Islam in Europe? Where do these "lunatics", who are not refugees, but European citizens, come from? Why are Jews, Christians, Muslims and atheists incapable of living together peacefully - and, on the

other hand, how can Islamophobia be dealt with?

Recently, at a conference in which we both participated, one of the audience members, a veil-wearing Belgian Muslim woman of Moroccan origin, spoke of the pressure she felt at having to defend herself with regard to what is happening with "Islamic State," because for her, those people are not Muslims.

It would be too simple to say that they have nothing to do with Islam. It would be a little like venturing to suggest that Stalinism was not communism. From a strictly Islamic and religious point of view, they are Muslims, although their behaviour is obviously not consistent with the principles of Islam. However, they oblige us morally and intellectually to take a stand on what they do. They force Muslims to distance themselves from their rhetoric, which condemns everyone but themselves to hell.


A religious response is needed, but not just a religious response. Although it is of course easier to recruit from the margins of society, with high levels of poverty and unemployment, studies show that the terrorists involved in New York, London, Beirut and Paris had very often fallen into extremist violence after a religious commitment of just a few weeks, and this was true regardless of their academic background or social class. There is therefore a real problem in regard to education, manipulation, internet indoctrination, drug use and political exploitation of religious matters.

➤ **THE NEED FOR A EUROPEAN ISLAM**

Our Muslim fellow citizens are at the front line in the fight against violent extremism, because they are its primary victims. However, we must all fight this political, cultural and social battle together. Paradoxically, Muslim extremists and European Islamophobes share the same idea that "Islam equals violence." This perception is not only false, but also dangerous.

To escape from this unfounded ideology, we need a European Islam, an Islam of European citizens and not an Islam composed of communities influenced by their countries of origin. We need an Islam inspired by minds that are open to change and the challenges of the modern era, rejecting a literal reading of the Qur'an and in tune with the new historical context. That kind of Islam would make an important contribution to European culture in the 21st century and beyond. It would also be a powerful antidote to the religious fanaticism that exists in all religions and, at the same time, constitute a response to the rigid, ultra-conservative Islam, occasionally proclaimed by some terrorist groups.

If Muslims share responsibility for the emergence of this European Islam, the EU Member States and their institutions will have to recognise that Islam is a European religion and that its contribution is necessary and important.

 See the video of the debate on progressivepost.eu



Brussels, Belgium - Belgian army at Louise metro station as a part of the security lock-down following terrorist threats.

BELGIUM AND EUROPE SHAKEN

Interview by Shant Krikorian

The recent terrorist attacks in Brussels have refocused world attention on Belgium and the EU. We sit down with the Minister President of Wallonia and the current mayor of Charleroi to get his point of view on the takeaway from these tragic events and how Belgium and Europe should respond.

— What are your thoughts about the recent events in Brussels?

We feel deep emotions of pain and sorrow as we think about the terrible impact these events have had on our families and society as a whole. Perhaps now, more than ever, we need to politically defend those values, which are dear to us, and not succumb to fear or racism.

— How will and how should Belgium respond?

We must try our best to preserve our precious way of life. This being said, improving and strengthening security will be imperative in the

follow up to this crisis. This is why parliament has decided to create a special committee to investigate recent events and the reaction of our security apparatus to them. As stated officially previously, Europe must work together to strengthen information sharing among member states in a possible new security mechanism.

— How will the government respond to criticism?

The government takes seriously any constructive criticism and will review tangible recommendations and shortcomings of its security apparatus with utmost detail. With this being said, constant Belgian-bashing gets us nowhere. I would like to underline that after the tragic events of

September the 11th, Belgium was a proposer and ardent supporter of a possible European security mechanism akin to the FBI. We are ready to learn from any possible mistakes that have occurred during the course of these events. The parliamentary committee will examine all facts, but this does not take away from the need to strengthen continental security.

— Lessons

They didn't attack Brussels by chance – they wanted to strike us at the heart of Europe. Following these tragic events we must:

1. strengthen security mechanisms
2. create a joint European Security Apparatus
3. rethink our model of social cohesion



> ABOUT
Paul Magnette is the current Minister-President of Wallonia and the current mayor of the city of Charleroi.

INVESTING IN EDUCATION MORE THAN IN THE COAST GUARD

Interview by Alain Bloëdt

— Were you surprised by these attacks?

FREDDY THIELMANS: We must stop believing that this phenomenon is new. France, Belgium, Italy, and Germany have experienced terrorism from the extreme left to the far right.

— Can we compare these forms of political terrorism to current jihadi terrorism?

FT: There is a common thread: it is the thought of one's existential righteousness, either at the religious level or at the level of philosophical thought, as some Marxists-Leninists were at the time.

— What is the responsibility of religion in these crimes?

FT: Monotheistic religions are basically the problem because they are religions of revelation. God's word is the truth even if "they", "we", "you" know that the text has been rewritten so many times we are not sure if the speech was bona fide. Truth be told, we

> ABOUT
Freddy Thielemans is a Belgian socialist politician who was the mayor of the City of Brussels from 2001 to 2013.

must prevail – as we can see that all religions have gone through periods of terrorism.

— Have we failed?

FT: In my eyes, technical education is an important part which has been misused in the context of integration. If we are starting to educate people who are not finding jobs at the end of their studies, we have already failed! So my message is: invest more in education than in any other form, more than in the Coast Guard! And more specifically, invest in technical training, such as the CFA (work-linked training center) as its courses cover lucrative sectors such as the internet, welding, creation of drones, etc.

— So what must we do?

FT: We must abandon the idea that there is one truth even in politics, even in ideology. And this is the debate that will fix this!

Read Freddy Thielemans's article in its entirety on [progressivepost.eu](#)



Brussels, Belgium – People gather in front of the Brussels Stock Exchange to remember the victims of the terrorist attacks.

GENDER EQUALITY VOTES IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

by Doru Frantescu
In partership with VoteWatch Europe

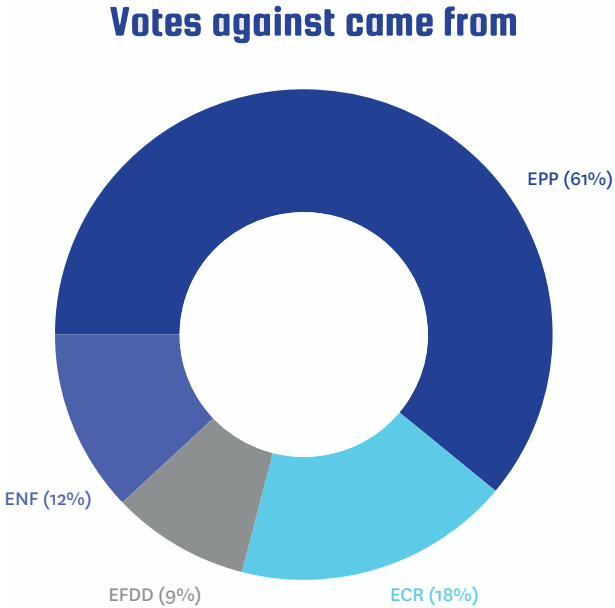
A narrow left-leaning majority in the European Parliament says the Commission has watered down the promotion of gender equality by only publishing a working paper instead of a full strategy for the years 2016-2020.



Strasbourg - France, European parliament.

The centre-left coalition passed the resolution calling for a complete strategy on gender equality in early February 2016. The move was controversial, as the biggest parliamentary group, the European People's Party (EPP) voted largely against it, criticising the centre-left's demand for more legislation before current laws were fully implemented. The European Union recognises equality between men and women as a

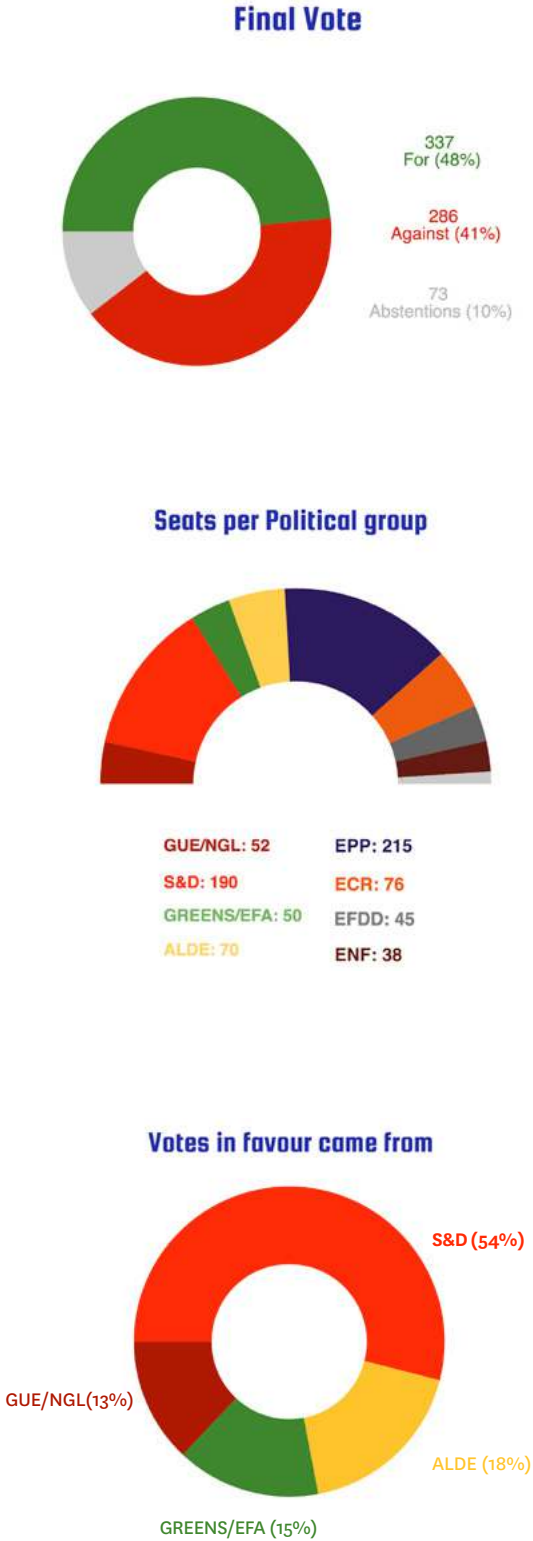
fundamental value and objective. The principle of "equal pay for equal work" was already included in the Treaty of Rome in 1957. The Union has the responsibility to introduce legislation to fight against gender-based discrimination and is committed to promoting the principle of gender equality. Although inequalities still exist, the EU has made significant progress over the last decades. The working document focuses on five priority areas: "Increasing female labour



market participation and equal economic independence, Reducing the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps and thus fighting poverty among women; Promoting equality between women and men in decision-making; Combating gender based-violence, including trafficking in human beings and protecting and supporting victims; Promoting gender equality and women's rights across the world." Furthermore, the text underlines the need to include a gender equality perspective into all EU policies and funding programmes.

ANALYSIS OF THE VOTE
The left-leaning parliamentary majority, consisting of the Social Democrats (S&D), the Radical Left (GUE/NGL), the Greens and the Liberals (ALDE) voted in favour the resolution on gender equality and women's rights in the Parliaments February Plenary session. The main group of the Parliament is that the Commission has until now just passed a working document. "It is very disappointing to see that the Commission thinks gender equality in the EU only deserves a staff working-document instead of proper comprehensive strategy," said Angelika Mlinar of ALDE. The critique of ALDE is surprising, as the responsible commissioner Vera Jourova is a member of the same party grouping. Ms. García Pérez chair of the Women's Rights and Gender Quality Committee (FEMM) and member of the S&D group, stated the European Com-

mission was avoiding its responsibilities. "Why did the Commission not adopt a new communication publicly and transparently designed to help deliver equality between women and men?" said García Perez.
Left wing parties had equally strong words, with Malin Björk (GUE/NGL) calling for a more feminist Europe. "The Commission is now blocking the development of a gender strategy; this is evidence of autocracy and patriarchal arrogance. [...] It's time to throw the patriarchal yoke away." The Greens called women's rights "the unfinished business of the 21st century". In the end, the resolution was adopted with 337 votes in favour, 286 against and 73 abstentions. A Left/Right voting split is no exception on social policies. The vote further painted an interesting picture of political group cohesion in parliament. Social Democrats, Greens and the Radical Left voted almost entirely in favour, noting just three abstentions on the Left's side. The Eurosceptic side was more muddled, with a large part of the ECR and EFDD groups choosing to abstain rather than to oppose. The EPP managed to keep three quarters of its MEPs in line, with 11 EPP members opting to vote in favour, 25 abstaining and 168 voting against (it is worth mentioning that these issues are treated as 'free voting' in the EPP, i.e. the Members are encouraged to vote according to their conscience).



BASIC INCOME: FEASIBLE FOR THE FUTURE

by Philippe Van Parijs

The idea of an unconditional basic income is in fashion. From Finland to Switzerland, from San Francisco to Seoul, people talk about it as they have never done. Twice before, basic income was the object of a real public debate, albeit briefly and

limited to one country at a time. In both episodes, the centre left played a central role.

What is there in basic income that can trigger the suspicion of social democrats and what is there in it that should prompt its enthusiasm? In order to answer such questions, it is important to clarify what a basic income is and what it is not.

A basic income is an income that is unconditional in three senses in which existing minimum income

schemes are also unconditional: it is paid in cash, entitlement is not conditional on having paid social security contributions, and it is not restricted to citizens. It is also unconditional in three additional senses. It is individual, i.e. independent of its beneficiaries' household situation. It is universal, i.e. entitlement to it is not dependent on the level of their income from other sources. And it is duty-free, i.e. not restricted to those working or willing to work.



Utrecht, Netherlands – In June 2015, the Dutch city of Utrecht announced it would begin distributing a universal basic income to its population.

“DOES THE INTRODUCTION OF A BASIC INCOME NOT THREATEN THE VERY EXISTENCE OF OUR WELFARE STATES? ON THE CONTRARY, IT COMES TO THEIR RESCUE.”

➤ **IS IT NOT ABSURD TO PAY SUCH A BASIC INCOME TO ALL, INCLUDING THE RICH?**

It is not. The absence of an income test is not better for the rich. It is better for the poor. True, the rich do not need a basic income, just as they do not need to have the lowest layers of their incomes untaxed or taxed at low rates, as they do under current personal income tax systems. High earners will of course pay for their own basic income and for part of the basic incomes paid to others. One great advantage of an income paid automatically to all, irrespective of income, reaches the poor far more effectively than a means-tested scheme, and without stigmatization. Another is that it provides them with a floor on which they can stand, because it can be combined with earnings, rather than a net in which they can easily get stuck if, because it is withdrawn if poor people start earning.

➤ **IS IT NOT UNACCEPTABLE TO REPLACE THE RIGHT TO A JOB BY A RIGHT TO AN INCOME?**

A basic income does nothing of the sort. On the contrary. It provides a flexible, intelligent form of job sharing. It makes it easier for people who work too much to reduce their working time or take a career break. It enables the jobless to pick up the employment thereby freed, the more easily as they can do so on a part-time basis, since their earnings are being added to their basic income. And the firm floor provided by the basic income makes for a more fluid back and forth between employment, training and family that should reduce the occurrence of burnout and early retirement, thus enabling people to spread employment over a longer portion of their lives. As social democrats rightly emphasize, access to paid work is important for reasons that far from reduces to the income it gives

access to. Those who advocate a basic income paid without a work condition do not need to deny this. It is even taken for granted by those who are confident that a generous unconditional basic income is sustainable: despite a less miserable fallback option and higher taxation, people will keep working precisely because work means far more to them than just an income.

➤ **DOES THE INTRODUCTION OF A BASIC INCOME NOT THREATEN THE VERY EXISTENCE OF OUR WELFARE STATES?**

On the contrary, it comes to their rescue. Needless to say, a basic income is by no means an alternative to publicly funded education and health care. Nor is it meant to provide a full substitute to earnings-related social insurance benefits funded by workers' social contributions. Given that each household member will have his or her basic income,



> ABOUT

Philippe Van Parijs is professor at the University of Louvain and Leuven and associate member of Nuffield College, at Oxford University. His books include *Real Freedom for All. What (if anything) can justify capitalism?* (Oxford UP, 1995) and *Basic Income. A radical proposal for a free society and a sane economy* (Harvard UP, forthcoming 2017, with Yannick Vanderborght).

however, the levels of the cash benefits and the funding they require can be correspondingly reduced, the benefits individualized and simplified, and the depth of the traps associated with the conditions to which they are subjected will shrink. Even in the longer run, social assistance cannot be expected to disappear either. Because of its being both individual and universal, sensible levels of basic income will not enable us to dispense with means-tested top ups for people in specific circumstances. Again, given the unconditional floor, traps will be reduced, the number of people dependent on these conditional benefits will shrink and the social workers' important job will be facilitated. Fitting an unconditional floor under the existing welfare state will not dismantle but strengthen our duly readjusted social insurance and social assistance schemes.

Read Philippe Van Parijs' article in its entirety on progressivepost.eu

LIBERTARIANS FOR BASIC INCOME

by Sam Bowman

There is a growing case that the welfare systems of most of the Western World are no longer fit for purpose, having been made in a very different world, with need of replacement with something else.

The postwar welfare state in Britain, designed to combat the Five Great Evils of “squalor, ignorance, want, idleness, and disease” included safety nets for the unemployed and hypothecated funding for essentials like healthcare and schooling. At the time, a job was enough to take you out of poverty, and mass unemployment was seen as the greatest danger to prosperity. Since then, though, a lot has changed. Globalization of goods and labour combined with increasing automation of manual labour has suppressed wage growth in many of the old sectors that working people could rely on; indeed it has eliminated many of these jobs altogether. It is not quite right to say that manufacturing has declined in the West: the UK actually produces more in terms of manufacturing than it

ever has, it just does so with less labour than it once did. Globalization and technological development are extremely good things. They raise the standard of living of people who heretofore had spent their lives in squalor unimaginable in any Western country. They have raised incomes, living standards and individual freedom around the world unlike any other developments since the Industrial Revolution. Though these advances have raised the average standard of living globally, some people in the developed world risk being left behind as old jobs disappear and the new ones that are created – if they are created at all – do not pay as well. Both sides of the debate about absolute versus relative measures of poverty miss the whole truth. Relative measures can be ridiculous: it does not make me any better off if the richest woman in the country

goes bankrupt. But absolute measures miss that part of my sense of well-being is embedded in the expectations I have of my life. Adam Smith’s understanding of poverty is instructive:

A linen shirt ... is, strictly speaking, not a necessary of life. The Greeks and Romans lived, I suppose, very comfortably though they had no linen. But in the present times, through the greater part of Europe, a creditable day-labourer would be ashamed to appear in public without a linen shirt, the want of which would be supposed to denote that disgraceful degree of poverty which, it is presumed, nobody can well fall into without extreme bad conduct.

This is the state that an increasing number of people in the Western world find themselves in. In the UK, the number of people in poverty and out of work was overtaken by the number of people in poverty and in of work for the

first time during the mid-2000s, and the gap is widening. Although the overall pie is growing, some people’s share of it is not.

A better alternative might be to go back to the drawing board and try to design a welfare system that solves the problems of the 21st Century, rather than one stuck in the 20th. This system would focus on how much a person earned, whether they were in full-time work or part-time work, or out of work altogether, and be designed to be a long-term subsidy to people on low incomes, perhaps topping up their incomes for their entire lives. This system might end up looking a lot like a Negative Income Tax (NIT) or a Universal Basic Income (UBI). Though the right usually favours an NIT and the left a UBI, the two systems are very similar. The underlying principle is that there should be an income floor, paid for by the taxpayer, below which no citizen ever falls, and given as

a top-up to those on low incomes. As the citizen’s income from work rises, their top-up gradually falls, until they become net contributors to the system. Under an NIT this reduction takes the form of a lowered payment; under a UBI the reduction takes the form of higher income taxes.

Both of these remove the need for much of the existing administration of the welfare system. Both allow for clear control over the withdrawal rate, avoiding the perverse incentives that bedevil the current system. And both supplement the incomes of

the worst-off whether they are in work or not. The exact level of these payments would need to be determined through randomized controlled trials, so that the payment was not too high to discourage work. Previous experiments in New Jersey and Canada with systems like these have found only a small reduction in the number of hours worked among part-time second income parents, and a rise in time spent looking for work by chief household earners, who presumably could afford to hold out for a better offer. They also found that poverty was reduced and spending on many social services fell, including health and in particular mental health. Working Tax Credits in the UK and the Earned Income Tax Credit in the US are both somewhat similar to the NIT and UBI, but more fundamental reform is needed. As more countries flirt with the idea and Finland seems more and more likely to implement a basic income, we may soon have more evidence about the efficacy of such programmes, and a route for widespread implementation.



> ABOUT

Sam Bowman is a libertarian political theorist, economist, and Executive Director of the Adam Smith Institute in London, United Kingdom.



PROMINENT BUSINESS LEADERS FOR BASIC INCOME



TIMOTHEUS HÖTTGES
CEO of Deutsche Telekom

“

An unconditional basic income can be the basis to lead a decent life, it comes to the question of how we create a fair system for the world of tomorrow

”

from his interview in *Die Zeit*



BERUND LEUKERT

Executive Board and the Global Managing Board Member of SAP

“

There will be great benefits for society from the fourth industrial revolution. It is also accurate to mention that required skills are constantly changing (...) a basic income helps us all

”

from his interview in *die Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*



ROBIN CHASE

Co-founder and former CEO of Zipcar

“

We need to create new social mechanisms to spread out the gains of the new platform economics — perhaps even a basic income allotted to every person (...) without this, the social consequences could be dire

”

from her book *Peers Inc*

EUROPEAN UNEMPLOYMENT: ADDRESSING CONCERNS

By László Andor

Since 2012, when the reform of the European Monetary Union (EMU) began, the possibility of and need for unemployment insurance within the Eurozone has been frequently discussed. The Five Presidents' Report, which explains so clearly the problem of divergence, provides another opportunity to have a serious debate on this instrument, potentially opening the avenue of practical changes as well.

► OPTIONS FOR AUTOMATIC STABILISER

Most macroeconomists seem to agree today that the incomplete nature of the EMU makes it unsustainable in its current form, but there can still be a debate about what should be the next step. Some oppose automatic fiscal stabilisers either because they are automatic, while others may be hesitant because they are fiscal (and other types of risk sharing or no risk sharing at all would be preferred). Of course, this debate has to happen, but if it lasts too long, any next step can come too late to save the

single currency from the coming economic storms and political challenges.

At the beginning of 2015, preference was given to three key actions in the pursuit of a sustainable recovery. A more flexible interpretation of fiscal rules was adopted, the Juncker plan was launched (creating EFSI), and the ECB embarked on quantitative easing (QE) in practice. In one year it became clear that, while useful and necessary, these actions do not add up to a full solution either separately or in combination. Nevertheless, there seems to be no end to further

proxies, whether we speak about Capital Market Union (CMU) or competitiveness councils.

In discussions on Eurozone fiscal capacity, experts speak about three possible models of automatic stabilisers. They have different implications in terms of the frequency of transfers, the definition of final beneficiaries, the need for harmonization and governance, as well as the sourcing of the model.

Some experts have explored the possibility of automatic income support for situations of major economic downturns, defined on the basis of the "output gap".

Most likely, such a solution would be in conformity with the current Treaty, but it also has disadvantages. The output gap is a concept too abstract for many people, and when it is calculated, it is often corrected ex post, which risks leading to perverse outcomes. In addition, it entirely lacks a social focus (i.e. it is not certain at all that the beneficiaries of such transfers would be the more vulnerable victims of economic crises).

Reinsurance of national unemployment insurance funds is another possibility. The national

> ABOUT

László Andor is a Senior Fellow at the Hertie School of Governance (Berlin), a Visiting Professor at ULB (Brussels), and head of the Department of Economic Policy at Corvinus University (Budapest). He was EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion in the Barroso II Commission (2010-14). From 2005 until 2010, he was a Member of the Board of Directors of the EBRD (London), representing the Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary and Slovakia.



capacity of dealing with cyclical unemployment would be supported, but transfers would only be triggered by major crises. Such a scheme would make a stronger and more visible impact at times of crisis, while lacking a role in case of more modest fluctuations. There is a real risk in setting the trigger too high (in terms of rising unemployment above "standard" levels), and thus making the model less effective than potentially possible.

Finally, a partial pooling of unemployment benefit systems would make an economically more advanced solution, by also defining some common minimum standards across countries (in terms of minimum replacement ratio and duration). The minimum would not be a maximum, because member states could top up payments from the common pool and also extend coverage

from their own resources. But the common pool would already have a significant stabilisation effect and it would represent EU solidarity in countries experiencing temporary hardships due to the limitations of their macroeconomic toolbox in the monetary union.

Had such insurance mechanisms existed in the EMU since the times of 1999, the establishment of the single currency, all member states would have been beneficiaries for a shorter or longer period. Countries experiencing a severe recession would have received fiscal transfers amounting to 0.5-1 per cent of their GDP, helping them to a faster recovery and ending up with less poverty and income inequality for which the EU or the euro are blamed today.

► THE EMU AND THE SOCIAL AGENDA

Today the key question alongside

“
STABILISATION
MEANS DEALING
WITH
ASYMMETRIES
AND
CYCLICALITY...
WE NEED
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FISCAL CAPACITY
FOR SHOCK
ABSORPTION.
”

economic stabilisation is how to strengthen the social dimension of the EMU and counter social divergence. Purely by setting standards without also providing support will not be sufficient. Moving towards an actual fiscal capacity therefore is crucial if we want to see change in reality and not only in principle.

Automatic stabilisers offer the solution to counter "asymmetric shocks" and resulting imbalances by having a rule-based and conditional mechanism of temporary fiscal transfers. In a long enough cycle, all member states would be net beneficiaries at some point, and the entire community would benefit from the capacity to support aggregate demand, economic activity, employment and eventually social cohesion in zones of economic downturn.

Read László Andor's article in its entirety on progressivepost.eu

THE NEED FOR A EUROPEAN UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE



> ABOUT

Sebastian Dullien is a professor for International Economics at HTW Berlin – University of Applied Sciences and Senior Policy Fellow at the European Council on Foreign relations. He has published widely on macroeconomic divergences in the euro zone and on the concept of a European Unemployment Insurance.

By Sebastian Dullien

In this issue, former EU Commissioner László Andor has once again made a powerful plea for the introduction of a European unemployment insurance to stabilize the euro as Europe's single currency and to provide the European Union with a fresh social impetus. Yet despite him having pushed the argument now for years (in fact, since his time in the European Commission), the discussion has not moved as quickly as one could have hoped.

The five presidents' report (from 2015) on missing elements of sustainable monetary union in Europe actually has backtracked behind what has been discussed in the four presidents' report (from 2012), giving only a broad mandate to discuss fiscal capacities and a possible European unemployment insurance. This is in stark contrast to the report's discussion of banking and financial markets issues which in many

aspects is extremely detailed.

It is difficult not to conclude that this timidity is due to the still significant resistance in some circles against such proposals.

In some cases, scepticism is easy to understand and should be taken seriously. For example, trade unions in some member countries fear that they would lose their ability to influence social and labour market policies if unemployment protection

would be partly or completely Europeanized. They also fear that introducing a common European basic unemployment insurance might be used as an excuse to cut further national protection for the unemployed. As some elements of the European integration process in the past decade have proven to be neo-liberal in nature and have ended up lowering the unions' influence and arguably social standards, it is

understandable that workers' representatives would like to have some safeguards in place. These safeguards should be provided and should be not overly difficult to implement (e.g. in the form of a tripartite oversight body for a European unemployment insurance).

Some other counter-arguments are less convincing. For example, conservative economists routinely claim that a European unemployment insurance - or even any transfer between euro member states - is not really needed, as there might be better, market-based instruments available. A typical example is the position of the German Council of Economic Advisers ("Sachverständigenrat"). The members have argued that a more perfect banking and capital market union would ren-

der fiscal transfers superfluous.

According to this argument, as the European Banking Union has now centralised oversight and resolution of failing banks, incentives are corrected and bank managers and supervisors will behave more prudently in the future. Housing bubbles as the ones observed in Ireland or Spain in the past decade should then be a matter of the past as first, banks would not extend loans to questionable borrowers, and second, supervisors would no longer look away.

Moreover, once an economy is hit by a negative shock and its banks get into trouble, the hope is that capital inflows through a cross-border capital market can substitute for the lack of fresh bank loans. Prolonged downturns in which a recession damages

banks' balances and banks' following reluctance to lend deepens the recession should then be ruled out. Hence with a more perfect banking and capital markets union, divergence in the Euro-area as we have observed in the run-up to the crises since 2008 would be something of the past.

Upon closer examination, however, these arguments are questionable on at least a few grounds: First, while of course a more coherent oversight structure will help to make a banking system more stable.

"it is naïve to believe that better regulations and oversight would perfectly prevent bubbles and banking crises."

Bubbles and banking crises are not a phenomenon of modern times with governments ready to bail-out, but have existed long before market participants could rationally count on a bail-out. If one allows for the notion that bankers not just took risks because they hoped for public money, but just might have been collectively wrong about the outlook in the housing market or the economy as a whole, just regulating banks better and integrating capital markets more is not a solution to regional boom-and-bust cycles in the euro-zone.

The idea that capital markets could provide the funds necessary to sustain investment in a deep downturn when banks are defunct is questionable: We have seen in the last crisis that a macroeconomic shock can be so large that it puts the solvency of governments into question. A default of a government would

lead to further defaults in the economy in question. It is very difficult to imagine why capital markets should extend the provision of funds at decent rates in such a period.

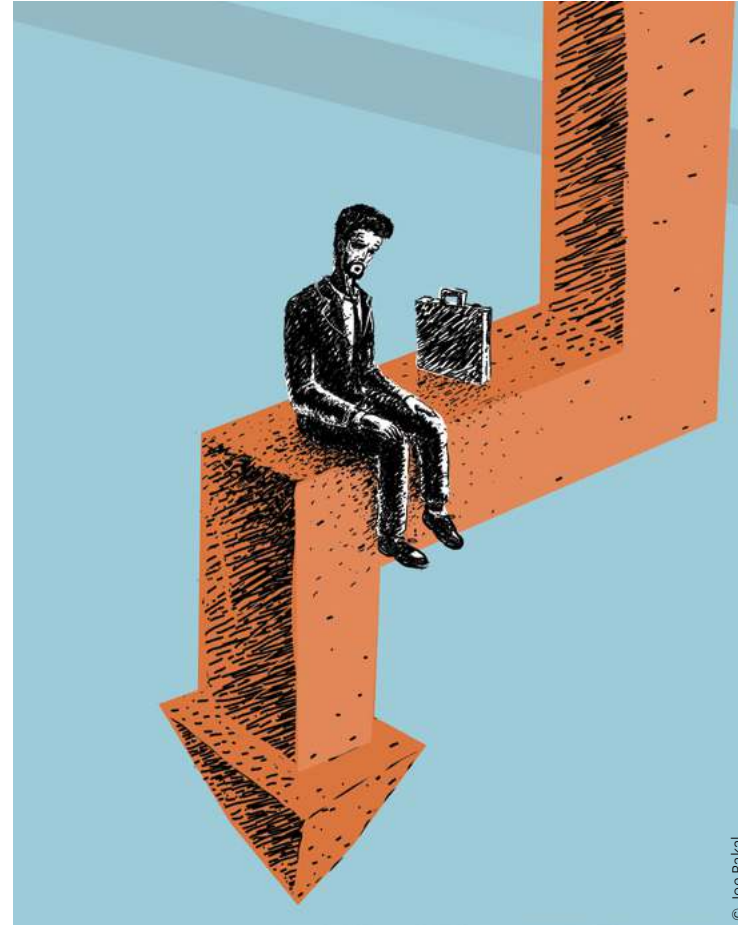
This comes to the final problem with this argument: Economists hoping for stabilization through banking union and capital markets union assume that giving financial markets a larger role in macroeconomic shock absorption will make the economy run more smoothly. This stands in complete contrasts to the experience of the past 40 years:

Deregulating international capital flows and financial markets and assigning them a larger role for example

in the steering of the economy for example in the form of capital-backed pensions or shareholder value capitalism has led to more volatility and deeper crisis. The crisis not only in Spain and Ireland, but also in the United States, as in 2008-2009 it was mainly induced by private investors. Believing that capital markets will work differently next time can only be based on a blind faith in efficient markets and a denial of all empirical evidence to the contrary.

Hence, even with a finalized single capital market and perfect banking union, the case for cross-border transfers for both macroeconomic stabilization and social reasons remains. The European unemployment insurance is a very good way to put this into practice.

 Read Sebastian Dullien's article in its entirety on progressivepost.eu



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NEXT DEMOCRACY

THE INTERNET AND THE SECOND ERA OF DEMOCRACY

by Don Tapscott

The rise of populist movements, most recently of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the US, the decline in youth voting in OECD countries, the widespread voter cynicism about scandals from Italy to the UK, all reflect a growing crisis of legitimacy of our democratic institutions. Not since the dawn of universal suffrage in the established democracies have voters been more angry at their governors. Nor have so many citizens in so many countries acted on the bumper sticker exhortation: “Don’t Vote! It Only Encourages Them!”

In his 1863 Gettysburg Address, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln asserted, “government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the Earth.” It may not have perished, but it is certainly becoming hard to find. Politicians are increasingly beholden to wealthy contributors and interest groups.

The health-care insurance industry thwarted the United States from joining the rest of the developed world with single payer health care system. Fully 92% of Americans want background checks of people buying guns, but the “will of the people” cannot be realized because NRA’s clout prevents that happening. The American political sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset

wrote that legitimacy is “the capacity of a political system to engender and maintain the belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate and proper ones for the society.”

The ongoing abuse of trust by office holders is not simply a series of isolated incidents, but manifestations of a deep and widespread rot. The result is a

full-blown crisis in legitimacy. We need more than changes to politics. It’s time to reinvent democracy itself and ICT holds the key.

The first era of democracy created representative institutions, but with weak mandates, passive citizens and politicians beholden to powerful funders and special interests. Call it “broadcast democracy.” It was only a matter

of time before such a model ran its course. We need to replace this old model with a new era of “participatory democracy” built around the Internet and four principles.

1. ACCOUNTABILITY to the electorate. We need to divorce politicians from relying on big money. In the US, citizens thought they had a system that limited big donations, but their right-wing Supreme Court clearly became alarmed at the possibility of wealthy donors not being able to influence elections. In the notorious Citizens United case, the court effectively lifted the limits on political donations, and a casino magnate promptly pledged \$100 million to fight Obama’s re-election. Stanford Law Professor Larry Lessig is right that we need to adopt the policies of other countries that place strict controls on campaign financing. And with the rise of blockchain technologies politicians can come to power with smart contracts that ensure they are accountable.

2. INTERDEPENDENCE Elected officials need to recognize that the public, private sector and civil society all have a role to play in sustaining a healthy society. As Jeffrey Sachs has argued there is a price to civilization and we need strong, good government. When politicians say the best role of government is “to get out of the way,” they are shirking their responsibilities. Strong regulations

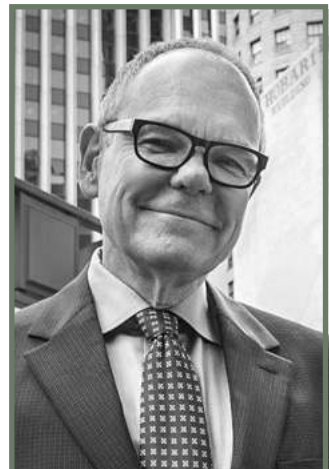
saved Canadian banks from being sucked into the US sub-prime mortgage crisis. The banks and Canada are healthier because of this. Similarly corporations and NGOs are becoming pillars of society and we all need new ways of collaborating on shared interests in based, multi-stakeholder Global Solution Networks.

3. ENGAGEMENT with citizens. We need ongoing mechanisms for government to benefit from the wisdom and insight that a nation can collectively offer. Using the Net, citizens can become involved, learn from each other, take responsibility for their communities and country, learn from and influence elected officials and vice versa. It is not possible to have a say, 3 day “digital brainstorm” with the entire electorate of a country. Challenges, participatory budgeting, electronic town halls, have all proven effective in turning voters into participants in democracy.

4. TRANSPARENCY Technology ensures that almost everything can be done in the full light of day. Sunshine is the best disinfectant, and the Internet is the perfect vehicle to achieve this. Transparency is critical to trust. The question “What are they hiding?” encapsulates the relationship between transparency and trust. It implies that if government leaders hold secrets, they do so for a nefarious reason and therefore are un-deserving of

trust. Citizens know that the fewer secrets leaders keep, the more likely they will be trusted. Transparency, even radical transparency is becoming central to building trust between stakeholders and their institutions.

To restore legitimacy and trust we need a second era of democracy based on accountability, and with stronger, more open institutions, active citizen citizenship and a culture of public discourse and participation.



> ABOUT

Don Tapscott is one of the world’s leading authorities on the impact of technology on business and society. Ranked the 4th most influential management thinker in 2015 by Thinkers50. His next book, co-authored with startup CEO and bitcoin governance expert Alex Tapscott, is *Blockchain Revolution: How the Technology behind bitcoin is changing Money, Business, and the World* comes out on the 10th of May.



THE REALITIES OF DIGITAL DEMOCRACY

by Kenneth L. Hacker

Freed from illusions about Twitter or Facebook revolutions, a scientific view of digital democracy exposes where the possibilities and limitations of digital communication found. Analysis of historical events such as the so-called "Arab Spring," election campaigns, or social movements, must account for politics before technology and then how the technologies of communication were employed to enact various political goals. It must account for how social media can help democratic reforms in one nation while helping to give birth to terrorists like ISIL in another. A consistent finding in communication research is that ICT systems perform numerous enablement functions for political

movements or causes. Listing affordances of ICT, which is common practice in studies of presumed digital democracy, is not sufficient to describe or explain the social and political significance of how the affordances are used. Social usage is what explains communication technology effects. The most tangible enablers of digital communication for democracy are a) easier access to political documents and easier dissemination and storage of those documents, b) facilitation of organizing and mobilization efforts by all political groups, and c) readily available means of posting views that can generate interaction about political topics with other citizens. Online communi-

cation makes it easier for citizens to obtain information and contacts that are useful for political actions. One of the greatest challenges in digital democracy research is in sorting out what kinds of political participation are most important for democracy. Chatting for some scholars may be significant while for others it is far less important than voting or debating. Political theory tells us that democracy requires informed participation. We must then ponder how online political communication is informed and how is emotion-driven and fact-free. Digital skills and literacy are important for online communication in general, but online political communication also

requires political literacy. Citizens without political literacy may be more consumers than citizens. Digital democracy must include concerns about community and political knowledge that are part of any democratic form. Self-expression and personalization of online political communication aid the technological side of digital democracy. To these, however, it is necessary to add political knowledge, political literacy, and commitment to community.

Digital democracy follows the path of democracy in general. That is, it comes from people seeking more rights of input into policy-making and governance. It depends of social organizing and such organizing takes advantage of whatever new communication technologies facilitate message distribution, interactivity, and mobilization.

Read Kenneth Hacker's article in its entirety on progressivepost.eu



> ABOUT
Kenneth Hacker co-authored the book *Digital Democracy: Issues of Theory and Practice* and is professor and Department Head of Communication Studies at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico USA.



PERSPECTIVE

Paris, France – Progressive European heads of state and leaders, hosted by President François Hollande at the Palais de l'Élysée on the 12th of March 2016.

PARTY OF EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS LEADERS SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE: RESET EUROPE

by Sergei Stanishev

For those of us who believe in equality and strong social values, the meeting in Paris on 12 March was a Launchpad for our new European project. Nineteen European leaders - Presidents, Prime Ministers, European Commissioners and the European Parliament President Martin Schulz – met on the invitation of the President of France, François Hollande to change the current direction of Europe. In Paris, all my efforts uniting policies across the Party of European Socialists family were rewarded. All our leaders spoke with one voice – investment, growth, social justice, solidarity. We were united around the idea of relaunching the European project

for the better.

For the first time in years, I saw excitement around the table. Excitement about new economic policies that will break with the austerity obsession, excitement about the prospect of a common European budget, about investing trust and means in our European youth.

We have to pursue public investment policies that reactivate our economies, which drive innovation, so that we can help create more, better jobs. We have to bring hope to people after years of mass unemployment, austerity and sacrifices. They need someone that will defend them. We have to fight economic neo-liberalism but also nationalism

and populism, because they are all destroying Europe. We must renew European solidarity, we must work with all progressive forces to make this change happen.

We defend the working classes, which might not be concentrated in the industry sector but needs trade unions and governments that consider them in their decision making like never before.

The political crisis around the refugees or the nationalist responses to the economic crisis in the last few years have put the very idea of Europe in danger. European solidarity is at risk.

Paris can be the beginning of a new European dream, this time with true European integration,

one that is not only limited to markets but where social standards also converge. Paris can be the proof that progressive policies work better for our economies and when they also work for people.

It is our political family – the Party of European Socialists – that will lead Europe in that direction because only we have the vision, the common ground and the political will to make it happen.

Conservatives will not come up with socially fair solutions and populists won't offer any solutions at all. So let's focus all our efforts on the agenda set in Paris. Next meeting of the Party of European Socialists leaders is in Italy.



> ABOUT
Sergei Stanishev is the leader of the Party of European Socialists and S&D Member of the European Parliament. Previously, he was the leader of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) from 2001 until 2014.

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN POLAND PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE



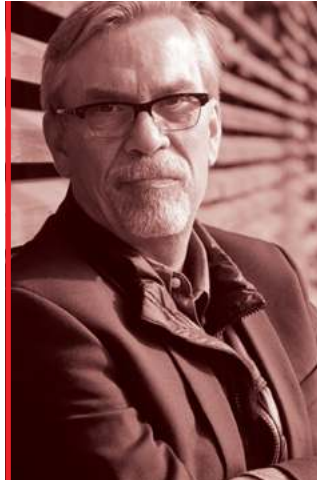
by Jacek Zakowski

Does the Polish Centre-Left have a chance in a state that is governed by PiS? Exclusively and absolutely! If it is to be established. The opportunity is now perhaps greater for the progressives than it has ever been for the last quarter of the century. There is a very simple answer as to why in Poland, the country that is a successful story in terms of transformation, it is the nationalist and populist conservatives with authoritarian inclinations – who grabbed the power. They were in the best position to fit into the vacuum created by the departure of the center-left, which effectively disappeared from the Polish political stage. Once again,

if to claim that in the traditionally Western European sense social democracy existed in the last 30 years. In such circumstances of the 1990s, there was no space for the left politics to grow in Poland those days – as the terms in which politics was conducted was in fact predesigned by the Western creditors. There was however obviously a space for a new left wing party to emerge. This space was quickly inhabited by the actors known from the previous, formally or semantically claimed to have been a leftist system. Diverse left wing groups allying with the pre-war tradition of the democratic left were trying to compete there, but they failed on an unprecedented scale. The reason for their defeat was the fact that they did not have infrastructure,

resources or human power that the post-communist formation had at its disposal. Being in power for the second time in 2001 – 2005, SLD kept its left wing appearance, but in fact started with some of the items that later had been carried by the center-right agenda and gave birth to what is known as the “4th Republic of Poland”. The then established reform lines were then continued by the PO (Civic Platform) and have become drastically driven to extreme by PiS nowadays. In institutional dimension, this trend refers to all changes that empower the executive powers by transfer of prerogatives from the collegial bodies. The change empowers the Prime Ministers transferring to him/her some of the powers that until now the

government possessed collectively, as also empowers Speaker of the House by reserving for him some of the decisions that until now only the Chamber could take jointly. To that end, it also pursues weakening of the so called third and fourth powers. Economically speaking, it translates into diminishing of social rights, curbing social policies, further deregulation of the labour market, transfer of the fiscal burdens from the rich onto the poor. In the international politics, it means eruption of Americanism, xenophobic neo-conservatism and euro-cynicism that means that the EU is seen as a cow to milk, which should, put bluntly, cry very little and demand very little as far as the values, but instead offer a lot of quality milk.



> ABOUT

Jacek Zakowski is a current journalist and head of the journalism department at Collegium Civitas in Warsaw.



■ Krakow, Poland – W, advocating for free media in Poland.

But with that, we can't forget that it was the government led by Leszek Miller in 2001 – 2005, which made Poland engage in the war in Iraq, permitted the secret CIA prisons to be built on Polish soil, introduced low (19%) flat tax for entrepreneurs and self-employed, promoted great flexibility in application of labour code enabling people to enter “trash work agreements” and promoted the idea of change from progressive into a flat tax system altogether. This policy can hardly be described as a left wine one. But an important difference between SLD and the Polish right was its opposition to persecuting people for the lives they had led before 1989, as also defense of those, who committed mistakes in the times of transformation. In

a lesser extent was Prime Minister Miller different to the right in the dimension of the civil liberties. He did not condemn abortion, but also did not do anything substantial for emancipating women and sexual minorities. Neither had he an agenda for very divided, disengaged and inexperienced civil society. This opportunity may be seized, if the SLD apparatus understands that it stands a choice between political death or merger with the authentic, non-post-communist left. It would require its readiness for a union, in which it would share its assets – material and institutional resources. Such an attempt was made ahead of the last elections, but it was not successful – again because the leaders of SLD remain self-centered. They moved

into the second row giving a space to the new faces of the left by far too late – having rather competing within them and not supporting them in reality in the course of the campaign. The departure of Leszek Miller opens the opportunity for the centre-left to get established, however it is not sure if SLD is yet ready for a different path. Much indicates that it may only be possible after yet another defeat – perhaps after the local and regional elections that are to take place in over two years. It is not clear, if the same chance that exists today will also be sizable then. It is quite probable that the current divide on the line left and right will be then replaced by a new divide, which will mark the conflict between democratic conservatism (Nowoczesna

Polska – Modern Poland) and the populist, authoritarian, but compassionate conservatism of PiS. In circumstances of such a polarization, there may be no vacuum to claim for the centre-left. Even if the more radical left will continue scoring at the same time. This may be to the benefit of RAZEM – which nowadays attracts those voters, who think left and those, who are simply dissatisfied with the Polish capitalism model as implemented since the grand transformation.

Read the entirety of Jacek Zakowski's article on progressivepost.eu

INQUIRY



WARSAW, POLAND – Polish democracy activists demonstrate against the governing party.

WHY GOOD ADVICE DOES NOT GO DOWN WELL IN WARSAW

by Michael Laczynski

Those hoping the national conservative government in Warsaw would take well-intentioned advice from outsiders and lift the blockade on the Polish Constitutional Tribunal were in for a big surprise. On invitation by Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski, the Council of Europe's Venice Commission started reviewing the reforms of the Polish judiciary in December and published their final evaluation on March 11. The international legal experts' verdict for Warsaw could not have been more devastating. The measures, pushed through since last autumn by Prime Minister Beata Szydło, with the help of President Andrzej Duda, are a threat to Poland's democracy and constitution. However, this equivalent of receiving an "unsatisfactory" in an EU performance evaluation was merely noted with a shrug. The Venice Commission's report was presented to the parliament

in which the Law and Justice Party (PiS) holds the majority. That Europe may have a slightly different view on "good change", which is being administered on Poland's citizen's by PiS Chairman Jarosław Kaczyński since their landslide election victory in the autumn of 2015, was soon clear to those in charge. Already at the European Parliament Strasbourg Plenary in January, Szydło was not going to commit herself to implementing the recommendations of the European Council. In a nutshell, the strategy of the PiS government is as follows: advice from abroad will only be accepted if it proves Warsaw right. If not, then the advisors are a) wrongly informed, b) in a conspiracy with the outgoing center-right liberal Civic Platform (PO), or c) on the payroll of those forces wanting to turn Poland into a German-Russian condominium, trying to hinder Poland from becoming a major European superpower.

So what to do with an important member of the European Union, whose government seems to prefer withdrawing into a parallel universe?

Given recent events, it is very tempting to communicate with the decision makers in Warsaw from the vantage point of moral superiority and to emphasize that Poland is obligated to comply with democratic and constitutional standards due to its membership in the European Union. This approach is problematic for at least

three reasons. Firstly, because no government is pleased when it is being prevented from implementing its plans. Secondly, because the EU's Central and Eastern European member states are particularly sensitive to real or perceived condescension from the West. And thirdly, because in a Union with 28 member states, the EU coordinate systems, like it or not, may never agree one hundred percent. From the point of view of the founding members of the European Union, the European integration project is not only about overcoming national egotism and creating interdependences, it is also about the prevention of strong states plunging the continent into disaster like Germany did in 1914 and 1939. As a response to the horrors of the First and Second World War the basic tenet here is absolutely logical. The only problem is that Poland—or rather its current government—drew a different conclusion from the lessons learned by the bloody wars of the 20th century. And this would be: Whenever the Polish state was too weak it was invaded by its neighbors. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that Poland is as strong as possible so it can defend itself against hostile neighbors. Until now, there was a common understanding that strength could only be achieved in conjunction with Europe's core countries (this being the EU west of the Oder-Neisse line). Instead, the ideologists of "Law and Justice" dream of regional partnerships between the Baltic and the Black Seas and are distrustful of Brussels.

Does this mean that Poland has now become impervious to advice?

Certainly not. However, it is important to apply the lever where it is most effective: on the security issue. Ever since the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, Warsaw has been in a state of alarm. Even for the biggest Eurosceptics in the ruling party it should be clear that Poland needs the EU to be able to stand up to Moscow. The same holds true for the "hard" military security, which NATO and the United States are responsible for. As disappointing as it may be from a European perspective, the PiS government can ignore Venice Commission's recommendations without having to fear a huge loss of prestige at home. If the recommendations had been dispatched from Washington instead of Venice, Szydło and Kaczyński would have had some explaining to do to their voters.



> ABOUT

Michael Laczynski is a foreign policy expert and the EU correspondent for the Austrian daily newspaper Die Presse in Brussels.

HISTORY



I Zakany, Hungary - October 5, 2015: War refugees at Zakany Railway Station.

THE REFUGEE CRISIS AND THE “UNHOLY ALLIANCE” OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP

by Attila Ágh

The refugee crisis has generated a big tension in the Visegrad Four countries, partly due to the “incomplete structures” of the Schengen Area. In their Janus-faced process they have felt neglected in the post-global crisis management of the EU. At the same time they have made an authoritarian turn, in which, resistance to EU management of refugee crisis has received public support from the disillusioned population.



> ABOUT

Attila Ágh is a Professor at Corvinus University of Budapest. Previously, he was the Director of the Hungarian Institute for International Relations and dealt extensively with the theory and practice of foreign affairs and policy planning. Between 1990 and 2002 he was the head of the Political Science Department at the Budapest University of Economics and the director of the Hungarian Centre for Democracy Studies.

The refugee crisis has brutally unveiled the weaknesses of the EU in the Schengen Area. As Daniel Gros (2016) has pointed out, “like the Eurozone, the Schengen Area is an incomplete structure”, without full institutional architecture. In the present crisis, these “incomplete structures” with half-made transnational institutions have impacted the EU very negatively, especially the Visegrad Four (V4 states). Due to the “incomplete” Schengen Area the increasing core-periphery divide has come to the surface through the controversial V4 regional reactions to the refugee crisis. In this Janus-faced process, the V4 countries have diverged from mainstream EU developments, with the decline of democracy and the slowing-down of socio-economic development in their respective countries.

On the other side, the V4 populations have felt neglected in the post-global crisis, more and more are losing their belief in a “cohesive Europe”.

Their governments have used and misused the resentment of their populations, encouraged by the extreme tolerance of EU institutions. The diverging position of V4 member states under the impact of the refugee crisis has turned to more regional cohesion in opposing mainstream EU policies. All in all, the relative negligence of the EU in dealing with this specific crisis in the Visegrad region may be counter-productive, since it may create a vicious circle of strengthening the domestic positions of its semi-authoritarian leaders. The basic issue here is the “populist turn” in the V4 countries, in which Poland pioneered in the first Kaczynski era. Similar processes now are evident in Hungary and Slovakia. During the course of the Orbán government, Hungary has become a prime example of a declining democracy and derailed market economy. The new brand name of this negative divergence is “illiberal democracy”, which is beginning to be copied by the new PiS regime in Poland. Here, the original sin of the EU has been failing to stop the offensive of Orbán after 2010. In its permanent confrontation with the EU, the Orbán government has violated EU rules and values – the EU institutions however, have considered these violations as isolated issues, failing to categorize them in its entirety as a “systemic failure”.

The Juncker Commission has been so overwhelmed by crisis management, that implementation of specific measures in the V4, have been delayed time and time again. The new Szydło government has violated EU rules and values

and one can expect more of a permanent delay in the ongoing Polish case. To its surprise, the Juncker Commission has now realized that V4 countries have proved to a liability instead of an asset during the refugee crisis.

The V4 governments have issued apocalyptic warnings of the consequences of allowing Muslims into their countries and threats to host-societies in the areas of security, economics, and cultural identity. As Rupnik explains, these disturbances have been connected with the revival of their national identities. The result is a complex web of cognitive dissonance with many tough contradictions: the V4 populations overwhelmingly support EU-membership and are proud to be Europeans, but many take the benefits of EU membership for granted, accepting constant scapegoating of the EU by national governments, and identifying the EU as the prime enemy of national sovereignty.

These arguments are not meant as an apology for the behaviour of the NMS governments. Certainly not for the Hungarian or Polish governments, just on the contrary. However, in the short presentation of this controversial situation in the V4 region the basic question is why the populist, anti-EU, and semi-authoritarian governments have a popular support at home, and why their support has increased due to the refugee crisis. Simply said, the NMS populations have felt neglected in the post-global crisis and they have developed their own kind of Euroscepticism.


EUROPEAN VALUES ONLY FOR EUROPEANS? EU'S RESPONSIBILITY IN HANDLING THE REFUGEE CRISIS

by Júlia Iván, Senior Legal Officer at the Hungarian Helsinki Committee

The EU must go further in developing a real common European asylum system otherwise the planned relocation and resettlement schemes will fail due to the inherent differences amongst member states when granting protection to refugees.

The EU should decide whether its common values are only applicable for Europeans citizens or if these are universal from which refugees may also benefit through an inclusive asylum policy.

There is the legal obligation to admit refugees to European soil and assess their protection needs in a fair and efficient procedure preventing refugees or rejected asylum seekers' readmission to torture or inhuman treatment. This is non-derogable, non-negotiable, an absolute prohibition resulting from the European Convention on Human Rights, one of the world's most effective human rights protection tool in modern history. An achievement Europe should be proud of and not ashamed to use and respect it.

 Read Júlia Iván's article in its entirety on progressivepost.eu

ESSAY

"WE ARE SLEEPWALKERS" EUROPE AND THE REFUGEE CRISIS

by Gesine Schwan

We are Sleepwalkers

According to the acclaimed historian Christopher Clark, the First World War was not provoked on purpose, rather it erupted as a result of the somnambulist interaction between diplomats and politicians, who neither had the political instinct nor the historical vision to foresee the disaster they were about to cause.

If we do not soon find a durable European solution for the current refugee crisis, future generations may also accuse us of recklessly destroying the European Union by sleepwalking and ignoring the opportunities at hand for saving it.

What options do we have in the current political crisis?

We should strive for a constructive and solid European solution such as the strategy proposed by the Portuguese EU parliamentarian and "mother of the Lisbon Strategy" Maria João Rodrigues by

replacing the Dublin Convention and Europeanizing the refugee issue. With courage and determination, we make the border in the Aegean Sea (as is already the case front of Southern Italy and Spain) a European border. Then, with personnel and technology, we coordinate the efforts with European money and register the refugees as EU refugees. Instead of Dublin Convention, which, due to geographic reasons, unfairly distributed the burden on Germany, we offer those European countries willing to receive refugees (also a coalition of the willing!) financial support from the EU for the necessary infrastructure. Through public investments for the benefit of the refugees, we can create a stimulus for growth, like the one Germany had in 2015 (0.2% of the German economic growth in 2015 was due to refugees). At the same time, we contribute to the reduction of unemployment in

these countries, which then makes it more attractive for refugees to go there. Portugal has already offered their assistance in this regard. This third option transforms the refugee crisis into an opportunity for growth and cohesion in Europe.

What options do we have in the current political crisis?

In the following three options, drastic measures to financially strengthen the refugee camps in countries neighboring Syria are necessary to create a more bearable and future-oriented situation for refugees. This includes intensive diplomacy to end the war in Syria and, of course, the often cited "elimination of causes" of the crisis. This, however, must go beyond Syria and will remain a task in the decades to come.

In the current crisis, we have the following three options:

1. We quickly succeed in sealing the borders between Turkey and Greece so tightly that refugee cannot make their way into Europe from the southeast. This would require a dependable and decisive commitment by the Turkish government to contribute to a "watertight" – yet legally highly questionable – shutdown. Measures to achieve this must include the ability of the Turkish and Greek Navy, NATO, and Frontex to cooperate without creating a humanitarian drama that would be incompatible with the EU's understanding of values and would strike at the very core of its authority and self-image. The implementation of this option is unlikely.

2. Should they not succeed, European states beyond the Visegrad Group could close their borders (including Germany's).

However, this would destabilize the Balkans, because refugees would find other ways into Europe, and, under the double burden of social crisis and refugee crisis, Greece would become a failed state. An open south-eastern flank of the European Union would encourage immigration chaos – the disintegration of the EU would ensue.

3. We strive for a constructive and solid European solution such as the strategy proposed by the Portuguese EU parliamentarian and "mother of the Lisbon Strategy" Maria João Rodrigues by replacing the Dublin Convention and Europeanizing the refugee issue. With courage and determination, we make the border in the Aegean Sea (as is already the case front of Southern Italy and Spain) a European border. Then, with personnel and technology,

we coordinate the efforts with European money and register the refugees as EU refugees. Instead of Dublin Convention, which, due to geographic reasons, unfairly distributed the burden on Germany, we offer those European countries willing to receive refugees (also a coalition of the willing!) financial support from the EU for the necessary infrastructure. Through public investments for the benefit of the refugees, we can create a stimulus for growth, like the one Germany had in 2015 (0.2% of the German economic growth in 2015 was due to refugees). At the same time, we contribute to the reduction of unemployment in these countries, which then makes it more attractive for refugees to go there. Portugal has already offered their assistance in this regard. This third option transforms the refugee crisis into an opportunity for growth and cohesion in Europe.

Who should pay the costs?

Planned military operations at the European borders (Italy could be a central issue again!), economic costs and losses due to the closure of the inner European borders, and the payments we are, for example, offering Turkey do not come at zero cost. Why not invest a greater part of these funds in the constructive development of the EU itself? This would make us stronger and more independent of the political and militarily highly problematic decisions of President Erdoğan. Above all, it would prevent the disintegration of the European Union.

Of course, more funding is necessary. At a time when investors are desperately looking for secure investments, even in at a time of negative interest rates, why not issue European infrastructure bonds? These could be paid off with tax revenues as the economies recover.



I Budapest, Hungary Refugees rounded together at Budapest Keleti railway station.



> ABOUT

Gesine Schwan is President of the Humboldt-Viadrina Governance Platform. She is the former president of Viadrina European University, a German political science professor, and member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany. The party has nominated her twice as a candidate for the federal presidential elections.

MIGRANT CRISIS: IN NEED OF SOLIDARITY

by Thomas Zwiefelhofer

For many months, a humanitarian disaster of enormous proportions has been taking place: millions of people are fleeing from Middle Eastern and Arab countries to Europe, many from war zones like Syria, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

The deadly dimension of the catastrophic situation can be seen especially in the Mediterranean Sea. The flow of refugees across the Mediterranean has increased dramatically in recent years. Smuggling rings send desperate people on life-threatening journeys on overflowing boats that are not always seaworthy - and not seldom, these journeys end in death. Apart from the Mediterranean, the refugee and migration flows have also increased dramatically on the Balkan route, which has meanwhile been closed. Over the past weeks and months, the situation has spun almost completely out of control. 30 years after the signing of the Schengen Agreement to create an area where freedom, security, and the rule of law prevail - and thus a Europe without borders - the continent is now facing one of its greatest challenges of the last decades.

These flows of refugees should not be the problem solely of those countries that are directly affected. Solidarity is essential.

The European Commission presented a European Agenda on Migration in May 2015. This agenda suggests an action plan against smuggling networks as well as a mechanism for the relocation and resettlement of asylum-seekers and refugees. The redistribution of approximately 160,000 refugees is an emergency measure that was adopted outside the legal framework of Schengen. The debate about the distribution of refugees has turned into a veritable test of the stability of the European Union. There is unfortunately little evidence of European unity, and the treatment of refugees ranges from the open-armed welcome in Germany to barbed wire fences and harsh treatment in some other countries for the purpose of keeping refugees away. And the redistribution

of the 160,000 refugees is progressing only sluggishly. The redistribution of refugees is only the short-term solution to a small part of a much larger problem. Europe has to strive for a common, long-term, and durable asylum policy. Europe is still far from that point. Europe must also strengthen its assistance on site in the crisis countries and refugee camps and act jointly against smuggling networks. Cooperation with Turkey is of the utmost importance in this regard. The actual causes of the refugee disaster must be solved outside of Europe. As long as attempts to stabilize the situation in the crisis countries are unsuccessful, the refugee crisis will get worse. I was particularly touched by the response of a Syrian child to the question of a journalist about what should be done now: "Just stop the war."

I would now like to focus on the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Liechtenstein is not a member of the European Union, but linked to the EU through the Agreement on the European Economic Area. Liechtenstein has a long humanitarian tradition and contributes to the extent possible. In the spirit of its humanitarian tradition and as a sign of pan-European solidarity, but also in the interest of a smoothly functioning Dublin System on which it depends, Liechtenstein has declared its willingness to participate voluntarily in the resettlement program as well as in the two relocation programs. In connection with the refugee crisis, Europe is facing further challenges that can likewise only be solved through solidarity. These challenges include the integration of refugees, the social and political shifts to the right, and the threat of terrorism. The coming weeks and months will show if and how Europe will be able to handle the refugee crisis and if the current European structures function well enough. Liechtenstein will involve itself actively in the discussions and will contribute to the process of finding solutions.



> ABOUT

Thomas Zwiefelhofer is the current Deputy Prime Minister of Liechtenstein and Minister of Home Affairs, Justice and Economic Affairs.

THE EU-TURKEY DEAL: IS BRUSSELS FINALLY TAKING CHARGE?

by Jeroen Dewulf

On September 5, 2015 the first train with refugees from Syria arrived at the Munich railway station where large crowds cheered those who had been stuck for days in Hungary. "This," said the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, was a "defining moment for the European Union". The former Prime-Minister of Portugal was right. Europe's future will indeed depend to a large extent on Germany's approach to the migration crisis. Yet it might turn out to be "defining" in a very different form than what Guterres had in mind.

Speaking on the 26th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Donald Tusk confirmed Germany's crucial role in solving the crisis. "Whether Europe survives as a continent of freedom, the rule of law, respect for an individual, and the security of its inhabitants will depend to a great extent on Germany," the EU Council President said, while

pleading in the same speech for a "modification" of the current migration policy, because "Europe is not able to accept all the people willing to come."

At a time when Europe's much-praised values seem to be sinking into the mud of the Idomeni refugee camp at Greek-Macedonian border, Tusk's words might sound hollow, but his decision to

link Germany's future role within the EU to the question of how Europe will manage to rescue its values while modifying its migration policy is understandable. Neither France, Great Britain nor any other EU member-state is able or willing to assume European leadership at the current moment.

The "European values" that Tusk referred to in his speech are in many ways similar to "German values" in the sense that both developed out of the ruins of the Second World War. When seeing the trains with refugees arriving in Munich, one could not help but remembering other trains that had once left German railway stations in the opposite direction, carrying Jews to the death camps. The heartwarming German welcome to refugees can, in fact, hardly be understood without reference to the deep feeling of shame over the nation's responsibility for the largest mass murder in modern history.



I Berlin, Germany - Refugees in Germany waiting for registration in front of a governmental building.

In many other EU member-states, however, solidarity with the victims of Nazi aggression did not define itself on the basis of shame but rather of shared victimhood. While all member-states technically embrace the same European values, the one thing the refugee crisis made bluntly apparent is that there are profound differences in the way these values are interpreted. Due to its tragic history, post-war Germany has developed an approach to migration, nationalism and freedom that is not necessarily shared by all member-states. It should, as such, not be surprising that Angela Merkel's decision to unilaterally suspend the Dublin Regulation in the assumption that consensus can be ignored whenever core European values are at stake led to irritation.

At a time when German leadership was most needed, the country seemed to have maneu-

vered itself into an isolated position with its Willkommenskultur. The first crucial decision to modify Europe's migration policy was, in fact, not taken in Brussels or Berlin but in Vienna. In good old Habsburg style, the Austrian government managed to create a platform for negotiation with Eastern European and Balkan states, which ultimately led to a suspension of Schengen rules and a closure of the Balkan route. The EU-Turkey deal now shifted the leading role in handling the crisis back to Brussels and Berlin. It is no exaggeration to claim that Germany's future role in the EU depends on the success of the deal. It has often been said that the EU always came stronger out of its crises. If the deal with Turkey succeeds in bringing the refugee crisis under control, both Merkel's position and that of the EU Commission will be strengthened. This would give a boost to further European integration, since "more

Europe" proved to be detrimental in finding a solution. Critics might argue, however, that ever since the humiliating defeats in the 2005 French and Dutch referenda on the European constitution, the very idea of building a European Union has been in crisis. If the EU-Turkey deal fails to bring a solution, these voices will grow stronger, as will the pressure on Merkel. A new, post-Merkel leadership in Germany is likely to be more pragmatic in defending its own interests. This would foster a tendency within the EU to evolve towards a confederacy of states rather than a federal state. It might even be that if David Cameron survives the EU referendum a new London-Berlin axis will come to replace the traditional Paris-Berlin connection. Not all German politicians would deplore such a shift, not the least those from the state that in September 2015 welcomed the first refugees from Syria.



> ABOUT
Jeroen Dewulf is the Director of the Institute of European Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. As the incumbent of the Queen Beatrix Chair, he is also the director of the Dutch Studies Program and associate professor in the Department of German at UC Berkeley.

“WHETHER EUROPE SURVIVES AS A CONTINENT OF FREEDOM, THE RULE OF LAW, RESPECT FOR AN INDIVIDUAL, AND THE SECURITY OF ITS INHABITANTS WILL DEPEND TO A GREAT EXTENT ON GERMANY.”



GERMANY AND THE EU: OVERCOMING CRISES



by Jakob von Weizsäcker

Europe is currently confronted with three major crises: the Euro crisis, the refugee crisis and a security crisis. But somehow, Europe seems to be unable to confront any of these in a satisfactory manner. This is not for the want of trying, as witnessed by recent and rather frequent all-night EU summits. The EU's failure to deal comprehensively with the problems at hand might now even lead to one major member state to leave. Jean Monnet famously predicted that "Europe will be forged in crisis and will be the sum of solutions adopted for these crises". Today, one worries that the crises might be destroying Europe instead of inspiring us to make Europe better and stronger. Did Monnet simply get it wrong?

Implicit in Monnet's statement

is one important insight into European collective decision-making: moving significantly beyond the status quo in normal times is close to impossible due to entrenched special interests of individual members states in combination with the unanimity requirement for any fundamental reform. In times of crisis, by contrast, increased uncertainty coupled with a greater sense of urgency can make it easier to find common solutions and to create a political consensus around them. Yet, while crises may be a necessary condition to move Europe forward, they clearly are not a sufficient condition. In recent years, jointly staring into abyss at regular intervals during EU summits has produced a string of ad-hoc and short term solutions and arguably, only one major strategic and long-term achievement so far: the banking union. This is

because the bold, strategic and long-term solutions for Europe do not tend to emerge spontaneously and naturally during all night-meetings. Instead, they need to be carefully yet flexibly planned by actors with the ability and clout to move the agenda forward. In this context, I would like to make three observations: First, Germany bears particular responsibility to engage in such strategic planning. It is currently the largest EU member state with a relatively stable economic and political situation. Of course, for historical reasons, assuming such responsibility is a delicate matter for any German government; Chancellor Merkel specifically, due to character or for want of a suitable French counterpart, appears sometimes to have had greater difficulty in fulfilling this responsibility than some of her predecessors.

This leads to the second observation: any German attempt to bear this responsibility alone is deeply misguided. This is even true in the refugee crisis where Germany offered to do much more than its fair share. Doing so unilaterally and without proper consultations with its European partners got us off to a bad start. The notion then of Germany's coming of age in the present crises as a "reluctant hegemon" is profoundly flawed for several reasons. It grossly overestimates Germany's true demographic and economic weight in the Union, while underestimating the enormous historical sensitivities both inside and outside Germany. And, this leads to what lies at the heart of my third observation: the lack of a credible and constructive outside option in any European negotiation. In the parlance of game theory, the outside option is what happens if no agreement is reached. The idea of moving Europe forward with the outside option – others would say threat – of non-Europe was a mistake. Expecting member states to embrace a forward looking strategy under the threat of the Euro or Schengen failing altogether, or of being thrown out, is not necessarily conducive to building a better and stronger Europe.



> ABOUT
Jakob von Weizsäcker was elected to the European Parliament in 2014 as a Social Democrat and is a member of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Delegation for Relations with India. Previously, he worked at the Thuringian Ministry for Economic Affairs, Bruegel, the World Bank, and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs in Berlin.

RE-THINKING EUROPE AFTER AUSTERITY

By Gianni Pittella



> ABOUT

Gianni Pittella is an Italian politician from Basilicata, Member of the European Parliament since 1999. He is the president of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D).

In the past 5 years, the European Union has been flustered by three major crises that have undermined the foundations of the European structure: terrorism, refugees, and the sovereign debt crisis.

The latter crisis unrolled between 2009 and 2015 and played a central role in the process of European integration, as it unveiled the structural weaknesses of the economic governance developed at Maastricht. Jurgen Habermas referred to it as a “crooked tree”: on the one side lays a monetary policy that is highly centralized around the European Central Bank, and on the other side lays a budgetary policy based on a

system of self-discipline between Member States.

While the monetary policy seems to have contributed to correcting the crisis, the system of self-discipline in the budgetary policy rooted in the “Pact of Stability and Growth” has only favoured the emergence of uncooperative games between the states located in the centre and the south of the Eurozone. Such lack of cooperation translated itself into the imposition of forced austerity measures that, while sensible in states with traditionally surplus-oriented societies – proved counterproductive in states with a stronger Keynesian tradition. Many southern European states were therefore asked to implement structural adjustments in just a few years, where such implementation would have naturally require decades. The

most striking illustration is Greece, where an attempt was made to impose strict policies that proved detrimental to growth, especially for the Hellenic society.

The Greek tragedy and the unsustainable situation of many European economies and societies shed new light on the malfunctioning of austerity. In this respect, the 2014 European legislation marks a break with the past: the new and flexible interpretation of the rules of the “Pact of Stability”, the investment plan, and the new fiscal policy of the commission clearly indicate that the time of austerity is over. But this is not enough. A move forward is necessary. The original sin has been identified – the “crooked tree” of Maastricht – simply, the asymmetry between a centralized monetary policy and a decentralized budgetary policy.

Until now, this problem was targeted by overburdening the ECB with responsibility, which led it to develop new unconventional instruments of monetary policy, such as quantitative easing.

However, the ECB cannot (and should not) be identified as a cure-all for two reasons. The first is technical in nature: the monetary policy has limits and it eventually becomes ineffective. The second is political: the ECB is a technical institution as opposed to a political one and monetary policy requires political piloting. Therefore, what is needed today in order to correct the “crooked tree” of Maastricht is an effort at the European level, something the experts would call “capacity balance”. In other words, we need a political instrument able to sustain both investment and demand in Europe. Various

hypotheses are on the table. One could, for example, focus on the reinforcement of the European Fund for Strategic Investments, which could enhance its potential by relying on the European Stability Mechanism (ESM). This new instrument could be managed by a Ministry of the Economy of the Union, the establishment of which has been supported by numerous authoritative representatives. To me, this seems to be the only answer to avoid witnessing a disintegration of the European tableau, or a confused re-nationalization of budgetary policies. The Paris summit of last March represented the first important moment of reflection on these themes for the European socialist and progressive family – these need to be at the forefront in the battle for institutional change in Europe.



Thessaloniki, Greece – Protestors expressing their desire to stay in a united Europe, around the White Tower in Thessaloniki.

ESSAY

MYTH & GRIM REALITY: AUSTERITY AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN EUROPE

by John Weeks

The Austerity Doctrine

Barely two months into 2016 talk of “Grexit” returns, the ECB searches its ineffective options to counter deflation, and most euro zone countries flounder in economic stagnation. All this is sadly familiar. When the first Greek debt crisis began policy makers in Brussels, with strong support from the German government, set forth an economic strategy focusing on expenditure reduction, quickly labelled “austerity”. The narrative justifying this doctrine for a parsimonious public sector finds its antecedents among the pre-Keynesian economists of the early 20th century. The narrative maintains

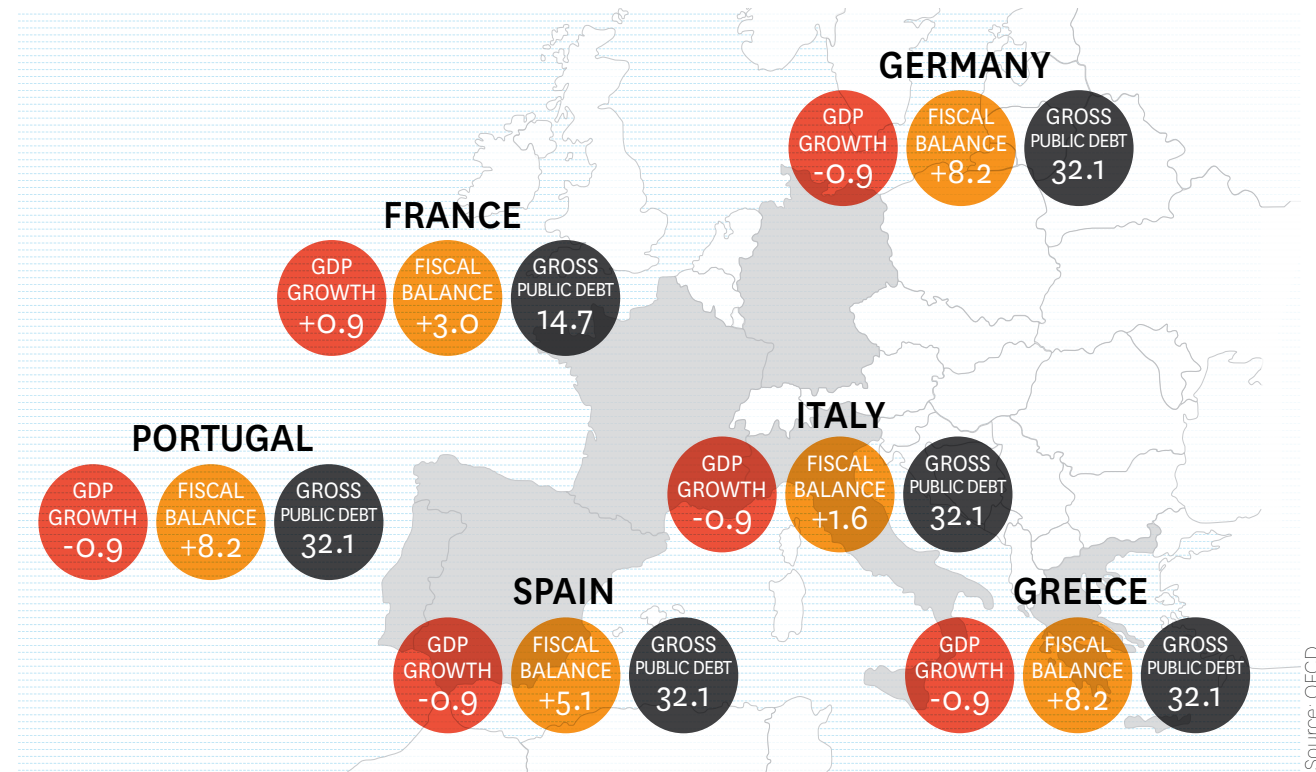
that the private economy adjusts itself to full employment. Market regulations and policy mistakes by governments prevent that automatic adjustment. The Maastricht Treaty was designed with guidelines to curtail this alleged tendency to mismanagement by governments. These guidelines set specific maximum or minimum targets for the public budget balance, public debt and inflation. The targets, the “Maastricht Criteria”, guide the economic policies of the European Commission: not more than minus 3% of GDP for the overall deficit and a maximum 60% for the gross debt to GDP.

I Sam ISLAND - Sam Island is a Toronto-based illustrator. He studied illustration at Sheridan College in Oakville and has been working as a commercial artist since 2012. His work has been awarded by American Illustration. His clients include The New York Times, The New Yorker, Time, The Canadian Museum for Human Rights, The Atlantic and The Walrus.



SIX EURO ZONE COUNTRIES:

GDP GROWTH, **CHANGE IN FISCAL BALANCE** AND **PUBLIC DEBT**
2010 - 2015



Notes: Fiscal balance is the “overall” balance. Gross public debt uses the Maastricht measure.

The somewhat more complicated inflation guideline quickly lost relevance when the euro zone descended into deflation. Interpreted as inflexible imperatives, as they are now by European commission, the criteria become undemocratic constraints on elected leaders. They restrict the application of rational fiscal policy in response to changing economic conditions. The Criteria should not be narrowly interpreted as constraints on “national sovereignty”.

The Austerity Outcome

The austerity doctrine promised economy recovery through a constraining fiscal regime that would reduce fiscal deficits and lower public debt overhang. The deficits themselves allegedly discouraged private investment by the public borrowing disrupting credit markets. Analogously the public debt overhang undermined both household and business spending because “forward-

looking” economic agents anticipate the increased taxation necessary to service the debt. These arguments have validity only when an economy operates at full employment, an empirically false presumption that is the keystone of the austerity doctrine. Whatever the theory supporting austerity, it has not achieved its expressed goals. The table below shows the outcome of five years of attempting to cut deficits and lower public debt for six euro zone countries. Governments of four

of the countries implemented strict austerity programs under pressure from Brussels (Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain). The GDP growth rate in the first column is a simple average of the six years. The columns for the fiscal balance and public debt report the percentage point change from 2010 to 2015. For example, at the end of 2015 the Greek gross public debt reached 183% of GDP, almost 38 percentage points above its value in 2010 (when it was 126%). Over the same period the

Greek overall fiscal balance as a share of GDP rose by almost 7 percentage points, from -11.2% to -4.3%. Over the six years national product in four of the countries contracted, and in the other two the rate of expansion bordered on stagnation, less than 2% per annum. An annual rate of 2% represents a modest estimate the GDP growth required in most euro zone to prevent unemployment from rising, because it barely covers productivity growth plus the increase in the labour force. Over the six years and six countries annualized growth rates equalled or exceeded the 2% minimum in only 21 quarters out of 144. Growth rates reach this minimum eight times in 2010 (4 in Germany), seven times in 2011 (again, 4 in Germany), not once in 2012 or 2013, twice in 2014 (France and Germany), and four times in 2015 (Spain). During 2011-2015 the economies of three of the six did not once achieve 2%. Perhaps the most damning statistic for the defenders of austerity is that 60% of the quarters had negative growth rates. The Greek economy suffered the worst collapse, coinciding with the introduction of creditor imposed austerity. Were it not for that economic disaster the performances of all the other economies, including that of Germany, would be recognized for what they are, stagnation unprecedented in Western Europe during the post war years.

In all the six countries the fiscal balance rose (“improved” the austerity ideologues would say). That the two largest increases occurred in the countries with the lowest growth rates is no ac-

cident (Greece and Portugal). This outcome should be expected. Increasing the fiscal balance (reducing a deficit), depresses demand; depressing demand lowers growth. The German economy could show the highest growth rate, modest as it is, by de facto mercantilism – in 2010 the German current external account had a balance of 5.2% of GDP, high by international standards. For 2015 the balance soared to 8.8%, far in excess of China’s 2.7%. Among the countries in the table, Italy came next behind Germany with a meagre-by-comparison 2.2%. Despite increases in fiscal balances, the associated slow economic growth resulted in failure to reduce the gross debt to GDP ratio. The final column shows the percentage point change in this

“**DESPITE INCREASES IN FISCAL BALANCES, THE ASSOCIATED SLOW ECONOMIC GROWTH RESULTED IN FAILURE TO REDUCE THE GROSS DEBT TO GDP RATIO**”

ratio, with the debt measured according to Maastricht rules. Only for Germany does the debt to GDP ratio fall. One should pause before issuing congratulations for German prudence and sound management of public finances. The ratio fell by an extremely modest 10 percentage points after six years. At that rate the German government will not reach the Maastricht 60% target this decade. Therein lies a clear lesson for the other countries, whose debt to GDP ratios rose by 15 to 40 percentage points (France and Portugal, respectively). Deficit reduction via expenditure cuts and tax increases depresses GDP growth. Should the austerity measures eventually generate a positive fiscal balance, at the near-stagnation rate of growth that results from these demand depressing policies the rate of debt reduction makes snails appear speedy.

Legacy of Austerity

Output stagnation, accompanied by its which’s familiar persistent debt overhang, makes clear that the dysfunctional EU austerity cannot be “muddled through”. It requires radical revision, nothing less than the abandonment and/or repeal of decrees and treaties than require governments to pursue pro-cyclical fiscal policy. In the short term Brussels and national governments should interpret the Maastricht rules “flexibility”. A flexible approach characterized pre-2008 policy and should again. As dysfunctional as the rules are in themselves, their dysfunctionality becomes disaster when applied

flexibility during economic expansion then strictly during recession. This is pro-cyclical macroeconomic policy and the reverse approach should be applied. Danger looms large down the austerity road. Anti-integrationist parties claim the support of large parts of the electorates in France and Spain. The new government in Portugal may break with or at least force a confrontation over Commission directives on its budget plans. In Italy the prime minister, once strongly supportive of the EU, now threatens public revolt against EC austerity. The growing support for right-wing anti-integrationist parties throughout the European Union calls for a coherent response from progressives in every country. A central plank in the progressive case for the European Union must be abandoning a fiscal policy based on the austerity doctrine. In the longer term the present deficit and debt rules require radical revision.

Read John Week’s article in its entirety on progressivepost.eu



> ABOUT

John Weeks is a Professor Emeritus at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London. He is credited with coining the phrase “quantity theory of competition” and author of *Economics of the 1% (2014)* and *Capital, Exploitation and Economic Crisis (2011)*.

PORTFOLIO

“EU AID IN ACTION: SERBIA”

by Marija Jankovic

truction effort, 1.500 pupils got renovated classrooms, modern interactive learning boards, and a new sport hall. That school is one of 15 schools destroyed in floods and renovated from EU donations worth 1,8 million euros.

Another school in Poljane, a small village near Obrenovac, has recently been built also thanks to the EU funds. It will host up to 30 kids. The Serbian Prime minister, Aleksandar Vucic, who is currently in an electoral campaign, and Michael Davenport, the head of the EU delegation in Serbia, paid an official visit to that elementary school on the 17th of February 2016. Even despite generous grants from the EU, the Serbian government is combating the tough problem of corruption in the country, which has diverted resources away from rebuilding and maintaining infrastructure.

The elementary school “Jovan Jovanovic Zmaj” in Obrenovac, Serbia, was flooded on 19th May 2014, leaving a devastating mess. Water reached a point of 2.5 meters, destroying all floors, books, computers, furniture and other equipment. After the European Union financed a recons-



■ The school re-opened in September 2014, five months after the floods. When asked, students underlined their happiness for the return of normalcy in their lives.

■ New interactive boards installed in different classrooms, were first of their kind in Serbia. The EU has underlined the need to integrate and support modern teaching techniques in the classroom.



■ The renovated school “Jovan Jovanovic Zmaj” in Obrenovac, from the outside.

■ The amount for the reconstruction of the schools in Obrenovac was 860.000 euros, with the total of EU aid to Serbia.



■ Destroyed lockers show the breadth of the changing water levels and the force with which the floods struck the school and city.



> ABOUT

Marija Jankovic is a photographer with a university degree in fine arts and more than 15 years experience working as a photojournalist in the Serbian and international press. During the past few years she worked independently on large photo projects in Serbia and abroad. Some of her artistic projects dealt with collective memories in Serbia ("Glory of the warriors," "War story", "Vojvodina Germans," "Staro Sajmiste – holocaust in Belgrade," "Serbian route of Archibald Reiss") and some with socio-economical topics ("GAK - Days in female hospital," "Bor, copper town," "Kids caught in the process," "Minorities in Serbia").



Obrenovac was one of the most severely hit cities, where more than 50 people in the country died during the floods.

BEYOND EUROPE

THE WORLD NEEDS AN INTEGRATED EUROPE



By Ambassador Eloy Cantú Segovia, Mexican Ambassador to Belgium, Luxemburg and the European Union.

For Mexico, an integrated Europe represents an option. It is the option given by the strength of 28 countries, whose joint political, economic and trading power are unique across the globe. Mexico has long admired the European Union construction process since 1950, when the European Coal and Steel Community united six European countries in order to secure a lasting peace. We recognize and have studied the vision of leaders like Robert Schuman, Jean Monet, Joseph Bech and Winston Churchill, among others, whose convictions of union led the way within the diversity of their history. The European Union is the triumph of politics, where shared values of democracy, peace and solidarity have been the cohesive factor. Throughout the years, we have watched how it has set aside differences and fortified its coincidences.

All that sum of wills are respected and shared by Mexico. Because Mexico is also a multicultural nation. As it is properly recognized in the Mexican Constitution, which in its 2nd article states that Mexico is a multicultural and pluriethnic nation. Dozens of ethnicities with over 60 different indigenous languages synthesize in our great Mexican nation. That is the diversity

that emerges within a united Mexico. And so is the same, that I believe, also bring Mexico nearer to the European Union, the union of the diversity that is what identifies our core.

An Integrated Europe in our opinion is good for Europeans but also good for the rest of the world.

Mexico's relationship with the European Union is long and vibrant. In 1997, we were the first Latin American nation to sign an Economic Partnership, Political Coordination and Cooperation Agreement with the European Union. This, better known, "Global Agreement", which took effect in 2000, was negotiated with a 15 member-state European Union. Many things have happened in the last 15 years. Mexico has changed, our trading partners have broadened (i.e. we recently signed the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement) and the structural reforms (energy, telecommunications, finance, etc.) carried out in the last couple of years have made us more modern, vibrant and a particularly competitive nation. As well, we have updated our institutions to strengthen our democracy and the rule of law.

But also the EU has changed in the last 15

years, 13 new countries have joined; formidable achievements (i.e. working laws, monetary union, etc.) that shape the daily lives of half a billion Europeans have been attained.

Aware of the intensity and dynamism of our relationship, today we are about to embark in the modernization of that 15 year old agreement. Because both parties recognize that our partnership needs to reflect who and where we are now. We are going to mirror the changes in each of the three pillars of the Global Agreement: political dialogue, trade and cooperation. Those pillars need to encompass the needs of today's potential joint market of 650 million people; we need to bring together our economic potentiality but more important our ideals of unity and prosperity.

We have been strategic partners for the last ten years and we know that because of cooperation and joint vision we are working towards a more democratic, egalitarian and sustainable community. We both share the vision of a more prosperous and sustainable world, we have shown in different multilateral fora that working together yields better results.

Therefore, an integrated Europe represents the commitment, solidarity and will to leave a better world for the future generations because the EU comes from a vision of peace, reconciliation and democracy and it is still the most successful example yet in our recent history of peace.

For all the above, to Mexico an integrated Europe represents a strategic partner with whom we share goals, values and interests and, with whom we look forwards to continue working together to the benefit and wellbeing of our societies.



ONE BELT, ONE ROAD INITIATIVE - SYNERGIES WITH THE EU



By H.E. Ambassador Yang Yanyi, Head of the Chinese Mission to the European Union.

Among China's external relationships, one of the most important is that with the EU.

China believes a 28-member EU, the biggest economy in the world with an enormously resilient and creative society, continues to be a global player of great strategic importance and a key part in the evolving international landscape. The EU takes the success of China's development as closely related to the success of the European integration.

Over the past four decades since the establishment of their diplomatic ties, China and the EU have forged strong, dynamic and cooperative partnership which contributed to their respective and regional and global peace and development.

Indeed, both China and the EU are currently facing many challenges. China is undergoing comprehensive reform and restructuring to realize its centennial goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects

by 2020. The EU is confronted with a similar crisis: refugees and migration, bitter aftertaste of the Greek financial crisis, instability in the neighborhood, the risk of a possible "Brexit" and the threat of terrorism in Europe.

While there are no easy answers to any of the challenges and there is no illusion that 2016 will be a simple year, our respective capacity to reinvigorate should not be underestimated.

Now the EU's unemployment figures are improving, GDP is rising at its highest rate for years, the financing conditions of households and companies have recovered significantly.

Equally encouraging, the EU is tackling as a matter of priority the migration crisis and security issues, and pressing ahead with re-creation process of convergence: investing in Europe's sources of jobs and growth, notably in the Single Market; and completing the EU's Economic and Monetary Union to create the conditions for a lasting recovery.

The Chinese economy is performing steadily within a reasonable range and remains a significant driving force of the global economy.

Most importantly, China's new normal is paying off. China's economic structure is improving. Growth in high-tech industries is notably higher than the entire industrial sector.

Consumer demands for information, cultural, health and tourism products are booming. Energy conservation, environmental protection and the green economy are thriving. New eco-

nomic growth areas are rapidly taking shape.

Obviously there is no room for complacency. To strive for strong, sustainable and balanced growth and world peace and stability, the ability of China and the EU to forge stronger partnership and respond collectively to global challenges is vital. Being fully aware of the interdependent nature of our relationship and our convergent interests, the 17th China-EU Summit last June and the 5th High-Level Economic Dialogue last September rolled out blueprints and concrete roadmaps to broaden the scope of the interdependence, interaction and mutually beneficial cooperation between China and the EU. On the immediate horizon, we will continue to strengthen mutual trust and confidence, implement in earnest the China-EU 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation; advance negotiations for a China-EU Investment Agreement, build synergy between the *One Belt One Road* initiative with the EU Investment Plan, promote connectivity, digital economy and cyber security, legal affairs dialogue; and facilitation of people-to-people exchanges.

We will also further enhance strategic communication and coordination with the EU to effectively confront global issues. As the host of this year's G20 Summit, China looks forward to working closely with the EU to build an innovative, invigorated, interconnected and inclusive world economy and make the international order and system more just and equitable. Given the size of China-EU trade and their closer ties, there bound to be trade frictions. The important thing is that both China and the EU are committed to keeping their long-term fundamental interest in mind and handling differences and trade frictions in a discreet and nonintrusive manner through dialogue and consultation and work out mutually agreed and beneficial solutions. As we move into a new decade of China-EU diplomatic relations, we see a brighter future for China-EU relationship. As the two great forces for peace, two huge markets and two great civilizations, China and the EU can do more and will do much better to bring their relationship to greater heights and realize their shared aspiration for world peace, stability, development and prosperity.



CARTOON



REFUGEES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Oliver
SCHOPF

© SCHOPF

Oliver Schopf is an Austrian cartoonist, who has worked for many national and international newspapers, magazines and satirical magazines (Der Standard, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Nebelspalter, Tagesanzeiger, Courier International, etc.).

TO WATCH

FUOCOAMMARE FIRE AT SEA

February - 2016
Gianfranco Rosi - ITALY

"Golden Bear" for best film, top award at the 66th Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale).

Samuele is twelve and lives on an island in the Mediterranean, far away from the mainland. Like all boys of his age he does not always enjoy going to school. He would much rather climb the rocks by the shore, play with his slingshot or mooch about the port. But his

home is not like other islands. For years, it has been the destination of men, women and children trying to make the crossing from Africa in boats that are far too small and decrepit.

The island is Lampedusa which has become a metaphor for the flight of refugees to Europe, the hopes, hardship and fate of hundreds of thousands of emigrants. These people long for peace, freedom and happiness and yet so often only their dead bodies are pulled out of the water. Thus, every day the inhabitants of Lampedusa are bearing witness to the greatest humanitarian tragedy of our times.

Gianfranco Rosi's observations of everyday life bring us closer to this place that is as real as it is symbolic, and to the emotional world of some of its inhabitants who are exposed to a permanent state of emergency. At the same time his film, which is commentary-free, describes how, even in the smallest of places, two worlds barely touch.



TRAPPED

January - 2016
Dawn Porter - USA

2016 Sundance Film Festival, U.S. Documentary Special Jury Award for Social Impact Filmmaking, official selection 2016 Athena Women's Film Festival, and official selection 2016 Stranger than Fiction Documentary Series.

What remains of a women's right to choose?

Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers (TRAP) laws are increasingly being passed by states that maintain they insure women's health. But as clinics are forced to shut their doors, supporters of abortion rights believe the real purpose of these laws is to outlaw abortion.

Since 2010, 288 laws regulating abortion providers have been passed by state legislatures. In total, 44 states and the District of Columbia have measures subjecting abortion providers to legal restrictions not imposed on other medical professionals. Unable to comply with these far-reaching and medically unnecessary laws, clinics have taken their fight to the courts.

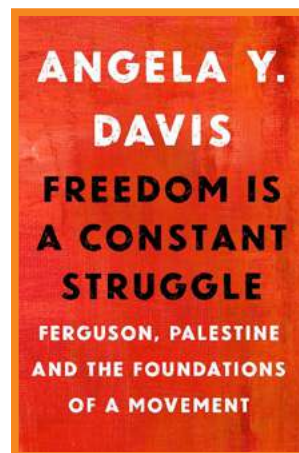
As the U.S. Supreme Court decides in 2016 whether individual states may essentially outlaw abortion (Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt), Trapped follows clinic workers and lawyers who are on the front lines of the battle to keep abortion safe and legal for millions of American women, where most clinics are in a desperate battle for survival.



TO READ

FREEDOM IS A CONSTANT STRUGGLE

by Angela Davis

**THIS IS LONDON**

by Ben Judah



“ I have to see everything for myself.
I don't trust statistics.
I don't trust columnists. ”

Who's the author?

Ben Judah is an acclaimed foreign correspondent who has chosen to turn his reporter's gaze on the city where he was born: London.

Why should you read this book?

To discover the new face of London, beyond caricatures, through genuine portraits – the Polish builder, the Romanian musician, the Filipina housemaid, the Russian mother, or the Egyptian heiress.

To go deep into a new kind of immersive journalism. We see Ben Judah sleeping in subways and squatting in dosshouses to get deep inside the minds of the book's protagonists.

To get an insight of how London is still fantasized as a dream city from abroad, and how it continues to lure people from all over the world.

What are the best parts of the book?

Nearly 40% of Londoners were born abroad. The city is made up of several layers of immigration that have come in successive waves over the years. As one of the protagonists puts it, there is an informal hierarchy between them: at the “bottom of the pile” there are Africans and West Indians, with Eastern Europeans in the middle, and “white Brits” at the top. In his kaleidoscopic approach, Ben Judah not only focuses on impoverished immigrants, he meets with social workers, teachers, and policemen, who have witnessed London's metamorphosis. He also shows that privileged newcomers from Russia and the Middle East also have their share of disillusionment. This new London is interestingly described as a patchwork of ghettos.

TO THINK

**EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING WATCH 2015 (GENERAL REPORT)**

Author: Julie Roden,
Editor: Conny Reuter

This report presents the main findings and general recommendations of the 2015 SOLIDAR Foundation Education and Lifelong Learning Watch. Based on an extensive consultation with SOLIDAR Foundation members and partners, this initiative evaluates progress towards the achievement of the Europe 2020 strategy and Education and Training 2020 strategic framework for member states. The report assesses the policy actions dedicated to fight youth unemployment and support young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) in 13 countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Romania, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom). More precisely, this year's Education and Lifelong Learning Watch initiative concentrates in particular on the following six benchmarks: promoting access and participation in lifelong learning, vocational education and training (VET), validation of non-formal and informal learning, early school-leaving, NEETs and citizenship education.

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**TRANSFORMING POLITICS - WOMEN IN POLITICS**

Author: CEE network
for gender issues

Inequality is a systemic issue and societies change slowly. Progress on gender equality, with all the gains over time, has been slow, uneven and not a given. Transformative action and changing gender equality paradigms today demand both feminist activism (in society and parties), alongside a partnership with men. A Report from the Korčula School and agreed Gender Equality Platform of SD parties in South Eastern Europe – this report gathers statements addressing gender aspects of the refugee crises and case studies of gender equality focused activities of SD parties in South Eastern Europe.



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Rue Montoyer, 40
1000 Bruxelles - Belgique
+32 (0)2 234 69 00
info@feps-europe.eu