The Progressive Post

BIODIVERSITY MATTERS

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The Progressive Post

The Progressive Post is the political magazine of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS). It gathers renowned thinkers, experts and activists from the world of politics, academia and civil society, provides critical analysis of policies, and clarifies options and opportunities for decision-makers.

Our ambition is to undertake intellectual reflection and debate for the benefit of the progressive movement, and to promote the founding principles of the European Union: freedom, equality, solidarity, democracy, human dignity, as well as respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

With a focus on EU politics, our crucial interest is the state and future of Social Democracy. We offer a platform (in print and online) for finding progressive answers to climate change, uneven development and social inequality in the European as well as global context. We invite our readers to explore with us the contradictions of our time and our authors to put forward arguments for peace, sustainability and social justice.

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by Hedwig Giusto

Biodiversity is the Cinderella of all the discussions around climate change. While the ranks widen constantly of those who advocate for environmental policies and for the fight against climate change, a full understanding is by and large missing of the importance of preserving species and of the connection between the depletion of ecosystems and the rise in temperature. On 15 June, the European Parliament held its first contentious vote on the Nature Restoration Law. The fact that such a law is being discussed in the EU is certainly good news, but the way ahead is long and tortuous, and the opposition to its adoption, mostly from conservative forces, is strong. Yet it is us, human beings, who are the sole perpetrator of the ongoing irreversible sixth mass extinction.

Among the reasons for this neglect and hostility is humankind's distorted relationship with nature. As suggested in one of the articles in the *Special Coverage* on **Nature and us: why biodiversity matters**, humans consider nature in a utilitarian way. They look at which resources are useful, and which are, apparently, 'superfluous'. And they behave accordingly. It is mostly overlooked, for example, that agriculture is the main cause of biodiversity loss (an estimated 30 per cent of biodiversity decline globally) due to both the extensification and intensification of land use for crops and livestock, and the preference given to a limited and more profitable number of farm products.

Changing our relations with nature, understanding the close interrelationship between us and the ecosystems in which we live, and changing our modes of production and consumption are essential steps for slowing down this dramatic process of depletion. Indeed, this process of depletion is detrimental not only to the many species that are disappearing, but to us as well. In fact, by destroying biodiversity, we are destroying the essential elements that guarantee our survival. Let's make no bones about it, the preservation of any species – be they birds, insects, plants or microorganisms – is not only good in itself, but also crucial for human existence.

Our actions shape the world in which we live. And currently we are shaping a world in which more and more tasks will be performed by machines and artificial intelligence. Regulating their development is a priority, and in June the European Parliament voted in favour of the AI Act – the first-ever attempt to regulate AI globally. In the *Focus* on **Regulating AI: a technological as well as a political feat**, the Progressive Post looks at the risks of unregulated artificial intelligence (and especially of unchecked AI developers) and at the tools to put limits in place to protect workers and citizens.

If biodiversity rarely makes it to the headlines, the topic of our first *Dossier*, **Migration: moving away from containment**, is rarely *not* in the news. And news on migration is never cheerful. The deaths in the Mediterranean are on the rise and as I write these lines, the casualties of perhaps the deadliest sinking in the Eastern Mediterranean are still being counted. But despite this, the Council of the European Union has just greenlighted the Pact on Migration and Asylum which promises a 'better' management of asylum and migration by making the EU even more inaccessible.

Our second *Dossier*, **Increasing social investment to fight Roma exclusion**, focuses on the shortcomings of the EU's only ethnic policy, which has so far failed to improve the conditions of the Roma people in Europe. Our authors argue that as long as prejudice and inequality persist, poverty will likely deepen negative stereotypes. An ethnically-focused policy might therefore backfire. Only increased social investment can prevent the exclusion of Roma.

Editorial

Hedwig Giusto,
Editor-in-chief

The Progressive Post

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The West in the minority or the reform of global governance

by Maria João Rodrigues

Signs of crisis are multiplying in the system of global governance created after the second world war. If these trends continue, it is not difficult to predict that we will soon have a West that can no longer lead the world alone. We will also have a fragmented and weakened multilateral system that is incapable of responding to the highly pressing global challenges of climate change, poverty, nuclear weapons and artificial intelligence. However, Europe has a choice.

The invasion of a sovereign country, Ukraine, in flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter, is not being condemned by the UN Security Council, which is currently even chaired by the aggressor. Meanwhile, the UN General Assembly does not have the necessary powers or a clear majority to achieve a ceasefire.

The European Union has managed to react with an unprecedented level of unity on various fronts – from the protection of the Ukrainian population, to the provision of arms, to the imposition of sanctions against Russia and the reduction of EU energy dependence on that country. The EU is supported by NATO and the G7, but the latter, as seen at its last summit in Hiroshima, has lost its former economic hegemony as it represents only 30 per cent of the world economy and ten per cent of the world population. The G7 is therefore seeking to maintain a geopolitical role by inviting other influential countries, like Brazil and India, but these countries also have other plans.

In addition to presiding over the G20 (India is currently doing so and Brazil will do so in 2024), these two countries have relaunched the BRICS with China, Russia and South Africa, and a summit is planned for August in Johannesburg. They have also invited other non-Western countries, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, and have strengthened the New Development Bank that is based in Shanghai and presided over by the former Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff. Their intention is to circumvent the Washington consensus that is promoted by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

▶ *The European Union has managed to react with an unprecedented level of unity on various fronts – from the protection of the Ukrainian population, to the provision of arms, to the imposition of sanctions against Russia and the reduction of EU energy dependence on that country.*

Behind this is a strategy that is being patiently woven by China with its Silk Road initiative. Through its investment in new infrastructure worldwide, China is disputing the influence that the US and EU seek to maintain with their own investments and cooperation agreements. Although there is now more talk of 'de-risking' (in other words, reducing excessive interdependence) there is clearly a real process of de-coupling underway – especially between the US and China – in the digital, energy, industrial and military fields.

Moreover, the Global South – where China always appears associated with the so-called G77 – is emerging with more articulate positions and is demanding reforms of the global economic governance that will allow these countries to respond to climate change, poverty reduction and the need to implement the sustainable development goals. The responses to all these issues have slowed down because of the financial crisis, the pandemic and now the war in Ukraine.
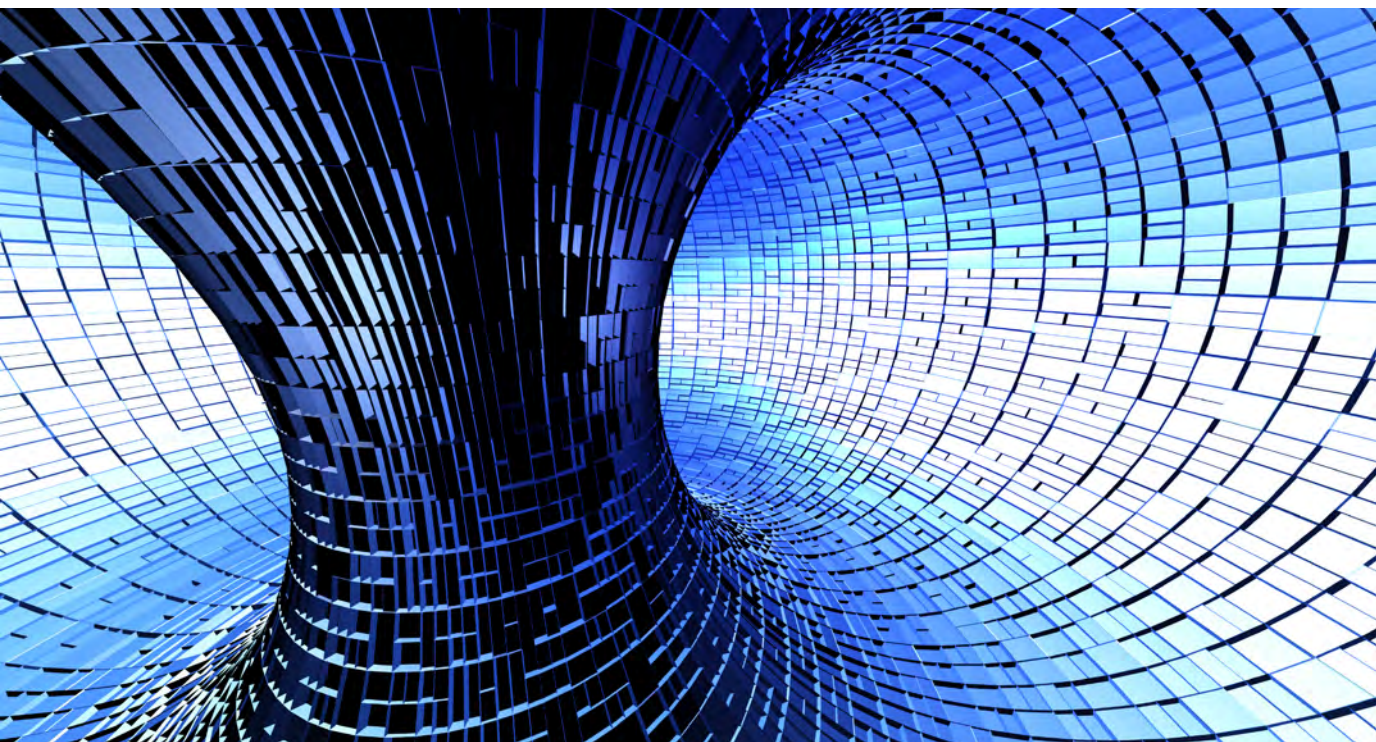
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If these trends continue, it is not difficult to predict that we will soon have a West that can no longer lead the world alone. We will also have a fragmented and weakened multilateral system, incapable of responding to the highly pressing global challenges of climate change, poverty, nuclear weapons and artificial intelligence.

The European Union should be enlightened enough to realise that the world has changed and will indeed change much more in the future.

The EU must certainly maintain its firm support for Ukraine in that country's fight against the invader and in that country' defence of its sovereign democratic rights. But at the same time, the European bloc must prepare for the EU's major new enlargement by reforming its institutions internally, as well as by involving the candidate countries as early as possible in its energy, digital, research and education networks, by promoting the rule of law and social rights, and by strategically coordinating its foreign and security policies. Indeed, we started to see this happening at the recent European Political Community summit in Moldova.

But if the European Union wants to accelerate the emergence of the conditions to bring peace back to its continent, it needs to work actively to make more allies across the world. It could start to do this by listening to the countries of the Global South in Africa, Latin America and Asia, and by addressing their problems with more convincing solutions, which need to be built together. It is necessary to recognise that these countries do not have equivalent conditions – in terms of access to technologies, markets and financial resources – for the implementation of the sustainable development goals. There is therefore a need to negotiate a reform of the global economic governance. This reform should be based on a New Global Deal, as proposed for the world summits that are to be promoted by the UN in 2023, 2024 and 2025 under the impetus of António Guterres.

The EU must also have a clear position on the strategic competition between the US and China. Indeed, the de-coupling between these two countries, and the appearance of two competing world orders, is not in Europe's interest. The EU must instead pursue its own defence of its values and interests – although the ambition to impose a 'European order' would also be absurd and unrealistic. The real solution is to work for standards and mechanisms of global governance that are based on more intensive and inclusive international cooperation, in other words for the renewal of the multilateral system.

Working for new global rules in these times of ecological, digital, social, commercial and financial change: this is what the EU should promote in its current negotiation with the US. And it should say the same to China if it does not want to be branded as a 'strategic rival'.

Maria João Rodrigues,
FEPS President

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Saving Europe's social momentum

by László Andor

One year from now, European politics will be on the home straight to the elections for the European Parliament. Much of the time between now and then will be spent building election programmes and strategies. For the Socialist family, it is obvious that these programmes and strategies are to be built around social questions. In principle this should be easy, but in reality it is not. The reason is that many important issues, especially in the domain of social policy, do not fall among the competencies of the European Union.

Since its creation, the EU has had a social dimension, but always in a limited and restricted way. After the establishment of the single market, concerns about social dumping were high on the agenda of the EU's social policy. Sometimes this was narrowed down to small but intense battlefields, like the succession of legislative cycles on posted workers – a debate that ended with resounding success for the Socialists. But what exactly the new orientation was to be after that, was not as obvious.

The EU enlargement brought new challenges for the social agenda to be enlarged too. Dealing with Roma integration was not part of Brussels' policymaking before enlargement but it soon became necessary afterwards (see also our second dossier on the EU's efforts to fight Roma exclusion). More recently, the combined analysis of cohesion and mobility shifted the focus to the question of wage convergence. Indeed, the story of minimum wage coordination is a very interesting case study. The idea arose seriously back in the 2014 European Parliament campaign. However, very few would have thought before

the 2019 European elections that minimum wage coordination could become a relevant legislative initiative – despite trade unions having campaigned for an EU-wide pay rise in previous years. The adoption of the directive on adequate minimum wages in 2022, which also helped strengthen collective bargaining, is therefore a major success.

▶ *It is a widely shared view that the social progress of recent years was made possible by the adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) in 2017.*

It is a widely shared view that the social progress of recent years was made possible by the adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) in 2017, which opened the door for fresh thinking and gave wings to activists of social policy and to the advocates of a Social Union. In the subsequent European

Parliament elections (2019), the *Spitzenkandidat* - or lead candidate - of the Socialist family, Frans Timmermans, outlined great ambitions in the field of housing. In previous years, this topic would not have been considered among the key concerns at EU level, but after its appearance in the 2013 Social Investment Package and its inclusion in the EPSR, it was waiting for someone to see not only the need for it but also the opportunity. Developing housing policy and combatting homelessness also deserve attention today, against the backdrop of a lack of mainstream solutions – a backdrop which has even helped resuscitate communist parties in certain cities of Europe.

The momentum created by the EPSR (and the subsequent Action Plan) helped close the gap between a rapidly deepening economic integration on the one hand, and social integration on the other. Indeed, the latter has always lagged behind economic integration and has always been considered of secondary importance at EU level. More importantly, since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the EU policy

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debate has shifted towards securitisation and militarisation, and the political landscape has, by and large, become less favourable for Social Democrats. Should this lead to a retreat, or a demonstration of the relevance of their core mission? Should Socialists focus on preserving what has been achieved, or should they set the agenda with bold new initiatives?

▶ *In current assessments of the developments of EU social policy, the NextGenerationEU is frequently mentioned as a major addition, even though it is not an instrument with an explicit social mandate.*

To solve this dilemma, it helps to acknowledge that ordinary citizens, as well as policy experts,

define the social dimension of the EU more widely than the way the social affairs portfolio is calibrated in EU institutions. At the end of the day, the social effects of EU governance in the short run depend mainly on decisions in the area of economics rather than on social policy. Interestingly, **in current assessments of the developments of EU social policy, the NextGenerationEU is frequently mentioned as a major addition, even though it is not an instrument with an explicit social mandate**.

Progressive reform at EU level requires a consistent plan to reshape the economic model of integration and to further develop social legislation. Those who agree with this analysis appreciate the importance of the EU initiatives on the social economy. Work on these iniatives at the EU level has been an undercurrent, but in times of frequent economic shocks (and of warfare), there may be a case for a more comprehensive and constant approach.

In order to develop Europe's social economy sector, the Commission adopted a dedicated action plan shortly after the first informal social summit in Porto (2021). The second one, held again in Porto on 26-27 May, has been followed by a Commission's package of "concrete measures to support the social economy, which prioritises people, social and environmental causes over profit".

Two years ago, the Porto informal social summit generated new momentum during the Covid-19 emergency. Although enthusiasts of a Social Union pointed out some ambivalence, we now remember it as a major event which helped turn the promises of the EPSR into reality by energising the Action Plan designed by the European Commission. **The new social summit in Porto has reminded us that the work has only started, and without rehearsing and enhancing the progressive agenda, the 2021 upturn may fade away.**

With our focus today on Ukraine, we are all trying to ensure that maximum support is provided for that country's war of independence for as long as it is needed. While we can only guess at what stage the war will be in spring 2024, and what exactly its legacy will be in the hearts and minds of European citizens, one thing is certain: economically the war effort will remain demanding, and even if it comes to an end within a year or two, European help will still be needed for a long time after that. **Today, Ukraine primarily needs weapons. But tomorrow, it will need a trillion-euro programme for its recovery and reconstruction.**

▶ *Europe may embrace a more securitised future but, even if that is how the next chapter of our history will be written, it must come with a new social contract, and with an expanded, rather than a reduced EU social agenda.*

Ukraine itself needs a social agenda as part of the reconstruction plan. It is not only infrastructure that needs to be rebuilt in a modernised form, but industrial relations and social safety nets also need to emerge in a way that meets the country's ambition to move closer to EU membership and converge with European standards. From this point of view, we must be concerned. Recent Ukrainian legislation has undermined employee rights and the power of trade unions – perhaps following advice from investment funds, old-fashioned IMF sources, or from seemingly benevolent Anglo-American advisers.

The worst leaders of the eastern member states, like Viktor Orbán, believe that respect for social rights and investment in decent working conditions are detrimental to economic competitiveness. If Ukraine follows that recipe, it will not only lock itself into an inferior economic model, but also discourage the return of millions of refugees who have started to experience more generous forms of welfare states in western Europe, and who would not consider moving back if Ukraine does not treat its workers well.

Today, the debates on the EU social agenda are on the back burner, but the political sentiment in Europe is changing month by month. It would be folly to assume that the ideas and feelings of 2022 or 2023 will entirely determine the agenda of the 2024 elections. Progressives in Europe must work to sustain the favourable momentum of recent years, driven by the understanding that most major developments of the time (like climate change, the digital revolution and the war in Ukraine) all test the resilience of our social models and highlight the need for further innovation. **Europe may embrace a more securitised future but, even if that is how the next chapter of our history will be written, it must come with a new social contract, and with an expanded, rather than a reduced EU social agenda.**

László Andor,
FEPS Secretary General

Europe's social integration

WELFARE MODELS AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATIONS

by László Andor

Future of work: between global, digital, local and green

by Philippe Pochet

The analysis of the future of work is sandwiched between two megatrends. On the one hand, there is the renewed hyper-globalisation in the services sector, reinforced by progress in digitalisation and artificial intelligence. And on the other hand, there is a relocation of production and services linked to the imperative of the green transformation. These two tendencies reflect the tension between the 'ever-faster, ever-further' mode of business and the desire to control time and space.

Before the pandemic, Richard Baldwin, a professor of international economics at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, stated that telework, associated with the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI), would lead to a new wave of globalisation – this time in the services sector. Baldwin used the term 'telemigration' to refer to people who would, therefore, live in one country while working for a company based in another. The development of project-based work, he said, could facilitate this development. Indeed, by their nature, teams change according to the project and can easily integrate company employees and collaborators of different statuses.

Baldwin's ideas on 'telemigration' involve workers both from rich countries who might relocate and from poorer countries who could more easily work from their home country. This indicates an extreme individualisation, where work is seen as self-realisation without the idea of the collective, except for the management which organises its teams virtually and changeably. On first sight, this is possibly a win-win situation. But that is only on first sight because in the medium term, nothing guarantees that the telemigrant workers from the North will be able to keep their high wages and good working conditions in the face of increasingly open competition – especially by companies that have learned to control a globally dispersed workforce, a kind of human cloud!

This trend towards deterritorialisation also affects sectors that are considered to be relatively protected, such as education and health. Yet the progress of AI is a major challenge for these sectors too – as can be seen in the case of medical diagnostics, where job losses in the tens of millions are predicted. Even if this type of forecast comes to be repeated with the arrival of each technological novelty, and ultimately proves to be exaggerated, what is important is that these are essentially services jobs, a proportion of which are medium or highly skilled. This is a fragmented and globalised world of work subject to technological change.

In contrast to this vision of the future of work is the vision of a radical transformation of modes of production and consumption to meet environmental challenges. It considers that technology alone will not succeed in curbing the environmental crises. **This approach is not about consuming more, but about consuming better (and less).** It is not about replacing fossil-fuel cars with electric cars, but about rethinking our mobility.

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Production and value chains must be reduced and relocated as locally as possible. Strategic autonomy and the slowdown in international trade are indications of the possible development of more self-interested regional mega-blocks, even if this does not reverse the current trend towards the globalisation of services. Technologies are becoming energy-efficient and resilient. Working time is again becoming a central issue, as is the question of the value of work. Hard jobs with poor working conditions and low pay are being abandoned, while new generations on the labour market have, since the Covid-19 crisis, started demanding meaningful jobs. Social and democratic participation is essential.

In short, these two visions of the future of work are clearly antagonistic in their views of space and time. But is it possible for one

or the other to become dominant? Can they coexist? Or can we think of a synthesis? In my opinion, the two trends are too strong for one to completely dominate the other, but they do not have equal weight and the climate issue as well as the upheavals it brings will have a growing impact. A synthesis, however, seems unlikely because the fundamentals are so different. This leaves the possibility of an unstable cohabitation with certain areas of convergence and others of strong tensions.

For our reflection on the future of work, this forces us to think pluralistically, with different competing models, based on different visions. With no hope of synthesis, but **with the ecological imperative becoming more and more prevalent, progressive forces and trade unions will have to propose differentiated strategies to consider this plurality of work realities**.

▶ *Technology alone will not succeed in curbing the environmental crises. This approach is not about consuming more, but about consuming better (and less). It is not about replacing fossil-fuel cars with electric cars, but about rethinking our mobility.*

Philippe Pochet, General Director of the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI)

A European interest: is there such a thing?

by Serena Giusti

Does a European interest exist? And if so, what are its characteristics? As fascinating as these questions might be, there is no easy answer. Even in the case of a traditional polity, such as a state, there is no consensus on how to define national interest. Indeed, the national interest is considered a rather obscure and analytically frail concept that has been monopolised by realism and is often linked to authoritarian regimes.

Although the state (and, by consequence, the national interest itself) has been eroded from above (by globalisation, multilateralism, regional cooperation and integration, and deterritorialisation) and from below (by regions, global cities, and independent administrative agencies) the national interest still pervades contemporary political discourse. Its persistence arises from several crises that have contributed to reinforcing the state, with the result that it is perceived as a protective entity.

When dealing with the EU, the most difficult challenge in applying the concept of national interest is that the EU is a hybrid entity, combining elements of supranationalism and intergovernmentalism. Nevertheless, **the idea that EU member states can work to reach a superior interest that transcends their many parochial interests, which surface when confronting crucial issues, is politically comfortable and alluring**. There are at least three main ways in which a European interest could be conceived. The first considers it as the outcome of the bargaining among the member states; the second presupposes that after many years of European integration, governments and people have developed a common sense of what is good for all; and the third holds that crises can have an extraordinary coagulating impact on Europeans, leading them to imagine a sort of common good.

In the first of these conceptions, the EU is seen as a highly competitive arena where member states struggle to advance their interests, and the affirmation of a European interest is represented by the point of convergence of various positions, as a consequence of intense political activity, which eventually leads to a compromise. The progress of integration is marked by a continuous process of bargaining where each unit seeks to maximise its interests and a European interest exists only if it satisfies every unit's preferences. The policies decided by consensus are the most exposed to this minimalist logic, while the principle of subsidiarity disincentivises the search for common positions. Furthermore, the logic of integration can work as long as the benefits are high, the costs low and the expectations considerable, while

ambiguity may arouse national consciousness and harden it into nationalism if the benefits are slow to come about, the losses high, and the hopes dashed or deferred. In other words, only a permanent excess of gains over losses, and hopes over frustrations, can guarantee a commitment to integration.

In the second conception, the assumption is that after more than 60 years of European integration (of sharing institutions, values, principles, legislation and policies) and after developing a method of doing things together that enhances reciprocal trust and a long experience of socialisation among the people of Europe,

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the terrain would be ready for defining a common European interest. In other words, by producing a form of isomorphism, integration is expected to favour the elaboration of similar views that would make it easier to converge on a shared European interest. Furthermore, the process of European integration has developed within a Euro-Atlantic institutional setting that has oriented the values of the basis of the process of European integration and the policies produced. The membership of most of the EU members to organisations such as the World Bank, IMF, OECD and NATO should have further cemented member states. However, a truly European sense of common interest has yet to surface, and divisions persist.

In the third conception, the definition of a European interest would be favoured whenever external threats and challenges endanger member states, persuading them that European responses hold more advantages than solitary reactions. It is hard to say if a European interest that is, in essence, the fruit of a response to a crisis, is just improvised, or if it can last and impact the EU's very political core.

At the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, egoistic postures among EU member states prevailed. Governments engaged in unilateral emergency politics by closing borders in breach of the Schengen Agreement, and by breaking the eurozone's rules on low deficits and debts. However, as it came to be understood that no country could stand alone against the consequences of the pandemic, member states entrusted the European Commission with the purchase of vaccines and launched a considerable recovery fund (€750 billion) together with a multiannual financial framework of more than €1,000 billion. The war in Ukraine also boosted the EU towards cohesion (with its sanctions against Russia) and accelerated the process towards strategic autonomy and strategic sovereignty. The concept of strategic sovereignty incorporates the idea of a more autonomous and emancipated polity, which opts to develop strategic thinking in certain crucial policies. Member states might gradually be prepared to rework the very concept of sovereignty, finding innovative ways to integrate national perspectives and practices into a European vision when dealing with selected strategic policies.

It seems that a European interest can result from a convergence through mediation and bargaining among states. Shared achievements in terms of values, policies, legislation, people, socialisation, and the patient work of institutions, help subdue conflicts and find common ground. But as long as executives reinforce intergovernmental practices, even the existent 'isomorphism' cannot impede a renationalisation of certain policies. Up to now, the Covid and Russia-Ukraine war crises have boosted cooperation among states and have brought them to a shared diagnosis of the threats posed to the EU, but these crises have not yet brought the EU states to a perceived common European interest.

Serena Giusti, lecturer in International Relations at Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies, and Senior Associate Research Fellow at the Institute for International Studies (ISPI) in Milan

In defence of negotiations

What Social Democratic values mean for the war in Ukraine

by Michael Bröning

At first glance, the basic Social Democratic values of liberty, justice and solidarity seem to command one – and only one – obvious course of action regarding the war in Ukraine. The Russian attack is a flagrant violation of everything Social Democracy stands for: liberty is under attack and justice is undermined. Full solidarity is imperative – not only through humanitarian aid, but also through military support.

Based on this understanding, German Social Democrats have never doubted that Ukraine deserves unwavering support. At the same time, a self-critical assessment of past Social Democratic positions with regard to Russia has begun. In the midst of the *Zeitenwende* (turning point) of these turning times, Social Democrats have frequently reiterated that the key to peace in Ukraine ultimately lies where the decision to go to war was made: in Moscow.

Supporting Ukraine, however, does not absolve progressive voices from looking beyond the present in order to understand that the ultimate objective of supporting the war effort is to bring an end to the violence. On one level, this apparent paradox is based on the conviction that the implementation of fundamental Social Democratic values is not possible in a global non-system where 'might' equals 'right'. On another level, however, this notion is based on the obvious fact that Social Democratic values are equally unattainable in a world locked in perpetual conflict – not to speak of a nuclear-devastated planet. A Social Democratic approach must do both: support Ukraine militarily and move beyond the military logic by searching for, not by delegitimising, a negotiated solution.

WITHOUT PEACE, EVERYTHING IS NOTHING

To search for an exit from military escalation does not mean caving in to aggression, or quietly rewarding the aggressor. Rather, it translates into realpolitik the insight of former German Chancellor Willy Brandt that "Peace is not everything, but without peace, everything is nothing".

A broad majority of the German public is in favour of supporting Ukraine. At the same time, however, there is widespread fear of further military escalation and the global repercussions of further violence. This duality of public sentiment is nevertheless rarely reflected in the German media, where **public concerns are routinely dismissed as foolish or – worse – as deliberately playing into Putin's hands. In far too many instances, the shrill tone of morality rather than sober analysis reigns supreme.** This rigidity may play out well for political commentators, however, for a centre-left *Volkspartei*

– a big tent party –, reflecting on an ambivalence that is widespread among the public is not a sin, but a necessity.

Ukraine is certainly entitled to support. But for Social Democrats, solidarity cannot ignore the wider, potentially global, repercussions. This is where a political debate that is focused exclusively on the type, quantity and quality of the next sophisticated weapon system for Ukraine falls dramatically short of incorporating a macro-view.

NOT LOSING SIGHT OF OTHER CHALLENGES

The abundance of global challenges – from poverty and underdevelopment to climate change and migration – can hardly be addressed while the war rages on and global cooperation becomes ever more elusive. Timing-wise, we are at a halfway point in implementing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Yet, in reality, they are further out of reach than ever. It is for this reason that countries in the Global South differ notably in their perception of the war.

Countries in the South realise that their legitimate concerns regarding sustainable development – the eradication of poverty and global crisis management – are unlikely to materialise in a world steeped in never-ending polarisation and military escalation. And this is not to mention their own experience with the moral double standards of the West.

Acknowledging such complexities does not of course justify halting military support and quietly selling out Kyiv in a grand bargain with Moscow. However, the complexities are a reminder that with western military support comes western responsibility – as German philosopher Jürgen Habermas rightly pointed out. Simply outsourcing this debate – and a serious discussion of the war objectives – to Ukraine does not exonerate western countries from defining the limits of their own role and goals.

LET JUSTICE PREVAIL, AND LET THE WORLD PERISH?

Such a discussion, however, needs to move beyond the notion of 'let justice prevail, and let the world perish'. Leadership is more than principled insistence. Moreover, looking beyond the battlefield is neither 'escalation phobia' nor 'submission pacifism' – to use the stigmatising labels cited liberally in the current German debate. Certainly, the question of justice is crucial. But beyond a certain point, escalating in the service of justice can trigger a problematic conflict dynamic of its own – with its own unjust repercussions far beyond Ukraine.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has recently set the doomsday clock at 90 seconds to midnight – closer to a nuclear catastrophe than ever before. Yet, such statements are regularly rejected as 'alarmist'. **Are the voices who routinely portray the Russian president as an irrational genocidal maniac really so confident that this same president will shrink back from the brink of nuclear escalation? Accepting catastrophe has never been a particularly rational disaster-avoidance strategy**,

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and progressive forces in particular have always understood this. Recent months have clearly shown that Moscow is deliberately stoking the West's public fear of a nuclear response – another taboo ruthlessly shattered by Vladimir Putin. But simply denying any such risk and hoping for the best in a global game of chicken hardly seems a responsible way forward.

Critics of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and other actors treading more carefully accuse them of appeasement. But at what point would they opt out of further escalation? After a tactical nuclear strike? And what message for the future of global order would that send? Or does such a point simply not exist? And if so, is this stance covered by a democratic mandate that is as far-reaching as the inevitable consequences?

HOW MUCH INJUSTICE DO WE ACCEPT?

Looking ahead after more than one year of fighting, Western states appear to be silently hoping that some sort of frozen stalemate will emerge after further inconclusive rounds of fighting. But **the real question is how much partial or temporary injustice can be accepted to prevent the universal injustice of an open-ended conflict** – or a potentially devastating military escalation. This question is one of the great taboos of the current debate. Yet our failure to find a conclusive answer to it is drastically different from preventing the question from being asked in the first place.

Social Democrats should not support Ukraine to bring about a global triumph over the 'tyrannical principle'. Neither should they stand with Ukraine to exorcise the militant chauvinism displayed by the Russian president, his reactionary worldview or his toxic masculinity. Instead, their goal should be to support a European neighbour against a brutal attack, a return to the status quo ante, and a defence of the most basic rule of international law as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Given that a negotiated solution is the only conceivable way out for the foreseeable future, the support of Social Democrats for the war is driven by the hope that Ukraine can enter such a negotiation from a position of relative strength. For Social Democrats, standing up for liberty, justice and solidarity means ensuring Ukraine is able to help itself. Military support for Ukraine therefore implies the responsibility to seek and seize every realistic opportunity to negotiate. Ultimately, at a time when passions are running high, it is time to remember that Social Democrats must support the war with the primary objective of ending it at the earliest possible opportunity.

Michael Bröning, member of the Basic Value Commission of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD)

Valuing biodiversity in itself (firstly), and for us (secondly)

by **Telmo Pievani and Sofia Belardinelli**

A triple planetary crisis is unfolding before our eyes. Climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss have a common cause: the destructive attitude of humans towards nature. The decline of biodiversity – a major threat to human existence and well-being – has long been overlooked. It is time for governments at all levels to prioritise this systemic crisis.

The sixth mass extinction is now underway. It is a global phenomenon that involves the decline and loss of populations and entire species at a pace far exceeding 'normal' extinction rates. It is rapid, largely invisible and – most frightening of all – irreversible.

The currently observed pace of extinction of different taxa across the entire tree of life is tens to hundreds of times higher than what scientists call the 'background extinction rate'. The number of extinctions recorded over the past five centuries would have taken 800 to 10,000 years to occur under standard evolutionary circumstances. The speed and geographical scale of the phenomenon are far larger than expected, thus justifying the alarming predictions that scientists have been making for decades, mostly about freshwater biodiversity.

But why should we worry about the possible extinction of apparently irrelevant species like an almost unknown frog in the tropical forest, or a small rodent only living on one island off the Australian coast? Incidentally, the rodent was *Melomys rubicola*, the first mammalian species whose extinction was scientifically recorded. There are several possible answers to this question, depending on the worldview we embrace.

▶ *Most decisions affecting the relationship between human and nonhuman nature are based on a limited set of market-driven, instrumental values.*

According to the latest report from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) – the *Assessment Report on Diverse Values and Valuation of Nature* – the living world holds a plurality of values beyond the utilitarian approach to nature conservation. **This utilitarian approach only values nature based on its 'usefulness' for humans, implying that only the part of nature that provides resources, or ensures the fundamental ecosystem services on which human societies depend, should be protected.** Meanwhile the 'unproductive' or 'superfluous' part of the living world is deemed unworthy of any importance or dignity. But biodiversity is not just a resource. And it is not just 'capital'.

Different societies, cultures and peoples have thus established diverse relationships with the nonhuman world and different ways of valuing it. The IPBES report summarises this diversity by stating that people can perceive themselves as living 'from' nature, 'in' nature, 'with' nature, or 'as' nature. These distinctions exemplify the various degrees of connection, even kinship, towards non-living beings, ranging from complete detachment to total identification with the local environment.

The relationships between people and nature are rich and diverse. Nevertheless, hardly any policies acknowledge this diversity. Instead, **most decisions affecting the relationship between human and nonhuman nature are based on a limited set of market-driven, instrumental values**. Such dependence "of
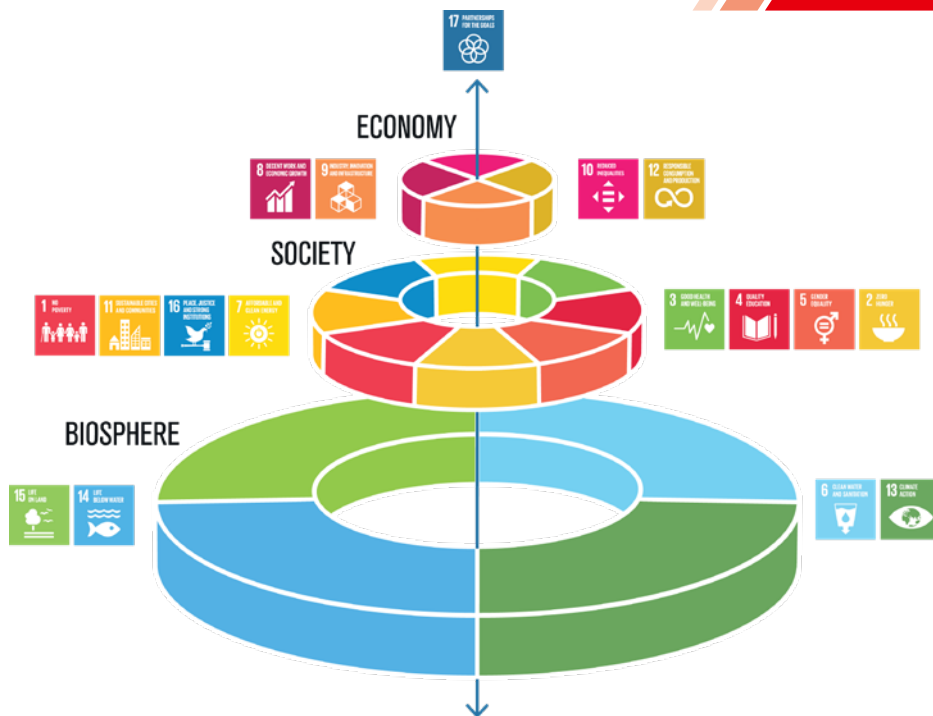
Graphics by Jerker Lokrantz/Azote

political and economic decisions on a narrow set of nature's diverse values underpins the global biodiversity crisis", as the IPBES emphasises. "Incorporating a wider set of values and perspectives into policy design and implementation can address the negative effects of people's actions on nature".

Moving away from an instrumental approach to nature can reveal that the connection between nature and people is bidirectional. Nature provides us with essential goods and services, but it could also be sustained by (low-intensity) human activity. To stress this interdependence, some have proposed pairing the concept of 'nature's contributions to people' with 'people's contributions to nature' to highlight the 'inextricable link' between our species and the rest of the living world.

Shortly after the Paris Agreement, the Stockholm Resilience Centre proposed a new visual representation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were established in Paris in 2015: the 'wedding cake' (see the chart above). The 17 goals are organised hierarchically, with the environmental goals in the first, base layer, and the social and economic goals in the second and third layers, respectively. This image illustrates the entanglement between environmental and social issues that characterises our current epoch. The SDG framework acknowledges that preserving the biological and ecological diversity of the Earth is a crucial prerequisite not only for ensuring environmental sustainability but also for guaranteeing social justice for both the most vulnerable people today and for future generations.

▶ *The currently observed pace of extinction of different taxa across the entire tree of life is tens to hundreds of times higher than what scientists call 'background extinction rate'. The number of extinctions recorded over the past five centuries would have taken 800 to 10,000 years to occur under standard evolutionary circumstances.*

Human societies and cultures are inextricably linked to the ecological environment in which they evolved, and it is essential to recognise this interconnection in policy design to ensure both environmental and social sustainability. Two dimensions need to be considered. First, a utilitarian approach to nature should not be completely disregarded, as nature plays a fundamental role in the existence of human societies. The seminal IPBES 2019 *Global Assessment Report* emphasises that nature's contributions to people are diverse, underpinning human health and well-being, and providing essential resources, such as food, medicines, clean water, pollination, ecological regulating services and the prevention of future pandemics. It is important to acknowledge that some contributions of nature are irreplaceable. Second, this instrumental perspective must not shade the complexity that characterises the varied relationships in which humans and nature have been engaged over history. Non-instrumental values are just as critical as the market-driven approach in informing and guiding policy decisions at all levels: biodiversity has a value by itself – an evolutionary value, as a result of the

tree of life – and **it is hard to find any philosophical or logical reason as to why we should have the right to destroy other forms of life** and other branches of the tree of life.

▶ *The utilitarian approach only values nature based on its 'usefulness' for humans, implying that only the part of nature that provides resources, or ensures the fundamental ecosystem services on which human societies depend, should be protected.*

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, adopted in December 2022 by the 196 national members of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), represents a tentative first step in this direction. The dramatic loss of biodiversity is a global systemic process (due to a convergence of factors like deforestation, invasive species, demographic growth, pollution, overexploitation and climate change) and requires global systemic approaches, including taxation and financial instruments. This Framework document, which sets the path for governments across the world to protect the planet's bio-ecological legacy until 2030, places unprecedented emphasis on traditional and local socio-ecological knowledge, recognising it as comparably as important as Western scientific tradition in safeguarding biodiversity. A couple of simple figures clearly illustrate the direct interdependence between ecological 'health' and traditional cultures: indigenous and local peoples occupy only five per cent of the Earth's lands, yet the territories they manage encompass 80 per cent of the Earth's biodiversity. These peoples are therefore preserving the conditions of our lives as well as their own.

Biological and ecological diversity is the very foundation of our survival and well-being on this planet. However, the widespread short-sighted and economistic approaches (compensations, greenwashing, etc) towards vulnerable beings, both human and nonhuman, are threatening the current configuration of life on Earth, and posing existential risks in environmental, social and economic dimensions.

To address this challenge, progressive movements must update their philosophical bases of environmentalism. We need a scientific, humanistic, popular, pragmatic and radical environmentalism. **The interests of nature and biodiversity are our interests. All European Constitutions should introduce the words 'environment', 'ecosystems' and 'biodiversity' into their articles, as Italy did in 2022.** It is high time we reconsidered our relationship with the nonhuman world, shifting towards a more horizontal, participatory and democratic way of governing interspecific relationships, and decentring our supposed superiority. Our values, our well-being and our very existence are at stake.

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Climate mainstreaming Breaking down the silos

Climate change is a systemic issue that cannot be addressed by **siloed thinking**. The transition to a political, social and economic model needs a **holistic understanding to address the planetary emergencies** and to implement the commitments of the EU Climate Law. Transforming societies and economies while respecting sustainability principles means **mainstreaming environmental concerns whenever we design policies for all other areas**.

Like climate change, environmental policies can affect different areas, such as gender, digital and health.

Read the f**our policy briefs** and watch the **expert debates**, produced in cooperation with *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, to disentangle these interlinkages by connecting climate matters with different disciplinary backgrounds.

Our food production destroys biodiversity

by Nout van der Vaart

The goals and targets agreed upon in a new and ambitious international framework to restore global biodiversity will only be met if countries radically transform their agriculture and food production systems. The EU needs to be a leader in bringing food production and consumption back within planetary boundaries.

The numbers are staggering. **Since 1900, an estimated 75 per cent of global plant genetic diversity has been lost**. This is mainly due to the widespread uptake of Green Revolution agricultural production models, which is detrimental to biodiversity. The large-scale application of artificial fertilisers and pesticides, and the neglect of farmers' landraces (local and indigenous seeds) as they turned to grow genetically homogenous commodity crops, have been among the main drivers of the decline of genetic diversity. The overall decline in species and the destruction of ecosystems were first brought to our attention with the establishment of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) during the UN's first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Unfortunately, the international community has not kept its promise of protecting Earth's natural resources effectively. Last December, countries adopted a new set of ambitious international goals for biodiversity at the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) in Montreal. In this new Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), 188 countries agreed to scale up their efforts to protect nature and to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by the end of this decade. It is yet to be seen if they will keep their promise this time.

The new framework consists of four ambitious goals and 23 targets, like protecting 30 per cent of the world's land areas and 30 per cent of oceans by 2030. It also comprises an agreement for rich countries to mobilise $30 billion for poorer countries by 2030. However, questions still need to be answered on whether the agreements that have been signed will be sufficiently transformative. None of the components of the Framework – nor of the 1992 Convention for that matter – are legally binding. It is unclear, for example, how the "restoration and enhancement of ecosystem function through nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches" (target 11) is meant to become a reality, as this will largely be left for countries to determine.

What has become clear, however, is that **countries will need to reform their economies substantially in order to respect the Framework. Most of the 23 targets agreed in the Framework are directly or indirectly relevant to agriculture, and therefore one area to look at in particular is food production**. Much of the global genetic diversity has been lost over the past century due to agricultural developments and how food systems currently function. The globalised industrial food system is characterised by high market concentration. Only a small number of corporate players dominate the global seed, fertiliser and pesticide sectors, global food trade, food processing and grocery retail markets. This has spurred the decline of the varieties and breeds used by farmers. It has also caused the rising global demand for animal-based food like meat and dairy, and for tropical products like coffee, palm oil, cocoa and sugar, which has been a major driver of the large-scale destruction of ecosystems in the Amazon rainforest and in the savannahs and wetlands around the globe.

▶ *Countries will need to reform their economies substantially in order to respect the Framework. Most of the 23 targets agreed in the Framework are directly or indirectly relevant to agriculture, and therefore one area to look at in particular is food production.*

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We need to transform the destructive tendencies of our current food production systems into a force for good, and to halt food systems-induced biodiversity loss. A first step for governments worldwide would be to translate their commitments in the new Global Biodiversity Framework into concrete national action plans. In the years ahead, governments will need to concretise their commitments in the so-called National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. The reform of food systems must be a key focus in these plans. There are several ways that food systems can be made to work better for biodiversity.

First of all, countries across the board need to adopt and implement agricultural development and food policies that strengthen and promote genetic diversity, rather than break it down.

In many cases, this means that they need to move away from high-input agriculture, and to reduce dependencies on chemical fertilisers and pesticides, stopping their focus on only a small number of commercially oriented crops. **While there is no one-size-fits-all approach, the targets of the European Farm to Fork strategy, including the goal to reduce by 50 per cent the use and risk of chemical pesticides by 2030,** **and the goal to boost organic production to reach 25 per cent of the EU's agricultural land use by 2030, are a promising way forward. The EU should remain coherent and respect a similar ambition when it operates globally, through its international trade, agriculture and development policies.**

Countries in the Global South, which in the current system function predominantly as peripheries cheaply producing a limited number of (genetically homogenous) crops for global commodity markets, must be supported in developing domestic and regional food markets. This means scaling up investment in the domestic agricultural sector, while protecting home markets against cheap imports from abroad. Such a move would require a significant shift in international and bilateral trade regimes, which are often negotiated to benefit and protect farmers in rich countries. International trade rules must be reshaped, with greater space for poorer countries to adjust their levels of food imports and exports and to invest in domestic food production.

Many countries in the Global South have a great diversity of indigenous crops and varieties grown on farmers' fields and often **traded in informal, local food markets. Fair prices paid to the producers who grow and conserve local plant varieties and cattle breeds are thus a necessary condition to maintain and strengthen an agrobiodiverse system.** One related way to spur the growth of biodiversity-friendly food systems would be to reward agroecological production principles and practices. Intercropping and the use of cover crops enhance soil health, and agroecological practices like crop-livestock integration enhance ecological functions by optimising biological synergies, leading to greater efficiency in the use of resources and to greater resilience.

Another crucial element in the struggle for biodiverse food production systems – and for agrarian justice – is the recognition of indigenous knowledge and its inclusion in decision-making processes and research institutions. Farmers have in-depth knowledge and expertise in improving, selecting and multiplying native and indigenous plant species, and these practices are key to climate resilience. Cooperation between farmers, breeders and knowledge institutions on developing and enhancing farmers' seed varieties is a very good example of how local knowledge on agrobiodiversity can be utilised, strengthened and allocated in order to boost local food security, as well as to conserve species and to protect ecosystems at large.

Much remains to be done to halt and reverse global biodiversity loss. The new Global Biodiversity Framework gives precious guidance on how to avoid further eating into our planet. All countries need to rethink and radically adjust their food production systems for the goals to be achieved, and the EU and countries in the Global North must be bold in their responsibility in this area.

Nout van der Vaart, Policy Lead Food and Land at Oxfam Novib (the Dutch branch of Oxfam)

Biodiversity may be the key to saving our future

by Pia Höfferle

The focus of environmental policies is mostly on tackling the cascade effects of climate change that impact our planet as a whole. Nature conservation, however, can also contribute very effectively to climate change adaptation. To tackle climate issues by working with nature will nevertheless require an urgent shift in our current mindset. Measures to tackle the climate by nature conservation must be pursued without delay.

Climate plays a fundamental part in shaping the Earth's major ecosystems, such as forests. Nature and ecosystems react to climate change with a delay, but resilient and healthy ecosystems respond to these changes more flexibly and dynamically than degraded ecosystems. It is crucial to actively address climate change via the aspect of biodiversity loss as soon as possible.

When looking at the current status of biodiversity, the consequences of human activity and climate change are visible at every level, from individual species to whole ecosystems. Major reasons for biodiversity decline are agricultural intensification, intensive forest management, and urban sprawl — which all cause habitat degradation and loss. The warming of the atmosphere meanwhile causes a rapid expansion of invasive species and outbreaks of disease, which spread faster and with higher intensity. Moreover, due to the accelerated increase in average temperatures and other consequential changes in the environment, many native species are unable to adapt as quickly as needed and their extinction thus becomes inevitable.

In addition, **climate change can affect different ecosystems through a cascade effect. For example, changes in mountain ecosystems, such as changes in the amount of precipitation and shifts in precipitation patterns and, consequently, in water quantity and quality, are also indirectly expressed in lowland ecosystems, where changes in water supply regimes lead to spatial shifts in plant and animal communities and, in some cases, even cause the destruction of entire ecosystems**. The effects of climate change on biodiversity are of particular concern in more sensitive environments, where species are tied to specific environmental characteristics. In the EU, long-term trends indicate a major decline in biodiversity. Three quarters of assessed habitats and 39 per cent of 463 bird species have poor or bad conservation status. Deterioration in the population trends of bird species in the EU has been growing steadily and experts say that serious efforts are now needed to reverse the current negative trends.

In terms of biodiversity, forests are among the richest ecosystems on the planet. In addition to their importance for nature conservation, they can contribute significantly to tackling the consequences of climate change. As major contributors to the total carbon sink, forests play an important role in accelerating or decelerating global climate change. Larger tropical rainforests such as the Amazon rainforest, the Congo River basin rainforest and the tropical rainforests in South-East Asia play a crucial role in storing CO_2 gases. **Together with tropical rainforests, sustainably managed forests can contribute considerably to climate protection because they act as a natural filter for the air, absorbing various pollutants and other harmful particles. They protect water and soil, as well as providing ecosystem services like protection against landslides, rockfalls and erosion, improvement of water quality through nutrient absorption, improvement of water retention during heavy rainfall, and reduction of surface runoff.** Forests also provide a variety of social benefits for people as they provide recreational spaces where people come to relax, enjoy nature, and engage in nature-related and sporting activities. This contributes to better physical and mental health.

In addition, forests are valued for their educational purposes and can help raise awareness of the importance of nature conservation – for example through educational hikes, school trips or research projects. For some communities, forests have cultural significance and can offer spiritual refuge. The impacts of unsustainable practices and climate change have a significant effect on all these forest functions and uses, as well as on their economic, protective and ecological values. Degraded forest ecosystems take a longer time to recover, thus lowering their economic value because they offer fewer ecological services and have an overall lower social value as they do not offer the same experiences as healthy ecosystems. Degraded ecosystems are much less resilient and more prone to the major impacts of extreme weather events and natural disasters, lowering their potential for protection and restoration.

Given the importance of forests as one of the essential cornerstones for climate change mitigation in the EU, forest restoration and conservation should be considered a priority objective when addressing climate issues. In the EU, approximately 10 per cent of the annual greenhouse gas emissions are absorbed and stored in forest soils and biomass. Primary, mature and old-growth forests play an especially vital role, as the high volumes of live and dead woody biomass and soil in the humus layer in these forests assimilate large amounts of CO_2. The latest research shows that these forests represent below three per cent of the total forest extent of the EU and about 90 per cent of them are located in Sweden, Bulgaria, Finland and Romania.

> ▶ *Deforestation, caused mainly by agricultural and urban area expansion in the EU, contributes to producing additional carbon sources and causes significant habitat loss, as well as significant changes in the populations and ranges of species.*

Unlike primary and old-growth forests, intensively managed and altered forests are less resistant and consequently more sensitive to the impacts of climate change, due to the instability of the entire ecosystem. While natural disturbances are part of forest dynamics, more frequent extreme weather phenomena and other climate change impacts can affect forest ecosystems faster and with higher intensity. **Deforestation, caused mainly by agricultural and urban area expansion in the EU, contributes to producing additional carbon sources and causes significant habitat loss, as well as significant changes in the populations and ranges of species.** While deforestation creates visible and comprehensive changes in forest ecosystems, intensive forest management practices and climate change affect the forest more indirectly. Both factors affect nutrient and life cycles, causing detrimental effects on soil composition, resource availability, forest growth processes and species populations. Through its impact on temperature and precipitation, climate change also affects the local and global water cycles, causing more frequent occurrences of extreme weather events,

such as forest fires and droughts, and lowering resilience to natural disturbances such as species invasion and disease and pest outbreaks, like that of bark beetles.

The protection of biodiversity is extremely important in mitigating and adapting to climate change and its effects. Nature conservation and climate mitigation measures are irrefutably interconnected and cannot be approached separately. Today's knowledge is sufficient to start implementing sustainable and nature-based measures and to adapt our current practices to tackle climate change in a more biodiversity-oriented manner. Unfortunately, some otherwise well-intentioned measures could severely harm biodiversity and threaten ecosystem functions.

▶ *The most obvious conflicts are in the field of renewable energy sources. While wood is considered a renewable fuel, the continuous felling of primary, old-growth and mature forests for timber destroys the resilience of forest ecosystems and can lead to significant deterioration if not managed properly.*

The most obvious conflicts are in the field of renewable energy sources. While wood is considered a renewable fuel, the continuous felling of primary, old-growth and mature forests for timber destroys the resilience of forest ecosystems and can lead to significant deterioration if not managed properly. In Romania, for example, illegal logging in the Fagaras Mountains is still ongoing and is thus damaging one of the oldest forest ecosystems in the Balkan regions – lowering its carbon sink function, contributing to additional

CO_2 emissions, reducing its social value, and exposing it to other threats connected with such practices, such as invasive species, pests, diseases and extreme weather events. If wood is to be considered a renewable and carbon-neutral energy source, it must be carefully examined from the point of view of long-term sustainability, as misuse could evidently lead to even more intense cascade effects of climate change on forest ecosystems.

There are many appropriate measures and ways to successfully combat biodiversity loss and climate change. As part of a broader effort to address the issues at hand, forest conservation and restoration plays a crucial role. When it comes to forest conservation, efforts should be put into establishing new and larger areas where forests are excluded from forest management, allowing them to mature and reach their full potential as carbon sinks. Simultaneously, sustainable forest management such as reduced-impact logging and the promotion of certified sustainable forest products can help maintain the social, ecological, protective and economic value of forests. Together with the previously mentioned practices, restoration projects such as reforestation and afforestation can also support sustainable forest management practices and biodiversity protection on a local and even regional level. In light of the ongoing biodiversity loss and increasing effects of climate change, the EU is currently addressing biodiversity loss through two major instruments: the EU Forest Strategy for 2030 and the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. However, for the positive correlation between nature conservation, climate change and nature-based solutions to gain more recognition and greater importance at all levels – from governance to the general public – a major push is needed to promote the value and strengthen the efforts of biodiversity conservation. A new law – a nature restoration law – could play a crucial part in achieving the sustainable management of natural resources, while simultaneously protecting and conserving not only nature, but also ourselves.

Pia Höfferle,
Conservation ornithologist
at DOPPS BirdLife Slovenia

RECOVERY WATCH

Towards a renewables' scale-up that works for nature

This policy study shows how selected Central and Eastern EU Member States plan to **use recovery funds to speed up renewable energy deployment**.

We analyse **the impact** this deployment will have on nature.

Biodiversity and climate emergencies must be tackled together and **trade-offs between renewable energy and biodiversity can and must be reduced to an absolute minimum**.

This policy study is part of the Recovery Watch, a structured network of experts monitoring the implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans, and assessing their impact on key social outcomes.

From restoration to resilience: how the UN Decade can safeguard water

by Nidhi Nagabhatla

Preserving riparian ecosystems – the areas on the banks of rivers or streams – is essential to protecting biodiversity and stewarding our increasingly scarce water resources. Indeed, these extended areas next to rivers or other water bodies serve as unique habitats for biodiversity. In addition, they provide important ecosystem services by helping to maintain water quality, prevent erosion, and provide habitat for wildlife.

Human activities can impact these crucial ecosystems. Water security planning that is sensitive to ecosystems is therefore needed to restore riparian regions for biodiversity and water quality purposes. Carefully ensuring water security and its distribution is key in dealing with the systemic consequences of climate change: water scarcity and water quality degradation. Ensuring the availability, accessibility and careful management of water resources to meet the present and future demands of populations and ecosystems could help us move towards fairer societies. This includes strategies for efficient water use and restoration of water sources which go hand in hand with preserving and restoring ecosystems. **To build climate-resilient societies, it is imperative to ensure reliable access to safe and clean water for drinking, sanitation, agriculture, industry and ecosystem functioning.**

Part of the solution to water security issues lies in the UN's Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, which aims to restore global ecosystems to recover biodiversity and ecosystem health, to address climate change impacts, and to support human well-being. This UN Decade complements the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the commitments made at the 15th UN Biodiversity Conference (the 2022 meeting of the Conference of the Parties [COP-15] to the Convention on Biological Diversity, CBD). Recognising the urgent need to restore degraded ecosystems for the benefit of both people and nature, the agenda of the Decade reiterates the need for an inclusive approach to managing freshwater, coastal, marine and other ecosystems.

▶ *To build climate-resilient societies there is a clear imperative to ensure reliable access to safe and clean water for drinking, sanitation, agriculture, industry and ecosystem functioning.*

The simple message is that by restoring biodiversity and ecosystem integrity, we can recover ecosystem goods and services that are essential for sustaining life on Earth. **Unlike conventional restoration approaches, the UN Decade places special prominence on co-creating: an approach focused on discussions with the people who are most concerned, including indigenous communities.** This is welcome progress from a climate justice perspective as it gives voice to those most impacted by climate risks and damage – a core element of procedural climate justice. This broader perspective allows for a more comprehensive restoration strategy, addressing diverse challenges and ensuring the long-term health of ecosystems worldwide, while empowering states, communities, and individuals by providing them with the necessary tools and guidance to prevent, halt and reverse ecosystem degradation. By sharing the sustainable practices of communities that are doing well in stewarding nature globally, the Decade will hopefully bring forward further concerted action at different levels of society.

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The recent Global Capacity Needs Assessment documentation and the summary report on standards of practice to guide ecosystem restoration state that collective discussions at the regional and national level could help translate the Decade agenda into concrete action.

If we evaluate critical global challenges like water security, it becomes clear that they can benefit from the commitments outlined in the UN Decade: restoration of water ecosystems, wetlands and protection of riparian biodiversity can support a better coordination of water allocation, better use patterns and better protection across different sectors, such as agriculture, industry and domestic use.

The central problem in understanding the relationship between water policy and ecosystem restoration is the underrepresentation of an ecosystem-based approach to water management. Conventionally, water management is understood from the viewpoint of a demand and supply equation – municipal water supply, irrigation, economic use for industries – and less with a focus on the water requirements of natural systems like wetlands, forests, etc. Over the long term, this oversight has resulted in either over-extraction and/or a lack of efficiency in managing water resources sustainably.

There is no blueprint to solve this problem. However, addressing the complex issue of water security with a focus on ecosystems requires a paradigm shift in our approaches and behaviours. In practice, this means adopting integrated restoration-focused water security planning, optimising water use and promoting conservation measures. Protecting nature is, in fact,

in our best interest. Countries and communities can pave the way for longer-term availability, provided they understand the interconnection between water security, climate change adaptation and resilience building, and provided they emphasise the importance of designing and implementing water management practices that protect riparian ecosystems.

In addition, collaboration and cooperation among countries and communities at the international, regional and local levels are also key to achieving a 'water-secure future for all'. For citizens, sharing knowledge, best practice and technologies can help overcome common challenges and promote sustainable water management.

The Decade also highlights the need for ambitious regional efforts such as the Nature restoration law proposed by the European Commission. This law calls for swift action in addressing crucial aspects like water, land and soil restoration in an integrated manner. Such an approach could harmonise our relationship with nature by restoring entire ecosystems in countries, communities and globally.

To successfully restore our relationship with nature, we must acknowledge that people and knowledge are essential components of an approach that could inspire governments, and that could empower individuals and communities to actively participate in efforts towards achieving water security. Establishing platforms for collaboration and knowledge exchange could amplify the collective impact of restoration initiatives. This ten-year pledge by the UN can foster a sense of ownership and responsibility along with the opportunity to unlock the collective potential that is so sorely needed in order to drive transformative change. The UN Decade opens the door so that we can move together towards a sustainable future for us and our riparian ecosystems.

Nidhi Nagabhatla, Senior Research Fellow at the United Nations University

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Tightening the guardrails for AI

by Brando Benifei

On 14 June, the European Parliament took a decisive step towards the adoption of common rules for EU member states on artificial intelligence (AI). It approved – by a very large majority of 499 votes in favour and with only 28 against and 93 abstentions – the negotiating mandate to be taken to trilogue with the Council and the European Commission.

The vote confirmed the text that was approved, also by a very large majority, in the joint Internal Market (IMCO) and Civil Liberties (LIBE) committees at the European Parliament on 11 May. On the very evening of that vote in May, the first negotiation meeting took place, and it is possible that by the end of this European legislature, the historic goal of the first comprehensive regulation of AI worldwide will be reached.

▶ *The negotiations were particularly challenging due to the breadth and complexity of the issues at stake, but above all because very different positions were pursued even within the same political groups, and because applications such as Chat GPT-4 emerged during the approval process, which had a big public impact.*

The regulation must hold together different challenges and objectives: to establish a governance system, to manage the risks of AI, to establish obligations and prohibitions for providers and users, to define protections for citizens (for example in the areas of privacy and non-discrimination) and to promote the development of innovation and technology in accordance with EU values. **The negotiations were particularly challenging due to the breadth and complexity of the issues at stake, but above all because very different positions were pursued even within the same political groups, and because applications such as Chat GPT-4 emerged during the approval process, which had a big public impact.**

An initial issue concerns the governance system, which will be very important to 'guide' the first phase of the AI regulation (when there will certainly be disagreements on the application of the rules) and then to 'accompany' the regulation of a subject that changes very rapidly. A European Office for Artificial Intelligence is to be set up, which will be endowed with legal personality, and which will be independent from the European Commission. This AI Office will give opinions to the Commission on the implementation of the regulation and on the development of AI. The member states must designate a National Supervisory Authority with the same requirement of independence and with adequate resources. The Management Board of the AI Office is to be composed of representatives of the National Authorities, the Commission, the European Privacy Supervisor, the European Cyber Security Agency, and the European Fundamental Rights Agency. A Consultative Forum is also planned in order to ensure a permanent involvement of the various stakeholders, economic actors and civil society.

The regulation that will now be negotiated in trilogue defines a series of general prohibitions and establishes a graduation of obligations and responsibilities based on the different levels of risk of infringing rights. **The second major issue concerns the regulation of so-called high-risk artificial intelligence systems. Compared to the European Commission's proposal, artificial intelligence systems must now also pose a 'significant risk' of harm to health, safety and fundamental rights in order to be classified in this high-risk category.**

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The application of this will be delicate because different aspects such as the severity, intensity and probability of harm will have to be assessed, as well as the duration of its effects. The risk of harm to the environment is also now included in some areas, and the scope of application of this is now extended to AI systems that are related to the provision of essential services, and to AI systems dedicated to migration and border management, as well as to AI systems aimed at influencing voters in political campaigns and recommending content through major social media platforms.

The Socialists and Democrats (S&D) managed to obtain a good compromise on a third important issue, namely video surveillance, where the ultra-securitarian position was strongly supported by some centre-right national governments. Indeed, a separate vote on this issue was requested in the joint IMCO and LIBE committees in May. Compared to the draft AI Act that was presented by the European Commission, the European Parliament has now established that biometric identification software can only be used ex post and only for investigations of a 'serious crime' for which video recordings

need to be analysed with authorisation from the judiciary. At the same time, **a ban has been established on any biometric identification carried out in real-time and in public places**. One of the most relevant effects of this ban is the proscription of using facial recognition, be it to combat irregular immigration, or for the defence of national borders, which clearly fall in the categorie 'public places'.

The introduction of an obligation, for those who deploy a high-risk AI system on people, to carry out a fundamental rights impact assessment is still a very important issue. Only the end user can in fact have precise information on the context and the specific target population to which he intends to apply AI. In addition to this obligation there are **two other important measures for protecting workers: the obligation, again for the end user, to involve the trade unions in an agreement before introducing an AI system in the workplace, and the obligation to inform the workers**. Since employment is a matter of shared competence, and not therefore suitable for regulation, the possibility remains for both the EU and the member states to introduce stricter measures on this subject.

The text of this regulation is long and very detailed, but there are two more issues that are particularly worth highlighting. The first is that the scope of the regulation has been extended to include so-called 'foundational models', which are not yet real AI systems, but models that are developed and 'trained' on millions of data, which can be integrated into AI systems. The best-known example of a foundational model is GPT, which is the model on which Chat GPT-4 is based. For these models, manufacturers must identify possible foreseeable risks to health, safety, fundamental rights, the environment, democracy and the rule of law – and they must define appropriate controls. The second issue worth highlighting is that each member state must set out a regulatory framework to foster innovation and ensure that a company using a regulatory sandbox (a space for experimentation in a controlled environment) has a specific plan, which has been agreed with the relevant authority, to test that company's innovation for a limited period.

▶ *The Socialists and Democrats managed to obtain a good compromise on a third important issue, namely video surveillance, where the ultra-securitarian position was also strongly supported by some centre-right national governments.*

Brando Benifei, Member of the European Parliament, Head of the S&D Group's Italian Delegation and co-Rapporteur on the AI regulation

Future-proofing AI: regulation for innovation, human rights and societal progress

by Virginia Dignum

How can AI be regulated so that it enhances innovation and competitive power, and so that it is future-proof, protects fundamental human rights, and brings forward societal benefits? This is the task the European Union set out to accomplish with the introduction of the AI Act – which has been discussed and approved by the European Parliament on 14 June.

Establishing a comprehensive and future-proof European legal framework of ethical principles for the development, deployment and use of AI is an important task. It has implications not only for Europe, but for the whole world, as well as for the role of AI applications, their development and use on our planet. However, even now, AI does not exist in a regulatory vacuum because many laws, directives, standards and guidelines already apply to AI systems, products and results. Supporting better understanding and integration of all these existing frameworks is as important as introducing more regulation. At the same time, too narrow an understanding of what constitutes an AI system will not improve public trust. From the perspective of those affected by technology, particularly by errors in automated decision-making, it does not matter whether the decision was made using a sophisticated AI algorithm or a simple spreadsheet: if it is wrong, it needs to be corrected, whether AI was involved or not.

The potential impact of AI on society is huge, both in a positive and in a negative sense. In particular, it is crucial to address the ethical consequences of AI systems. For example:

- the lack of transparency of AI tools: AI decisions are not always intelligible to humans;

- value alignment: AI is not neutral, and therefore AI-based decisions are susceptible to inaccuracies, discriminatory outcomes and embedded or inserted bias;

- commodification: we and our societies are more than the data that is available about us, and at the same time, data gathering and management raise concerns about the privacy of users;

- power imbalances: increasingly the ability to deploy and benefit from large AI systems is concentrated in the hands of a couple of (mostly private) organisations. This leads to issues of democratic accountability and the deepening of societal and economic divides.

Most stakeholders agree on the need for some form of regulation in the AI and digital technology landscape. Regulatory efforts must consider both current AI capabilities and future developments, especially in generative AI models, which can be applied in diverse ways with varying risks. For example, the risks of using such systems to summarise a newspaper article are very different from those of using the same technology to give medical advice. Regulatory processes need to monitor these developments, in ways that guide responsible research and innovation rather than inhibiting new developments.

▶ *Most stakeholders agree on the need for some form of regulation in the AI and digital technology landscape. Regulatory efforts must consider both current AI capabilities and future developments, especially in generative AI models, which can be applied in diverse ways with varying risks.*

Regulation should therefore guide responsible research and innovation without stifling progress. In attempting to balance scientific progress with ethical considerations and the avoidance of harm, lessons can be learned from the existing regulations concerning genetic manipulation. Indeed, it is crucial to consider the implications to AI legislation of a study on genetic technology regulation that was published by the European Commission in 2021. The study established that limitations to the capacity of legislation to keep pace with scientific developments can cause implementation challenges as well as legal uncertainties.

Concrete steps (technical, organisational and legal) are needed now, to ensure that AI legislation will ensure continuous innovation and scientific developments that are aligned with human rights and societal values, rather than becoming a burden in the development process. Moreover, effective AI regulation must involve international cooperation and coordination because of the transnational nature of research and development, the potential societal and environmental impact, and the geopolitical strategies. In the case of genetic technology, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety aims to establish common guidelines and procedures.

By contrast, global coordination on AI regulations is currently less established, although there are ongoing discussions and initiatives to promote international cooperation in this area, notably by UNESCO, the OECD, and the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI).

▶ *AI is not out of control. We are losing control of those that develop and exploit AI.*

Contrary to current narratives of existential risks, **AI is not out of control, but we are losing control on those that develop and exploit AI.** Demanding responsibility and accountability from organisations that develop and deploy AI systems must nevertheless be accompanied by concrete steps in governance, at the national as well as the global level – not just nice words about which principles AI should follow, but concrete solutions. For instance, there should be demands on preconditions for making AI systems available: technical requirements on transparency and explainability, demands on auditing the organisations deploying these systems, and maybe also demands on the expertise of those using the systems. Indeed, **we do not let pharmaceutical companies release medicines without many tests, nor do we let people drive cars without a driver's licence**.

It is crucial to avoid embracing an 'arms race' narrative that implies a singular finish line, where losers and winners can be identified, and that implies there is one direction to follow towards that line. Such a narrative undermines the systematic and long-term research and development necessary to explore consequences, improve AI technologies and their implementations, and refine regulations. The primary role of regulation at this stage is to incentivise such exploration. Responsible innovation, focusing on sustainability and fundamental human rights, should serve as the main support for regulation. Just as exploratory innovations have led to higher standards in various sectors, from green energy to fair trade initiatives or LED lamps, we urgently need responsible AI innovations that demonstrate responsible, sustainable, and trustworthy alternatives to current AI developments.

Instead of viewing regulation as a constraint on innovation, it should be framed as a powerful steppingstone for innovation. Like a beacon, regulation will signal the expected ambitions of innovation.

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Regulating AI: workers' intelligence versus Big Tech oligarchs

by Bonn Juego

If there is any compelling realisation about the protracted attempts in the US and EU to regulate emerging technologies, it is that Big Tech oligarchs do not care about the well-being of the individual, the workers, the socio-economy or democracy, unless civil society and public authorities force them to do so.

Disruption is said to be the new normal. Digitalisation, globalisation and demographic shifts are accelerating at an unprecedented rate with far-reaching effects on daily lives, societal interaction, consumption patterns, business operations and the nature of work. A recent disruptive technology like artificial intelligence (AI) that is based on the advances of the internet, computing, information systems, communications and electronic materials will further alter economic relations, especially working life.

The evolving practice of algorithmic management at the workplace depends on AI's voracious appetite for data to perform automated decision-making for the remote control of the workforce. Workers are being programmed, motivated, managed, evaluated or undermined by statistical patterns and algorithms. While the lifeblood of data and algorithms are the workers, both academic theorising and policy debates on today's platform capitalism and the digital world often overlook the workers' perspective, agency and consciousness.

Conventional economic theories and parliamentary enquiries treat workers as passive – rather than active – actors in the evolution of technology. The usual assumption is that multinational corporations are the leading innovators, and the value they create leads to increased productivity, which, in turn, causes job losses and de-skilling. This perception misses out the reality that technological innovation is a process and product of collective labour. Indeed, the rapid advancement of science and technology is a striking reflection of a fundamental aspect necessary for the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production: the division, fluidity and mobility of labour. Yet despite the dependence of digitalised capitalism on skilled, flexible and mobile workers, it is the Tech Giants, not the workers, that are being set free.

During AI's installation period as a revolutionary technology, there is no doubt that the Big Tech companies are well-positioned to direct its deployment as a commodity to their profit-making advantage. In the context of hyper-competition in the world economy, the

Big Tech elites have an interest in leveraging scalable AI solutions to reduce labour costs, increase output and outdo their competitors. **Years of scrutiny by the US Congress and the European Parliament on Big Tech's activities have revealed the oligarchical status of these few powerful corporations – which have been implicated in antitrust violations, tax avoidance, privacy invasions, job displacements and election interference.**

▶ *Years of scrutiny by the US Congress and the European Parliament on Big Tech's activities have revealed the oligarchical status of these few powerful corporations – which have been implicated in antitrust violations, tax avoidance, privacy invasions, job displacements, and election interference.*

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With their data monopoly, significant economies of scale, strategic acquisitions of competing enterprises, market dominance and sheer wealth accumulated from the advent of the Information Age and the digital economy, the Big Tech oligarchs enjoy first-mover advantages in influencing the innovation and regulation of AI. The threat of regulatory capture for new technologies is real. These Big Tech companies can enlist AI into their service – including the possibility of weaponising this innovative machine to stifle not only their business competition but also political opposition. The mainstream approach to responsible business conduct, like that of the European Commission (where corporate social responsibility is company-led and the relationship of state regulators with companies is limited to a supportive role through voluntary policy measures), should not therefore be extended to the regulation of AI *vis-à-vis* the Big Tech companies.

New AI regulatory frameworks must emerge where rules are emancipatory for workers, but disciplinary for Big Tech misbehaviour. Businesses should be made to appreciate why regulation of risky AI systems is not mere cost and burden on them; rather, it is invaluable for the process of innovation itself. Policies should enable them to innovate with ethical and moral considerations, while disallowing them to automate functions that manipulate behaviour at the expense of human dignity and autonomy.

At the same time, **a progressive regulatory framework must recognise workers as social individuals having the intelligence and sensibility – the cognitive and affective capacities – to make AI liberating technologies, rather than machineries of social control and labour exploitation**. Implementing this necessitates the reactivation of working-class consciousness among AI producers and users. The diverse professionals involved in the production and use of AI – from data scientists and robotics engineers to computer programmers – are all workers, and so are the technology consumers and ordinary citizens.

Several ideas about AI regulation from the point of view of workers should be explored. Workers can actively participate in the design of transparent, accountable, explainable and human rights-based AI. Workers can bargain with employers in negotiating AI-enabled techniques. Workers can individually set their work goals and schedules, yet collectively build humane and value-creating conditions for their workplace. Moreover, the concepts of 'selective automation' and 'responsible innovation' can also be realised from a labour perspective – concerning the former, workers can influence which work activity should be automated or not; and concerning the latter, workers consider both the intended consequences and the unintended outcomes of AI.

Certainly, ongoing attempts at AI regulation suffer from failed efforts to make a timely check on the modus operandi of Big Tech and its platformised business models. But **it is not too late to regulate AI. The current momentum in media discussions and public awareness about generative AI, language models and chatbot software – which undertake tasks indistinguishable from human work – can help drive effective regulatory approaches**. Calibrated state intervention, intergovernmental action and societal vigilance are needed now to mitigate risks and maximise general benefits of budding innovations.

Regulating AI is essentially a political and policymaking endeavour. Politically, internationalist labour unions, in coordination with international institutions for global democratic governance, will have to be created as countervailing organisations against the monopolistic nature and transnational reach of Big Tech oligarchs. Policy-wise, to democratise the development of AI, it is of paramount importance to ask: regulation for whom and by whom? Democratising AI should not be reduced to a discourse on risk level classification or to the dilemma of 'over-regulation versus underregulation' but must seriously embody the question of representation. Workers and their organised trade unions ought to be represented as proactive participants in the processes of technological innovation and public regulation for the common good.

Bonn Juego,
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Asylum and containment: the bankruptcy of conditionality

by Thomas Spijkerboer

For almost two decades, Europe has tried to contain migrants and refugees in neighbouring countries. But this approach is bankrupt and the situation in Tunisia is merely the most recent 'crisis' that shows this. The alternative is long-term, formalised and unconditional support of Europe's neighbours, that addresses their concerns, and that would also better serve Europe's interests.

For nearly 20 years, the EU and its member states have tried to externalise asylum and migration policy. They make private actors (such as airlines) and neighbouring countries (such as Turkey, Libya, Tunisia and Morocco) responsible for keeping African and Asian migrants away from European territory. In the *Asylum for Containment* report, which I co-authored with colleagues from Niger, Serbia, Tunisia and Turkey, we point to a contradiction at the heart of this European externalisation policy – a contradiction that helps explain why externalised migration policies do not work, and at times even backfire.

Europe is aware that, for externalisation to work, neighbouring states must have functioning migration and asylum systems (with state-of-the-art legislation, policy and administration). From a European perspective, this is perfectly logical: to contain migrants and refugees in neighbouring countries, asylum and migration governance needs to be supported in those countries. In turn,

Europe's neighbouring states are aware that there is a link between Europe's containment policies and the EU's support for migration and asylum governance. While these neighbouring states have an interest in functioning migration and asylum governance for themselves, they do not want to be the place where European containment policies take place – they do not want to become European hotspots. The position taken by Europe's neighbours is not merely based on calculating the benefits and costs of cooperating with Europe; it is also based on a normative position about global mobility.

Neighbouring countries thus only partially cooperate with the EU. Serbia, for example, hopes to become an EU member state soon and therefore formally accepts the EU acquis as it is. For the Serbian government, EU accession has priority over any disadvantage that may follow from implementing European law. Meanwhile, Niger (one of the poorest countries on Earth) receives EU budget support on condition that it implements certain migration

policies. And other countries also partially accept what is largely a European diktat. In some contexts, they do so eagerly – particularly when the EU is willing to train and fund their police forces and security services. While these countries do, of course, have a certain degree of countervailing power, none of them (not even Turkey) can afford to disregard European policy preferences.

Containment is nevertheless not in the interest of Europe's neighbours. They are less affluent (and, in many cases, far less so) than Europe, and they lack the massive administrative systems of European countries. Furthermore, like European countries, they too have economic, social and political concerns which make migration and asylum sensitive issues. In Agadez (northern Niger), for example, the EU funds a UNHCR office where Sudanese refugees can ask for resettlement in Europe, rather than trying to reach Europe by a smuggler boat. Although at first sight this is a positive initiative, **local authorities and civil society organisations**

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are unhappy with the 'hotspotisation' of their city, which coincides with the undermining of traditional trans-Sahara trade due to EU-led anti-smuggling policies. Why would people in Agadez be prepared to bear a burden that people in Greece, Italy, Germany or Sweden are not prepared to bear themselves?

This 'calculating' attitude ('this costs us more than the EU gives in return') is reinforced by a normative perspective. It is not just that European external migration policy is not 'profitable' enough for neighbouring states. From their perspective, it is also unreasonable and not legitimate. Indeed, this normative perspective is multi-layered. One layer is that Europe's neighbours are at the wrong end of what Steffan Mau has called the 'global mobility divide'. Due to the restrictive European visa regime, citizens, in particular of African countries, have fewer mobility rights than they had during the cold war. European promises of legal pathways for migration conspicuously fail to materialise. In fact, it is quite the contrary: France, for example,

routinely reduces the number of tourist visas as part of its external policy. The effects of this (grandparents who cannot visit their offspring, people who cannot attend the funeral of a loved one) create anti-European resentment. Another layer of this normative perspective is that the displacement which Europe seeks to contain is often the result of European foreign policy. The disastrous 2011 NATO intervention in Libya (to mention only one example) has destabilised not just Libya, but also the Sahel. The resulting increase in conflict-induced migration is therefore not primarily the responsibility of dysfunctional African politics but of European policy. From the perspective of Europe's neighbours, it is not reasonable for the EU to expect them to pick up the pieces of the ruins of European foreign policy. A third layer is that a country like Serbia fails to see what is reasonable in the idea that migrants and refugees coming from EU member states (Greece and Bulgaria) and heading for other EU member states like Hungary or Croatia should be its responsibility when they transit through Serbian territory.

▶ *Europe's neighbouring states are aware that there is a link between Europe's containment policies and the EU's support for migration and asylum governance. While these neighbouring states have an interest in functioning migration and asylum governance for themselves, they do not want to be the place where European containment policies take place – they do not want to become European hotspots.*

This combination of the 'calculation' of neighbouring countries with their normative rejection of European externalisation therefore results in partial non-cooperation with EU policy. Even when Europe succeeds in pressuring them to sign agreements, these neighbouring countries do not necessarily implement the agreements. This non-implementation is highly contextual. Tunisia cooperates with the EU regarding the coastguard and Integrated Border Management, but refuses to adopt the Asylum Act (drafted with the technical assistance of the UNHCR and funded by the EU) because adopting it would turn the country into a safe third country. Turkey, on the other hand, did adopt an EU-inspired Asylum Act in 2013, and now hosts the largest refugee population worldwide. Tunisia has learnt from this. Serbia is another example. While at the formal level (adoption of legislation and policy frameworks) Serbia rubber-stamps the EU acquis, it nevertheless does not implement it. Like Greece, Serbia is aware that not having a functioning asylum and reception system leads to the legal impossibility of returning asylum seekers. In Niger, key elements of the central state have been convinced by the EU to cooperate, but the local authorities whose cooperation is crucial for success do not see why they should do so. Turkey is a case apart because it has more clout than the other three countries mentioned, and because for Turkey migration is just one of the elements of its geopolitics related to Europe. Turkey's cooperation with the realisation of European interests therefore only goes so far.

Conditionality is the key. **Neighbouring countries do not cooperate with European external migration and asylum policy because they know that Europe will use their cooperation to contain migrants and refugees on their territory.** While, from a European perspective, support for the condition of cooperation with European policy priorities makes perfect sense, it makes no sense from the perspective of Europe's neighbours, for exactly the same reason.

In our *Asylum for Containment* report, we conclude that conditionality and the policy characteristics that come with it (short-term, informal or sometimes secret, bilateral cooperation) do not work and even backfire. It is quite possible that Serbia and Tunisia would welcome European support to set up an asylum system that actually works, if these two countries did not have good reason to believe that if they did so, Europe would saddle them with a problem that it is not willing to deal with itself. Without the obligations that conditionality entails, and without the policy aim of containment, Europe's neighbours would probably have better functioning migration and asylum management than they have now. That would be good news for migrants and refugees in these countries, but also for Europe because more people could remain in these countries under acceptable circumstances.

▶ *Why would people in Agadez be prepared to bear a burden that people in Greece, Italy, Germany, or Sweden are not prepared to bear themselves?*

It is clear that Europe's policy of containment and conditionality, which was initiated in the 2006 Spanish Plan for Africa, is bankrupt. The alternative is long-term, formalised and unconditional support that addresses the concerns of Europe's neighbours.

Thomas Spijkerboer, Professor of migration law at the Amsterdam Centre for Migration and Refugee Law, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Towards a humane refugee policy for the EU

A BOOK BY GESINE SCHWAN

The EU's approach to asylum and migration is failing because it is contrary to the values that the Union proclaims.

A pragmatic and humane response to the challenges posed by the refugee protection crisis can be found in municipalities and their active civil society.

Gesine Schwan outlines a detailed proposal on how to engage municipalities and civil society initiatives in the relocation and reception of migrants and asylum seekers.

The proposal will not be a panacea for the complex EU migration and refugee policy. Yet, the tools illustrated in this book could benefit the hosting communities as much as the newcomers.

SCAN TO READ MORE

On migration, Europe's fixation with returns does not work

by Michele LeVoy and Marta Gionco

Forcing undocumented migrants to leave the EU (commonly referred to as 'returns' in EU policy lingo) has become one of the key pillars of how the EU manages migration at its borders and within its territory. The underlying assumption is that more and quicker returns will deter people from coming to Europe, will help 'fight irregular migration' and will make everything – from asylum procedures to reception – more efficient. But this assumption has started to show deep cracks: it is harmful to people and does not address the realities of migration.

When the European Council established its common migration and asylum policy in 1999, 'return' was mainly referred to in the context of assistance to countries of origin. It concerned voluntary return and was to help countries of origin cope with their readmission agreements. However, this changed after the EU adopted its Return Directive in 2008, when a push for deportations began which has grown increasingly stronger ever since. In 2018, the Commission in fact re-opened the Return Directive to significantly step up the return of undocumented migrants. The 2020 EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, a set of proposals that aim to overhaul the EU migration and asylum system, is designed to speed up deportations – all while lowering procedural safeguards.

In line with the provisions of this Pact, the European Commission appointed an EU Return Coordinator in 2022 and also launched the High-Level Network on Returns, which is composed of member states' representatives, and which is intended to strengthen coordination and boost returns in the EU. The EU border agency Frontex will "strengthen [its] return capacities", with €277.5 million budgeted from 2024 onwards. At the start of 2023, the European Commission released a Policy Document aimed at increasing and speeding up returns. It also released a recommendation for member states to expedite returns by promoting the mutual recognition of return decisions.

| VIOLENCE LINKED TO DEPORTATIONS

Terminology is not neutral. What the EU institutions call 'returns' covers in fact the violent practice of deportations, often uprooting people from the life they had been building for themselves and their families in Europe. The practice of deporting people comes with high levels of violence: people are often handcuffed, pushed into aeroplanes and left in places they may not even know. Reports of violence against people being deported on flights coordinated by Frontex started surfacing in 2019. But more than 20 years prior to those reports, Semira Adamu was suffocated to death by four police officers on a commercial flight in 1998, during a deportation from Belgium to Nigeria. Activists attempting to prevent take-offs, or fellow passengers on commercial flights who resist inhumane treatment against people being deported, are also often criminalised.

Appealing against a deportation decision is becoming ever more difficult. According to the EU Migration Pact, people will only have seven working days to appeal against negative decisions in border procedures – and in reality, they could be deported while waiting for the outcome of their appeal. To further speed up return procedures, the Commission recently recommended that member states take steps to ensure that remedy can be exercised from a third country – through legal representation and videoconferencing. In other words, **it is expected that a person will appeal against their deportation once they have been deported thousands of kilometres away from Europe**.

The focus on deportation is ramping up an ever-growing immigration detention system that locks up more than 100,000 people every year across Europe, including children and families. This is because **it is believed that more detention will lead to more deportation, despite no evidence to this effect**. In fact it is quite the contrary because immigration detention has proven to be extremely harmful for people, even for short periods of time. We also now have clear international standards so that detaining children for immigration reasons is always a violation of child rights and is never in their best interests. Governments have committed to ending the detention of children — yet the EU's proposals in the Pact would only increase it.

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RETURNS AS A VEHICLE OF IRREGULARITY

Europe's obsession with returns is also based on the assumption that if you do not qualify for international protection, you have no right to stay in the EU. What this approach blatantly overlooks is that migration is more complex than 'asylum or return'. People move for many different reasons and may have a right to access residence permits other than those linked to asylum. In fact, there are at least 60 different types of national permits in European countries — which are granted for humanitarian, medical, family or other reasons. Dividing people between asylum and return procedures would de facto block access to all of these other pathways to a residence permit. If a person cannot be returned (for legal or practical reasons), they are left in a legal limbo where they remain in Europe but are often excluded from access to residence permits, and are forced to live precarious lives. When the Italian government abolished its humanitarian permit in 2018, it is estimated that more than 37,000 people became undocumented.

MOVING AWAY FROM DEPORTATIONS

It is therefore time for a U-turn in how Europe manages migration. Instead of its current approach, **Europe now needs to focus on decent pathways for people to access residence permits that allow them to live and work in dignity and safety**. Some countries have already taken steps in this direction. Germany, for example, passed a law in 2022 that will make it easier for people whose deportation order has been suspended to access long-term residence permits. Similarly, Spain adopted a reform in 2021 that has allowed over 16,000 young migrants to access residence and work permits in that country. Meanwhile Ireland granted residence permits to almost 5,000 people in 2022 through a temporary regularisation programme.

Moving away from deportations would mean recognising the different types of protection needs and human rights obligations that should apply to people in the EU and at its borders. It would also mean ensuring that national protection statuses are reinforced as policy measures, and that people have access

to them. Governments — in concertation with civil society and other stakeholders — would design and implement fair regularisation measures that grant residence permits to people living in an irregular situation in Europe. The EU must therefore shift its focus on returns and instead support these measures that recognise the different types of protection needs and human rights obligations.

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(Platform for International
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Marta Gionco,
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Chronicle of a failure foretold

by Hedwig Giusto

On 8 June, the Council of the European Union reached what was branded a 'historic' deal on migration. After exhausting negotiations, the majority of the member states' home affairs ministers voted to unblock the two stickiest chapters of the Pact on Asylum and Migration, opening the door to negotiations with the European Parliament. This is undoubtedly a 'political success', as the member states have apparently squared the circle in one of the most controversial and divisive policies of the European Union (outvoting the two countries that have most opposed any deal, Hungary and Poland). But can the agreement really be considered a successful achievement in itself?

Or does it just paper over the cracks, without actually bridging the deep divisions among the member states' different interests or – even worse – without developing a fair and workable migration and asylum system?

It looks, once more, as if the losers will be the people: the migrants, whose well-being, rights and needs will continue to be overruled; and the citizens, who are promised a migration policy that delivers. But that is exactly the question: will this policy deliver? Deliver on what? And at what cost?

After years of deadlock and polarising debates about migration, a broad agreement on reforming European migration and asylum policies now seems to be at hand. And it will probably be achieved according to plan, within the current parliamentary term and ahead of the 2024 European elections. This development is likely to limit, but not prevent, the instrumentalisation of migration in the upcoming election campaign. This might have been among the

reasons that led certain governments to eventually accept a less-than-ideal agreement. Nonetheless, many observers believe the Pact is doomed to fail because it does not look beyond the limited horizon of short-term, ephemeral and questionable goals, like protecting borders from migrants, and it does not take into consideration the real and long-term interests of all stakeholders, including migrants.

The spirit that informs the Pact, and indeed that has informed the general European approach to migration for years, is that of containing migration, deterring arrivals, controlling external borders, deflecting responsibility (to the peripheral EU member states and to the neighbouring countries) and obsessively trying to resort to returns. **In a nutshell, the Pact keeps framing migration as an eternal crisis and emergency, a situation out of control, rather than as a structural issue; migrants as a threat, rather than as people in distress and need; and human mobility as a security issue, rather than an agent of development.**

In spite of its consistent approach to migration flow management, however, the European Union has so far failed to cut numbers. "In 2022, around 330,000 irregular border crossings were detected at EU's external border (...). This is the highest number since 2016 and an increase of 64 per cent from the previous year" – these are data released by Frontex last January, underlining that 2022 "was the second year in a row with a steep rise in the number of irregular entries". Frontex also reports that numbers are further on the rise in 2023.

Once adopted, the Pact will intensify, not mitigate, this trend, introducing new elements (like the so-called 'border procedure') that – despite their declared aim of making procedures smooth – will probably increase the pressure on the peripheral countries of the Union. This comes in defiance of the much-vaunted principle of solidarity, and will only increase the number of people who remain stuck at the border of Europe. It is doubtful, therefore, that the Pact will even deliver on the very goal it

openly pursues: curbing numbers. And its ability to deter arrivals is also far from being proven.

What is striking too is that the Pact will not reform the infamous Dublin regulation that has been a bone of contention for years. The principle of first entry – the rule that establishes which country is responsible for assessing the asylum request – will, in fact, remain in force, while the (albeit exiguous) number of total relocations (30,000) on which the EU member states agreed will barely be met. Why should member states comply now, when all the previous attempts to ensure relocations (be they on a compulsory or voluntary basis) have failed?

The Pact is broad, very complex and tortuous. It is therefore easy to become lost in its myriad of details, which will make a preliminary assessment of its impact difficult. **However, it is clear that it will not deliver wide measures to open legal pathways for migrants and safe corridors for asylum seekers, nor guarantees that protection standards and human rights will be ensured (while the use of detention will be reinforced).** The Pact also fails to take into account the perspectives of the other elements of the equation: the countries of origin and transit, which will have a set of rules imposed on them that they have not contributed to defining.

European migration policies fail – and will always fail – If their goal is to simply close a migration route for good (without opening legal paths), and if they intend to turn Europe into a 'migrant-proof' fortress. They will also always fail if they aim to waive the EU's responsibilities by dumping the task of managing migration to Europe onto third countries.

This is because a new (or old) migration route will always be found – possibly more dangerous and deadly than the previous one. These policies will also miss their goal because – despite the formal declarations that always accompany them – they completely fail to analyse, grasp and recognise the complexity of the phenomenon: the many and mixed reasons that drive people's decision to migrate, the geopolitical dynamics that affect migration trends, and the interests of all stakeholders – including the very same third countries to which the bloc turns for help. These policies even stand against the interests of an ageing Europe to receive migrants.

What is more, **EU migration policies will always fail if the bloc, trying to seal its borders, does so at increasingly higher moral costs and at the price of those alleged values that the EU tries, hypocritically, to impose on third countries**. And they will fail if they do not consider that, in an increasingly interconnected world, migration management needs to be shaped in the broader context of Europe's relations with its African neighbours, and in the context of its other policies in the African region. All these elements are unfortunately missing from the Pact.

▶ *It is clear that the Pact will not deliver wide measures to open legal pathways for migrants and safe corridors for asylum seekers, nor guarantees that protection standards and human rights will be ensured.*

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Hedwig Giusto,
FEPS Senior Research
Fellow, and editor-in-chief
of the Progressive Post

Roma survey shows disappointing results

by Martin Kovats

For more than a decade, the EU has been the driving force behind initiatives to reduce the disadvantages and discrimination faced by Roma minorities. However, data from the Fundamental Rights Agency show that this racialisation of public policy has had little effect on reducing inequality.

Over the last decade, the EU has become the impetus behind the politicisation of Roma identity and it stands at the apex of a Europe-wide governance structure directed towards a specific ethnic minority. In December last year, the European Union's Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) published its latest European Roma survey measuring the progress of Roma policy. Racialising public policy without reducing inequality creates a risk for the EU that progressive politics must do more to mitigate.

Due to the ambiguity of Roma identity, FRA's Roma data are vital for measuring Roma policy. 'Roma' is a relatively new political identity encompassing numerous other identities, and the definition of Roma lists several different types of communities. **Census data are limited in coverage but consistently find far smaller Roma populations than the estimates preferred in the European Roma policy discourse. The absence of a shared culture or other characteristic traits leads to inconsistencies in the people to whom the identity is applied.** Unable to rely on others, the European Commission appoints the FRA to provide quantitative, ethnically disaggregated data, which are considered reliably representative of the Roma in order to monitor policy impact.

The 2021 Roma survey was carried out in ten EU member states (plus North Macedonia and Serbia) that are considered to represent 87 per cent of the EU Roma minority. The results were derived from 8,000 respondents covering up to 28,000 people and focused on the EU Strategy's targets. This was the fifth FRA Roma survey, and it was compared with results from 2016. There were both greater and smaller differences between the countries, and the figures below are aggregated to present the EU's overview. The results were underwhelming and contradictory, leading the FRA director Michael O'Flaherty to state in the foreword that "it saddens us that yet again, six years on since we last reported from these countries on our Roma survey findings, not much has changed".

Significant improvement was seen for those Roma who had been experiencing hate crime: their share fell from 30 to 17 per cent. At the same time, those who believed they had been discriminated against concerning employment almost doubled from 16 to 30 per cent and, regarding education, the figures rose from 7 to 11 per cent, while in healthcare they rose from 8 to 14 per cent. The largest recorded positive change was in respect of Roma who have heard of at least one kind of equality body, which increased from 29 to 50 per cent. Nevertheless, the rate of reporting an act of discrimination actually fell from 16 to 5 per cent!

▶ *The employment rate for Roma remained the same at 43 per cent, while the number of young Roma not in employment, education or training rose slightly to 53 per cent.*

Regarding education, preschool attendance and young people completing secondary school barely changed (+/-2 per cent) and was respectively 49 and 57 per cent below the EU average. The rate of educational segregation increased from 44 to 52 per cent. **The employment rate for Roma remained the same at 43 per cent, while the number of young Roma not in employment, education or training (NEETS) rose slightly to 53 per cent.** Using a new method to calculate life

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▶ *Generating ever more Roma-specific information will not change the fact that the success of the strategy depends on the member states. Although innovative (it is the EU's only ethnic policy), no impact assessment was undertaken.*

expectancy for the first time, the recent survey found that Roma men can expect to live 9.1 years less than the EU average. For Roma women it is even 11 years less.

Regarding living conditions, the number of Roma living in deprived housing fell from 61 to 52 per cent, and those living in homes without running water from 30 to 22 per cent, while overcrowding increased from 78 to 82 per cent. There was a significant fall in those experiencing severe material deprivation (unable to afford certain items) from 62 to 48 per cent (from 66 to 54 per cent for Roma children). However, the survey recorded exactly the same rate – 80 per cent – of Roma being at risk of poverty (income below 60 per cent of the relevant national median) as five years previously.

This failure to reduce poverty and exclusion does not reflect temporary factors such as Covid-19 but is consistent with many examples of national and transnational Roma policy initiatives. The European Commission responded in its new 10-year strategy by dramatically increasing the number of targets and indicators from four to over 200, most of which will be assessed according to FRA's Roma data. However, **generating ever more Roma-specific information will not change the fact that the success of the strategy depends on the member states. Although innovative (it is the EU's only ethnic policy), no impact assessment was undertaken** as the "expected impacts strongly depend on the level of commitment to Roma equality and inclusion that member states agree to".

The fundamental problem lies in the weakness of Roma as an interest group in domestic politics, which determines national policy priorities. In many EU countries, Roma constitute a tiny part of the overall population and have distinct needs, for example the *gens du voyage*. Large Roma minorities present complex challenges to labour markets, to the quality and accessibility of public services, to housing quality and segregation, and even to national identity as Roma migrants do not have national citizenship. Given the ambiguity and low status of Roma identity, social and cultural diversity, high levels of poverty and exclusion, and limited political traditions or capacity, it is not surprising that those targeted by Roma policy have little influence over its content and effectiveness.

In the new EU Roma Strategy, particular emphasis has been placed on tackling prejudice and discrimination, conceptualised as antigypsyism.

Yet despite good intentions, leading an ethnically specific racialised policy discourse and governance process that does not reduce the inequality and exclusion of the targeted group is an uncomfortable thing to have. While progressive parties have often been ambivalent about Roma identity politics, racialised social division is usually disadvantageous for the left. Only more effective social policy interventions based on civic equality can mitigate the risk of EU Roma policy actively contributing to social fragmentation along racial lines. In combining a discourse of racialised difference with limited impact on inequality, the EU's Roma Strategy demonstrates that the battle for inclusion has to be won in each society in recognition of the complex factors that determine inequality and exclusion.

Martin Kovats was a Special Advisor on Roma issues to the EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Integration (2010-2014)

No choice between fighting antigypsism and the expansion of social rights

by Violetta Zentai

The fight for Roma equality is to be promoted by framing intervention strategies based both on the fight against antigypsyism and on the expansion of social rights, ideally in alliance with each other. Progressive forces should therefore endorse and take advantage of a recent conceptual move which increases the potential of a substantial political agenda driven by social rights.

The first EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (2011-2020) was an important step towards the construction of a Roma equality policy infrastructure. The strategic framework resulted from constructive debates about duty-based anti-discrimination and more ambitious outcome-based equality thinking. The framework generated high expectations about the EU's capacity to enforce dedicated Roma equality policies. However, it left many civil society actors and experts deeply disappointed with its implementation. This raised questions concerning the very relevance of the strategy. The new EU framework strategy (2021-2030) for Roma equality policies had to respond to revised political claims in a world which is no less challenging than that left in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis.

The framing of strategic political and policy statements always embodies the outcomes of preceding debates, and it guides subsequent intervention strategies. It is argued that the

Roma equality concerns were framed through the reasoning of human rights in the 1990s and early 2000s, and through social and economic inclusion from the late 2000s. **In the 2010s, the concept of of 'antigypsyism' was discussed intensively, and by the end of that decade, the concept had gained traction in civil society and high-level political discussions. The term is meant to unveil poorly understood domains of ethnic and racial oppression and it calls for policy thinking on transformative objectives.**

Such a shift in policy framing was inspired by an understanding that the 2011-2020 strategy was blind to the continuous 'headwind' of antigypsyism. It was not properly diagnosed that antigypsyism motivates both action and inaction in law enforcement and in tackling discrimination and hate crimes. Similarly, it was overlooked that antigypsyism undermines state responsibility to design and implement social inclusion policy measures. With the new framing of the fight against antigypsyism, Roma and

pro-Roma organisations advocated an emphasis on broad transformative interventions that target entrenched mechanisms of exclusion. Further, the framing shift was also underscored by arguments that non-Roma should view their privileges critically and engage in reconciling the power gap between them and the Roma.

▶ *Only a few national strategies highlight the responsibility of mainstream society for the inclusion of vulnerable populations through inclusive education, and through fighting poverty, eliminating ghettos, and eliminating indirect discrimination in all fields.*

The new EU framework strategy has found a compromise between racial justice and social equality considerations. It acknowledges that widespread antigypsyism is a crucial barrier to effective inclusion policies. In the national strategies that member states were obliged to draft in compliance with the new EU framework strategy, antigypsyism is mostly articulated as a standalone field of action. Recognising antigypsyism rarely informs crosscutting thinking in key sectoral policy areas of Roma equality and inclusion. **Only a few national strategies highlight the responsibility of mainstream society for the inclusion of vulnerable populations through inclusive education, and through fighting poverty, eliminating ghettos and eliminating indirect discrimination in all fields.** In short, member state governments need to learn a lot more and faster to embrace the framing of the fight against antigypsyism.

> ▶ *The prism of antigypsyism sheds light on those elements of racial discrimination that cannot be easily captured by standard attention to anti-discrimination, and it magnifies the neglected values of Roma culture, history and social knowledge.*

Progressive political forces should acknowledge that fighting antigypsyism has become a powerful language of political salience. **As a stand-alone policy field, antigypsyism sheds light on those elements of racial discrimination that cannot be easily captured by standard attention to anti-discrimination, and it magnifies the neglected values of** Roma culture, history and social knowledge. **As a cross-cutting policy paradigm, antigypsyism strives to uncover how a majority in society overlooks its privileges and accepts institutional practices which result in segregation and the differential provision of services.** Furthermore, the fight against antigypsyism often serves as a meta-frame that stands for cultural decolonisation, political participation, access to social welfare, and also racial justice – including every pillar of Roma equality. Regardless of this all-encompassing perspective, the framing of the fight against antigypsyism should be actively promoted by all European progressive forces, specifically because of their historical conscience, calling upon the majority to take responsibility, reminding the state of its duty to act, and of its transformative objectives.

Alongside the dismantling of systemic power imbalances between the majority and ethnically defined groups in society, equally robust attention should be paid to how the socio-economic conditions of individuals, families and groups, cutting across ethnic lines, continue to generate grave social inequalities in society. The transformations in global capitalism and the responses to recent crises have not made participation in the economy and welfare provisions any more egalitarian in the 2020s than before. This is true despite massive state interventions during the Covid-19 pandemic and in the recent energy crisis in Europe.

Parallel to the rise of the concept of antigypsyism in Roma equality struggles, socio-economic inequalities have gained a significance close to that of other major areas of inequality that are protected by EU hard law. This change greatly increases the potential of a substantial political agenda driven by social rights and policy visions.

It is argued that people in poverty and precarity face 'social maltreatment' in society due to market and other forces. They also face the failure of public and private institutions to

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respond appropriately to their circumstances and needs. These failures are systemic and often mean that actors rationalise their discriminatory behaviour according to the expectations of others. **Well-functioning markets do not delegitimise discrimination as irrational behaviour. In fact, markets register social norms, and reflect dominant prejudices in recruitment and promotion, thus meeting the expectations of customers.** Maltreatment based on a person's socio-economic condition should be seen as 'suspect grounds' of inequality, and this maltreatment requires hard anti-discrimination and active transformative interventions. Accordingly, states should enact regulatory and policy frameworks which do not discriminate against people in poverty and precarity, and which also guide private actors. States should guarantee that all people have equal and effective protection against structural and systemic discrimination through affirmative action. The failure to provide reasonable accommodation to people who need it is a form of maltreatment.

> ▶ *Well-functioning markets do not delegitimise discrimination as irrational behaviour. In fact, markets register social norms, and reflect dominant prejudices in recruitment and promotion, thus meeting the expectations of customers.*

Having access to basic conditions of life irrespective of one's purchasing power is a mirror rationale to the prohibition of discrimination. It calls for transformative legal and state activism based on social rights. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is a pioneer voice noting that the provision of food, water, electricity, sanitation, and

basic education – in other words, essential goods and services – should remain affordable for all. A state may be in violation of its duty to protect from discrimination if it fails to guarantee equal access to essential goods and services. It is noteworthy that some EU member states (and beyond) have moved to prohibit discrimination based on 'social precarity' or 'economic vulnerability'. As lead expert of this pioneering conceptual progress Olivier De Schutter argues, "coercion by the power of the purse, resulting in an abuse of the economic vulnerability of individuals in need, is as problematic as physical coercion". This expansion of legal reasoning for social rights and corresponding state duties should be welcomed by all progressive political forces in Europe.

In conclusion, the fight for Roma equality is to be promoted both by framing social rights and by framing the fight against antigypsyism, ideally in cooperation or even alliance with each other. The framing of social rights often describes grave inequality experiences – such as poverty, vulnerability and precarity – with terms which Roma equality advocates consider stigmatising and inappropriate. Further dialogue should be conducted to find a widely acceptable language in this area. Eliminating the obvious residential segregation and housing deprivation in both rural and urban settings requires strategic cooperation to be put in place.

Violetta Zentai, social anthropologist, associate professor at the Central European University, Budapest-Vienna

EUROPE AND THE WAR IN UKRAINE

FROM RUSSIAN AGGRESSION TO A NEW EASTERN POLICY

Edited by László Andor and Uwe Optenhögel
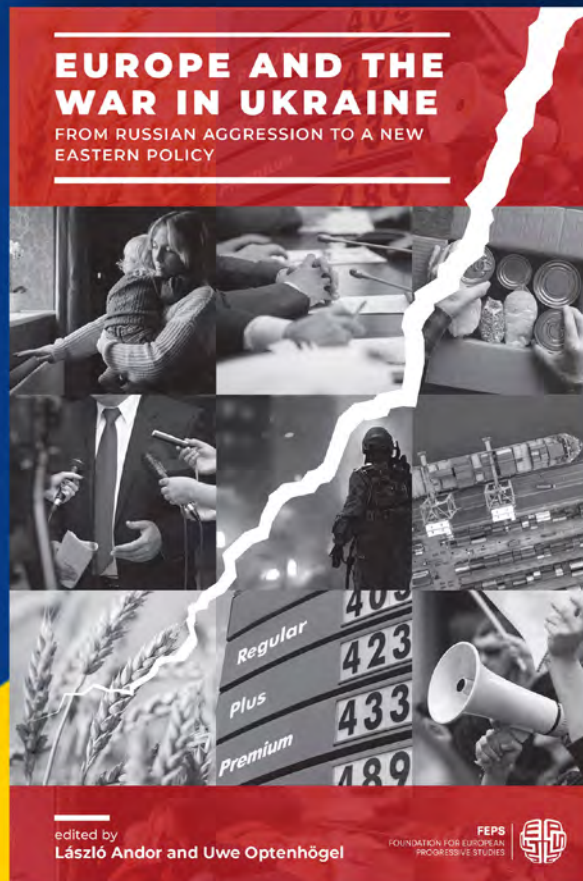
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Social investment is key to overcoming the inclusion impasse

by László Andor

Roma integration strategies in the EU have not been particularly successful. However, the European Commission is right to relaunch an overhaul of this policy more than a decade after the first edition.
To succeed, the integration strategies must be coupled with measures that combat inequality and promote social investment.

One consequence of the eastern EU enlargement on social policy was the need and opportunity to create a common strategy for Roma integration. However, this had to be done without creating the illusion that the EU institutions in Brussels could or would deliver what was needed without – or even instead of – the governments of the member states, and especially without those of the countries of eastern and central Europe and the Balkans.

When the European Commission (of which I was a member, and working on this policy among many others) introduced the EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies in 2011, the aim was to make 'tangible' improvements in the lives of some the continent's most disadvantaged citizens. The results of the latest survey from the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) show that this has not happened for four out of five Roma people living at risk of poverty today. Since a new strategy leading up to 2030 is now in place, it is worth reflecting on the first ten years of the EU's only ethnic policy.

Roma integration represents an unusual challenge for the EU as it demands simultaneous and combined social policy interventions in a broad range of areas – employment, education, health, housing and anti-discrimination – with explicit ethnic targeting and data collection. By turning Roma integration into a common policy, the EU has responded to various political issues arising within member states. These issues are rooted in the impoverishment and discrimination arising from post-communist transition and its impact on migration within the enlarged EU.

However, **by the very fact of adopting a specific policy, the EU has, in turn, also become an active player in constructing 'Roma' as a racialised political identity and policy object**. The EU's inclusive approach has brought together various different communities into the broader category of 'Roma'. The new Roma Strategy was justified because the EU is now the main driver of Roma policy. Indeed, without this policy there would be fewer initiatives within the member states concerned.

While the recognition of Roma and associated groups is undoubtedly an advance on the historical neglect or marginalisation of those communities, the disappointing findings of the latest FRA Roma survey show that recognition is certainly a condition, but not a sufficient one, for improving the living conditions and life chances of those considered to be Roma. Indeed, **the disconnect between the recognition of Roma and the lacking improvement of their living conditions actually creates new problems because presenting Roma as a distinct ethnic/racial group without reducing inequality at the same time appears to reinforce prejudices and perceptions of Roma people as a peculiarly problematic part of European society**. Regarding the relationship between public institutions and racism, it is also disconcerting that the EU has a discourse and governance structure for one particular ethnic minority, the main effect of which seems to be to consolidate, rather than reduce, that group's disadvantages and exclusion.

Improving the lives of Roma people is predicated on the transparency of commitments, the exchange of good practice, and the encouragement to use EU funds. The original Roma integration strategy has greatly increased the European Commission's monitoring capacity through a large number of targets, which can be tested against the Roma-specific data from the FRA. However, the last ten years have shown that this upward accountability in itself does not lead to effective action by national governments.

The fundamental problem lies in the weakness of Roma as a political interest group within member states. The communities considered as 'Roma' are highly diverse. In many (north-)western EU countries, Roma only count for a tiny part of the electorate, and policy is often focused on connecting mobile populations to mainstream services. In the south, numerically larger Roma populations often lead segregated lives in camps or slums. In many eastern states, Roma are still a small minority of voters and can present a challenge to the nation state's identity. Although there are many successful Roma people, who might as well act as advocates or ambassadors of genuine integration, overall, Roma minorities themselves lack the capacity and tools to exercise effective influence on local and national authorities to achieve the scale of investment needed to ensure equality of opportunity.

Racism towards Roma has been part of European cultures and societies for centuries. However, it is complacent to imagine that racism is just the legacy of an unfortunate past and to ignore the impact that contemporary politics has in reproducing prejudice and discrimination today. The risk is that by promoting the idea of a distinct Roma identity, without reducing inequality, the EU inadvertently deepens racialised social division. Roma have long been a favourite target of far-right and ultra-nationalist parties, and today centre-right parties are also increasingly showing their willingness to mobilise exclusionary

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attitudes and to make tacit alliances with racist, anti-European political forces. It should be noted that the EU countries with the most Roma citizens have experienced dynamic growth since joining the EU – but they have not harnessed social convergence to their economic growth. The continuing exclusion of Roma partly explains the existence of this gap.

The fight against racism and the struggle for inclusion and equality must take place across society and at every level of government. The EU Roma integration strategy provides a framework for this, but the ethnicity-oriented discourse without a dedicated investment capacity to overcome Roma's weakness, marginalisation and segregation cannot achieve the stated goal of integration. Instead, it perpetuates division and exclusion. Having stepped up social investment capacity before and during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is now within reach for the EU to allocate sufficient funds to the most disadvantaged areas and thus facilitate the convergence of social conditions, with a particular focus on racial equality.

Progressive political parties have a critical role to play in this policy paradigm, both within their home countries and at the EU level, by protecting the integrity of this newly defined policy field. It is not just a question of giving more support to Roma representatives, but of framing and leading on how the rights and needs of citizens of Roma identity are integrated into the broader social, economic, and political debates and decisions about the quality of public services, access to training and employment, climate change adaptation, and social cohesion. Although circumstances and needs vary widely across Europe, progressives cannot shy away from making the case for Roma inclusion. This debate can be won, and it must be won within each member state.

László Andor,
FEPS Secretary General

The interplay of the twin transitions

**Interview with Kerstin Hötte,
by Gerard Rinse Oosterwijk**

Kerstin Hötte is a post-doctoral research associate at the Alan Turing Institute and an Academic Visitor at the Institute for New Economic Thinking at the University of Oxford. The Alan Turing Institute is the UK's national institute for artificial intelligence research and data science. Kerstin's research focuses on technological change, particularly in the context of climate change and the question of how the transition to green technologies can be accelerated. She has also done research on automation technologies and artificial intelligence and is experienced in working with very large datasets and the different tools of data science.

Gerard Rinse Oosterwijk: In the European bubble, we always talk about the 'twin transitions': the digital transition that's now underway and the climate transition. Could you describe the interaction between those two transitions?

Kerstin Hötte: Transition is a very good word to describe the whole process of change that is going on. The digital transition and the climate transition are the big processes of change of our time, and it would be economically and socially foolish to ignore this. Smart policy, therefore, needs to react to these processes of change. And for both transitions, there's much scope to shape the form they take. We often say that digital technologies are like general purpose technologies and a bit like a self-driving process of change – with the

result that the digital transition is now really speeding up. But there are still many ways how we can shape which types of algorithms are developed, how we can deal with data privacy, how we can enable firms and businesses to participate in this process of change, and also, of course, how we can preserve the privacy of citizens. With climate change it is different. For a long time, many people tried to ignore the problem. But since climate change is accelerating and the worrying climate trends are changing faster than we are addressing them, we need political governance to hasten the transition. And this is where both processes happen at the same time. It would be unwise not to consider this simultaneous process of change or not to search for a scope where we can maximise the synergies between these two processes.

GRO: You mentioned tech policy and technological change as a self-driving force. Yet, at least in Europe, there has been a lot of legislation on digital policy. With climate policy, however, it is more about setting targets.

KH: We can hope that fighting climate change will be more and more a process driven by the market, but that's far from sufficient. And **whenever we think about how digitalisation and climate change policy interact, we should at least think about principles of not mutually causing harm and we should ideally find ways to make both transitions work together**. Digitalisation that undermines all climate change mitigation or adaptation goals is something we should avoid. Climate change may also have negative impacts on the digitalisation of societies – for example, where infrastructures become more vulnerable.

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GRO: *You brought up the negative interactions between climate and digitalisation. Could you mention one or two examples to make it concrete? Where does the digital transition weigh negatively on climate change?*

KH: The most prominent topic, that first comes to mind when we think about negative interactions, is of course the energy intensity of digital processes. Data processing centres need a lot of energy. We all run our computers all the time, computers get bigger (and more efficient too) and we have many more digital devices than we had ten years ago. One negative interaction is therefore energy consumption. Empirically it's not really clear to what extent energy consumption is really increasing, but we should decrease it to make the low-carbon transition easier.

We know that there will be enough energy, but not in the short run. And so anything that makes us consume more energy should be avoided.

▶ *Whenever we think about how digitalisation and climate change policy interact, we should at least think about principles of not mutually causing harm and we should ideally find ways to make both transitions work together.*

GRO: *Things like blockchain are taking more and more energy to do the calculations. Bitcoins, for example, which use blockchain, are very energy-intensive.*

KH: That is a very good example, also in terms of when we think about how we can make both processes more aligned. There are other blockchain technologies, whose algorithms and setup save a lot of energy compared to Bitcoin, which is one of the worst cases. We have many design options for digital tools, but there is another big negative interaction that I want to mention, and that is resilience. **When more and more processes become digital, we become more dependent on these processes. For example, think about digital payments. If every payment is made electronically, then you might have a big problem if there are power**

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blackouts that occur due to extreme weather events. And in times of climate change, we need to think about extreme weather events that can happen more often. This also matters for international supply chains. What we've just seen in the context of Covid-19 is that digital products are very complex and very dependent on inputs coming from many different countries. This is something that needs to be carefully monitored when we think about resilience.

> ▶ *When more and more processes become digital, we become more dependent on these processes. If every payment is made electronically, then you might have a big problem if there are power blackouts that occur due to extreme weather events. And in times of climate change, we need to think about extreme weather events that can happen more often.*

GRO: *We also have a lot of promising and hopefully positive interaction between digitalisation and the fight against climate change. We are optimists, after all, and we want to fight climate change. What opportunities does the digital transition offer in this fight against climate change? Can you give a few examples?*

KH: The positive interactions are possibly the lever that we need to find to make both transitions well-aligned. Very obvious examples are the smart applications that facilitate the development of sustainable technology. For example, think about smart energy technologies or smart mobility concepts that build on a lot of data and enable us to interconnect

different systems and make these systems more efficient to use. Also, for climate change adaptation, there is a big positive role of digitalisation. Digitalisation implies a lot of information and information availability. If we want to develop national or European climate change adaptation plans, for example, it is very important for us to have granular regional data that we can use to develop these plans effectively. Digitalisation also allows us to share data faster and thus to share information faster. And for climate change adaptation, behaviour is one of the most critical components of every adaptation concept, so making information widely and quickly available can help us adapt behaviourally.

GRO: *You propose 15 principles for a policy designed to reduce the negative interactions and to leverage the positive interactions for the effectiveness of climate change policy. I want to pick out a few. First of all, the opportunity that data gives to be more targeted and to share more and more information more and more quickly and easily. You mentioned green data spaces a couple of times in your recommendations. That's a concept that not a lot of people know about and that should be explained because it's something that helps innovation and that can also foster the circular economy. Can you tell us what the idea behind green data spaces is and what is happening?*

KH: In the digital economy, we have a big problem: **data are very concentrated. Think about Google, think about the other Big Tech companies like Amazon and Facebook. They have a lot of data, and the data allow these Big Tech companies to develop applications that are extremely sophisticated. But at the same time, this prevents many other possible inventors from entering the fields of innovation and technological development**. The concept of green data spaces has been put forward to break these data monopolies by having transparent and clear rules, including

data sharing obligations, which would mean that Google must make certain types of data available if it is for the public good. We, therefore, need to have clear and transparent rules on how the data can be accessed and by whom in order to enable other companies to innovate in these areas. In the context of green technologies, mobile phone companies have a lot of information (for example, on the mobility patterns of citizens) and banks have financial transaction data. Having access to these data, which are currently in private hands, could enable us to develop smart mobility solutions, for example. The concept or the idea of data spaces in the context of the green transition has been put forward to focus on these types of data, which we need to make green innovation happen and to enable new participants to enter the field of green innovation. It is not so much about developing breakthrough rocket science technologies. It's more about applications and digital services where data spaces can have a role. Very likely it will not be of much help in developing new enzymes, crop varieties or new batteries, but we could help a lot in developing smart applications on how we can use smart mobility on all mobile devices, for example.

> ▶ *We need to have clear and transparent rules on how the data can be accessed and by whom in order to enable other companies to innovate in these areas. In the context of green technologies, mobile phone companies have a lot of information (for example, on the mobility patterns of citizens) and banks have financial transaction data. Having access to these data, which are currently in private hands, could enable us to develop smart mobility solutions, for example.*

GRO: *You have mentioned sustainable mobility. We all know Uber, which is a private company that provides innovation, but which also has detrimental effects on social rights. Self-driving cars are being developed. It seems the whole car industry has to change, as well as the entire way we look at mobility. How do you see the future of mobility, and especially the car industry?*

KH: It's clear to anybody who's even slightly involved in this research field that there will be a big change in the car industry. And the managers in the car industry know this themselves – although vested interests sometimes make them tell different stories. But I think the message today is clear that the car industry will see radical change. It's not only about self-driving cars – it's also about other concepts of mobility and facilitating the entire operation between different types and different modes of mobility. Jumping from the train into a self-driving cab would be a solution when we have the perfect chain of different modes of mobility. And digitalisation can certainly help achieve this. When we think about policy in this context, I would always ask the question: where is the market? For self-driving cars, I believe there is already a market and there are developers. There are certain companies that will struggle, but in every technological transition, those who do not manage to keep pace end up losing. That is a very natural principle of innovation. Of course, policy should set the guidelines. Labour standards are one example. You mentioned Uber. We have a problem with self-driving cars not because there are no drivers, but because there are standards that must be met. **European policy can be very powerful in terms of setting not only labour standards but also technical standards. And we know that European regulation has often been very successful in harmonising products and technical standards, facilitating the transfer of goods across countries and the transfer of people.** It would be an area where European policy could take action by facilitating

the interoperability between the railway system in France, for example, and the one in Germany. European policies could set standards and facilitate the entire operation across borders and across different modes of mobility so that when I arrive in any European city, I can use the same app to track my mobility.

GRO: *Providing interoperability is a potential solution for opening the walled gardens of the Big Tech platforms and how we use WhatsApp versus Signal and Twitter versus Messenger to communicate. Also, in mobility, you have to download every app separately if you want a ride or a shared bike, and every app gets your data. Is making tech more human-centric also a solution for climate policy?*

KH: Talking about making the digital policy more human-centric is different from the discussion we have in climate policy. Basically, the human-centric digital policy discussion does not apply to climate change polices, because these climate change policies already stem from the fact that we care about humans. There wouldn't be a rationale to care about the climate if we did not care about the humans living on the planet. Nevertheless, we should ensure that climate policy is socially acceptable, as we need support from civil society to make effective climate change mitigation, adaptation and compensation happen. For example, we need to pay attention to the distributional effects and make sure that no one is left behind. However, **climate change impacts tend to hit poorer people harder than those that have the most resources and that often also have the highest responsibility for climate damage. A stringent climate policy therefore naturally entails a regressive element. I think this dimension could be emphasised more strongly by the progressive community.** We should not leave the discussion about distributional impacts to those abusing climate change mitigation if we want effective climate change mitigation to happen.

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A bumpy coming of age

by Roger Liddle

Loukas Tsoukalis

Europe's Coming of Age

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Polity Press, 2023

As a reviewer of this book, I must declare an interest: I have been a longstanding admirer and friend of Loukas Tsoukalis. He is my kind of pro-European. He is a modern Social Democrat, but with no spirit of partisan hostility to those who have built Europe from other traditions, whether liberal, conservative, green or Christian Democrat. On the central question that has been his life's work, the cause of European unity, he is a believer, not a dispassionate observer.

That driving conviction flows through every page of his latest book, *Europe's Coming of Age*, but it does not diminish the quality of his analysis and his frank recognition of where today's Europe falls short of his hopes and ideals. As an academic, he has always been prepared to speak truth to power and he does it directly but in an irresistibly charming way.

This book tells the European story with great style but with little loss of accuracy. In some respects, Loukas is an old-fashioned academic from an era that is now past: a **technical economist by initial training who is prepared to bound effortlessly across the disciplines of economics, politics, philosophy, history and international relations to tell a story that is uniquely his own and in a compelling style.** One comes away from his book with a mix of frustration and hope. Frustration about the many areas where Europe falls short of his ideal, but hope that the harsh inevitabilities of "events, dear boy events" (as Harold Macmillan quipped about the driving force of political life) will provide opportunities for unexpected visionary leadership that will make possible the necessary integrationist steps forward. This has happened time and again before.

If I have a disagreement with Loukas, it is that he is, on the one hand, over-disappointed with the Europe we have, and on the other hand, too pessimistic about the possibilities of significant but incremental change and reform. Loukas sometimes writes as though he believes at some day of reckoning in the future, Europe's politicians will eventually realise that there is no alternative to the great leap forward to a federal United States of Europe and suddenly we will wake up to find we Europeans are living in a totally different world. Much as I might like to believe it, I confess to great scepticism of this second coming.

The nation-state is strongly entrenched in the European way of thinking. Indeed, I subscribe to Alan Milward's view that it was the creation of the post-war European community that made possible "The Rescue of the Nation-State". With the beginnings of the European Community, Germany began to win back its self-respect after the Nazi trauma and disgrace; France to reimagine its place in the world after the loss of Empire; Italy to hold together in the face of its own political dysfunctionality; Greece, Spain and Portugal to rediscover democracy after the decades of dictatorship; the nations of eastern Europe to find their own identities after the brutalities of Soviet domination. The EU is a continent of proud nations. They will not willingly dissolve themselves into some amorphous United States of Europe. But most of them have enough sense – 52 per cent of

Britons (I hope temporarily) excepted – to realise that the framework of the European Union is an essential guarantor of their prosperity, human rights and independence.

The European Union is destined to survive and overcome the multiple threats that face its future. In all member states, the forces of national populism can be beaten off. The failure of Brexit which becomes clearer day by day will not be a lesson lost on others. My biggest worry remains France and what transpires in the post-Macron world. But **the far-right can no longer credibly claim the model of Putin as their inspiration. Indeed, one hopes that Ukraine will serve to bring Poland back into the European democratic fold and isolate Orbán as a rogue force**. As for far-left anti-Europeans, I hope fellow democratic Socialists and Social Democrats have learnt the lessons of the Jeremy Corbyn experience in the UK and are no longer prepared to ally with the destructive populist left.

▶ *The far-right can no longer credibly claim the model of Putin as their inspiration. Indeed, one hopes that Ukraine will serve to bring Poland back into the European democratic fold and isolate Orbán as a rogue force.*

For the present and foreseeable future, Europe is condemned to be what it now is: a higgledy-piggledy hybrid of supranationalism and intergovernmentalism but nevertheless cajoling most member states in a progressive direction, with the need for opt-ins and opt-outs to satisfy the enthusiasts and recalcitrants. Is this sustainable still? I believe it is. I once wrote a memo to Tony Blair which foolishly started with a sentence like "Europe is in a deep state of crisis" – precisely about what at the time I

have forgotten. It came back from his weekend box with a handwritten "when has it ever not been" written across the top. Europe is always in some crisis and the amazing thing about the EU is how it always manages to overcome them, or at least to solve in part and leave some of the difficult bits for another day.

As a patriotic Greek, Loukas knows only too well what economic and social damage his own country suffered as a result of the imperfections of the foundation of the euro. I have been a supporter of the single currency ever since Roy Jenkins as president of the Commission relaunched the monetary union with his brilliant Florence speech in 1977. This led to the creation of the European Monetary System which the Callaghan government foolish stood part from in 1978. Yet, unlike the Jenkins concept, the euro was at the start poorly conceived: an accident waiting to happen. Much has changed since the naïve assumptions of Maastricht, but further governance reforms are a priority to create a viable banking union. But who would have believed thirty years ago that the European Recovery Plan financed in part by the issue of Eurobonds would be happening today? The inevitable next step is agreement on Europe-wide taxes to finance those bonds, probably taxes designed to achieve the EU's shared climate change and environmental objectives.

Tsoukalis' book is honest that the problem of unmanaged migration eats away at political support for Europe. Yet the pressures to award the free movement rights of EU membership to include Ukraine, Moldova and the Balkan countries will be very strong. Then there is the question of migration across the EU common border. The only answer is a much stronger common policy which recognises the facts of demography – that Europe needs migration – but puts in place stronger border controls to ensure that migration is properly managed with the responsibility for refugees in need of our humanitarian protection and support, fairly shared between member states.

The relationship with the United States has long been a source of tension between member states. I believe Joe Biden has been magnificent on Ukraine, but surely it must be clear to all that Europe has a responsibility alongside its commitment to NATO, to take much greater responsibility for its own defence. This is not a crisis that will go away: it will only intensify. We must be thankful to our fellow Social Democrat, Olaf Scholz, for demonstrating the quality of leadership at times of crisis that his predecessors as German Chancellor have shown.

Loukas' book is a brilliant reminder of all that a united Europe still must do. Every informed pro-European should read it.

▶ *As a patriotic Greek, Loukas knows only too well what economic and social damage his own country suffered as a result of the imperfections of the foundation of the euro.*

Roger Liddle, Labour member of the House of Lords, former Co-Chair of Policy Network, and Cumbria County Councillor

Preventing disorder: hard work in the 21st century

by Marene Elgershuizen

Helen Thompson

Disorder – Hard Times in the 21st Century

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Oxford University Press, 2022

I have always had an appreciation for a good citation from a historical text, literature or poetry at the start of a speech or new book. Fortunately, Helen Thompson knows how to pick a few lines well. "We see, the Lawes of other Common-weals to alter with occasions, and even those that pretended their originall from some Divinity, to have vanished without trace or memory". The warning by Thomas Browne (1605-1682) is also the message Thompson produces. The world changes, and problems you refuse to deal with will deal with you.

Thompson is a professor of political economy at Cambridge University. Writing not only academically, but also as a columnist for a wider readership about the eurozone and Brexit, she has made her mark on thinking about questions of instability. To put it briefly, she analyses political short-sightedness as being due to the failure of politicians to do their necessary homework, and as being something that leads, again and again, to opportunities being missed to limit the planting of seeds of future disorder.

Her important theme has now found its way into her well-received book *Disorder: Hard Times in the 21st Century* – a dense historical analysis, which aims to be extensive, but which can also get lost in detail. Thompson's book appeals to readers who are primarily interested in energy as a geopolitical disruptor and it gives them a substantiated vision of how this will shape the near future. On this topic, Thompson delivers thoroughly.

She starts her introduction with a list of disruptive events in the years 2019 and 2020 – Brexit, Trump's behaviour and Europe's de-escalating dealings with him, oil prices and the pandemic crisis, which "also acted as a window on the decade of disruption that preceded it". Indeed, according to Carnegie-Europe director Rosa Balfour, the preceding decade was one in which Europe just "muddled through" instead of addressing its underlying crises. Thompson chooses an in-depth analysis before even mentioning such a judgment. But for this decade both Thompson and Balfour point to a trinity of wobbly security politics, divergent financial choices and their connection to a poor

quality of democracy. **Furthermore, Thompson points out that one thing has received too little attention in explaining the many disruptions in the 2010s: energy. Her 'energy lens' shows us the widely encompassing influence of our dependency on oil, gas or other resources from which the need for the current energy transition arises.** At the end of the book, this leads to an almost existential turn on how we handle the use of energy itself.

Thompson reiterates that economic development equals the use of more energy. The choices of the types of energy we use indicate whether the world in which we live and on which we depend will be destroyed or not – or, phrased differently, whether the current civilisations will continue to exist in the future, or if they will be depleted of their military sustenance and their possibilities to carry out the energy transition in the first place. The paradox lies in the fact that oil is also necessary for the production of plastics which are key to manufacturing solar panels and high-capacity batteries, which in turn are needed for the ecological transition.

Thompson's prime focus on resources, namely on oil and rare earths needed for renewable techniques, gives the impression that she might adopt a rather conservative stance in the geopolitical discourse. The 1970s and the collapse of the Bretton Woods system are considered the starting point of America's use mainly of force to protect its energy interests. And for me, the connection between energy use and economic development cannot be stressed enough. As it is well-known by now, climate change is the reason for scarcity wars (the often so-called 'new wars', mainly since the 1990s) and, subsequently, for the increase in internally displaced persons, refugees and migrants.

Economically, **low-income countries have made it clear at several of the international COPs climate conferences that they need energy to reach the point of development which these formerly colonised countries evidently deserve. Gaining an equal place at trade – and other – negotiation tables is what they want and indeed should have**. Progressives are therefore searching for a transformative foreign policy to rebalance these power relations. Thompson gives a warning as well as some substantiation for their wish, underlining that establishing and maintaining (a new) political order produces the seeds of future disorder. Although she gives no clear solutions in the book, on her *Inside Politics* podcast she mentions the possibility of an "economy of politics of sacrifice instead of politics of chasing economic growth all the time", which sounds largely like a concise definition of degrowth. In her book, Thompson does, however, gives an in-depth description of diplomatic history around the enlargement of the EU and NATO in connection with energy routes needed for pipelines. Unsurprisingly, her history of the Russia-Ukraine dynamics provides important background information about the current war.

Thompson's argument on economics is mainly a history around the complexities of currencies, which left me puzzled and wondering if all her arguments actually hold water. She gives a great

deal of room to Trump and Brexit, and she views the role of Christine Lagarde at the helm of the European Central Bank negatively. Despite her overtly Anglo-Saxon views, Thompson's *Disorder: Hard Times in the 21st Century* is an impressive book that is packed full of information. It is essential reading for everyday politics-junkies, and is certainly to be praised for making sense of a great complexity of facts.

> ▶ *Thompson's main point is the importance and breakdown of the principle of losers' consent because in a representative democracy, this is necessary for the change of power without people resorting to violence.*

Thompson further interweaves her argument in a most intelligent way with a third part on democratic politics. **She states that it is not the return of nationalism that is threatening open society democracies because, historically, nationalism goes hand in hand with the pursuit of sharing power amongst the members of a given society that consider themselves to be connected in the first place.** Still, it is also representative democracy that can have the coercive power not only to have inclusive advantages like those of the welfare state, but, in extreme situations, to be exclusive and even genocidal.

Thompson's main point, however, is the importance and breakdown of the principle of losers' consent because, in a representative democracy, this is necessary for the change of power without people resorting to violence. Citing Polybius, Thompson explains how the decay of a political system is inevitable over the course of time and can bring a regime to an end. The question is whether the regime moves towards democratic or aristocratic

excess because both cause a system's instability and risk eluding losers' consent. According to Thompson, the 1990s showed a plutocratic tendency that was characterised by unresponsiveness to economic reforms and the weakening of traditional political parties. To create some long-term economic grip, an increase in international treaties moved multiparty democracies towards an alleged but deceptive economic stability. This decline in healthy democratic dynamics has proven a disruptor on both sides of the Atlantic. The EU has painfully had to confront the consequences of its dependency on an outside power for external security. The EU must therefore ask itself if the number of its representatives is too small, how many of its executive authorities are appointed instead of elected, and to what extent one's chances of being elected depend on having a campaign fully financed? These are questions we know we need to ask, but Thompson poignantly explains their urgency.

My main question about *Disorder: Hard Times in the 21st Century* is whether in the long run it can resist the test of academic time, or whether it will prove more of a window on early 21st century thinking about energy geopolitics. The book's value lies in its main argument for logic, and in its appeal to the inevitability of acknowledging the importance of geopolitical thinking on the energy transition. Indirectly, it calls for people to be more seriously involved with historical facts because the question of energy dependency lies at the basis of our civilisation, and of our very existence. Taking stock of this important realisation, we can be sure that more work like Thompson's needs to find its way into everyday policymaking.

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