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PROGRESSIVE
CITIES

VS

CONSERVATIVE
STATES

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The #MeToo campaign
within EU political sphere

NEXT SOCIAL

Revising the Written
Statement Directive

BREXIT

Are UK politicians listening
to Millennials?

NEXT ECONOMY

Positive effects of
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Visegrad Group countries:
The state of the Left

NEXT DEMOCRACY

The price of data

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China's silk road and its impact
on Europe and the World

NEXT ENVIRONMENT

Improving the air
that we breathe

The Progressive Post

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PROGRESSIVE CITIES VS CONSERVATIVE STATES



by Maria João Rodrigues, FEPS President

Brussels, Paris, London, Vienna, Lisbon: through cities such as these, led by progressives of a new generation, social democracy continues to show that it is alive and kicking despite the efforts of those who wish to bury it. It is a social democracy of proximity, which responds to the questions and concerns of local residents. It is a social democracy that defends those embroiled in long term struggles for housing for all and defends those who have breathed new life into the debate about sustainable energy.

It is no coincidence that social democracy is rooted in big cities. In these ever-growing spaces, there is a new generation of young people attracted by local amenities and migrants drawn to the cities in the hope of finding their first job and a better life where they are fully included in society. In these

political, economic, digital and international capitals, the world is constantly changing. This is an open, multicultural and multilingual world.

But the city can sometimes seem rather like an employee in a public administration who is dealing directly with the public or the switchboard operator at a large company. They listen to the complaints and concerns of respectively, citizens or dissatisfied customers but they can do nothing about the issues raised. The state dominates and, when it is led by conservative forces, often acts overly cautiously or even in a cowardly way.

Currently, nation states are predominantly huddled together in Europe and appear prepared to let the market decide what is best for them. Instead of taking responsibility and offering a reassuring vision to citizens, the state gives time

and freedom of speech to nationalists, which only serve to make the situation worse.

Ceding in many ways to the powers of influence of conservatives and liberals, the European Commission has just proposed reducing the component of the European Union's budget that was dedicated to the development of cities and regions, who are the major stakeholders in people's everyday lives.

Progressive forces must now propose a new agenda. It is up to progressive forces to translate their local actions to a national and European level.

SPECIAL COVERAGE



| According to data from UN Women, in October 2018, 11 women were heads of state and 12 were heads of government

WOMEN BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS IN LOCAL POLITICS

by Yannick Glemarec

In a global context, local politics matter for women. Women’s equal participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making in public life is the key to unlocking the transformational change that we want to see to improve societies everywhere. Women’s right to participate in public affairs and their right to exercise political rights are central to gender equality and sustainable development. These are human rights. They are prerequisites for democratic governance.

Yet, in every region of the world, women are underrepresented in politics – just over 23 per cent of the world’s parliamentarians are women; slightly over 18 per cent of the world’s ministers are women; and less than 20 countries currently have a woman who serves as head of state or government. Local politics are often where political leaders get their start and are key to building the pipeline of future women

politicians. Astonishingly, we do not know how many women are represented in local level politics around the world. While regular tracking of the number of women in parliaments over the last 20 years has made it possible to measure progress and setbacks in terms of women’s representation at this level, the same has not been done at the local level. The experiences and contributions of millions of women serving at the local level is not captured because of the challenge of measurement across diverse countries and systems of local government.

Women’s strong contribution to politics

This is despite evidence that women’s substantive participation in politics improves political outcomes. When women are in decision-making positions, more inclusive decisions are made and different solutions are created. The evidence is clear: increased women’s political participation helps build safer, more inclusive and stable societies. In countries where greater numbers of women participate as political leaders, issues like health, education, infrastructure, ending violence against women and overall quality of life concerns get paid greater attention. And this is most evident in local politics – the level of decision-making that is closest to the people and affects daily life the most. Research on panchayats [forms of local government] in India discovered that the number of drinking water projects in areas with women-led councils was 62 per cent higher than in

those with men-led councils . In Norway, a direct causal link was found between the presence of women in municipal councils and childcare coverage.

Women in local government

UN Women is now working on developing the measurement of the proportion of women in local government within the monitoring framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. UN Women is leading the effort to develop the methodology that countries can use to produce and report on the proportion of seats held by women in local governments. We need national and local governments everywhere to join this global effort by committing to make every woman count by counting every woman elected to their local governments.

#Metoo The evidence is clear: increased women’s political participation helps build safer, more inclusive and stable societies @yannickunwomen



Transformational change needed

The transformational change we seek as part of a sustainable and

gender-equal world, however, is more than facts and figures. We must dismantle barriers to women’s political participation everywhere, from political parties that exclude women or deny them winnable candidacies, to electoral systems that do not give women a fair chance to compete against men, to a lack of financial resources to run viable campaigns, to the ‘triple burden’ for women in local level politics, for whom elected office is not their profession, who must look after the needs of their constituencies and carry out disproportionate unpaid domestic and care work in addition to their professional activities. We must stop spreading damaging, gender-based stereotypes in the media that diminish women’s contribution to policymaking. Above all, we must end violence against women in political life. Everyone has the right to participate in politics and to live a life free from discrimination and violence against women in politics is a violation of those rights.

We have a duty to aim higher for our societies by protecting those rights and promoting women’s engagement in politics. By now, we know how to do it. We must put in place enabling legal frameworks and electoral arrangements to help women and men compete on an equal basis – this includes implementing temporary special measures, such as quotas, which increase numbers of women in politics. We must prepare the terrain for more women to run for election at all levels of government by equipping women with the technical and financial capacity to run competitive campaigns.

And we must change harmful narratives so that women are as much accepted as leaders as men – the media has a central role to play here, by paying attention to women’s policies and political records rather than passing judgement on their appearance or family life. Key to these efforts is the political will to achieve gender balance in political and public life at all levels. With that, comes constant support to women leaders and a commitment that our political institutions are both responsive and sensitive to gender concerns.



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SPECIAL COVERAGE



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| With the #Timesup campaign creating a legal defence fund to help women to report sexual harassment and assault, the #Metoo movement has already taken the next step

#METOO: FROM HASHTAG, TO MOVEMENT, TO SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS TO COMBAT SEXUAL HARASSMENT

by Zita Gurmai & Marja Bijl

Sexual harassment has been present in the lives of women forever, but has always been treated as something unspoken, private and shameful. Last year, the #Metoo uproar showed the world what feminists have known for decades. Two women involved in politics, PES Women’s President Zita Gurmai & Vice-President Marja Bijl, give us their vision of a new social paradigm in which action is taken to tackle issues such as sexual harassment.

Thanks to social media, a lot of anger and frustration about sexual harassment has been brought to the surface. This ‘modern revolution’ broke

the silence, recreated solidarity among women of all ages, ethnicities and social backgrounds and gave victims a platform to be heard and respected. While the sexual harassment scandals

from Hollywood were only the tip of the iceberg, courageous women all over the globe spoke about their incredibly uncomfortable experiences and made clear that the underlying causes

#Metoo #Timesup
"Women start to change the world"
@zgurmai_EN
@MarjaBijl



of sexual harassment and rape are the unequal power structures in our society.

Systemic changes needed

Now, women are being supported to stand up and to start to change the way in which our world is structured against us. But we must not lose the momentum of this wave of solidarity, understanding and awareness. It is important not only to have a platform from which to speak, break taboos and show that women do not stand alone, but also to harvest the fruits of this new era. It is time for those of us who have decision-making power to address this difficult issue and to make systemic changes to help our societies to heal.

While businesses and companies have realised that their reputations are at stake and thus have implemented drastic measures, political parties and institutions are lagging behind. What is needed now is to set clear and specific guidelines for what types of behaviour constitute sexual harassment and policies to provide a clear process for victims and employers to follow when it takes place. We must improve messaging and awareness inside every workplace and create procedures that make it easy to handle an

Action by the EU institutions

Sadly, the EU institutions are not immune from sexual harassment. That is why, for example, the

European Parliament pushed for a cross-party motion on combating sexual harassment and abuse in the EU last year and is also moving forward with its advisory committee dealing with harassment complaints and rolling out more proactive and preventive campaigns, especially targeted at MEP assistants.

PES Women is convinced that these are not the only positive consequences of the #Metoo movement, which will trickle down and bring about real change. With the #Timesup campaign creating a legal defence fund to help women to report sexual harassment and assault, the #Metoo movement has already taken the next step. In the US, we already see more women running for office than ever before and people seem to understand that, in the long run, it is essential to increase female participation among decision-making authorities in order to foster a better work environment. This is something we wish to see in Europe too.

Tackling violence against women

While the #Metoo movement has opened ears, eyes and minds, sexual harassment is not an issue that will disappear soon unless we act on it, gathering data and making legislative, institutional and cultural changes. In the EU, we not only have to come up with concrete measures to translate the movement into political action but we need to implement the policy proposals that are already right in front of us to tackle the multiple forms of

violence that women suffer every day, including sexual harassment. That is why it is essential that the EU ratifies the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women as soon as possible, as we have been requesting for the past year. With the right political will, we can expect dramatic changes that go beyond a hashtag.

#Metoo
What is needed now is to set clear and specific guidelines for what types of behaviour constitute sexual harassment
@zgurmai_EN
@MarjaBijl



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Zita Gurmai was elected as President of the Party of European Socialists Women (PES Women) for the first time on 21 October 2004 and is currently in her 5th mandate. She has been Member of the European Parliament between 2004 and 2014 and has been elected Member of the Hungarian Parliament in April 2018.



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SPECIAL COVERAGE



There will be no peace in society if men do not turn their hegemonic masculinity into a progressive form of chivalry, says Isabella Lenarduzzi

#METOO, THE WOMEN’S REVOLUTION IN NEED OF ‘PROGRESSIVE MALE KNIGHTS’ TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD

by Isabella Lenarduzzi

For the last six months, not a week has gone by without there being a ‘victim’ of the #Metoo movement. At the time of writing, we are witnessing the Nobel Prize for literature being cancelled, six of the top leaders of Nike leaving the sports clothing company, Bill Cosby finally being sentenced and expelled from the Academy of Oscars just like Roman Polanski was. Yet who are the real victims? Indecent men, stalkers, predators, rapists or the women they attacked and from whom we are finally hearing?

When JUMP surveyed more than 2,000 men in Europe to understand whether they really wanted equality at work, one in four admitted to having already made a sexist remark or an inappropriate gesture towards a woman. And yet, when a woman is interviewed, she doesn’t want to come across badly. If one in four men claim to have behaved inappropriately, what is the reality experienced by women? Here’s what more than 3,000 women told us: 98% have already been subjected to sexist behaviour in the street or on public transport and 94% at work. One in two women was physically assaulted in the street or on public transport, one in three women in a public place and 9% at work!

#Metoo
It is up to each of one of us to stop accepting this state of affairs and to stop remaining silent
@isabellajump



How can one explain a situation in which men are still mistreating women in the 21st century?

Sexism is about taking power or keeping it.

From an innocuous remark, under cover of humour or paternalism, to the most serious psychological and physical violence, these kinds of behaviour exclude, marginalise or belittle women.

Sexism in companies is a major obstacle to gender equality in the workplace. 80% of women say they have been subjected to the phenomenon of ‘mansplaining’ and ‘maninterrupting’, in other words men interrupting them frequently in meetings and explaining things to them in a condescending manner, reinforcing the woman’s feeling of inadequacy and lack of legitimacy in their working lives. But sexist behaviour and remarks do not only take place in the work environment... More than three quarters of women have been subjected to remarks about their

dress sense and just as many have had comments about how they manage their families.

Companies can make the world’s best efforts towards achieving diversity. However, if women do not feel listened to, as respected and as valued as men, they will either leave the company or tend to limit their level of ambition to avoid being exposed to the violence of power or to the competition of those attempting to obtain power. Diversity without an inclusive culture brings suffering to all who are different from the dominant norm. All men benefit from the reduced competition from female competition for positions of power, even when they represent 60% of university graduates in Europe.

What about the issue of privileges in society?

If we want to build a fairer society where all humans are equal, we must first recognise that some have privileges that others do not.

If we want to increase the capacity for better performance and innovation in our organisations by benefiting from all its talent to its full potential no matter how diverse it may be, we must recognise that corporate culture is never neutral and reproduces the privileges that have existed in our society since the beginning of our civilisation.

White men are not responsible for the domination they exert over the world. But their responsibility starts if they do not make the effort to recognise it and adapt

#Metoo
Even today, 8 out of 10 women who report sexual harassment in the workplace end up leaving their jobs
@isabellajump



“ IF MEN DO NOT CHANGE, THE #METOO REVOLUTION WILL SIMPLY EXACERBATE THE WAR OF SEXES. ”

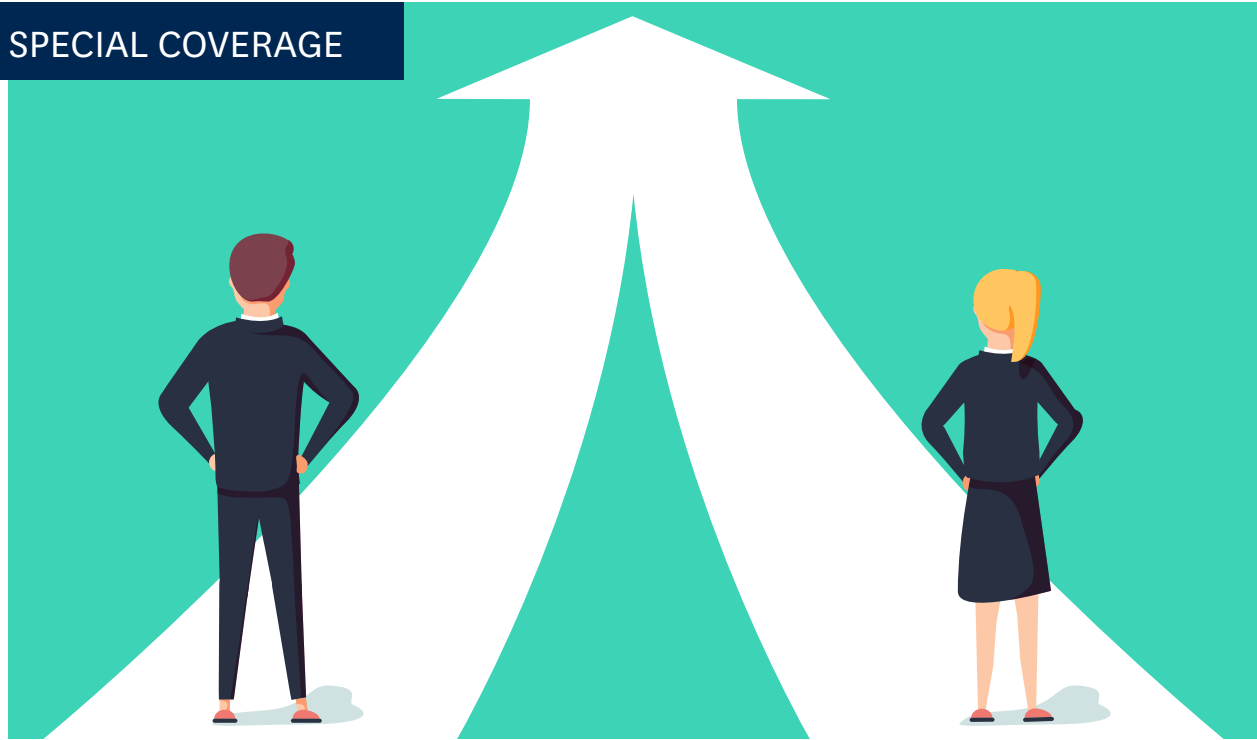
their behaviour to become an ally of women and minorities. aggressors, we simply add to their suffering.

If men do not change, the #Metoo revolution will simply exacerbate the war of sexes. Women will feel even more humiliated that they are not being listened to despite the millions who finally dared to speak up. Even today, eight out of ten women who report sexual harassment in the workplace end up leaving their jobs. The same applies to women who are victims of domestic violence, who are forced to leave home with their children. If we do not protect the victims and apply firm actions against the



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Isabella Lenarduzzi is the founder of JUMP, whose slogan is: ‘Empowering women, advancing the economy’. JUMP works with organisations and individuals to close the gap between women and men at work, to achieve sustainable corporate performance and to create a more equal society.

SPECIAL COVERAGE



| In October 2018, women accounted for 7.1% of board chairs and 5.5% of CEOs (European Commission, 2018)

#METOO: FROM SOCIAL CAMPAIGN TO SOCIAL CHANGE?

by Laetitia Thissen

‘Me Too’: These are the two words responsible for the shockwave that has reverberated around the world for the past few months. The ‘silence breakers’ – women who spoke out about abuse, assault and rape – were even named as the “person of the year” for 2018 by Time magazine. It could be argued that calls for an end to violence against women, next to equality in the workplace and a more gender-balanced representation in positions of power is nothing new in the fight led by women’s rights movements. In other words, the ideas behind ‘Me Too’ are nothing new. But what is rather new about it lies in the unprecedented mass mobilisation and its potential of perhaps becoming the biggest revolution that has happened to women since the right to vote.

#Metoo Assaults on women were commonplace but silenced
@LaeThissen



This uniqueness stems from a conjunction of specific factors. Firstly, the movement has irrevocably put a burning issue on the table that everyone knew about but did not want to address openly until now. Assaults on women were commonplace but were kept silent. Now, they are not only being made public but are also heavily challenged. We have seen an upsurge in solidarity amongst women from all parts of the world as a result of the emergence of a major shift in attitudes. In addition, the movement has proven exceptionally inclusive by rallying women from all walks of life against a common scourge thanks to the use of social media as a platform of expression accessible to everyone regardless of one’s socioeconomic background. While celebrities used their fame to propel the #Metoo into the spotlight, it has subsequently empowered women from all countries, ages, sectors and social groups who have followed suit in seeking to tackle the issue of violence against women. This sense of universal sisterhood has been a vital element in exposing the huge scope of the problem of sexual harassment and assault. In a short span of time, women’s rights issues and gender

equality issues have aroused a rapidly growing interest in public debate. ‘Feminism’ became Merriam-Webster’s word of 2018 as the most looked-up word of the year in its online dictionary. Thirdly, more women are identifying themselves as feminists.

This is a trend which is even more pronounced amongst young women: 69 per cent of British teenage girls would describe themselves as such according to a new study by the media agency UM London. Finally, thanks to the sharing of their experiences, women are being believed. For the first time, it seems that men are understanding what women have suffered for centuries.

Clearly, there is no doubt about this change of mood. But, beyond the headlines and perceptions, we need a change in reality and therefore a change in policy and processes. In order to translate this movement into social progress in curbing sexual harassment, achieving gender equality across all domains is crucial. A good place to start is with the traditionally male-dominated hierarchies. Women are severely underrepresented in decision-making processes at all levels, even in sectors where they represent the majority in terms of numbers. In October 2018, women accounted for 7.1% of board chairs and 5.5% of CEOs. If teams and managers were more balanced between men and women, there would be more likely to be less sexual assault and harassment. Moreover, a crucial element lies in involving men. When UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres openly called himself

“a proud feminist”, this already sent out a strong signal. The fact remains however that, according to a special Eurobarometer on gender equality (2018), only 35% of men approve of a man identifying himself as a feminist.

In the same vein, figures demonstrate that, overall, women are more likely than men to think that promoting gender equality is important for them personally, for the economy and to ensure a fair democratic society (European Commission, 2018).

Is EU gender progressive ?

In the light of the above figures, we have very little to cheer about over a century after the emergence of the first women’s movements. As underscored by the 2018 gender equality index produced by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), gender equality is progressing at snail’s pace in Europe across all sectors. Therefore, in the wake of the European Parliament elections, progressive parties across all member states need to demonstrate through deeds that they stand

#Metoo Women who spoke out about abuse, assault and rape were named as the “person of the year” for 2018 by Time magazine
@LaeThissen



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#IwantWorkLifeBalance: Join the movement!



| The #IwantWorkLifeBalance campaign was launched to shore up citizen support for the EU Work Life Balance Directive as a first channel to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights and make a real contribution to achieving more gender equality in Europe

A GENDER POWER BATTLE TO BRING EQUALITY INTO THE LABOUR MARKET IS UNDERWAY

by Paola Panzeri

The #Metoo movement unveiled a reality that most of us were afraid to admit but somehow all had experience of: in order to work, women have to respond to extra demands and be silent about it. From signing (illegal) dismissal letters in case of pregnancy to being asked during a job interview whether they plan to have children or being offered a lower salary than a man for the same job through to the inappropriate, abusive and unacceptable demands for sexual encounters. Paola Panzeri highlights the importance of this reform in everyday life.

We either experienced it ourselves or knew someone who did but we all kept silent. Maybe we were afraid or maybe it is just because we got so used to it that we thought it was normal.

This is, however, not our fault. The system was built to make us feel like 'guests' in the labour market. It was designed by men for men, in a vision of society where male-breadwinner fami-

Society has changed, families are diverse, the number of women graduates has increased and, last but not least, more and more men are no longer ashamed of wanting to spend time with their children. There is a growing call to modernise the labour market from the younger generations: to make it possible for women to access and stay in employment and for men to take up more care responsibilities.

While some may demand these changes, others are resisting because, like in any other power

#IwantWorkLife
Balance #Metoo
The EU should take
the chance to make
Europe a better place
for women and men

@paolpan
@COFACE_EU



we will have eradicated the idea that extra criteria and demands may be asked from a woman applying for a job. I sincerely hope that the EU will take this opportunity to make Europe a better place for women and men and that it will not bury its head in the sand, blocking or stalling this piece of legislation as it has done in the past. If it did so, that would mean only one thing: the EU is a white old men's club and it wants to keep it that way.

“
THE SYSTEM WAS BUILT TO
MAKE US FEEL LIKE 'GUESTS'
IN THE LABOUR MARKET.

lies were the model to be promoted. We see it in taxation systems that often still penalise second earners (i.e. women) or in the incompatibilities of work and school hours forcing the parent with a lower income (i.e. women) to go part time. This model is, in 2018, no longer viable.

fight, regardless of how fair and just a battle is, the group holding power will not want to share its consolidated and dominant role. In this fight, an essential battle is the legislation structuring the labour market itself because making a fair labour market should not be a matter of good will but a right for all.

As we speak, the European Parliament is discussing a Commission proposal for a Work-Life Balance Directive that would grant parents and carers the individual right to adequately paid leave and flexible working arrangements. This would support women in entering and staying in employment and men in taking more time for family responsibilities, reducing the gap in terms of time spent out of employment for family reasons for men and women.

This may seem like a drop in the ocean, but the day that women will not be seen any more as mothers temporarily 'lent' to the labour market but as workers fully entitled to their job; and men not only as breadwinners but also as fathers and carers,



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SPECIAL COVERAGE



© shutterstock

| #Metoo I prefer women who fight to those who have regrets. Here, it is not clear what they are calling for, says Anne Morelli

WHY ‘ME TOO’ IS NOT AROUSING MUCH INTEREST AMONG MILLIONS OF WOMEN

by Anne Morelli

In their homes around the world, women continue to be the victims of violence. The most serious of these forms of violence is of course ‘femicide’, i.e. killing women. From Mexico to our very own doorstep in Europe, that involves husbands (who feel that or believe that they have been) deceived, or exes who refuse to accept that the relationship has ended or unsuccessful suitors who kill a woman whom they consider belongs to them. There are also other forms of violence affecting women in a more direct way: e.g. insufficient income is economic violence that many women face. Sometimes this insufficient income is combined with the women having family responsibilities that can effectively tie them to the home. Anne Morelli reviews the impact of #Metoo.

The current pay gap, in terms of monthly salary, is 20% in Belgium. The average pension paid to women is 882 euro per month whilst the average pension paid to men is 1,181 euro per month. Unemployment benefit due to a cohabitant at present is 523 euro whilst the Belgian government is continuing with plans to reduce the supplements which are currently paid to part-time workers (who are predominantly women).

Women are now better educated than men but work in the lowest-paying sectors. Their ‘self-stereotypes’ (Editor’s note: A belief that an individual maintains about another member of the group that he/she belongs to) and part-time work serve to restrict their vertical professional mobility.

the right of women to have children that they want has been called into question by the re-criminalisation and limitation of the right to abortion. I regularly join demonstrations in support of women who are fighting to keep these rights, the

We have very specific laws which deal with rape, harassment and even sexist language on the street. These must be applied firmly and judiciously

@ulbruxelles



same rights we won in our fight against forced pregnancies. Yet, I did not join in the ‘Me too’ or ‘Expose the pig’ movement.

“

WOMEN AND YOUNG GIRLS TODAY ARE NOT POOR, FRAGILE THINGS THAT THESE MOVEMENTS SUCH AS ‘ME TOO’ ATTEMPT TO LOWER US TO.

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We must add other forms of violence to the litany of economic violence we have seen. If we restrict ourselves to a review of the situation in Europe, we can see, for example, that, in a number of countries (Poland, Romania, Hungary, Italy, etc.),

The Hollywood spin to this movement certainly created a buzz that pleased many of the parties with an interest in Twitter, which itself saw an advertising spike. Whilst others joined in like wolves in a hunting pack as increasing numbers

of opportunists took the opportunity to slander or figuratively lynch the men in the public eye who were (for a thousand different reasons) unpleasant.

I prefer women who fight than those who have regrets. Here, it is not clear what they are calling for. We have very specific laws which deal with rape, harassment and even sexist language on the street. These must be applied firmly and judiciously. I willingly signed Catherine Deneuve’s letter, but I quickly learned the hard way that the “liberated” word of women was not the word of any woman, only the word of those women considered to represent the “mainstream”. I am a successor of ‘68 and I fight for women AND men and their right to open marriage and to flirt (elegantly to a lesser or great extent depending on the person!).

On the other hand, I do not have much empathy for the claims of Patricia Arquette, a Hollywood star who has complained about salary inequality in Hollywood. An Oscar may bring an actor a \$500,000 salary supplement...

As for the enthusiastic McCarthyism and revenge encouraged by the ‘Me too’ and ‘Expose the pig’ (‘Balance ton porc’ in French) movements, these have served to strengthen social control and triggered a worrying whistle-blowing phenomenon.

The Belgian press (for example La Libre Belgique dated 8 March 2018) published results of a survey showing that 9 out of 10 members of the public had faced some form of

“sexual intimidation” but do you know that these so-called acts of “sexual intimidation” included “staring”? What should be included in these claims? Can we regulate and prohibit “staring”?

Women and young girls today are not poor, fragile things that movements such as ‘Me too’ attempt to lower us to. There are more claims than those related to the conduct of an American billionaire that we should support. And whose claims should be successful? Ultimately, after all this media hype, it is clear to all that Harvey Weinstein (who has produced many big budget films and has been accused of sexual harassment by many women) is neither in prison nor is he facing criminal charges and that the ‘Weinstein’ of the White House (i.e. US President Donald Trump) continues to make people worry about the longevity of peace in the world, and yet the world appears not to be worried.



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Anne Morelli is a historian and professor at the ULB. She signed the ‘tribune to the World’ which defends “the freedom to annoy”. She studied political science and history and is from the (SPÖ) [Social Democratic Party of Austria].

SPECIAL COVERAGE



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As with everywhere else, the beginnings of modern women's movements in this part of the world date back to the last third of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, says Sonja Lokar

LESSONS FROM HISTORY: FEMALE ACTIVISTS IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

by Sonja Lokar

Today's Europe has an incredibly rich and diverse but poorly explored history of women's movements. The progressive nature of Scandinavian countries in this regard is widely known and their experience has been an inspiration for women's movements all over the globe. But what about female activists in south eastern Europe, especially the ones from the new countries that emerged from the former socialist Yugoslavia?

The first and very common misperception is that countries in the European southern semi-periphery and periphery were and still are lagging a long way behind feminists in northern and western Europe. In reality this has never been the case. As with everywhere else, the beginnings of modern women's movements in this part of the world date back to the last third of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. The initial demands for equal rights to education, employment in all professions, equal pay, the ending of dual morality and prostitution and calls for peaceful solutions to international conflicts came along with the first waves of industrialisation, the formation of the modern nation states, the growth in the numbers of their civil servants, especially teachers, of the industrial working class and its trade unions, civil society organisations and parties and with the gradual introduction of the right to vote and stand election for the adult men. For example, the first women's association in Slovenia (a teachers' association for women) was organised in 1871 and the first women's

newspaper was published in 1897. The second misperception is that state measures to support and protect pregnant working women and give them the chance to stay in the labour market after giving birth by organising public childcare were introduced in northern Europe.

Women in the great antifascist liberation movement generated the biggest push towards #GenderEquality #Yugoslavia @SonjaLokar



Women's role in the antifascist liberation movement

The biggest push towards gender equality, especially in Yugoslavia, came from the direct involvement of many women in the major antifascist liberation movement (1941-1945) led by the communists. Women who fought as partisan soldiers, organisers of the logistics for the partisan fighters in cities and villages, as doctors and nurses in clandestine partisan hospitals, who in 1943 formed a massive antifascist women's organisation, were the ones to become ardent and successful 'state feminists' from 1945 until 1990.

Full legal equality, the secular state, the right to vote and all economic, social and nearly all personal rights that women are

still enjoying in Slovenia were enacted and implemented in this period. At the moment when Slovenia left socialist Yugoslavia to become an independent republic with a market economy and a parliamentary democracy, the percentage of women graduates was already higher than that for men. The situation all over the former Yugoslavia was not as good. The other five republics of the federal state were much poorer and less developed than Slovenia, but the political and state approach to gender equality and to women's rights was the same everywhere.

Gender equality setbacks in the 80s/90s

Economic crises caused by high levels of public debt broke out in the 1980s in all former socialist countries. Yugoslavia was no exception. The political and economic system had to change. The communists could not find a new solution for the economic and social progress of the whole federation. Instead, all political parties started to plan the creation of independent nation states. When the country fell apart and democracy started with nationalistic, aggressive and conservative governments, women were completely excluded from the parliaments and governments. The first multi-party elected parliaments in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro had between two to five per cent of women MPs. Slovenia was a bit better with 11%. Slovenia luckily escaped the armed conflict, while, from 1991-1999, Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo

were devastated by terrible armed disputes in the search for 'greater' or new nation states.

These same belligerent, nationalistic political forces rejected the modern concept of gender equality, replacing it with the ideology of a woman as the "mother of the nation, queen of the home". The secular state, freedom of choice and the state protection of sexual and reproductive women's rights were the first to come under the attack. Armed conflicts destroyed the social and economic fibre of these societies. They derailed the economic development of the so called Western Balkans and transformed this region into a region of unemployment, poverty and social despair. The absence of the rule of law, corruption, organised crime, growing social inequalities and the brain drain made it worse. Democracy is fragile and prone to abuse from autocratic nationalistic and populist leaders.

Slovenia leading the way forward

In such extremely harsh conditions progressive women from this region succeeded in starting the struggle for peace and reconciliation and for their political empowerment. In Slovenia, they saved crucial soft achievements from socialist times. In the Western Balkans, due to international support, their regional and cross party-cross civil society cooperation, due to their nationwide issue coalitions, they succeeded in putting the issue of violence against women onto the agenda of mainstream politics,

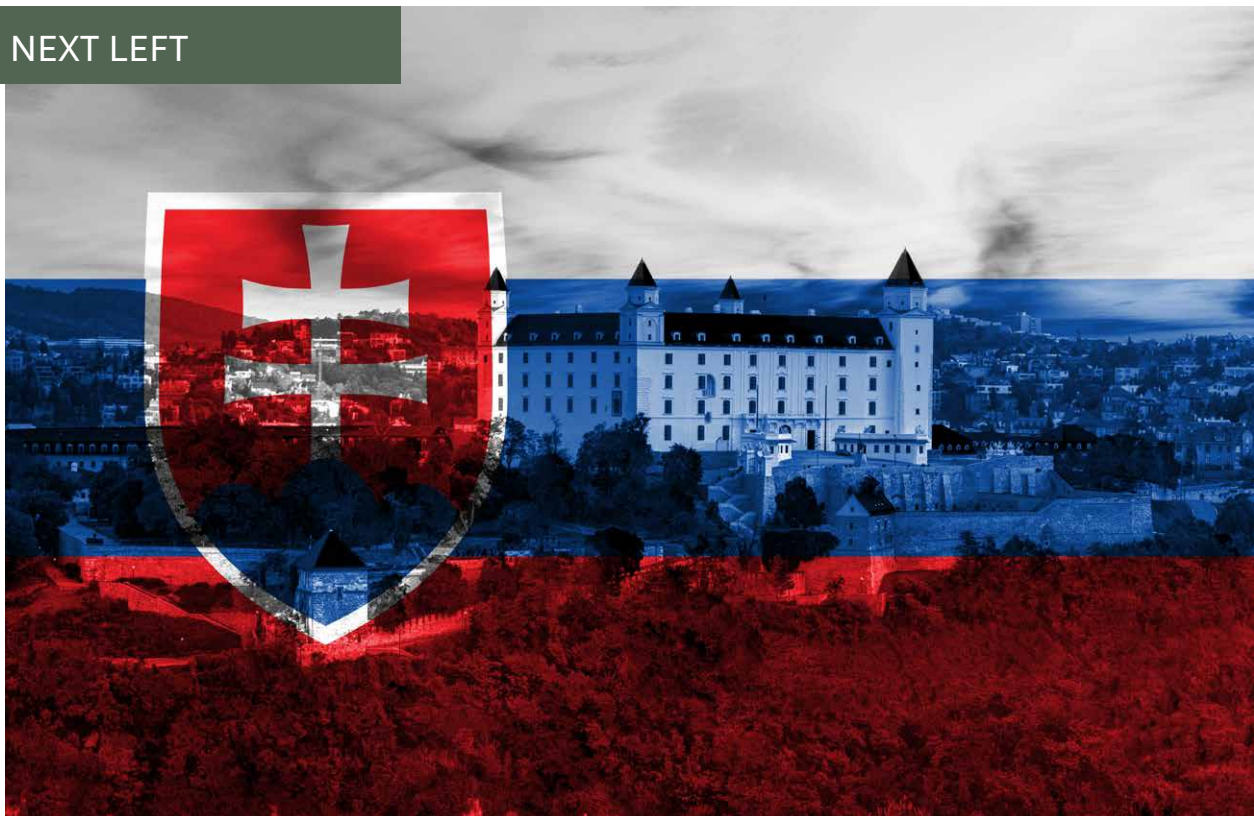
in enacting quota in all the new states in south eastern Europe. In Serbia they even succeeded in creating a joint platform for the development of Serbia. The Women Peace and Security Index 2018/19, which measures sustainable peace through inclusion, justice and security for women, lists all the independent states that emerged from the former socialist Yugoslavian republics in the top 50 of 152 nations. Slovenia is listed in 4th place! Sweden comes 7th.

I am inclined to think that it is time that the feminists from northern and western Europe might also start to learn from the incredible achievements of the women from south eastern Europe.



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Sonja Lokar is a feminist and advocate for women's human rights in Slovenia and internationally. As Executive Director of the CEE Network for Gender Issues and the Chair of the Stability Pact Gender Task Force she has been working with women activists across all social, ethnic, religious and political divides in 21 countries. As president of the European Women's Lobby she works all over the European Union on Women issues and for the political empowerment of women.

NEXT LEFT



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I Despite winning the election in 2016, the party lost one third of its previous supporters, says Boris Zala

THE STATE OF THE LEFT IN THE VISEGRAD GROUP: PARADOXES OF THE SLOVAK LEFT

by MEP Boris Zala

SMER- Social Democracy is a successful political party but its paradox is that it is not able to address the younger generation, progressive urban strata and more civic and green thinking people. This is simply because of the conservative rhetoric and public narrative of its leaders, particularly its long standing chairman Robert Fico. Moreover, the party is mired in corruption scandals and efforts to clean up the party have not been successful. Boris Zala sets out some of the key points to help us understand the state of play of the Left in Slovakia.

Is there a 'Left' party in Slovakia at all? A real paradox of the Slovak left: in comparison with the loss of support from outside (i.e. from the electorate) in other European countries, the Slovak Left has been declining from within. Allow me to go back in time briefly: we started to create the new party, called Smer, twenty years ago with the resolution to give it a social democratic vision and political content step by step. I was personally deeply involved in this process both politically and conceptually. The chairman of the party Robert Fico actively opened the space for those efforts and for Smer to incorporate all the other Left parties in the country.

#StateofLeft
#Slovakia

The future of the Slovak Left is tragically bound up with the fate of the SMER party

@zalaboris



Smer brought together all the other small Left wing parties and rightfully added a new title to its name: Smer-social democracy. The success story rolled on. Smer-SD won four subsequent elections and

formed three governments. We stopped the orthodox neoliberal trend and imposed more balanced social and economic policies. We changed the Labour code in favour of trade unions. Despite the economic crises we introduced several "social packages" to help people to survive honestly, to overcome the negative impact of the crises on the vulnerable social strata and at the same time to maintain a balanced budget and curb deficits. This social economic policy was exemplary and people prized it. But, from 2014 onwards, there have been some bad signs.

Robert Fico lost the presidential elections to an unknown entrepreneur by a big margin and, despite winning the election in 2016, the party lost one third of its previous supporters. As a result, the ideological position and particularly the rhetoric of the party leader and prime minister changed and took on a typical conservative and traditional flavour. As a result of the convergence the views of mostly backward looking clericals and then the approval of a constitutional change, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community was excluded from the legal possibility of marriage.

Following that came condemnation of the migrants because of their religious affiliations, an endorsement of the concept of an exclusively Christian Europe, a reduction of Slovakia's historical

heritage to Christianity (understood as the Catholic legacy); direct attacks on migrants with an Islamic background etc. In addition, there was a hard condemnation of solidarity in the form of migrant "quotas". Apart from this rhetoric, corruption scandals have multiplied, with those involved arrogantly defying the public opinion and protected directly by the prime minister. In my personal capacity as a member of the Presidium of the party I repeatedly pointed out these ideological and personal problems.

This was a clear warning that, with the conservative rhetoric and unsolved corruption scandals, the party will lose the support of the young generation, progressive and liberal urban strata, non-Catholic Christian believers, the greens and environmentalists (they don't have a parliamentary representation in Slovakia) and the whole LGBT community. In this ideological environment even the positive "social packages" had no real effect and the party shifted from a social democratic position towards more of a typical social conservatism in the style of the Bavarian Social Union. (by the way, due to this development I suspended my membership of the party to try to shake and wake up the other members...). After the tragic killing of the investigative journalist and his fiancé, massive street protests forced the Prime Minister Robert Fico and Interior Minister Robert

Kalinak to resign. But Robert Fico remains chairman of the party and, with loud anti-Soros vocabulary, he has attacked the NGOs and suggested that the coup d'état was about shifting the politics of the party even closer to the narrative of Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán. The fate of the 'Left' in Slovakia is at the moment very tragic because there is no real Left leadership in any party in the country.



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Boris Zala Boris Zala is a Member of the European Parliament and is from the Socialists and Democrats Group. He is the founder of the Social Democratic Movement in Slovakia and a co-founder of the party SMER-Social Democracy and the author of the books 'Europeanism' and 'Thought for Leftists Willing to Think'.

NEXT LEFT



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I Collectively, left-wing, green and liberal parties were unable to obtain any more than 30 percent of the votes

THE STATE OF THE LEFT IN THE VISEGRAD GROUP: LANDSCAPE AFTER A DISASTER IN HUNGARY

by Péter Krekó

As the parliamentary elections on 8th of April obviously proved, the Hungarian Left is not in its best shape. Fidesz could win a two-thirds majority for the third time in a row. With less than majority of the votes (47 percent on the territory of Hungary), but with a massive, and increasing voter base. While everybody expected that high turnout will be beneficial for Fidesz, the results went totally against this expectation: with more than 70 percent of the votes (compared to only 62 percent in 2014) Fidesz could bring close to half million new voters to the ballot boxes compared to the previous election, achieving its second best electoral result in its history. Péter Krekó draws up a state of Left in Hungary.

If it weren't a big problem in itself for the Left, traditional left-wing parties, fitting to the European trends, performed spectacularly worse on this election than on the previous one. While the alliance of the Hungarian Socialist Party (S&D) and Dialogue Hungary (Greens) could reach 12 percent, passing the 10 percent threshold set for them to pass, and Democratic Coalition, the party of ex-socialist PM Ferenc Gyurcsány, entered in the parliament for the first time on a separate list with 5.4 percent, this cannot be regarded as a success in itself. While the joint list of these left-wing parties plus the Together Party received 1.3 million votes and 26% 4 years ago, they hardly gained more than 1 million votes this time and gained less than 18% together – a considerable loss. Collectively, left-wing, green and liberal parties were unable to obtain any more than 30 percent of the votes.

But the problem was not only with the number of the votes but with insufficient coordination as well in individual constituencies, where the first past the post. While the centrist-green Politics Can be Different Party were able to broaden their voter base a bit (they gained 7 percent this time, compared to 5.3 in 2014), they were reluctant to step back in several individual constituencies in Budapest to support other left-wing candidates – thus contributing to the two-thirds majority of Fidesz. Also, opposition parties were unable to coordinate

delegating members to every local electoral committee – undermining the credibility of their post-election claims on massive electoral frauds.

Furthermore, a lot of votes lost. More than five percent of the votes that were given to parties that remained under the five percent parliamentary threshold: the joke party two-tailed dog party with close to 2 percent of the votes, the liberal Momentum with 3 percent of the votes and Together with 0.7 percent of the votes. Still, Momentum and the Dogs can be happy: even if they do not have mandates, they will have financial resources for the next four years.

To sum up: the Hungarian Left was unable to broaden its voter base, and also, the different parties were unable to coordinate efficiently. The hard, diligent work was not done, in order to expand the voter base. The “narcissism of small differences” between the opposition parties seemed to overwrite the joint goal of pushing Fidesz under two-thirds.

But what is a bigger problem: the left seems to lose support among the voter groups they officially aim to represent. Most of the lowest-income settlements voted for Fidesz. The countryside, including the less developed Eastern part of the country, also supported Fidesz – with one exception (Szeged). Pensioners, once the most enthusiastic supporter of the Hungarian Socialist Party, now dominantly voted for Fidesz. The left remained strong only in

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THE “NARCISSISM OF SMALL DIFFERENCES” BETWEEN THE OPPOSITION PARTIES SEEMED TO OVERWRITE THE JOINT GOAL OF PUSHING FIDESZ UNDER TWO-THIRDS.

”

the capital, Budapest: the most developed part of the country.

No question that the Hungarian election in Orbán's illiberal Hungary was unfair- while dominantly free. No question that good economic figures helped the government. But it seems that eight years of Fidesz governance was not enough for the opposition to adapt – and it will be even more difficult to do so in the next four years in an increasingly authoritarian system. So this is not just a big win for Fidesz, but a huge failure of the opposition.

This election was not about the bead, but about the circus. Fidesz in the campaign almost did not tell a word about policies and economy. They talked only about migrants, and Brussels, and the dystopian vision of the disappearance and Islamization of Hungary. This election was not targeting pockets but hearts and minds. And this is not something that the Hungarian Left has too much to tell about.

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#Hungary
The left seems to be losing support among the voter groups that they officially aim to represent
@peterkreko



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Péter Krekó is an executive director of Political Capital, a policy research and consulting institute.

NEXT LEFT



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| In Poland, less than 20% of the overall electorate describes itself as left-leaning

THE STATE OF THE LEFT IN THE VISEGRAD GROUP: POLAND'S LEFT, FRAGMENTED AND IN DISARRAY

by Maria Skóra

In the 2015 parliamentary elections, the results of the Polish Left were not good enough to enable them to win seats in the Polish parliament. Today, the biggest problem on the path towards challenging the governing national-conservative PiS party is that left wing parties are fragmented. Maria Skóra looks back at the last elections and paints a picture of the state of the Left in Poland.

The national conservative Law and Justice (PiS) party has been in government in Poland for over two years now. It has satisfied its most dedicated voters by implementing the announced “conservative counter-revolution” through bold reforms to its judiciary, changes in its media laws and by reframing historical narratives. With the new era marked by the nomination of the second PiS cabinet of the soft-spoken former banker Mateusz Morawiecki, the unstoppable machine broke down. A controversial defamation law, a dogmatic approach to reproductive rights and the latest scandal over generous rewards for the ministers from the party’s first term of government has cost the PiS the support of some of its voters. According to the latest polls, although the party has maintained its pole position, other political forces are appearing on the horizon, including the Polish Left.

In the 2015 parliamentary elections, the results of the new left (RAZEM party) and the old one (SLD, Social Democratic Alliance) were not good enough to enable them to win seats in the Polish parliament, known as the Sejm. As a result, the political landscape at the national level ranges from the liberal positions of the Civic Platform and its previous junior coalition partner, the agrarian PSL, and

their core rival, Nowoczesna, to the national-conservative agenda of PiS, flanked by a right-wing populist movement called Kukiz’15, a broad coalition including nationalist elements. Left wing parties have therefore had to prove their relevance on other battlefields than in the Sejm.

“THEORETICALLY, COOPERATION SEEMS THE ONLY WAY TO GO, BUT FOR IDEOLOGICAL REASONS IT IS IMPOSSIBLE.”

But drifting away from the political mainstream does not seem to be the biggest problem of the Polish Left. What prevents its meaningful comeback on the political scene is the fact that it is fragmented. The post-communist SLD continues to be the most prominent left wing party but is neither capable of mobilising enough voters to mount a serious challenge to the PiS nor can it facilitate

the emergence of a broader progressive coalition. The new left, Podemos and Syriza-inspired RAZEM party, rejects thoughts of cooperation with its older comrades and is engaging locally and running very appealing virtual campaigns. However, that is still not enough to grant them support exceeding the election threshold of 5%. Last but not least, a new figure is emerging. The eyes of many are turning to the former MP and first openly homosexual city mayor, Robert Biedroń, as offering hope for left-liberal voters. The future of this alliance is, however, hitherto unclear. Analogies between him and Emmanuel Macron are being drawn although Macron does not really represent the traditional Left.

According to the latest research figures, less than 20% of the overall electorate describes itself as left-leaning. Meanwhile, at least three initiatives mentioned above are competing for their support. By contrast, not only are conservative sympathies much more common in Polish society, but they are also represented by a very disciplined and consolidated political force: the PiS and Jarosław Kaczyński. The Polish left must therefore remain vigilant and make use of widespread and growing disappointment with the current government

#Poland
#StateofLeft
“What prevents its meaningful comeback on the political scene is the fact that it is fragmented,” says @MariaSkóra



to mainstream their agenda. More importantly, it must also avoid fragmenting its electorate and growing too fast for it. Theoretically, cooperation seems the only way to go, but for ideological reasons it is impossible. The state of the left in Poland is therefore currently unclear and in uncharted waters.



> AUTHOR

Maria Skóra is Senior Project Manager at Das Progressive Zentrum, a think tank based in Berlin. She formerly worked for the Humboldt-Viadrina Governance Platform, Berlin, and supported the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions in Warsaw as an expert.

NEXT LEFT



| The weakness of political parties endangers democracy, and not only in central Europe, says Vladimír Špidla

THE STATE OF THE LEFT IN THE VISEGRAD GROUP: THE LEFT SUCCEEDS WHEN PEOPLE START BELIEVING IN A BETTER FUTURE

by Vladimír Špidla

Political developments in the Czech Republic are not regionally specific. They are part of a broader development of modern society. It resembles developments such as in Italy. Key features of these developments are weak parties, a feeling of distrust about the future and a fear of change. Vladimír Špidla, a former Prime Minister of the Czech Republic (2002-2004), tells us about the evolution of the Left in his country.

Before the Czech elections in October 2018, typical questions associated with the socio-economic conditions of human life played a much smaller role than ever before. The situation in the Czech Republic was excellent in all aspects. Salaries and pensions were growing, the crime rate was one of the lowest in the world and the rate of unemployment had fallen below three per cent. Overall, we can say that full employment was being achieved and a large proportion of the population was part of the labour market.

*#StateofLeft
#CzechRepublic
between a "lack
of trust and a
strong demand for
transparency"
@vladimir_spidla*



However, there was a general feeling of uncertainty. Although, in general, people stated that their life was in good shape, they had only a very small level of confidence in a more distant future. There was a deeply rooted idea that the current state of things is very fragile. Traditional political parties, with their long history in politics, had, at this point in which there was such considerable anxiety, a very disadvantageous position. Great failures are part of history, too. The 2008 crisis shook the certainties of the Czech population. It also shook trust in the European Union. It turned out

that the European Union is not an automatic provider of prosperity.

Weakness of political parties endangers democracy

Central European societies have experienced several decades of a closed and authoritative system, which only strengthened xenophobic feelings and the fear of a big open world impossible for an individual to encompass. The Czech Republic is not the only example of this. The Federal Republic of Germany can serve as a good example too, or, to be precise, its eastern parts can. However, central European countries do not form a political and cultural unity. The role of the Czech Republic is also defined by the fact that it cannot, even seemingly, have a political ambition, not even on a regional scope.

It is weak political parties that are a distinguishing feature of central Europe. Political parties of any kind, including on the Left, have very low levels of membership, which is also why they are not able to stand for political interests in a convincing way. In addition, a small number of people can only create very weak organisational structures, which make it difficult to change the elites in the event of a crisis. There is simply a lack of people.

The weakness of political parties endangers democracy, and not only in central Europe, as we can also mention Italy in this context. Other entities, which are often connected with economic groups of different sorts, are

occupying the space freed up by political parties. The Czech case proves that, like in Italy, large economic groups no longer consider it effective to influence democratic structures indirectly and so they have decided to seize control of them.

A typical example from the Czech Republic is the political movement ANO, led by a billionaire with substantial and direct media power. His movement has no tradition in politics and, technically, does not even have a political programme. This enables him to, in combination with the media ownership, create a certain 'messianic' image, as well as a stable and problem solving image.

Demand for selective openness

The current Czech political practice features a lack of trust in general conceptions and an unwillingness to reform the system in any direction. That is why non-political politics is so strong, meaning the politics which is not based on a value system but saying instead: "I am not going to change anything, but I am going to be much more effective in running the country. And you can, of course, benefit from that."

Another major issue is an erosion of trust in individual political party figures, triggered by a strong demand for transparency. The same is not demanded from other power elites though, for instance the administrations of big companies. This results in any political figure soon being discredited and worn down. This makes any conceptual planning

extraordinarily complicated, because the ideas are, especially in their initial state, not fully elaborated, and so they are easy to rebut.

It is symbolic that the questions of societal transformation caused by technological changes are so little discussed in the Czech Republic. It is also important that the consciousness of the population has internalised, post-communist transformation has more or less ended and the winners and the losers have been determined. All the traditional parties were founded or reinstated in the 1990s. They are associated with the transformation and the transformation itself is not morally accepted. This elicits a somewhat unclear desire for change. It is obvious that traditional political parties, with their history, cannot be the symbolic bearers of such a change.



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NEXT SOCIAL



| A driver working for Uber is one example of an online platform worker

PROTECTING WORKERS' RIGHTS IN A CHANGING WORLD OF WORK

by Barbara Gerstenberger

In her analysis of the European Commission's proposals for a Directive on transparent and predictable working conditions, Barbara Gerstenberger looks closely at the growing challenges posed by non-standard forms of employment and new forms of employment (e.g. casual work and platform employment).

Changes in the world of work have led to a situation where rules and regulations designed to protect workers are, in effect, shielding fewer and fewer of them. The increase in non-standard forms of employment – which tend to offer less protection – is not necessarily a development from the recent past. Both temporary contracts and

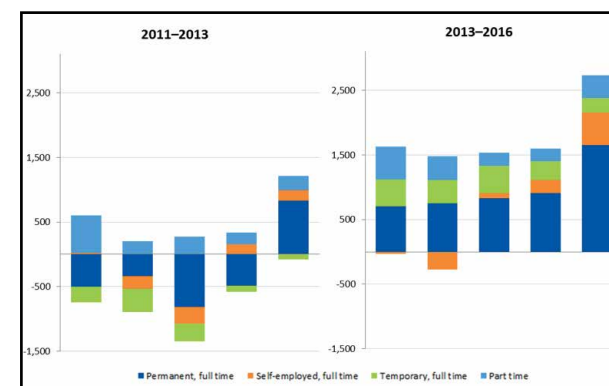
self-employment grew in the long economic boom from the mid-1990s. There has not been a dramatic increase in either in the past decade. This is different for part-time work: it continued to grow even after the onset of the recession in 2007 and now accounts for just under 20% of all jobs in the EU. The dynamics of the situation become clear when we look at new jobs created in the last

ten years. More than half of them were non-standard. The resulting instability and lack of predictability for an increasing number of workers is what the proposed Directive on transparent and predictable working conditions needs to address.

Pay often low in non-standard jobs

From a policy perspective, it is important to note that non-standard jobs are mainly created in lower paying categories. If we examine net employment change by wage quintile, we see that the highest number of full-time, permanent jobs was added in the highest wage quintile. New jobs in the lowest wage quintile were mainly temporary or part-time jobs.

Employment shifts (in thousands) by job-wage quintile and employment status, EU, 2011 Q2–2016 Q2 based on EU-LFS and SES data



The above findings from the European Jobs Monitor are confirmed by an analysis of data from the 6th European Working Conditions Survey. An investigation of the links between employment status and working conditions shows that the share of low-pay is higher among workers on fixed-term contracts compared to full-time workers. Also, perceived prospects are significantly lower for people on fixed term contracts – mainly due to lower job security. For part-time workers the data shows that they did not benefit from the increase in employer paid training experienced by full-time workers. The share of part-time workers receiving training actually declined between 2010 and 2015. The proposed Directive takes up the issue of cost-free training for all workers in Article 11.

What about self-employment? Eurofound has completed a detailed analysis of the working conditions of self-employed in Europe. While nearly half show good levels of job quality, one in four self-employed give reason for concern. The situation of these 'vulnerable'

self-employed is characterised by economic dependency, low levels of autonomy and financial vulnerability. More than half of vulnerable self-employed say that they would not be financially secure in case of sickness. The proposed Directive opens up the possibility to cover also workers who are nominally self-employed but are, in fact, economically dependent on a single employer.

Non-standard employment issues

But it is not only about the increasing share of workers in non-standard forms of employment. It is also about new forms of employment. Eurofound has identified nine different types in its 2015 mapping exercise of new forms of employment. Among them, casual work and platform employment are of particular concern. A casual worker does have a continuous employment relationship with an employer. But the employer does not continuously provide work and, in the case of on-demand work, calls the employee in if and when needed. In some cases

the employment contract specifies the maximum and minimum of working hours. But casual work also includes 'zero-hour' contracts where no minimum is specified and the employer is not obliged to ever call in the worker. The lack of predictability of working time and, associated with this, the low income security is worrying. The Directive addresses the issue by requiring the employment contract to include reference hours and days within which the workers may be required to work and minimum advance notice. Also, an employer cannot prohibit workers from taking up other employment outside the reference hours. However, unpredictability of working hours (and associated income) will remain high for this form of employment with proven consequences for work-life balance and financial security.

Platform employment issues

Platform employment is a new form of outsourcing tasks. Instead of assigning the task to a single employee, it is delegated to a pool of 'virtual workers'. Access to this pool is facilitated by an online platform which enables clients to identify suitable individuals to complete the tasks in exchange for payment. Eurofound's examination of the working conditions associated with platform employment shows two sides. Some platform workers genuinely appreciate the autonomy, the potential for work-life balance; and the development of skills which can be associated with platform work.

However, the list of negative effects is longer. The biggest concern is the low pay associated with many types of platform work and the insecurity about pay. The platform worker cannot always be sure to be paid at all for work provided and in many cases payment per task is extremely low. As platform workers are considered as self-employed they lack access to benefits and social protection. In addition, platform work is often monotonous and boring, leads to social isolation but at the same time to stress due to the need for self-organisation and a blurring of work and private life.

The Directive contains little scope to address the situation of platform workers as long as their status is defined as being self-employment. Currently, the number of those involved in platform employment is very limited and estimates for its potential to grow vary. However, if the proposed Directive aims to cover also new developments in the labour market and be 'future proof', ways to cover this phenomenon too should be explored.



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| In hotels and pubs in Germany, the minimum wage is evaded in 38% of employment contracts, says Frank Lorenz

THE EU LAW ON TRANSPARENT AND PREDICTABLE WORKING CONDITIONS IS POSITIVE

by Frank Lorenz

Until now, the Written Statement Directive has led rather a shadowy life. Things are changing now! The appeal of devising an approach that sets EU wide minimum requirements for employment contracts as the EU revises the existing Written Statement Directive is obvious. Looking at the issues in the German context, Dr Frank Lorenz explains why he sees the Directive on transparent and predictable working conditions as a positive step forward.

First of all, with regard to the decline in typical and standard labour arrangements and the increase in crossborder labour relationships (also at a virtual,

online level, known as 'crowd-working'), the attempt to define an employment contract at an EU level is courageous, but it also makes sense. The Directive is a chance to extend the crucial

aspect of transparency to more employment relationships than before although it obviously does not cover all forms of employment. There is a need to assign fundamental contractual

rights such as transparency to those working in grey area arrangements. Bogus self-employment and the 'gig economy' will increase with increasing digitalisation of the EU's economies.

The Directive should be broadened to include the concept of economic dependence of one contracting party, i.e. covering workers who are economically dependent on one company and effectively bogus self-employees.

But even with the draft law as it stands, workers in precarious relationships will benefit from having more rights, e.g. duration and conditions of probation and procedure of termination. Considered by some as a high wage country, precarious working conditions are not a peripheral matter in Germany. A view on the low wage sector in Germany is meaningful. With 22.5% of employees in Germany on low wages in 2014, its figures are double those in comparable EU member states. The low wage sector accounts for 30.8 % of temporary contracts, 83.1 % of small-scale contracts (which do not entitle workers to social security) and 51.2 % of the contracts with temporary work agencies. Employment for temporary work agencies increased by 16.4% in 2016 compared to 2013. 54% of these short term jobs last no longer than three months, while pay equivalent to the regular workforce is guaranteed by statute only after nine months of employment. On average, temporary agency workers receive only 58% of the comparable wage.

Although Germany has had the minimum wage in place since 2015 (via the minimum wage law, the 'Mindestlohngesetz'), between 1.8 and 2.6 million workers do not actually get paid the minimum wage because it is

not enforced properly. In hotels and pubs, the minimum wage is evaded in 38% of employment contracts and in retail in 20% of employment contracts. The most vulnerable groups of workers are foreign, female and young employees and those in enterprises without collective agreements, temporarily employed persons, those with small-scale employment contracts and those who work for temporary work agencies.

Precarious work often is accompanied by an informal approach to contractual affairs. In general, a written employment contract is not required by law, but by collective agreements. But there is a dramatic decline in the numbers of collective agreements. About 50% of all employees are no longer protected by collective agreements concluded by trade unions (Institute for employment research, 2013).

Facing this decline, mandatory standards have to be guaranteed by law. Workers in small firms, those with short-term contracts and foreign workers suffer from a particularly low level of access to and knowledge of their rights. There should therefore be a legal obligation set out in the Directive that they receive the written statement from their employer in the worker's mother tongue. For example, Polish workers sent to Germany by a Dutch employer currently receive employment contracts in Romanian, which they do not understand.

Knowing your rights is the prerequisite for being able to

enforce your rights. To that extent, it is to be welcomed that the Directive states that employees must receive a written statement setting out information on the employment relationship (as per Article 3 of the Directive) from the first day of their employment. It will also be extremely helpful to enforce the content of the Directive, which envisages an unlimited full-time employment contract for workers as a sanction against employers who do not inform the workers properly. This also makes it easier for national enforcement agencies to recognise the contractual obligations of the employer. In order to prevent abuse, the exemptions for small and medium enterprises as well as for small-scale employment should be narrow.

#SocialRights
The Directive should oblige employers to provide workers with a written statement in the worker's mother tongue



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| A cyclist working for the increasingly popular take away delivery company Deliveroo

EU'S WORKING CONDITIONS' PROPOSALS GOOD BUT MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE

by Siôn Simon

MEP Siôn Simon gives his views on the issue of workers' conditions in the 21st century in the context of the Commission's legislative proposals for more transparent and predictable working conditions.

The exponential growth of online platforms like Uber, Deliveroo and Amazon has created a new challenge for employment rights. And the Europe-level response to these

challenges have been slow to develop and poorly designed.

After 27 years of the Written Statement Directive (WSD), a revision is long overdue. The Transparent and Predictable

Working Conditions Directive will revise the WSD.

Positive elements in the Directive

Overall, I welcome the Commission's proposals for a new Directive. It will provide important protection and new and clearer rights for vulnerable workers in atypical and precarious work.

First, from day one, new starters are guaranteed a document explicitly outlining the conditions of the working relationship. At the moment, employees can expect to wait two months before seeing such a document.

Second, the draft Directive seeks to incorporate a broad definition of 'worker', derived from EU case law, extending the scope of the new rules to more people. As they work currently, the rules are limited to a relatively narrow definition of 'employer'.

The Directive will tackle unfair terms for new starters: employers will not be able to charge for mandatory training sessions, put workers on excessive probationary period and, crucially, employers will not be able to demand exclusivity clauses in contracts without good reason.

Nevertheless, much remains to be done.

Zero hours contracts are a growing problem

I want to see a ban on zero hours contracts (ZHC) which significantly weaken the rights of working people and adversely affect their work-life balance. According to the UK's Office for National Statistics, there were 1.8 million zero hours contracts in the UK in 2018 and a poll of workers on zero-hour contracts commissioned by the UK's Trades Union Congress (TUC) published in 2018 found that:

More than half (51%) of zero hour workers have had shifts cancelled at less than 24 hours' notice.

Nearly three-quarters (73%) have been offered work at less than 24 hours' notice.

And alarmingly, around a third of those on zero hour contracts (35 per cent) have been threatened with not being given shifts in the future if they turn down work.

Only 25% say they prefer being on zero hour contracts

Directive needs to be strengthened

These workers rarely get sick, redundancy or holiday pay. Nearly half of them do not get written terms and conditions and hardly any get a permanent contract after consistently working the same pattern of hours. This is why there is scepticism that the proposed 'right to request' regular hours after a year on the job – as suggested

#SocialRights
I want to see a ban on zero hours contracts, which significantly weaken the rights of working people and adversely affect their work-life balance

@sionsimon



by the Taylor Review and recommended by the Government – will change things for the better. Such a right to request would not fundamentally change the power dynamics where a vulnerable worker will remain at the mercy of the employer.

Furthermore, a written statement should be provided before any work has started. Apart from anything else, who wants to spend their first day in a job reading the terms of their employment while adapting to a new job at the same time?

I hope to see the European Parliament and the Council address these problems and strengthen the Directive so that trade union workplace representatives can better inform workers of their rights under this new Directive.

We must make sure that the rights in the Directive are not watered down and we must allow Member States to put in place more protection for workers that goes beyond the

provisions of the Directive. The definitions in this Directive should extend its provisions to the greatest number of people. Your rights as a worker should not be different because your employer is a small company.

Working people cannot wait any longer for better conditions. The new proposals from the Commission are a step in the right direction but there is a lot of work left to do and not much time.



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NEXT SOCIAL



Job satisfaction

- ✓ Flexibility: work/life
- ✓ Satisfactory salary
- ✓ Job security
- ✓ Work itself
- ✓ Career advancement
- ✓ Working conditions

EU LAW HAS GOOD ASPECTS BUT NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED

by Vanya Grigorova

The declared objectives of the Directive on transparent and predictable working conditions published by the European Commission are worthy of praise but the actions envisaged seem unsatisfactory, argues Vanya Grigorova. She pinpoints some of the areas where she sees room for improvement and calls on the European Parliament to be more ambitious.

It is fair to say that the Directive on transparent and predictable working conditions as proposed by the Commission envisages a number of changes that would help working people in the EU. These include the employer's obligation to sign a labour contract at the very beginning of the labour relations; the limitation of the probationary period to six

months and certain conditions for using so-called 'non-standard' labour contracts.

Some provisions too vague

However, even these steps are too timid to show results as there are a number of exceptions foreseen. Some provisions

are too vague and need to be tightened up:

The directive allows the probationary period to be increased to more than six months. Even six months is too long given that three months are quite enough for employers and workers to get to know each other.

The directive obliges the employer to specify in the labour contract "reference hours and days" in which they may require work so that the worker can plan their personal and professional life. It is important here that the directive envisages recommendations or guidance on what and how long this "reference" can be.

Labour contracts for 8 or less hours of work per month can be excluded from the scope of the Directive. They should be included in the Directive.

Article 10 gives workers with at least six months' seniority with the same employer the right to request a transition to a form of employment with more predictable and secure working conditions where available. Big employers have a month to reply in writing while small scale employers (e.g. people, micro, small or medium sized companies) have three months to reply. My concern is that the Commission will use Article 22 (a possible review of the application of the Directive as regards the impact of this right on SMEs) to say that this is too hard for SMEs and that workers will therefore not benefit from this right in practice. There are a huge number of SMEs in the EU (some 99.8% of enterprises operating in EU-28 non-financial business sector were SMEs).

The directive obliges the employer to give workers a statement about the employment relationship between the employer and the worker containing all necessary information (as set out in Article 3). If the employer does not put details in the written statement, the directive presumes that the relationship is open-ended, that there is no probationary period and that it is a full-time position. If the employer does that, it may well be bypassing the obligations under the directive and is therefore in an illegal situation. The employer should therefore

be punished for that. However, under Article 14, employers have the possibility to rebut the presumptions. This needs to be tightened up.

Furthermore, workers currently working without a written statement will continue to do so unless they request the documents themselves. This is not about providing businesses with relief from administrative but are in effect legal loopholes that allow businesses to escape their legal responsibilities towards workers.

The information requirements relating to the place of work have been modernised to allow for forms such as platform work, where the workplace is not determined by the employer, and the procedure for termination of employment has been included.

Summary of Article 3 of the proposed Directive
Chapter II - Information on the employment relationship
Article 3 – Obligation to provide information
New elements that employers need to put in a written statement about their employment relationship with workers and give to workers:
Duration and conditions of probation;
An entitlement to training;
Arrangements for overtime and its remuneration;
Key information about the determination of variable working schedules, to take account of the increasing prevalence of such types of work organisation such as casual or zero-hours contracts

or work in the collaborative economy;
Information about the social security system(s) receiving contributions.

Non-standard contracts

Last but not least, although it claims to target all non-standard contracts, the Directive concentrates its efforts mainly on so-called 'zero hour contracts' and does not, for example, cover the 'one day contract' that exists in agriculture in Bulgaria. This kind of contract is signed in the morning before work begins, which means that the worker is not told the day before about the possibility of work the next day. This is a labour contract that does not provide adequate protection in terms of unemployment benefits, paid maternity or sickness benefits.

If the European Parliament really wants to put an end to the exploitation by employers of the labour force in the production process, it must show much greater ambition.

The Directive must strive to limit all possibilities of using non-standard labour contracts in order to ensure the security of workers. Irrespective of the size and type of businesses, the employee is not a shareholder to be expected to take the same responsibility as the business owner. The possibility of making more resources available to labour inspectorates and giving them more powers to check labour contracts against the actual working arrangements that are in place must be explored.

Another issue is that, in many EU countries, including Bulgaria, there is a lack of accurate statistics on the number of job vacancies and the number of unemployed jobseekers. This allows employers to speculate about how many workers are needed as they can argue that there is a shortage of labour in the country. The reality is that, often, vacant positions are not taken up due to poor working conditions and low wages, which is referred to by employers' organisations as "labour shortages".

When we have no clear overview of the whole picture of the labour market, we could take bad decisions. This deficit can easily be overcome if the employers are obliged to declare their job vacancies as well as the full information on the working conditions in national employment agencies. This transparency approach goes well beyond what is currently proposed by the Directive but should be in the Directive.



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Denmark's Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen (on left) shaking hands with the trade union 3F's chief negotiator on the Hilfr collective agreement, Tina Møller Madsen (on right)

DENMARK: TRADE UNION SIGNS FIRST COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT WITH A DIGITAL PLATFORM

by Thorkild Holmboe

A number of the new platforms offering services by workers have been accused of wage dumping and undeclared work. However, after 3F, the largest trade union in the United Federation of Danish Workers, concluded the first collective agreement with a digital platform earlier this year, Hilfr workers will enjoy the same conditions as other workers on the Danish labour market. Thorkild Holmboe-Hay, a union adviser working for 3F, explained why he sees this a huge step in terms of modernising the Danish labour model and preparing it for the new digital age.

The main business activity of the digital platform Hilfr is to connect up private households and self-employed people (freelancers), who offer cleaning services. Anyone who wants to earn money doing cleaning tasks in private homes can set up a profile on the platform, describe their past experience etc. and they are ready to take on work. Private households can see their profiles and any recommendations and ratings from other customers and choose from a wide selection of freelancers available in their area.

#SocialRights
Being able to unionise, receive a proper wage, a pension and holiday money and become eligible for unemployment benefit are among the benefits of the agreement for workers



As such, the digital platform has a skeleton staff consisting only of the four creators and owners. They all have full time jobs outside the cleaning industry. The platform is more of a hobby than anything else.

Benefits of the new agreement

The new agreement signed by the trade union 3F and the digital

platform Hilfr establishes a right for the self-employed to become workers with basic rights such as: a minimum wage (approximately 19 euro per hour) at the same level as in other collective agreements in the cleaning sector, a pension, holiday money, sick pay and the right to due notice before having their profile removed from the online platform. Thanks to the agreement, the platform and the workers will also become subject to any EU or national employment legislation (e.g. the EU's Directive on transparent and predictable working conditions, which is currently being negotiated). At the same time, it will still be possible for anyone on the platform to remain self-employed if he or she wishes. The purpose of the agreement is to make sure that the self-employed are truly, and of their own free will, self-employed.

The new agreement contains a variety of innovative provisions ranging from establishing employment relations on the platform to safeguarding private data and preserving 'the right to be forgotten' on the internet. At the same time the platform basically preserves its business concept and skeleton staff and, via an agreement on digital relations between worker and employer, will add only a minimal of extra administration time to the setup.

The benefits for the workers are considerable. They will be able to organise, unionise, receive a proper wage, a pension and holiday money and become eligible for unemployment benefit and much more.

The Federation of Danish Industry took part in the final negotiations as advisors to Hilfr, and reached an agreement with 3F that next year the Federation and 3F will try to finalise a bi-partisan agreement to cover the domestic cleaning industry as a whole.

3F truly believes that the new agreement could inspire legislators, unions and employers in the digital platform industry to move forward along the lines of more collective agreements, but the process of negotiation also brought some insights.

Tackling the 'bogus self-employed' issue

The EU and national governments will have to create a new legal foundation for the future development of the industry. As things stand now, digital platforms in Denmark, as well as in the EU and North America, are rapidly creating a sub-group of the labor market based on the 'bogus/pseudo self-employed', i.e. workers who have no wish to become self-employed, who do not intend to develop their own business or create a business strategy or even create a customer base. They want to make a living from working and they predominantly do so out of need. There is a danger that many workers will be exploited by unscrupulous companies reducing their basic labour rights by pretending that workers are self-employed when they are not. This 'bogus self-employed' issue could lead to the emergence of a sub-group of the labour market and could dest-

abilise national labour markets by leading to a considerable reduction in basic labour rights across the EU, which citizens have become accustomed to.

The 3F-Hilfr agreement provides basic labour rights to workers without eradicating the basic advantages of setting up digital platforms. Hopefully the agreement will thus show a way forward so that, in the future, the digital platform economy can be a welcome contribution to existing markets instead of threat.



> AUTHOR

Thorkild Holmboe-Hay is a union advisor in the area of private services, hotels and restaurants for 3F, the largest trade union in the United Federation of Danish workers (with around 278,000 members). In Denmark, by far the majority of workers are members of a trade union. 3F has collective agreements at more workplaces than any other trade union. 3F, which has more than 48,000 members from other countries, helps workers in cases where the employer violates the legislation or the rules and agreements in force in the labour market.

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| In my view, employers should be obliged to give workers a contract on day one defining when the workers will work and how many hours, says Agnes Jongerius

EU WORKING CONDITIONS LAW GOOD BUT MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE

Interview with Agnes Jongerius

The European Commission has proposed a Directive for more transparent and predictable working conditions across the EU. Key points include that workers should have information at latest on the first day of the job; workers should not be charged for training; workers must have the right to a written reply to a transfer request to a securer job in the company; and collective agreements must be protected. MEP Agnes Jongerius agrees with this but she also wants more done to tackle the issue of the ‘bogus self-employed’ (e.g. platform workers) and the growing problem, for example in the UK, of ‘zero hours contracts’.

The Progressive Post: What are the positive aspects of the Commission proposals for a new Directive for more transparent and predictable working conditions across the EU?

Agnes Jongerius: The previous Directive, called the Written Statement Directive, dates back to 1991. It wasn't very well known, got very little attention and didn't have much of an impact. Even though I worked for the trade union movement

in the early 1990s, I didn't even know about it.

In addition, in previous European Commissions, for example under Barroso, the Commission promoted ‘flexicurity’ as the privileged system for labour

relations and put more weight on the ‘flexibility’ elements of that than the ‘security’ elements. For the first time, the Commission is effectively acknowledging the growing uncertainty of flexible working arrangements and that flexibility is leading to more job

insecurity where people do not know when they will be working, how many hours and how much they will earn. The EU's Employment Commissioner, Marianne Thyssen, has recognised that there has been a growth in the number of jobs where labour conditions are untransparent and where work patterns are unpredictable. So it's clear that this issue is now growing in prominence as something that needs to be tackled.

The proposals aim to address the problem of insufficient protection for workers in more precarious jobs. It aims to ensure the following rights for all workers in all forms of work, including those in the most flexible non-standard and new forms of work such as zero-hour contracts, casual work, domestic work, voucher-based work or platform work:

- More complete information on the essential aspects of the work, to be received by the worker, in writing, at the latest on the first day on the job (rather than up to two months afterwards);
- The right to seek additional employment, with a ban on exclusivity clauses and limits on incompatibility clauses;
- The right to know, a reasonable period in advance, when work will take place, for workers with very variable working schedules determined by the employer, as in the case of on-demand work.

That is a way forward for millions of workers in Europe, especially workers with precarious jobs.

What is meant by the ‘bogus self-employed’ and how are they being dealt with?

The plus point in the proposed Directive is that the term employee will now be defined on an EU-wide basis. The definition of worker under the proposal is: A worker means a natural person who for a certain period of time performs services for and under the direction of another person in return for remuneration. It is based on case law from the European Court of Justice. As things stand, the Commission proposals only apply to the workers and not the ‘bogus self-employed’. Commissioner Thyssen has referred to the problem when talking about the ‘Uber crisis’, with workers driving around earning very little money and even less social security. Self-employed people (e.g. architects, lawyers and medical specialists) are genuinely self-employed in that they earn high enough hourly rates to be able to put money into paying national insurance contributions, their pension and healthcare insurance. So there is no need for them to be covered by this Directive.

A good example of a bogus self-employed worker is a truck driver who officially doesn't work for a company, drives a truck that is leased out on his/her own name and not in the company's name, receives instructions from a company boss and only works for one company. The company treats them as self-employed and therefore does not pay any

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“Employers are increasingly disguising employment relationships as ‘self-employment’ and so ‘bogus self-employed’ workers should be brought under the protection of the Directive

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social insurance or pension contributions on their behalf but just a flat rate per hour. That seems to be an advantage because the workers receive a higher net income but the worker then has to take care of their own social insurance and pension contributions, which often they cannot afford to do, especially if they have a family. So in effect, they are ‘bogus self-employed’ because the employer has tricked them out of their social security and welfare arrangements.

What should be done about this?

Employers are increasingly disguising employment relationships as ‘self-employment’ and so ‘bogus self-employed’ workers should be brought under the protection of the Directive. We need to try to define elements of the ‘bogus self-employed’. In the Netherlands there is an ongoing debate about how to distinguish the employed from the self-employed. In the

Netherlands, there are many who think that if, as a worker, you have one company providing you with contracts, then it is probably your employer. And if the hourly rate you are paid is below the minimum legal rate for that work in the country then you are economically dependent and therefore an employee. These are elements that could be considered.

This issue is hotly debated at national level and I think should also be debated at EU level. In February this year, in Belgium, the UK and the Netherlands, the delivery platform company Deliveroo decided that they would no longer accept workers as individuals (signing contracts with them as individuals) and would only work with workers if they registered as a company. In effect, workers were therefore obliged to register as a company working for Deliveroo and sign self-employment contracts. This is not acceptable to me. At the EU level, we should join forces to put a stop to this sort of practice by big platform companies.

What is your bottom line for the Directive?

The bogus self-employed, e.g. platform workers, especially those who are economically dependent, need to have predictable and transparent working conditions protected by the Directive. We shouldn't worry about bringing in the self-employed people like lawyers who have a strong enough negotiating position on their own.

For the purposes of the Directive, workers should, as proposed

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In the long
run, zero hours
contracts should
be made illegal
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by the Directive, have information at latest on the first day of the job; workers should not be charged for training; workers must have the right to a written reply to a transfer request to a securer job in the company; and collective agreements must be protected.

In addition, the contracts need to be short and straightforward and written in the language of the worker. In their contract, workers should know when they will be expected to be available for work and the approximate amount of money they will be entitled to at the end of the month. They should not have non-compete clauses barring them from working for other companies working in the same sector. For example there are cleaners in the hotel business who have to sign non-compete clauses. This is total nonsense.

What is your view on zero hours contracts?

The main problem is the total lack of predictability in terms of working hours. This means that workers don't know when they will work and roughly how much they will earn. Workers

on zero hours contracts cannot find another job because they don't know when they will work. And it is risky for them to say no when offered work under the zero hours contract as the company may well stop calling them. So it is effectively 'one-sided flexibility in favour of the employer' so that the employer has people available when it wants. Zero hours contracts are becoming a pattern in many sectors (e.g. retail, cleaning, plumbing services) in the UK. So I would like to see this Directive finalised before the UK-EU divorce papers are finalised so that the UK will have to apply it – for the benefit of workers.

In the long run, zero hours contracts should be made illegal. In my view, employers should be obliged to give workers a contract on day one defining when the workers will work and how many hours. If after three months, workers turn out to be working more, people are entitled to a new contract with the amount of hours that they are working.



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Agnes Jongerius is an MEP in the Socialists and Democrats Party and is Coordinator of the European Parliament's Employment Committee. She was formerly chair of the Dutch trade union confederation FNV (currently the largest trade union in the Netherlands with over one million members).

BREXIT



| March for Europe, an Anti-Brexit protest in London, UK, in 2016

BREXIT: ARE UK POLITICIANS LISTENING TO YOUNGER PEOPLE?

by Caroline Macfarland

The UK referendum on the EU in 2016, narrowly won by the 'Leave' side (52% to 48%), has resulted in much discussion about a divided nation. Caroline Macfarland sets out her vision of what a better public dialogue could look like and how it could capture the interests of younger generations and restore confidence in the decisions that are being negotiated and agreed on our behalves.

In the aftermath of the United Kingdom's referendum on the EU, I was, like many others from the millennial generation, disappointed and frustrated with the vote to leave the EU. But I also saw Brexit as an opportunity for British politics for a number of reasons. Surely, given that it was the most profound political shift in a generation and that it could take at least a decade to implement, the Brexit 'project' would inevitably need to look to the long-term first and represent the views of younger generations. The process too, would need to

#Brexit
We need our politicians and media to transition from political rhetoric towards practical information and knowledge sharing about how Brexit will affect our everyday lives



be based on the goal of re-uniting what was seen as a starkly divided country. The vote had been a decision between the status quo and the 'unknown', not a democratic mandate for a particular type of Brexit or set of negotiating priorities with the EU, so there would be countless opportunities to have a say in the changes that will come. In addition, it showed that young people were not apathetic about politics. Perhaps this was the

wake-up call which was needed, not only for younger people to re-engage with the political system, but for the political process to become more responsive to our expectations too.

Ongoing failures in the political and media debates

Unfortunately it seems that I was overly optimistic about some of the opportunities which the politics and process of Brexit could provide. British political debate has continued to be based on very binary defining lines, with many individuals and organisations still identifying as 'Remainers' and 'Leavers' rather than articulating shared aspirations for the Britain that they want to live in. The debate on Brexit is still monopolised by politicians, economists and academics – with no concerted effort by the government to broker a more inclusive political dialogue and respond to public interest with accessible factual information. Not a day has gone by in the last two years without Brexit making the headlines – but the news stories continue to cover personality politics and 'power battles' amongst politicians, rather than solid analysis of the negotiations and how this might affect our everyday lives. All this has led to what is commonly known as 'Brexit fatigue' amongst people of all ages, even those who would usually take an interest in current affairs.

Younger generations remained concerned about Brexit. However, the language, mechanisms and tone of the prevailing

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IS A CLEAR PRIORITY FOR THOSE UNDER 30

debate are not conducive to deliberative engagement and there is very little by way of specific, tailored materials that aim to increase political and economic literacy and meaningful participation.

Practical information, not media speculation

Firstly, with the clock ticking until the UK-EU deal is presented to the UK Parliament, we need our politicians and media to transition from political rhetoric and discussing personality politics towards practical information and knowledge sharing about how Brexit will affect our everyday lives. When Common Vision conducted a number of workshops for young people across the UK last year, we heard multiple times that unhelpful phrases such as "Brexit means Brexit", "the best deal for Britain", or "no deal is better than a bad deal" do not help engage people or increase understanding of the process. As a number of facts and figures cited in the media have been contested or disproved, it is

often hard to know what sources to trust for reliable information or how to separate fact and opinion. Discussions about "the economy" tend to focus on GDP and intractable, macro-level concepts rather than the tangible effects and implications on the everyday lives of young people. Furthermore, debates are inherently short-term, considering the needs of the current labour market rather than what may be suitable for the next generation.

Let's take the example of a key issue of practical concern for young people: the ongoing opportunities to live, work and study abroad in EU countries. Across a range of studies and surveys (including those undertaken by UK Youth, the British Youth Council and campaigning groups My Life My Say and Undivided), freedom of movement has been a clear priority for those under 30. Instead of speculation about the personal

#Brexit
Civil society organisations and campaigning groups have a responsibility to shift the dial away from divisive, binary debates and towards a better understanding of young people's concerns



BREXIT

support of different individual politicians for different transitional deals and 'end states', a more fruitful discussion would look at how an eventual deal might allow for continued educational, skills and cultural exchange.

Reflecting millennials' global identities and concerns

As global citizens with multiple, often cause-based identities, one of the disappointments for many young people who voted to Remain was the feeling that Britain was voting to turn its back on international collaboration. But this doesn't have to be the case. Research has shown that the millennial generation are more in favour of measures to protect the environment and rate environmental damage and climate change more highly as a political problem than older generations. Translating these values into policy commitments – for example upholding EU environmental standards – is a way in which young people's concerns could be represented.

Positive, values-led discussions

Perhaps one of the reasons why there is such a dearth of accessible knowledge and information

available to the public is because of the high level of uncertainty about the final Brexit deal. But there is room to go beyond the technicalities of the process and discuss the values which could or should underpin the decisions which will be made in the future.

Whilst some politicians have come out with positive messages about continued UK-EU relations beyond Brexit, there is much more that could be championed on the national and international stages about the political and cultural heritage which we share with other EU members and ambitions for solidarity, friendship and trust across national borders in future. Preserving European solidarity and shared values should be a more explicit goal in order to respond to the more internationalist identities of the younger generations.

These are just a few suggestions as to how the political discussions in the UK could be more responsive to younger people's views and priorities. However, the onus to do this does not just lie with the politicians. There are a number of campaigns which call for politicians to 'listen' to young people, but which fail to inform and educate policy-makers about young people's views and priorities in rigorous and analytical terms. Without proactive ideas presented in policy terms, what do politicians have to listen to? This is why civil society organisations and campaigning groups have a responsibility to shift the dial away from divisive, binary debates and towards a better understanding of young people's concerns and how they could be addressed by specific policies in creative and aspirational ways. We mustn't give up on the potential to explore the opportunities.

THE DEBATE ON BREXIT IS STILL MONOPOLISED BY POLITICIANS, ECONOMISTS AND ACADEMICS



> AUTHOR

Caroline Macfarland is the founder and director of the millennial think tank Common Vision (CoVi), [www.covi.org.uk] an independent, not-for-profit think tank that curates and develops research and discussion aligning the behaviours, expectations and values of millennials (born between 1980 and 2000) with long-term intergenerational goals around the common good. Common Vision believes that the power of positive ideas can detoxify the public debate.

NEXT DEMOCRACY



| Tech giants such as Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, and Microsoft (GAFAM) are particularly adept at using havens, says Robert Sweeney

TAX FAIRNESS AND ITS DISCONTENTS

by Robert Sweeney

Successive EU treaties and the ability of the European Central Bank (ECB) to put pressure on recalcitrant nations is evidence that the level of fiscal discipline imposed on eurozone states in particular is historically unprecedented. At the same time, growing burdens placed on states due to rising environmental, social, distributional, and demographic pressures implies an ever greater demand for public spending. With middle income and working class voters turning rightwards and seemingly less willing than ever to pay more in taxes, something has got to give. And well it might.

A recent conference held by the European Foundation for Progressive Studies, the European Trade Union Institute, the Think Tank for Action on Social Change (TASC) and other

organisations tackled the issue of multinational corporation tax. It addressed a number of issues, including the role of digital giants, tax havens, the effects of tax competition on developing countries, transparency and reporting issues, and the

effectiveness of recent moves to curtail or moderate multinational tax avoidance.

Naturally these issues are of particular relevance to European tax havens. As discussed during the conference, because of the

importance of investments in intellectual property, which can theoretically be undertaken anywhere, tech giants such as Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, and Microsoft (GAFAM) are particularly adept at using tax havens. Of course,

avoidance is not restricted to the tech sector. A recent Oxfam report, presented at the conference, listed Ireland, Belgium, and Luxembourg as central to the tax avoidance strategies of European banks. As well as diminishing the fiscal capacity of European states, tax havens do significant damage to developing countries. Moves toward greater tax harmonisation are being fiercely resisted as illustrated by Ireland's refusal until very recently to collect €13 billion in taxes deemed by the EU to be owed to it by Apple.

There are, however, non-trivial rationales for opposition to greater harmonisation of corporate tax codes. For one, despite falling effective rates globally the revenues raised from booming corporate profits are, in Ireland at least, at an all-time high. Significantly, complaints from France, Germany and other leading powers that tax haven regimes constitute an unfair advantage are hypocritical to say the least. As a rule, rich countries became rich in no small part by protecting

their own industry. The virtues of free markets and free trade were then preached by the rich and rich countries (and duly repeated by economics curricula around the world). To this day reality, of course, begs to differ. To take but one example among many, for 13 years the EU has been arguing with the US in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) about who throws more money in subsidies at their respective airline companies, Airbus and Boeing. Moreover, support and development by the US state has been central to the creation of modern aviation, without which Boeing's commercial planes would likely have been commercially unviable. The EU was also not too concerned about

the large bailouts to the banking systems in Ireland, Cyprus and elsewhere.

Thus, when addressing tax avoidance by GAFAM and other companies one must acknowledge the reality that state support and unfair advantage is the rule and not the exception in state corporate capitalism. A country such as the Netherlands has long been a technologically sophisticated country so that a transition away from tax haven-based activities would presumably be quite manageable. Countries such as Ireland, Malta and Cyprus have, in contrast, significantly lower living standards, despite what per capita income may say.

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Peripheral European countries have, moreover, for historical reasons long struggled to generate value-added and sophisticated exports from their indigenous sectors. They are, of course, drowning in riches compared to the developing countries which suffer from lost revenues due to multinational tax avoidance. Nevertheless, moves towards tax harmonisation need to be complemented with serious attempts at industrial upgrading. But that's another day's work.



> AUTHOR

Robert Sweeney is a Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) Think Tank for Action on Social Change (TASC) researcher on inequality. He conducts policy analysis on inequality in Ireland and the EU. He has a PhD in economics from University of Leeds, which focussed on financial markets and investors, banking, international macroeconomics and housing. He is also interested in debates on alternative schools and methodology in economics and ownership

#FairTaxation
#GAFAM The level
of fiscal discipline
imposed on
eurozone states
is historically
unprecedented
@sweeneyr82



NEXT DEMOCRACY



| Europe has abandoned the entire electronics industry and the data industry to Californians, Chinese and Koreans, according to Laurent Alexandre

GAFAM VERSUS EUROPEAN UNION

Interview by Alain Bloëdt editor-in-chief of the Progressive Post with Laurent Alexandre

The influence of GAFAM outside the United States is a concern for the countries of the European Union. The decision about whether or not to introduce a digital tax for countries is a heated debate among member states. However, the impact of GAFAM seems to go beyond economic aspects. Laurent Alexandre talks about the delay in the European Union's response.

How do you assess the reaction of Europe and the Member States to the so-called digital giants?

Europe does not understand the economics which form the foundation of data. Attempts to regulate the cyberworld are unbearably difficult but they have not fully grasped that artificial intelligence is educated by processing a mountain of

data and that those who are in possession of such data are the new masters of the global economy. Those known as GAFAM (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft) or the Chinese equivalent BATX (Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent and Xiaomi)

So, the web-tax proposed by the European Commission is not going to help the situation?

No, they need to take direct action to make GAFAM pay because they already avoid tax with such ease. But let us not forget that making any corporation pay taxes will not solve the problem, the real problem is that we have no European equivalent of GAFAM!

What should they do instead?

Europe is caught in a trap. They

attempt to regulate undertakings who are not European but admittedly they have no real power to do so. Vassalisation in Europe, both on a digital and technological level, can not be slowed easily. If the Commission wish to take a stand against this new group of artificial intelligence aristocrats and the system they have created then we need multi-disciplinary expertise, i.e. people with the

technological skills necessary to help. Those who understand and have experience of how the digital cyberworld interacts and crucially how this should be regulated in terms of legislation. Notwithstanding the need to find those with a knowledge of the policy implications and the scale of the economics involved in data and technology as the political elite simply do not comprehend the issues laid before them.

Artificial Intelligence is not considered to be that old, how did we get to this point so quickly?

We did not see any of this happen. We went from being the home to a telecommunications giant where Nokia had 50% of the global market, to a Europe that abandoned the entire electronics data industry. Now the industry and the corresponding giants are located in California, China and Korea.

Can the situation be resolved?

Europe is still caught in a panic. A good example of this is to consider the case of Total, who have just announced that they have entrusted their oil exploration to Google. Total is a significant business, but it has no other choice because they are not able to develop artificial intelligence that would equal the AI provided by GAFAM. Airbus has also recently confirmed how much they rely on Google! We will soon be ultra-dependent on the power of GAFAM!

This sounds quite pessimistic, is this the reality?

Europe has not begun to consider a policy to improve the situation whilst data management provisions like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will only serve to worsen Europe's underdevelopment in this area. The introduction of this regulation will impede the development of European undertakings more than any member of GAFAM or BATX, who are as I have stated already giants in their own right and have an army of lawyers and lobbyists ready to take the fight to Europe. In short, they will survive.

How could Europe have fought back?

We need a new elite, but we cannot simply impose a new elite. In today's market those who understand artificial intelligence will continue to earn millions in the private sector. Why would they want to sit in the European Parliament!

Could we transform the elite?

We cannot transform the sociology of those in politics in an instant. As a result, they will continue to legislate in a biased and somewhat skewed manner. In general terms we will

see the introduction of technophobic policies and policies enacted quickly to reflect the populist opinion at the time. Unfortunately, they do not fully appreciate the situation: we must launch the technological war on GAFAM and BATX, we must increase our investment in research and in our universities, etc.

Why?

The citizens want stronger protection to be provided by the welfare state. They do not want any increase in the competitiveness of the services offered.

How have we arrived at a point where it is necessary to defend the welfare state, whilst providing significant investment in new technologies?

It is a very complicated situation but bear in mind that there will be no welfare state if we become a digital colony and if we allow ourselves to become consumers and not producers.

Is the American elite more technologically aware then?

No, I would not say that, but they have less impact on the course of technology than we face within Europe.

What could be done to reverse this trend?

A great deal of education is required and changes must be implemented on both the left and European right.

Do you blame the European right for anything?

The right-wing parties are typically rather technophobic, particularly because they are afraid of how artificial intelligence and synthetic biology is developing in relation to procreation and trans-humanistic projects.

And what are your thoughts on the left?

They remain highly critical of this new technological economy as it produces billionaires and increases inequality. They are also somewhat worried about artificial intelligence and how it may threaten the trade unions and the broader policies of the left going forward.

Which of the two sides of the political spectrum will move forward first?

Neither of them, I'm afraid.



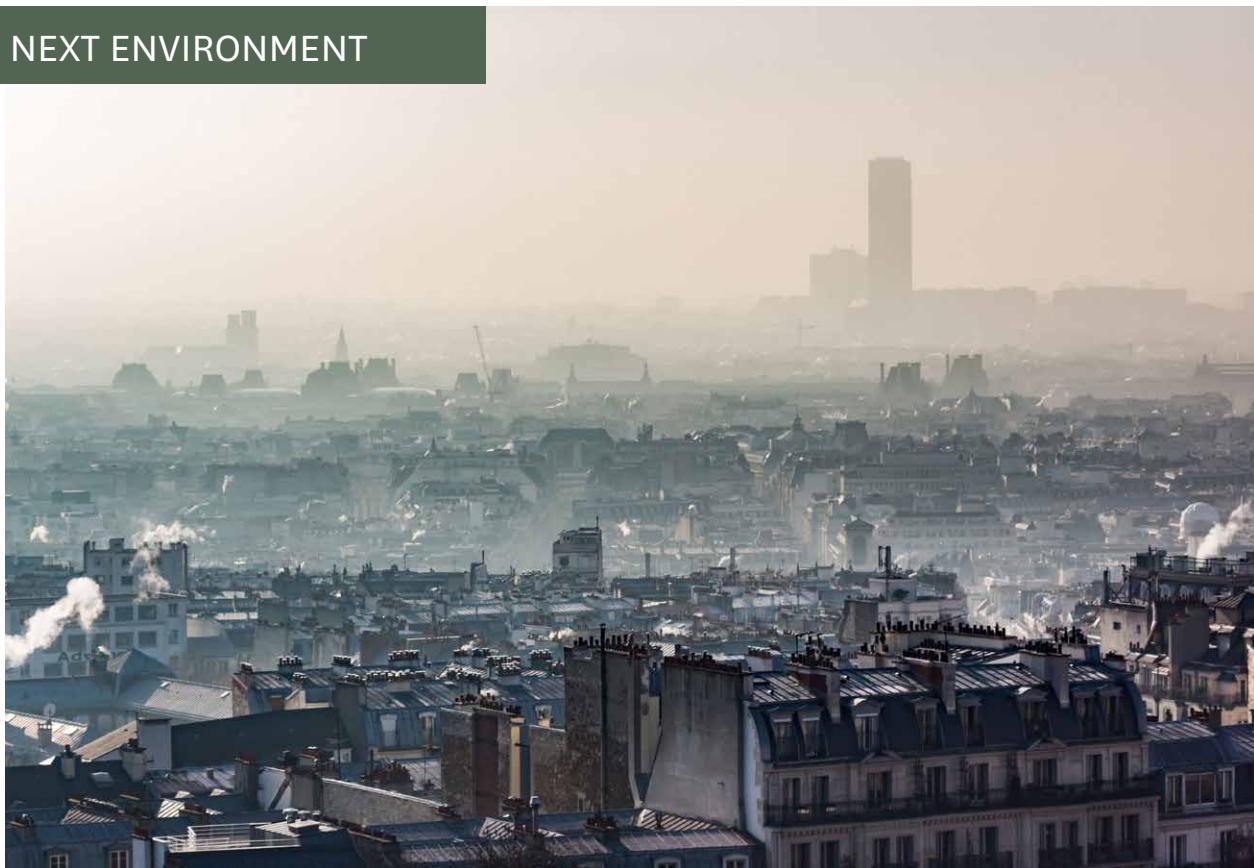
> AUTHOR

Laurent Alexandre is a specialist in technological developments and the challenges that these present. Laurent Alexandre is a surgeon, neurobiologist and a member of the ENA alumni of the French 'grande école' for training future senior French civil servants called the Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA), founder of Doctissimo and a number of high-tech companies. He is the author of several textbooks, including 'The Mort de la Mort', 'La Défaite du Cancer' and his latest, 'La Guerre des Intelligences' (about artificial intelligence).

#GAFAM
Total has just announced that it has entrusted its oil exploration to Google
@dr_l_alexandre



NEXT ENVIRONMENT



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| Cities are looking for ways to restrict the access of the most polluting cars via Low Emission Zones

THE ONGOING FIGHT FOR CLEAN AIR IS ABOVE ALL A SOCIAL ISSUE

by Kathleen Van Brempt

According to the European Environmental Agency (EEA), exposure to air pollution throughout the EU causes around half a million premature deaths. Air pollution is first and foremost a social issue. It is the most vulnerable and the more socially disadvantaged groups who are suffering the most: young children, pregnant women and the elderly. Pollution is creating another type of inequality and is aggravating existing ones.

As long as around 90% of Europeans living in cities are exposed to levels of air pollution deemed damaging to human health, the European fight for cleaner air must continue.

That's why the European Parliament robustly countered the plans of the European Commission to withdraw the from its work programme. This forced the Commission to backpedal and to continue with its Clean Air package, which resulted, among other things, in an agreement between the Parliament and Council on a revised National Emission's Ceiling Directive with more ambitious national caps on emissions. The agreed pollution cuts will reduce the health impacts of air pollution by around 50% by 2030.

The European Parliament also scrutinised Europe's failing regulation on car emissions. The 'Dieselgate' inquiry committee made perfectly clear that, in

particular the Euro 5 and Euro 6 regulation for diesel cars have failed when it comes to the emissions of nitrogen oxides. Without any doubt, the introduction of a real driving emissions test for the type approval of new vehicles will, together with the agreement on a new Regulation on the approval and surveillance of vehicles, improve the environmental performance of new cars coming on the European market.

But this alone will not solve the problem. The 'not to exceed' limits for Euro 6 cars may still be exceeded by 110% in the course of the next three years. And by the time the Euro 6 emission standards will be finally complied with, the European standards will lag behind the ones that are in force in China and the US. Besides this, an estimated 37 million overly polluting diesel cars and vans continue to drive on EU roads.

Cities are looking for ways to restrict the access of the most polluting cars via Low Emission Zones (LEZ) but the current

Euro classification of cars is not suited for that purpose. Due to outdated and unrealistic test procedures, some Euro 6 diesel cars which are allowed in LEZs might well be more polluting than older models which are

#AirQuality
Agreed pollution cuts will reduce the health impacts of air pollution by around 50% by 2030
@kvanbrempt



banned. This makes LEZs based on Euro classes ineffective. The alternative of straight diesel bans will lead to an increase in exports of highly polluting cars to central and eastern EU Member States. Air quality problems will be exported, not solved.

Further actions are therefore urgently needed. First, as recommended by the Dieselgate inquiry committee, the Commission must come forward with more stringent Euro 7 emission standards for cars coming on the road from 2025 onwards. These emission standards must be in line with the more stringent limits in China and the US. Secondly, the EU must oblige car manufacturers to repair the current Euro 5/6 fleet, with hardware fixes if needed, in order to comply with the emission standards "in normal use" as required by the Euro 5/6 legislation. Thirdly, we must establish an EU-wide remote

sensing network to monitor the real world emissions of the car fleet and to identify excessively polluting vehicles and to trace cars that might be illegally manipulated. Finally, based on the results of this remote sensing network and independent on-the-road testing, we should elaborate a labelling scheme for cars that can be used by cities to introduce effective Low Emission Zones. Crossborder data exchanges must enable foreign visitors to get automatic access to cities with LEZs based on Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR). The same crossborder data exchanges will also enable authorities responsible for the enforcement of the LEZs to collect fees from non-compliant foreign vehicles.

With these additional actions, we will be able to improve our citizen's health and restore trust in the EU's institutions. Air pollution is clearly a topic where the EU can prove its added value.



> AUTHOR
Kathleen Van Brempt is Vice-Chair of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament.

“
AIR POLLUTION IS CLEARLY A
TOPIC WHERE THE EU CAN PROVE
ITS ADDED VALUE.
”

NEXT ENVIRONMENT



| According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the European Environment Agency, 400,000 people died prematurely in 2014 in the EU of 28 countries due to exposure to bad quality air

IMPROVING THE AIR THAT WE BREATHE

by Teresa Ribera

“Every breath you take, matters,” said Beijing citizens in the wake of the ‘Blue Skies Diplomacy’ undertaken by the Chinese Government ahead of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit that they hosted in 2015. You can “see” pollution in Delhi or Beijing. And, sometimes, you also “see” it in Madrid or Paris but not seeing pollution doesn’t mean that you are inhaling clean air. According to Teresa Ribera, it’s time to change social patterns to restore good quality air.

In these times of great environmental change, air quality is recognised as a key issue. It connects people's everyday lives with environmental policies. There are convincing facts behind this need for change. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the European Environment Agency, 400,000 people died prematurely in 2014 in the EU of 28 Member States due to exposure to bad quality air. In addition, it harms ecosystems, soil and water systems, impacting on biodiversity, agriculture and, ultimately, on socio-economic patterns.

Policy action in this field has a long track record. For decades, measures have been adopted to improve air quality. But technical “improvement” is not enough any more. It has become a high priority in politics and economics, a societal topic

#AirQuality
We are witnessing people defending their rights to enjoy a healthy environment in court, fighting against the car industry
@Teresaribera
@iddrilefil



“
82-85% OF EUROPE’S TOTAL
URBAN POPULATION
IS EXPOSED
TO HIGH LEVELS
OF PARTICULATES.
”

that deserves further engagement and adequate responses. 82-85% of Europe’s total urban population is exposed to concentrations of PM2.5 (Particulate matter) and above, according to WHO and EU references, and this percentage rises to 95-98% when dealing with ozone (O3).

The sources of pollution are multiple and diverse. Beyond industrial emissions, heating in homes and the use of fertilisers and dirty fuel for transport are a major public concern. Accordingly, there are several interesting moves in this sense. Air quality speaks to people's hearts and people's minds. The dominance of cars or other mobility options are a simple way to identify action on air

quality and public goods since the source of the problem is also competing for the public space. Let’s take the example of Paris, where the public debate on the use of the ‘berges’, the banks along the river Seine riversides-, has been heating up. 1,419 hectares out of the total of 2,800 hectares dedicated to streets and squares are dedicated to the use of cars (200 hectares for parking), preventing other potential uses for citizens.

Mobility and clean air are major issues driving a relevant change in social patterns. Technology is no longer the single point of reference for change. For a long time, lack of options or lack of demand inhibited policy makers but this is not the

case any more. Even more so nowadays, we are witnessing people defending their rights to enjoy a healthy environment in court, fighting against the car industry or the lack of ambition of local and national authorities. Mayors in a large number of cities have understood that they need to lead the change. Citizens’ empowerment and local action are powerful tools but they are not enough on their own. European governments and EU institutions have the opportunity and the obligation to deal with this issue under the energy and climate package. This is a framework for mobility and transportation that impacts on people’s health and on industry as well as on the confidence in the EU’s capacity to build an appealing common future for its citizens.



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NEXT ECONOMY



| The level of a minimum wage set down in law in a given country should be consistent with productivity levels in that country, says economist Rémi Bazillier

THE BENEFITS OF HAVING A STATUTORY MINIMUM WAGE

Interview with Rémi Bazillier

In an interview with the Progressive Post, economist Rémi Bazillier explains what he sees as the advantages of having a statutory minimum wage as well as the arguments against the minimum wage and argues that every EU country should have a minimum wage.

Progressive Post: Why is it a good idea to have a statutory minimum wage (i.e. as determined by a country's law)?

Rémi Bazillier: A minimum wage is an efficient tool to increase

living standards and fight poverty. The bargaining power of workers has been eroded by globalisation, increased competition and financialisation (i.e. the development of financial capitalism during the period from 1980 until 2010,

in which debt-to-equity ratios increased and financial services accounted for an increasing share of national income relative to other sectors) of the economy. In that context, competition among workers can lead to a race to the bottom, which is

sub-optimal for the whole economy as it would tend to depress aggregate demand.

Opponents of the minimum wage tend to argue that it will destroy jobs, particularly low-skilled jobs. The contexts are

very different from one country to another. The level of a minimum wage set down in law in a given country should be consistent with productivity levels in that country. But overall, most academic studies fail to find any significantly negative impact of having a minimum wage on employment. In some cases, it is the contrary. A minimum wage can foster job creation when wages are too low without any legislation.

One additional argument is that having a minimum wage is a policy that pushes firms to invest in productivity and quality. If firms face higher labour costs, they have to improve their productivity to stay competitive. It therefore acts as an incentive for dynamic firms to foster their investments in R&D, to improve their management of human resources and to improve the quality of the goods and/or services that they produce. Firms react to their institutional environment. In a low wage environment, productivity levels will also be low. Alternative strategies pushing up wages might lead to more positive outcomes,

with more productive workers.

What is the advantage of having a minimum wage across as many sectors as possible?

Setting a minimum wage is necessary to avoid unfair competition between firms and workers. Minimum standards should be defined at the sector level at least. Producers selling the same goods and services should follow the same rules. But an inter-sectoral minimum wage is also necessary. As we saw in the German case, before the introduction of a national minimum wage, the lack of minimum wage in some sectors (such as agriculture) led to big disparities in wages from one sector to another, which raises inequality. It also created distortions in the marketplace at the European level for these specific sectors, with many companies carrying out social dumping. Social dumping refers to a set of practices on an international, national or inter-corporate level, aimed at gaining an advantage over competitors, which could have important negative consequences on economic processes and workers' social security. In my view, we also need to have a minimum wage in as many countries as possible. There are strong arguments in favour of a minimum wage across the EU. EU countries are competing with each other and this can have adverse consequences on the living standards of workers. Setting a minimum wage in every EU country is an economic and social necessity. The national level should take into account the level of productivity. The

goal is not to set the same level of minimum wage for each country, but to define a minimum level respecting the level of productivity and then to ensure that the productivity and wage levels converge in the medium term.

We have seen the economic consequences of overly large macroeconomic imbalances between trade surplus and deficit countries within the European Union. A country with a trade surplus earns more from its exports than it spends on imports, making it a net exporter. These imbalances are a factor in creating instability and crisis. Disparities in terms of wages are also a major factor impacting such imbalances. Countries with a trade surplus, or net exporting countries, should increase their wages to reduce these imbalances. This is a macroeconomic necessity. Setting a minimum wage is the right tool to achieve this goal.

What's the best example of a country with a minimum wage?

There is no 'best example'. Each country has its own history, institutions and regulatory framework. In Nordic countries where collective bargaining is strong, trade unions are able to negotiate a minimum wage with good outcomes. In other contexts, such as in Germany, a national minimum wage was necessary in addition to sectoral collective agreements. In France, collective bargaining is much weaker and a national minimum wage defined at the state level is necessary. Each

country should define its own way to reach these goals. But when trade unions and collective bargaining are weak, state intervention is necessary.

#MinimumWage
Setting a minimum wage in every EU country is an economic and social necessity. The national level should take into account the level of productivity
@remibaz



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Rémi Bazillier is Professor of Economics at Panthéon-Sorbonne University, Paris University, Paris. His research areas include development economics, labour economics and sustainable development (more info here: <http://remi.bazillier.free.fr>). He is also a member of the Scientific Council of FEPS and has been a member of the Next Left programme for several years.

NEXT ECONOMY



| Stimmen fuer den Mindestlohn (Voices for the minimum wage), Die Menschenpyramide (man pyramid) mural by Victor Ash in Berlin, Germany

A WAY FORWARD FOR MINIMUM WAGES IN THE EU

by Guillaume Balas

Setting minimum wages is a way to head off the ongoing threat of economic, tax and social dumping within the European Union. Guillaume Balas sets out some of the options that policymakers should take on board.

The European Union continues to face major economic and social challenges which have not been tackled since the establishment of the EU's single market and of the euro area. If the situation remains unchanged, the risk of economic, tax and social dumping poses one of the main threats to the European economic area and, ultimately, to the continuation of the European integration project.

An idea for a minimum wage

To partly address these risks, one of my proposals as the rapporteur of a European Parliament resolution on social dumping, which was approved by MEPs in September 2016, was the following: that each EU member state in the EU adopt a minimum wage of at least 60% of its national median wage.

The idea of a minimum wage, in this respect, is an effective instrument designed to fight poverty and the risk of deflation all over Europe. This first step in the direction of a better coordination of European labour markets would

also have a positive impact on the overall coordination of macroeconomic policies.

I defend the principle of minimum wage floors established in all EU countries according to their respective national practices, notably the role played by the social partners (employers and trade union organisations) in this process of wage setting. However, some specific sectors in Europe would need to have a common wage setting mechanism, such as the road transport sector. Various aspects, such as the fragmentation of market operations, the question of international transport operations and the complexity of the rules to be applied lead to an unacceptable circumvention of labour law and social rights. I am therefore in favour of a European minimum wage for international road transport operations which could be based on the most ambitious economic and social standards currently prevailing in Europe and which could be further defined in full association with social partners and political actors at the national and European level. This would prevent unfair competition and provide a clear signal that the European Union is able to set

out concrete policies in line with upward social convergence.

Sectoral agreements

Sectoral agreements can be adopted if we are able to gather social partners in a specific area. This could be the right method in the construction sector, in crossborder activities and, as already mentioned in the international road transport sector. As a precondition for these agreements, European institutions should clearly express the basis for such discussions: this could be an opportunity to give concrete content to the European Pillar of Social Rights. In this respect, the only element that we need in Europe for this is political will. I will fight this battle with many progressive forces in Europe in the coming months.

#MinimumWage,
#EUminimumwage
Each EU member
state should adopt
a minimum wage
of at least 60%
of its median
national wage

@BalasGuillaume



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Guillaume Balas is an MEP from the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament. He sits on the Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs Committee.

NEXT ECONOMY



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| Wages in fast food restaurants are often low

A EUROPEAN SYSTEM OF MINIMUM WAGES FOR EQUALITY-LED DEVELOPMENT

by Özlem Onaran

A European system of minimum wages can help bring people out of poverty as well as contribute to equality, higher productivity and healthier public sector budgets.

Establishing a sufficiently high statutory minimum wage is one of the most effective policy tools to tackle the worrisome growth of in-work poverty. Evidence shows that robust minimum wages can substantially reduce inequality. The International Labour

Organisation (ILO), among others has been vocal on this. Our recent Foundation for European Progressive Studies- Greenwich Political Economy Research Centre (FEPS-GPERC) research shows that minimum wages are also very effective in increasing the share of wages as a proportion of national income and this

effect is relevant for workers of all skill groups and across service and manufacturing sectors alike. It is also a key policy to decrease the high gender pay gaps.

A rise in minimum wages not only reduces people's reliance on benefits or debt but also improve demand and growth

in a wage-led economy such as Europe. Low-income earners would spend a higher proportion of their income and this would lead to positive effects on growth and investment in each European country, in particular where policies to increase wages are coordinated as shown in recent research by

the Foundation for European Progressive Studies, Greenwich Political Economy Research Centre, Think-tank for Action on Social Change, Economic Council of the Labour Movement (FEPS-GPERC-TASC-ECLM). These policies include improving trade union legislation, collective bargaining coverage, equal pay legislation, public spending in social infrastructure as well as increasing minimum wages to give a boost to the wage share in each EU Member State.

At the EU level, minimum wages can also be used as a tool for convergence, with nation-specific minimum rates defined in relation to the median wage of each country, in a fashion similar to the one elaborated by Schulten and Watt already in 2007. Such a policy should be further embedded within a broader wage coordination policy in order to achieve an upward convergence in wages to support socio-economic cohesion.

Living wage strategy needed

Over the medium term we need a strategy to make the statutory minimum wage a living wage through gradual increases in minimum wages. After each increase, the employment effects can be assessed before proceeding

with further increases. Once the living wage level has been attained, increases beyond this could then be tied both to inflation and average labour productivity, as described by Pollin. In the transition period of gradual adjustments leading to the statutory minimum wage, living wage rates should be used within public sector organisations and should be imposed on private firms working as contractors or suppliers to the public sector. Even after the convergence of the national minimum wage to a living wage, local authorities should then be able to set their own living wage norms at levels higher than the national statutory minimum wage given that local costs of living differ.

Positive effects of minimum wages

Studies on the effects of minimum wages show that there is no significant evidence of a negative association between minimum wages and employment. For the UK case, minimum wages reduced inequality without any significant negative effects on employment. In Germany, the introduction of a minimum wage of €8.50 in January 2015 (now increased to €8.84), actually translated into a contraction of unemployment and youth unemployment. The myth about

the negative effects of minimum wages on youth employment was also discredited by a research on the fast food industry, a major employer of young workers, where minimum wages indeed led to more and not less youth employment in the US. In fact, raising the minimum wage can also increase labour force participation rates, as better-paid employment becomes attractive.

The positive effects of minimum wages however, are not to be found only on the quantity of work, but crucially, on its quality. Higher minimum wage reduces turnover among workers and creates employment stability for low-wage workers, which in turn helps firms to increase their productivity. Furthermore, they are found to enhance employees' general wellbeing at work and work-life balance, and to contribute to improvements in workplace atmosphere. It is not by chance that a survey carried out by the Greater London Authority finds that 80% of employers believe that the living wage has enhanced the quality of work.

To sum up, a coordinated policy of European minimum wages is a win-win case for achieving equitable development, convergence, higher productivity and healthy public sector budgets.

**#MinimumWage,
#EUminimumwage**
A coordinated policy of European minimum wages is a win-win case for achieving equitable development, convergence, higher productivity and healthy public sector budgets
@GPERC_UoG



> AUTHOR
Özlem Onaran is Director of the Greenwich Political Economy Research Centre and Professor of Economics at the University of Greenwich.

NEXT GLOBAL



| Between 2015 and 2016, European direct investment abroad (FDI) increased by 49% with China

AN ASSESSMENT OF EU-CHINA RELATIONS

Interview by Alain Bloëdt editor-in-chief of the Progressive Post with Jo Leinen

In a wide-ranging interview with the Progressive Post, MEP Jo Leinen gave his views on EU-China relations, including China's Belt and Road Initiative, Chinese investments in the EU such as buying the Port of Piraeus in Greece and future cooperation between the EU and China.

How would you define the supposed EU-China 'win-win' relationship after five years?

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been a challenge and an opportunity for Europe. A challenge because it is a unilateral Chinese initiative to reach out to the world (with China's standards) and an opportunity for Europe to connect with

China on many infrastructure projects (Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa).

Is there one united European Union position towards China?

Unfortunately the 28 EU Member States have quite diverse positions. I hope that the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini,

can present a new EU-China partnership roadmap in June 2018. The EU must speak with one voice and have a common language towards China, otherwise we will have no influence and our interests and values will be weakened.

#China-#EU

We do not have a level playing field in terms of market rules and political understanding

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We need to analyse whether, #China having assets in key infrastructure areas is more than an investment and if it is a political strategy through which to influence Member States

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Given the public's reaction to the last trade agreements, such as with Canada and the USA, are you concerned about EU public opinion towards China?

Yes, of course, China is a challenge because it has a different political system and it is not a market economy. Products coming to our market from China are partly subsidised and there are major restrictions in terms of financing and investments in China. We do not have a level-playing field in terms of market rules and political understanding. Many people in the EU are worried that we are in a bad position and would be the losers in a trade relationship.

How can we make sure that parity and equity will be ensured by this sort of agreement?

The EU has an interest in developing good cooperation with China but we should ensure that we have a level-playing field and reciprocity in what we do. From the Chinese government we want more market access and no discrimination against our companies regarding their

activities in China. Furthermore, we have to look at our trade defence instruments, which are being sharpened up and improved, on screening investments from China in terms of whether they meet our standards.

Do you think that China has adopted the right attitude with its '16+1' initiative, which aims to expand China's cooperation with 11 EU Member States and five Balkan countries?

There is no problem about China being active in the EU and that China is investing in Poland or Romania as it does in Germany and Portugal. I would have a problem if they were undermining our standards and our rules.

So was there any problem for you when China bought the whole of the port of Piraeus in Greece?

The port of Piraeus is flourishing. It is a positive element for Greece and its economy too. The Greek government was forced, by the austerity policy, to sell the port. No EU companies were able to meet the level of the Chinese offer. But we should observe that China is mostly investing in infrastructures projects (e.g. ports, railways, energy systems and distribution systems). We need a complete picture, at the EU level, on what is happening and we need to analyse whether, China having assets in key infrastructure areas more than an investment and if it is a

political strategy through which to influence Member States.

Could you imagine the same reaction coming from Germany and the Netherlands if China had tried to buy the Port of Hamburg or Rotterdam?

Well, in Germany, China is buying the more sophisticated technology companies (Chinese home appliance maker Midea Group took over the German robotics firm Kuka) One does not want to see China on a 'shopping tour' with state-owned companies buying our best EU companies. There are limits to what the EU can accept, at least as long as there is no reciprocity whereby EU companies are able to do the same in China.

In April, 27 out of 28 EU ambassadors to China signed a letter criticising China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Is this the right approach towards China?

This is a warning from our ambassadors not to be naïve and a call for the EU to get united. Our ambassadors in Beijing are much closer to the reality of China than our governments and institutions in Brussels. I found it helpful that they put the finger on some problematic developments relating to China.

Are you optimistic about future EU-China cooperation?

Yes, because we need each other for global governance. If you see how shaky the US has

got and how problematic Russia may well stay for many years, we do not have that many partners in the world to do the big things where they are needed: e.g. climate protection on a major scale, economic development in Africa, etc...

#EU has an interest in developing good cooperation with #China but we should ensure that we have a level playing field and reciprocity in what we do

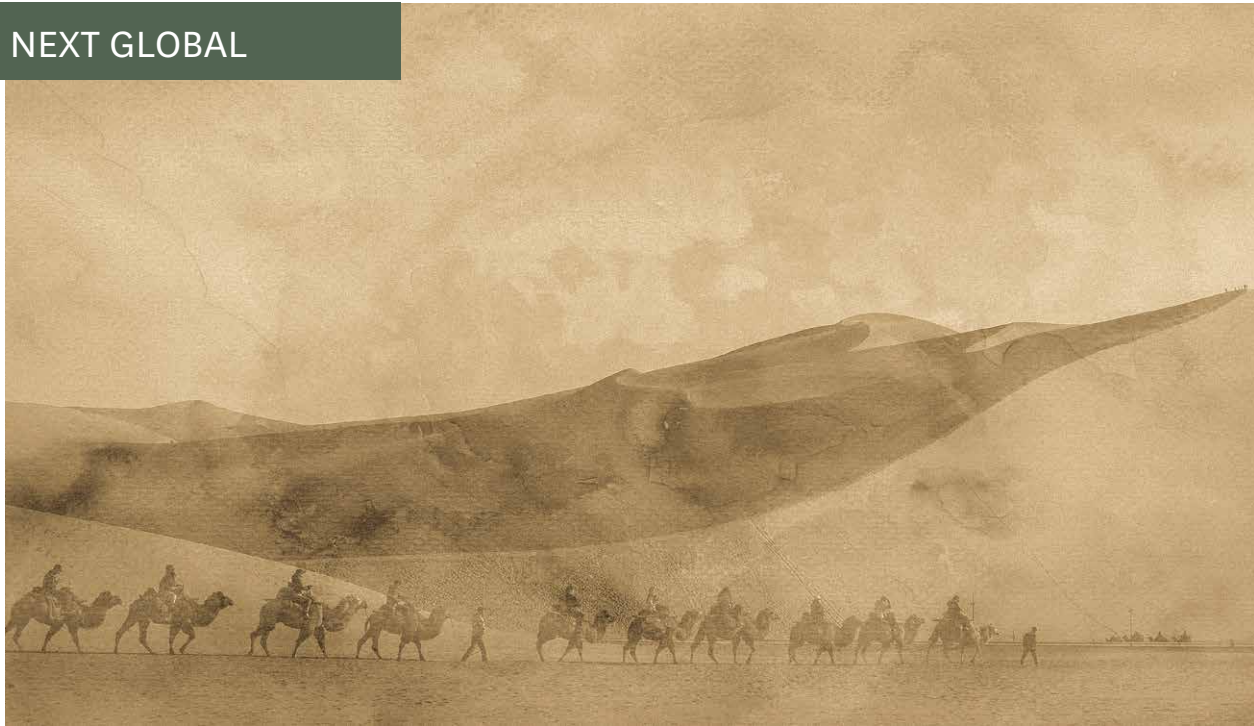
#NewSilkRoad



> AUTHOR

Jo Leinen is a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) from the Socialists and Democrats Group. He has been an MEP since 1999 and has been the Chairperson of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with China since 2014.

NEXT GLOBAL



| Compared with past development policies, the Belt and Road Initiative's (BRI) spatial imagination is bigger, broader, and less geographically precise, says C. Cindy Fan

BELTS, ROADS AND REGIONS: MAPPING IMAGINATIONS

by C. Cindy Fan

Spatial representations such as maps are instrumental to understanding and interpreting China's policies. Official maps are available for some policies, while researchers and observers have also created their own spatial representations of policies. Either way, spatial visualisations help to translate policies into potential impacts on people and places and to cement the way in which regions can be conceptualised for political purposes.

Spatial representations such as maps are instrumental to understanding and interpreting China's policies. Official maps are available for some policies, while researchers and observers have also created

their own spatial representations of policies. Either way, spatial visualisations help to translate policies into potential impacts on people and places and to cement the way in which regions can be conceptualised for political purposes.

In the past decades, China's regional policies have vacillated between focusing on the eastern coastal region and helping the inland region. Beginning in the 1960s, Mao promoted the 'Third Front' (sanxian) programme, which was aimed at shifting key

industrial bases inland for the purpose of national defence. China scholar Barry Naughton famously mapped the different phases of the Third Front, centering on the inland provinces of Sichuan, Guizhou, Hubei, Shaanxi and Gansu. Avoiding

the militarily vulnerable eastern coast, remote locations that were hard to access were singled out by the Chinese government to receive large amounts of investment. By and large, however, these activities have not produced satisfactory returns.

Export-led industrialisation

Deng's rise in the late 1970s made it possible for the Open Door Policy, which enabled export-led industrialisation via coastal 'Special Economic Zones', the 14 'Open Coastal Cities' and preferential policies aimed at attracting foreign investment. A new political conceptualisation for the regions was presented via the new 'Three Economic Belts' (sanda jingji didai) division, which was introduced during the Seventh Five-Year Plan (1986-1990) and which assigned different roles to the eastern, coastal, central and western regions. This division legitimised the rapid growth of coastal provinces such as Guangdong, literally manifesting the first part of Deng's famous quote: "Let some people and regions get rich first; the others will follow."

By the 1990s, it was clear that the second part of Deng's quote was nowhere in sight. The perceived and documented rise in regional inequality necessitated a new vision of regional development, one that focused on helping the poor, inland

yet resource-rich provinces. The 'Western Development Programme' (xibu da kaifa), announced in 1999 by Jiang Zemin, aimed at boosting the economic growth of 12 inland provinces, which together accounted for more than 70% of China's territory. However, despite considerable state investment in these provinces, they continued to lag far behind their eastern coastal counterparts. In short, a regional vision of balanced regional development remained little more than in the imaginations of policymakers.

Conceptualising Bri

Compared with the above, the spatial conceptualisation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is bigger, broader and less geographically precise. By virtue of its title, BRI connotes spatial relationships and activities. While official media such as Xinhua has published maps on the modern 'Silk Road Economic Belt' and the '21st Century Maritime Silk Road', which make up the BRI, they are by no means final or definitive. Instead, the two BRI belts are fluid, unrestricted and evolving spatially. Although the spatial conceptualisation of the two belts has primarily encompassed parts of Eurasia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Southeast Asia, they are already extending rapidly to Oceania, Latin America and beyond. In short, no maps can accurately

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A regional vision of balanced regional development remained little more than in the imaginations of policymakers
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identify, define and limit BRI's geographical expanse and geopolitical potential. In fact, the concept's flexibility and fuzziness precisely represent how China is building diplomatic and economic relationships with countries in all directions, as the two imaginary belts grow across lands and seas.

Also, compared with previous regional policies, the BRI is not designed to prioritise certain regions within China over others. Rather, the entire country is expected to be involved and maps of China related to the BRI tend to be regionally inclusive rather than categorical like the 'Three Economic Belts'. Nevertheless, since central and western Chinese cities including Yiwu, Xi'an, Chongqing and Urumqi are identified as destinations of the Silk Road Economic Belt, the BRI is expected to boost urbanisation and economic development in their adjacent regions. Such development may also help alleviate the migration challenge in China,

as hundreds of millions of people, most of whom live and work in eastern coastal cities without urban hukou, are separated from their left-behind families. Although hukou reforms, including the recent announcement by Premier Li Keqiang of giving urban hukou to 100 million migrant workers by 2020, are intended to help migrants settle in cities, rural Chinese tend to prefer large coastal cities and shun urban hukou in smaller and inland cities. If the BRI is successful in making inland cities more attractive, it may become an effective tool to solve China's migration problem.



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C. Cindy Fan is Professor of Geography and Asian American Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), with research interests in migration and regional development in China. She is the first woman and Asian to be appointed UCLA's Vice Provost for International Studies and Global Engagement.

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| Most of the Belt and Road Initiative projects run counter to the EU agenda for liberalising trade and push the balance of power in favour of subsidised Chinese companies, according to an EU delegation report

BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AND EUROPE’S FATE: STILL UNITED IN DIVERSITY?

by Alisée Pernet

Throughout 2018, several authors debated “Europe’s Destiny” (Ivan Krastev) as challenged by the refugee crisis and defied in “its conquest of ideals” (François Jullien) by the harsh reality of a political community that has been for too long led by economically driven issues. Alisée Pernet provides some insights with regard to the Belt and Road Initiative.

In a certain way, the strength of the EU’s ideals has subsided while its economic plans have declined following the debt crisis. China is coming to Europe with ambitious financial flows (more than one trillion dollars) and plans that come with debt risks, according to the Center for Global Development, especially for Montenegro, which aspires to becoming an EU member state). Most of Belt and Road Initiative projects run counter to the EU agenda for liberalising trade and push the balance of power in favour of subsidised Chinese companies, according to an EU delegation report. The European Union remains cool and distant towards the BRI initiative. Nevertheless, for some countries, such as Hungary, Greece and several eastern EU countries, BRI is considered as an appealing policy because of its multi-faceted aspects, including its digital issues. The digital European economy needs more than 500 million euro, according to the European Commission. Chinese enterprises are already putting money into the digital economy: Alibaba’s electronic-World Trade Platform (e-WTP) is creating a move to counter globalisation, pitting SMEs against traditional industries and disrupting industries. It is doing this in Pakistan, Malaysia and Turkey. Huawei is building connectivity in rural areas in the Netherlands and Malta.

The BRI is dividing Europe

BRI is dividing Europe with these engaging policies – such as with

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China is coming
to Europe with
more than one
trillion dollars
@Aliseepornet*



its digital strategy - but also through China’s bilateral diplomacy in Europe. 16+1 – a soft diplomatic initiative launched in 2012 to expand multi-sector cooperation with 11 EU Member States and 5 Balkan countries - is disrupting the usual channel of dialogue with Eastern European countries. 16+1 is working as a parallel multi-bilateralism, “a bilateral structure that leads to an unequal distribution of power which China exploits”, according to the EU delegation report. Beyond the gates of the European Union, Chinese think tanks, such as the BRI Research

Institute, are working closely with leaders from Eastern and Central Europe to bind relations with business enterprises and governments. The Center for International Knowledge Development (CIKD), a new body created in August 2015 under the supervision of the China State Council, refers to Belarus as an example of a successful Special Economic Zone outside China.

Counter-argument to the BRI needed

But, what if the Belt and Road Initiative is exactly what the European Union needs to redefine itself? Is it a pure, strategic, ideological and very seductive plan that can be taken as giving Europe a kind of electric shock to shake it into action? The Belt and Road Initiative is not a threat or a danger for those who can stand united. Some recent events indicate that 16+1 is not

insurmountable. For example, 27 of the 28 EU ambassadors to China have just signed a report sharply critical of China’s BRI (except Hungary). The European Union has to build a strong counter-argument to the BRI that will treat its eastern region in a new way. Europe has to recreate a political and symbolic cohesion, rethinking its relationship with China but also with its Eurasian nations.

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THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE
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”



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Alisée Pernet is a researcher on China. She has written several articles for newspapers and is writing a book on the Belt and Road Initiative.

NEXT GLOBAL



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| Beautiful, winding roads on the Old Silk Route, a silk trading route between China and India

EUROPE, CHINA'S SILK ROADS AND INDIA

by C. Raja Mohan

One of the long term consequences of China's expansive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is the reorganisation of the physical, economic and political space in Asia and Europe as well as the Indian and Pacific oceans. While the two continents and the two oceans were seen as separate geographies until recently, China's economic expansion and military power projection are helping construct Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific as integrated theatres. To secure its interests in these emerging regions, Europe must reinforce its traditional American alliance through strong strategic coordination with Asian powers like India and Japan.

On the economic front, few doubt the value of deeper commercial and transport connectivity in the Eurasian landmass and in its waters. But the debate has been about China's terms for integration.

Criticism of the BRI

India has argued that the BRI projects tend to be financially unviable, environmentally unsustainable and drive the recipient countries into deep debt. The United States has called the economics of the BRI "predatory". Japan is offering some competition to the BRI through its own 'partnership for quality infrastructure' (PQI) on terms that are far more reasonable. India, Japan and the United States are also trying to coordinate their efforts to promote regional infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific. European support for these efforts would strengthen the choices for the recipient countries and encourage China to move towards more acceptable international norms in the promotion of connectivity in Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific.

Security issues

In the security domain, three new factors stand out. One China's military pressure on the US's forward military presence

in the Western Pacific. It is accompanied by the Chinese effort to weaken the US-led alliances in Asia. Second is the growing imbalance in military power between China and its neighbours. Third is that China is using the BRI projects to acquire military facilities and bases in the Indian Ocean. Together, these three factors have made it harder for either the US or China's neighbours to prevent non-peaceful changes in the territorial status quo and to limit the prospects for potential Chinese hegemony. Greater European contributions are critical for peace and security in the Indo-Pacific. Traditional European great powers like stepping up to the plate. But Europe as a collective unit is yet to emerge as a force to reckon with in the region. Of course Europe has its own major concerns with Russia and the Middle East. It is unable to meet defence spending targets set by the United States for its NATO allies. Yet, Europe cannot stand idly by in the Indo-Pacific.

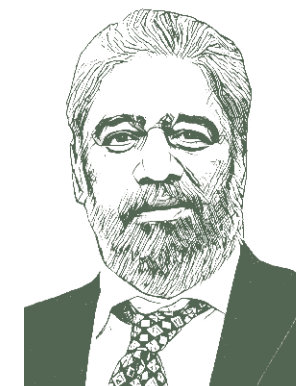
*#NewSilkRoad
#China is using the #BRI projects to acquire military facilities and bases in the Indian Ocean
@MohanCRaja*



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CHINA'S
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If it were to see Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific as coherent strategic spaces, it would turn to more comprehensive approaches that would involve deeper military strategic cooperation with India and Japan. Delhi and Tokyo are ready to welcome Europe's return to the east and the south.

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Delhi and Tokyo are ready to welcome Europe's return to the east and the south
@MohanCRaja*



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NEXT GLOBAL



| View on the new silk road or Karakoram highway

MAKING THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE A TWO-WAY STREET

by Vassilis Ntousas

For a city like Brussels, which is used to institutional and diplomatic wrangling, a report leaked to the German daily Handelsblatt some weeks ago that focuses on China's Belt and Road (BRI) initiative, caught many in Brussels by surprise. According to the newspaper, the European Union's 27 ambassadors to Beijing (except for Hungary) compiled a report that sharply criticises BRI, arguing that the initiative "runs counter to the EU agenda for liberalising trade and pushes the balance of power in favour of subsidised Chinese companies".

As unexpected as the leaked report's 'unusually biting content' might be, this critique is not new nor should it have been surprising. China's almost world-spanning grand initiative has a natural partner in Europe as China and Europe are located at either end of the 'Silk Road', and yet Europe's reception to the initiative has gradually shifted from heartfelt endorsement to growing reticence, if not downright scepticism. European critics view much of BRI as a solo Chinese show, rather than 'a real chorus of all relevant countries', as Chinese policymakers have repeatedly promised. According to their reasoning, these criticisms point to a number of asymmetrical outcomes in China's favour, Beijing's often instrumental and selective commitment to the principle of parity and inclusiveness combined with the absence of a level-playing field for European states and companies in terms of market access, tender selection, trade facilitation and investment relations. China is progressively seen less

as an economic partner than a geopolitical player using its economic might to acquire undue political influence and mute diplomatic resistance to its foreign policy conduct.

Beijing is waking up to this widespread scepticism, seeing diminishing returns in promoting BRI as an exclusively 'win-win' strategy based on parity and mutual respect. Its

China under scrutiny

As the eyes of the world focus more on China, it was always expected that there would also be a greater degree of scrutiny regarding the ways Beijing chooses to implement the project, leading critics to question its motives and intentions. In this sense, China should work systematically not to dispel this

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EUROPE'S RESPONSE SHOULD
BE FUNDAMENTALLY STRATEGIC
IN ITS DESIGN AND NOT MERELY
REACTIVE IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION.

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#NewSilkRoad : The EU should establish a robust European mechanism for screening foreign investments in strategic assets, despite opposition by certain member states
@VNtousas



official retort is that much of this argumentation is predicated upon misperceptions, yet as the leaked report shows clearly, this is no longer a public diplomacy issue, it is first and foremost a concrete foreign policy one. It is first and foremost a diplomacy one.

criticism for its perceived lack of merit, but to address it directly. As far as Europe is concerned, the reason is simple: much of this argumentation poses real risks to the BRI's success and longevity. Why? Because while some of its underlying assumptions might be unwarranted (and they are), some reflect real, deep-seated

concerns linked to EU's unity, prosperity and security.

As the wanted or unwanted effect of Beijing's enlarged footprint on the ground is increasingly felt, China has to try harder to prove that, in reality, BRI is truly a two-way street and not simply a vehicle for Chinese investments abroad. What is more, it should not take lightly warnings about how initiatives attached to BRI such as the 16+1 policy (China's aim to intensify and expand cooperation with 11 EU Member States and 5 Balkan countries) can accelerate the Union's fragmentation. Brussels is right to an extent in arguing that such initiatives aggravate the divisions within the Union and hamper the EU's ability to deal with China collectively, awkwardly pitting member states against each other (and Brussels) in order to secure Chinese investment. If anything, Handelsblatt's report should act as a powerful reminder as to how fine a line there is between being an expansive global actor and being (perceived as) an expansionist one, and therefore as a valuable warning as to how dangerous this increasingly popular criticism is, whether deserved or misplaced. At the very least, this danger lies in creating a climate of mistrust, which can inhibit cooperation even on matters where European and Chinese policy-makers largely agree.

The stakes are high

Evidently, for a Europe that uses such stark terms to describe its relations to China, it too needs to do its homework. The

stakes are so high that neither passive scepticism nor fading patience without any appropriate measures taken will suffice to address the issues at hand. The EU should urgently formulate a holistic policy response vis-à-vis BRI that takes into account both economic and geopolitical considerations. An exclusive focus on geopolitics is not fair to either Beijing or Brussels as it risks disregarding the tremendously beneficial nature of Chinese investment if rules are applied properly. But nor is it fair to merely emphasise the economic opportunity that BRI offers, while overlooking the (potential) geopolitical challenges.

Europe’s response should be fundamentally strategic in its design and not merely reactive in its implementation. A key component in this regard should be establishing a robust European mechanism for screening foreign investments in strategic assets, despite opposition by certain member states. This latter point is key;

Europe cannot afford not to form a common strategy vis-à-vis BRI and Beijing, as only a united Union will be able to exert sufficient diplomatic weight to collectively bargain within the framework of BRI.

EU policy recalibration needed

To do this, Europe also needs to overcome much of its relative policy short-sightedness often demonstrated in the past, which has at times led to the very development of some of the divisions amongst some member states. Take Greece for example. Would Athens have sold off a majority stake in the port of Piraeus, one of the country’s (and Europe’s) most critical infrastructure assets, to Chinese state-owned company COSCO had it not been forced to embrace the strict austerity dogma for years, struggling with painful measures in terms of cuts and privatisations imposed by its debtors? Questions like this need to be part of the

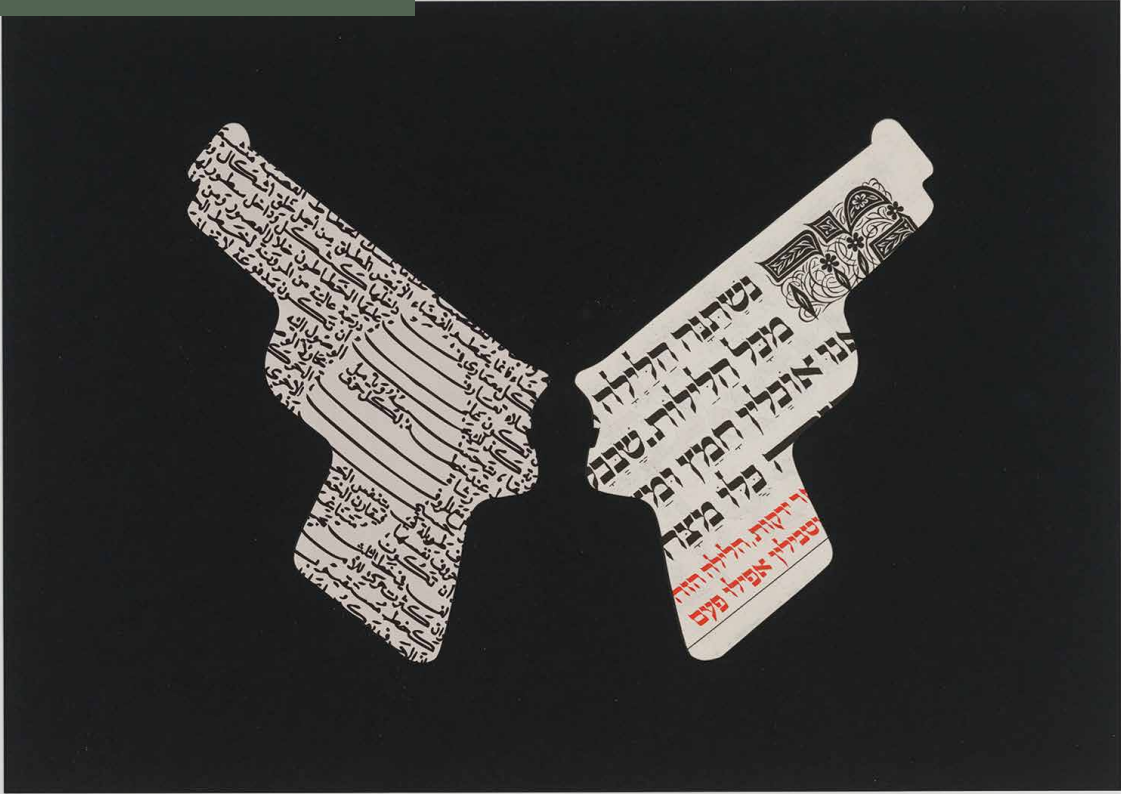
calculus when Europe conducts its policy recalibration. With the 20th EU-China Summit fast approaching, it is clear that a lot of work remains to be done by both sides. For BRI, project which is highly ambitious in its goals and Herculean in its proportions, to become a true two-way street, both Europe and China should be in a position to fully leverage each other’s development opportunities. In a world under strain from increasing isolationism, unilateralism and protectionism, this is an immense task. But it is one worth trying for.'

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Only a united
Union will be able
to exert sufficient
diplomatic weight
to collectively
bargain within the
framework of #BRI
@VNtousas*



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Vassilis Ntousas is an international relations policy advisor for the Foundation for European Progressive Studies.

FOLLOW UP



| Work of Art by Noma Bar. He is an Israel-born graphic designer, illustrator & artist

EUROPEANS MUST UNDERSTAND ISRAEL’S REALITY

by Isaac Herzog

When other nations question Israel’s defensive actions without acknowledging the role played by Hamas and our legitimate concerns, they reduce their chance of persuading Israelis that future territorial compromises in the West Bank serve our interests.



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I AM ALSO CONCERNED BY THE
GAP BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS IN
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EFFECTIVENESS OF EU ENGAGEMENT.”

Europe can play a constructive role in advancing a two state solution but successful engagement requires a clear-sighted grasp of the reality on the ground and the concerns of the Israeli public.

On my recent visit to Brussels I met many EU leaders, including the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini. I found considerable respect for Israel and a desire for closer cooperation and at the same time impatience with some of the policies of the government led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. As Israel's Leader of the Opposition, I share those frustrations but I am also concerned about the gap between perceptions in Brussels of our situation and the reality that we are dealing with. This gap is

harming the effectiveness of EU engagement.

Two state solution

Our European friends should understand that most Israelis would accept a two state solution. This is because they consider that maintaining Israel as a Jewish and democratic state is more important than holding onto the entire 'Land of Israel'. However, they have entirely reasonable concerns about security that have only grown as a result of the upheaval in our region in recent years. The most weakly governed countries in the Middle East have felt the full force of Islamist extremists, including on Israel's southern and northern borders. Whilst I am convinced that we must move towards a two state solution whilst maintaining our security, I have to

explain to the Israeli people how we will prevent Hamas and other extremists – backed by Iran – taking over the West Bank, just as they did the Gaza Strip, and launching rockets at Israel.

Lessons from the Gaza Strip

It is in no one's interest to repeat the Gaza experience in the West Bank. Under Hamas rule, the Gazan people face severe humanitarian distress. Israeli policymakers know that this increases the risk of conflict and widely support international efforts to rehabilitate infrastructure, including water and electricity. But our ability to change the situation is limited without a credible partner inside the Gaza Strip.

Hamas continues to use building

material to build tunnels and to use rockets to attack our towns and cities. Israel would like to see the Palestinian Authority led by Mahmoud Abbas take responsibility, but he is unwilling to do so unless Hamas gives up its weapons. Hamas are trying every way possible to avoid that concession. Having failed to get their way by attacking Israel with rockets and tunnels, they are now sending thousands to breach our border.

Having withdrawn from the Gaza Strip in 2005, we have a duty to defend our citizens from those trying to storm into Israel, many of them intent on violence and we have a right to use force as a last resort. Yet we frequently hear European leaders affirm our right to defend ourselves and then the next moment demand investigations into our military, whilst ignoring the responsibility

of Hamas for orchestrating repeated confrontations.

We all need to apply the harsh lessons of the Gaza experience to the West Bank. The central lesson that Israelis took away from the withdrawal from Gaza was that ending the occupation does not by itself end the conflict. In any future withdrawal from the West Bank we will need special security arrangements to prevent another Hamas takeover.

Israeli settlements

Europeans should also acknowledge that, whilst Israeli settlements are a challenge in reaching a two state solution, they are not the central one. It is not the case, as I often hear, that settlements have made a two state solution impossible. My party's position is that construction in isolated settlement areas should stop since it does not serve Israel's interests. But 85% of the settlers live in settlement blocks that sit on 4-6% of the West Bank and annexing them to Israel in a land swap deal was accepted by the Palestinians in previous talks. For the isolated settlements there are any number of solutions if we think creatively. Therefore, we must avoid giving encouragement to opponents of peace by wrongly conceding that settlements have destroyed the two state solution, when this is not the case.

We must also confront the mistaken idea that boycotting Israel, including settlements, will promote peace. The first victims of boycotts against settlements

are thousands of Palestinians employed in them. Meanwhile boycott measures reinforce the narrative of the Israeli right who claim that European interventions are one-sided or even anti-Semitic. These perceptions make it harder for those of us in Israel who want to work constructively with international actors to advance peace.

In sum, to help those in Israel who want to bring about a two-state solution, Europeans must advance positions which are balanced, which reflect a clear understanding of the reality on the ground and which address the legitimate concerns shared by all Israelis. These include recognising the centrality for

Israelis of securing Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people; recognising the need for special security arrangements to prevent a repeat of the Gaza experience in the West Bank; and repudiating counterproductive boycott initiatives.

We must also confront the mistaken idea that boycotting Israel, including settlements, will promote peace @HerzogMK

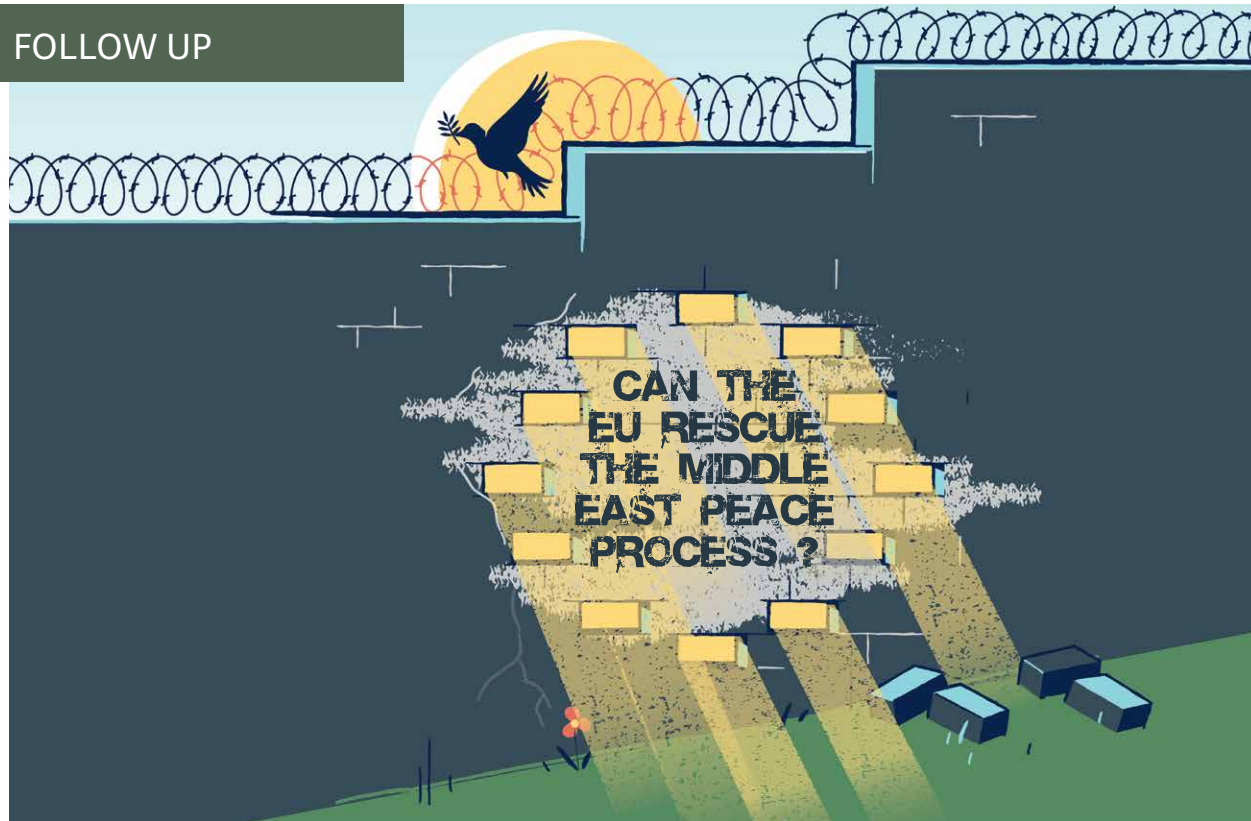


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> AUTHOR
Isaac Herzog Chairman of the Israeli Labor party. Since 2003, Herzog has been a member of the Knesset and has held various ministerial posts, including Minister of Welfare and Social Services (2007–11).

FOLLOW UP



| Cover of The Progressive Post Autumn 2018

PROGRESSIVE FORCES NEED TO PROPOSE A NEW PARADIGM TO DISPEL ISRAELI-PALESTINE TENSIONS

by Victor Bostinaru

As a European but also as a Social Democrat I can only join the Jewish people in celebrating the 70th anniversary of the creation of the State of Israel. After all, Zionism was a socialist dream that succeeded and Israel is today a thriving, innovative and democratic state. Yet, it is important to keep in mind that the price that has been paid has been high and the wounds remain deep and difficult to heal on the Palestinian and Israeli sides.

JERUSALEM IS NOT JEWISH,
CHRISTIAN OR MUSLIM. IT BELONGS
TO HUMANKIND AND IT BELONGS
TO ALL OF ITS INHABITANTS WHICH
ARE ALSO 40% PALESTINIANS.

I would like to be sure that everybody that reads my humble contribution understands that I am a friend of both the Israelis and the Palestinians and that all my political life I have tried to see this conflict through the eyes and perspectives of both sides. With this in mind, I am convinced that anyone that speaks about Israel has to take into consideration the complex geopolitical context within which Israel had to survive. Israel is a Jewish state in an Arab world and there has been a constant and inherent tension between this state and the world it lives in.

Moreover, I am afraid that we have to come to the conclusion that unilateralism and occupation have failed peace and that Israelis have to live with a constant feeling of insecurity. Palestinians are facing repeated violence and, some of them, in

Gaza in particular, they have no freedom, no future and no hope.

A paradigm based on equality and solidarity

That said, there is a majority of Israelis that want a progressive, secular and peaceful Israel and yet there are not many Israeli leaders to speak to them and for them today. Above all, the European and the Israelis progressive forces should come together to fight the rhetoric of fear the populist drift of the current government and propose another paradigm based on equality and solidarity. What is needed is a paradigm that will allow the reconstruction of the delicate and fragile balance between a strong but humane State of Israel.

The peace process seems a long way away as the tendency today

seems to be to curtail the little progress that has been made in recent decades towards a two state solution. The continuation of the settlements policy, the continuation of violence, the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza and the illicit build-up and militant activities of Hamas are exacerbating mistrust on both sides. Furthermore, there are many regional challenges as the Middle East region is falling into chaos, with the Syrian war entering in its eighth year and with Iran's assertiveness growing. It is therefore more necessary than ever to cultivate togetherness, to invest in reconciliation, understanding, solidarity and inclusiveness and to change the confrontational paradigm inside Israel and with its neighbours, the Palestinians.

Peace process needs fresh impetus

All this considered, I am totally convinced that there is no alternative to the two state solution and that there is a need to give the process fresh impetus, by engaging Israelis and Palestinians and by showing that there are benefits in having real peace.

Finally it is key today to realise that, without finding a way of sharing Jerusalem, we might never have peace. Jerusalem is not Jewish, Christian or Muslim. It belongs to humankind and it belongs to all of its inhabitants which are also 40% Palestinians. Thus it cannot be only the capital of the state of Israel. It has been among the most sensitive issues

of this conflict for a reason. The diversity of Jerusalem should be preserved and promoted – any other option will change the soul of this unique city.

#European and the #Israelis #progressive forces should come together to fight the rhetoric of fear and the populist drift of the current government and propose another paradigm based on equality and solidarity

@VictorBostinaru



> AUTHOR

Victor Bostinaru, is Vice-president of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament, responsible for foreign policy, neighbourhood policy, security and defence, and transatlantic relations

WHO ARE THE LEADERS ?

PROGRESSIVE MOMENTUM

Green cities, innovative cities, inclusive cities: cities across Europe have been changing since the 1970s. A process of deindustrialisation at the heart of our cities has made it possible to put in place more social and technological structures, which have in turn helped to create cities that are more sensitive to the energy transition and especially to the needs of citizens.

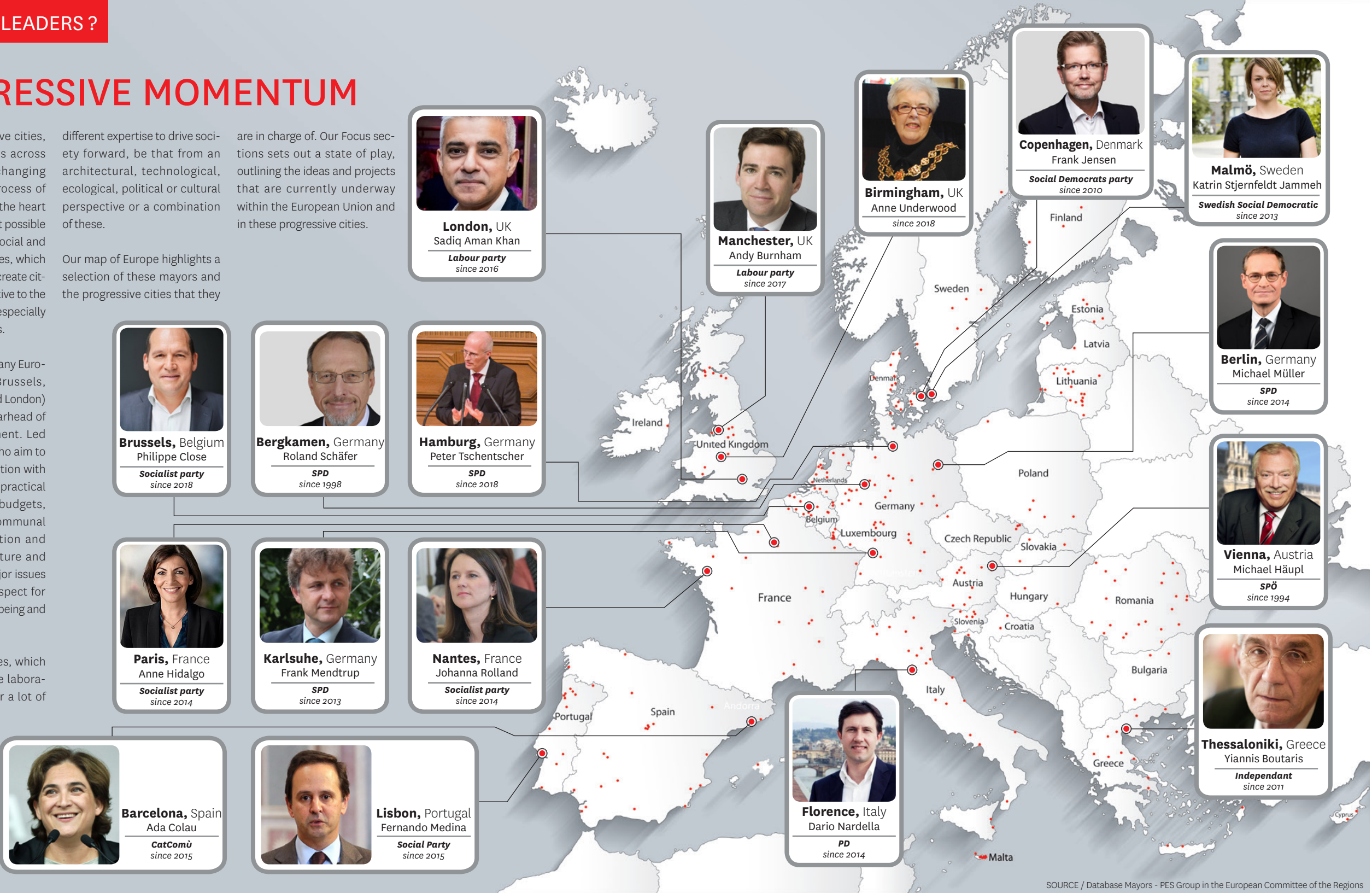
330 cities, including many European capitals (e.g.Brussels, Paris, Berlin, Lisbon and London) have become the spearhead of a progressive movement. Led by visionary mayors who aim to re-establish a connection with their citizens through practical initiatives: inclusive budgets, research facilities, communal gardens, transportation and ecological infrastructure and actions to address major issues such as migration, respect for the environment, well-being and civic engagement.

As a result, these cities, which have become 'real life laboratories', bring together a lot of

different expertise to drive society forward, be that from an architectural, technological, ecological, political or cultural perspective or a combination of these.

Our map of Europe highlights a selection of these mayors and the progressive cities that they

are in charge of. Our Focus sections sets out a state of play, outlining the ideas and projects that are currently underway within the European Union and in these progressive cities.



SOURCE / Database Mayors - PES Group in the European Committee of the Regions

HISTORY



In cities across Germany and the Netherlands, students, environmentalists, pacifists and anti-nuclear activists are getting their causes into the public eye and demanding new forms of democracy and urban planning legislation

EXPLORING THE FEATURES OF EUROPE'S PROGRESSIVE CITIES

Interview by Alain Bloëdt editor-in-chief of the Progressive Post with Charlotte Halpern

Most of the towns in the European Union are led by progressive mayors. With Charlotte Halpern, we have sought to analyse why and how this trend has evolved in recent years.

The Progressive Post : When do you think that European towns and cities started to become progressive?

Charlotte Halpern : There was a clear turning point in the 1970s when a concentration of middle class people and those with greater wealth and education showed an increased interest in culture, sport and quality of life. Alongside this change came the process of

de-industrialisation in cities, which manifested itself in different ways and at different times, depending on the European country in question.

How would you define this progressive trend then?

If we look beyond voting patterns, we have seen an emergence of new urban social movements. In cities across Germany and the Netherlands, students, environmentalists, pacifists and anti-nuclear

activists are getting their causes into the public eye and demanding new forms of democracy and urban planning legislation. These sorts of movements have encouraged the development of the concept that a city should be a laboratory for democracy and urban development even if commercial interests and inequalities remain ever present.

#EuropeanCities
The status and role of these cities: an important part of the continuous power struggle
@CharlotteHalpern



How are modern cities fighting against such inequalities? And how do such measures differ from those implemented by the state?

They do not implement any measures at all, far from it. But let us say, for the sake of argument that European cities have accumulated a greater capacity for action since decentralisation reforms were implemented. These cities now have more resources than in the past to define their political agendas and to initiate their own projects, most notably in terms of housing, culture, sport and education. Their ability to define urban and metropolitan projects has made it possible to bring national public policy to the local and regional level in terms of urban renewal, transportation and economic development and to locate such infrastructure at a distance from city centres. This does not just apply to larger cities. I'm thinking here of Valenciennes, Nijmegen or Kassel.

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STUDENTS, ENVIRONMENTALISTS,
PACIFISTS AND ANTI-NUCLEAR
ACTIVISTS HAVE ENCOURAGED
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
CONCEPT THAT A CITY SHOULD BE
A LABORATORY FOR DEMOCRACY

”

In which areas do cities appear to oppose the state?

There are many areas of conflict, mainly due to opposing political ideologies, but also differences in institutional practices, notably in terms of the division of powers and taxation. But if I had to choose a single theme then it would have to be the climate and the inter-related policies of transportation and pollution. In larger cities these are related as part of a broader policy on energy transition. In effect, urban governments now face an increased number of challenges and are no longer limited to taking purely symbolic actions. They are free to develop pioneering solutions within their national borders or opt to implement EU policies.

Which cities are you thinking about when you say that?

In Berlin, for example, which was the first to introduce an 'environmental zone', in 2008, which at that time was a pioneering move in Germany. Or in the early 2000s, when Malmö developed energy efficiency building standards that were later incorporated into national standards. This was certainly due to the political colour of the government at the time but also the pressing need to address the issues of urban pollution and high levels of CO2 production in a constrained environment.

Do you believe that world cities (Paris and London in Europe) and capital cities (like Vienna and Lisbon) or similar

sized cities (such as Milan, Manchester, Rotterdam and Constanza) exert any influence over society?

For a long-time many commentators believed that capitals were cities that had become too dependent on the state to position themselves independently on the international scene. The reasoning was that capital cities were supposedly ungovernable! Yet, by studying these capital cities more closely we have been able to observe a number of elements. For example, whilst urban transportation is an administrative and institutional marketplace marked by intense political rivalry, we have noted that there has been a significant reduction in the use of cars and a far greater reduction than we have witnessed elsewhere.

How do you explain such a change?

Mayors are keen to compete with other cities, as well as against their own member state, to put a certain number of targets on the agenda each year. But there is still reason to be cautious as this does not necessarily mean that these cities can deal with the said issues

themselves and/or that they do not continue to have significant problems in handling the same issues, as shown by the recent infrastructure crises with the S-Bahn (a rapid railway transit service) in Berlin, the RER (an express underground train service) in Paris or rail transport in Brussels!

Is competition healthy for our democracies?

It is questionable whether or not such detachment from the state is an expression of the independence of cities as our urban societies stand alone in terms of the decisions implemented at a national level or whether this is a reflection of a wider issue, the question of solidarity between rural and urban areas, at a national or even European level.

What influence and power do the residents of these cities exert?

It is essential that the residents exert some form of influence. But we must not forget the influence that non-residents also have on policies. Paris, for example, has a population of two million and an even greater number of

everyday commuters, whether these are tourists or workers. This raises the issue of how best to represent these different interests and who should fund such urban projects and how the benefits and burdens are to be distributed.

It has been observed in the recent national elections in Hungary and Austria that the inhabitants of Budapest and Vienna did not vote like their fellow compatriots. Can you explain this duality?

There are many factors to consider, particularly when we talk about the growth of the national economic structure, social policy reforms, housing, etc. The status and role of these cities also plays an important part in the continuous power struggle and the resulting sparring on issues can be intense. For example, in Vienna there was a fascinating discussion a few years ago at a national level regarding the pedestrianisation of a famous street. This decision was brought up in numerous political speeches and covered by the national press as the people discussed issues relating to historical heritage, national identity and the allocation of budgets to the city of Vienna.

Has such opposition crystallised into other areas?

In very different ways - the position on migrants and the use of the car are both examples of debates that have crystallised significantly in recent years in Vienna, Budapest, Milan and Copenhagen. But other subjects are yet to emerge.

Who prevails in general between the state and the city?

It depends on whether or not the city has the capacity to accumulate sufficient resources and whether they are able to negotiate autonomy with their suburban areas, which are influential and valuable partners.



Charlotte Halpern, is a researcher in political science at SciencesPo, the Urban Design School and Centre for European Studies and Comparative Politics, CNRS (French National Centre for Scientific Research), Paris, France. She has just co-edited a publication entitled 'Low-carbon cities' ('Villes sobres' is the original title in French). New models of resource management published by Presses de Sciences Po (Sciences Po Press).

#Migrants and #Car are two debates for #EuropeanCities
@CharlotteHalpern



PROGRESSIVE CITIES VS CONSERVATIVE STATES



| My social city': photo competition running until 30 June, organised by Solidar and the PES Group in the European Committee of the Regions

WHY THE EU MUST LISTEN MORE TO CITIES AND REGIONS

by Karl-Heinz Lambertz

Europe faces great challenges and the cities and regions are often on the front line. Take the migrant crisis for example: on the ground, it is the cities and regions that have to organise the initial response. In Catania, Athens, the Greek Islands and many other areas and countries, local and regional authorities have handled the reception of thousands of migrants in very difficult conditions.

“

**AS I SEE IT, WE MUST BRING
EUROPE CLOSER TO ITS CITIZENS,
RATHER THAN WEAKENING IT.**

”

I am convinced of the need to envision and rebuild Europe from the ground up. Local and regional stakeholders are among the best placed to assess the added value that the European Union brings to their citizens, and to communicate their wishes. This expertise and proactive force cannot be disregarded when contemplating the future of our Union.

Just as the European level influences the local and regional levels, the local and regional levels can have a genuine influence on the Europe. Cities and regions must be fully involved in the drafting of EU policy and recognised as full-fledged stakeholders in Europe.

We must work together at all levels and establish at which level decisions should be made and implemented, in the best interests of the citizens. This is the principle known technically as ‘subsidiarity’, and is defended, at the European level, by the Committee of the Regions. However, those who wish to hijack this principle in order to dispossess the European Union of its powers in favour of the member states are mistaken. As I see it, we must bring Europe closer to its citizens, rather than weakening it. Crucially, this entails reinforcing the role of the cities and regions, in the interest of the Union.

Diversity in cities: a reflection of identity and the European project

There continues to be great economic and social disparity among Europeans. While physical security is fundamental to the wellbeing of European citizens, as the tragedies that have occurred in several European cities in recent years remind us, security must also be understood in its environmental and social sense.

Over one in five European citizens live households experiencing poverty or social exclusion. Urban spaces, in particular metropolises, are the most economically dynamic areas, but they are also the focus of the greatest inequalities. European cities have been hit harder by the crisis than rural

areas, particularly in terms of unemployment.

However, these figures must not lead us to forget the difficulties facing residents of rural areas, where access to public service often remains lacking. This is why the European Committee of the Regions supports balanced models of cooperation between urban and rural areas. The cohesion policy, alongside the “rural development” pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy, has proven its worth in fostering this balance, and we must therefore reinforce its influence on rural areas.

Threats to the cohesion policy

Budgetary negotiations are never simple, but the member

states must agree on a European budget in the interest of their citizens. European women and men need a budget that protects them from the negative consequences of globalisation and promotes social and territorial cohesion, while also enabling them to face new challenges such as migration, climate change, the digitalisation of the economy and security.

The cohesion policy is a contribution to solidarity, essential to the strengthening of the European Union. With its management shared between Europe, the States, the regions and the cities, it is the policy best placed to provide concrete solutions to these new concerns and challenges. It is a forward-looking policy that works well.

By the end of the 2014-2020 budgetary period, this policy will have helped a total of 7.4 million unemployed people to find work, enabled 8.9 million Europeans to obtain a qualification, provided access to drinking water and the internet for millions of homes, supported 1.1 million small and medium enterprises, financed research projects, improved thousands of kilometres of roads and railways, and accomplished so much more.

It would be incomprehensible and dangerous to abandon a policy that supports European

men and women so effectively. How can we build a Union without ensuring social, economic and territorial cohesion?

This is why the members of the Committee of the Regions call for a cohesion policy that encompasses all regions and continues to represent at least a third of the future European budget.

Cities: a laboratory for change

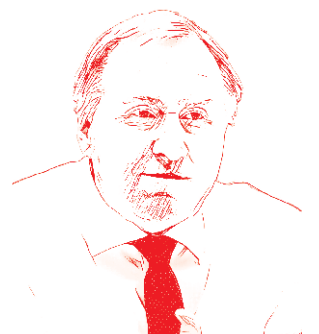
From an economic point of view, cities have the greatest resources in terms of research and innovation and are the most competitive. Almost all national capitals are the most developed cities in their respective countries.

Cities are also more energy efficient and present an opportunity to establish low carbon lifestyles. However, from the social point of view, even if improvements to public transport can reduce congestion, make companies more productive and connect deprived neighbourhoods; even if universities and training centres can assist in the integration of immigrants and refugees, promote innovation and bolster skills lacking in the labour market, cities remain unequal spaces.

And it is this situation that forces local stakeholders to seek new solutions. Some cities, such as Paris have iconic status, but everywhere I go I see the same desire to find new, pragmatic and innovative solutions among the stakeholders, municipalities, cities and regions.

In order to be a force for change, our local authorities must cooperate at a European level, exchange ideas and combine their strengths and talents. This is the aim of the Committee of the Regions.

*This cohesion policy will
have helped 7.4 unemployed
people find work
@Karl-HeinzLambertz*



> AUTHOR

Karl-Heinz Lambertz was elected president of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) in July 2018, having served a two and a half year term as vice president. He is also a member of the Belgian Senate, representing the German speaking community.

PROGRESSIVE CITIES VS CONSERVATIVE STATES



| The increasing pace of daily life and our consumption patterns are pushing some people to begin a movement to slow down

TO BE 'SMART', CITIES NEED TO SLOW DOWN

by Pier Giorgio Oliveti

It is not a matter of being literally "slow" but rather cities need to be "reflective" and attentive to their own model of development. At the heart of the Cittaslow project are community relations, cultural heritage and beauty, the balanced relationship between city and countryside, the defense of natural biodiversity and agri-food. Pier Giorgio Oliveti reminds us of the need to slow down to create new environments.

Twenty years ago, four mayors from four small Italian cities, Greve in Chianti, Bra, Positano and Orvieto, gave life to a network of municipalities that aims to transfer the concept of 'positive slowness' proposed by Carlo Petrini and the concept of 'slow food' to the local government of territories. Today there are over 240 cities in this network, from 30 countries around the world. From the ancient concept of the walled Italian and European villages of medieval municipalities ('Libero Comune'), was born a new and very modern approach to urban self-government, more attentive to the values present in individual territories, to the natural environment, to culture and to social issues.

Cittaslow, let's face it, has somehow anticipated what is now on

everyone's lips: the possibility of small or medium-sized centres and more generally of individual territories, to be "active" and not passive subjects of their development in a world increasingly subjected to global phenomena that are both positive and negative. Respecting and enhancing the dynamic identity of places, of collective memory, of the landscape as a synthesis between geographical space and territory and the affirmation of community economy policies: This is Cittaslow's main mission.

Some consider it an impossible challenge that borders on utopia. But, in reality, over many years of activities, the mayors and the communities have shown exactly the opposite everywhere. Despite a problematic general context featuring constant and rapid change and deregulation, Cittaslow has offered pilot

#EuropeanCities
Cittaslow: There
are projects and
actions to be
shared together
@cittaslow_intl



project examples of active resistance compared to models of 'fake development', of ephemeral development that has no future.

Rather than speaking in conferences, Cittaslow mayors prefer to grow the 'slow' territories step by step, to concretely engage in local quality in a 360° way, to resist the most insidious global storms better than others (statistical data comfort us in this sense).

In summary, a mayor from the Cittaslow network offers its citizens some projects and actions to be shared together. The areas concerned are sustainable agriculture, the local and virtual market, art and functional crafts, education and school and the aim is to encourage the emergence of 'slow' citizens, new types of energy, sustainable and quality transports shared social responsibility, participatory forms of governance, a new form of citizenship and social inclusion, Cittaslow style tourism (i.e. not industrial but based on identity specificities).



> **AUTHOR**
Pier Giorgio Oliveti is Secretary General of Cittaslow International.



| Cittaslow project logo shows a snail to encourage people to slow down and reflect more.

PROGRESSIVE CITIES VS CONSERVATIVE STATES



I The EU Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) provides vital financial resources to address the challenges of reception and integration of refugees, says Anna Lisa Boni

URBAN SOLUTIONS FOR EUROPEAN CHALLENGES

by Anna Lisa Boni

The EU has been rocked in recent years by a state of confusion generated by populism and Euroscepticism, and, more visibly, the influx of thousands of new arrivals. These are challenges that have come together in our cities. Getting it right at the local level is now more important than ever for the EU and that should be reflected in the next seven year EU budget.

Cities are faced with a wide array of challenges on a daily basis and are continually working to improve the lives of all residents. This can mean taking on new competences or strengthening older ones. The integration of migrants and refugees is a good case in point. Cities have no choice but to deal with the situation presented to them. Failing to do so would have disastrous repercussions for social cohesion, public health and the protection of fundamental rights.

Providing affordable housing is a particular challenge, with many cities already suffering from housing shortages and market speculation. Welcoming new arrivals adds more pressure to an already precarious situation, leading to challenges such as overcrowding. This is especially true in cities like Athens, Munich or Vienna, which have all welcomed tens of thousands of newcomers over the last two years (on top of already significant demographic changes).

Ensuring access to education for unaccompanied minors and the children of asylum-seekers and refugees is one of the main integration tasks facing European cities. Most European cities have been involved in the provision of education for migrants and people with a migrant background for many years, but the recent

volume of new arrivals presents new challenges.

Given this situation, it is important that cities are supported in this role and that their experience and knowledge helps guide decision making at other levels of government. Moreover, responsibilities need to be shared evenly across Europe, across all levels of government.

Cities have proven that they are willing and able to act quickly in response to these situations. Yet, cities do not have sufficient access to the main European funds that can be used to help integrate migrants and, too often, funds do not even reach the cities.

The EU Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) provides vital financial resources to address the challenges of reception and integration of refugees. However, it should be made directly available at the local level to enable cities to deal with the reception and integration of migrants and refugees.

Furthermore, in cases of national governments not being able to spend the AMIF, the funds should be reallocated to cities with the most urgent needs to implement reception and integration policies.

The setting of the next EU budget provides an opportunity to make

*#Migration
Urban solutions
can help bridge
European
challenges, says
@annalisaboni2
secretary general*



sure that cities' actions in the field of migration are matched with adequate funding.

EUROCITIES vision for integration is one where all city residents can develop their full potential and live safe and dignified lives. Our members – in over 140 large cities throughout Europe – tell us that access to funding and a lack of say in national and European decision making are major obstacles to achieving this long term goal.

The Urban Agenda for the EU, through its partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees, is a step in the right direction, as it brings cities together with other levels of government to discuss and implement solutions.

Through EU funded projects, such as CITIES GROW, which focuses on the integration of migrants through work, EUROCITIES is able to share city best practice both between cities and to offer

scalable solutions to other levels of government.

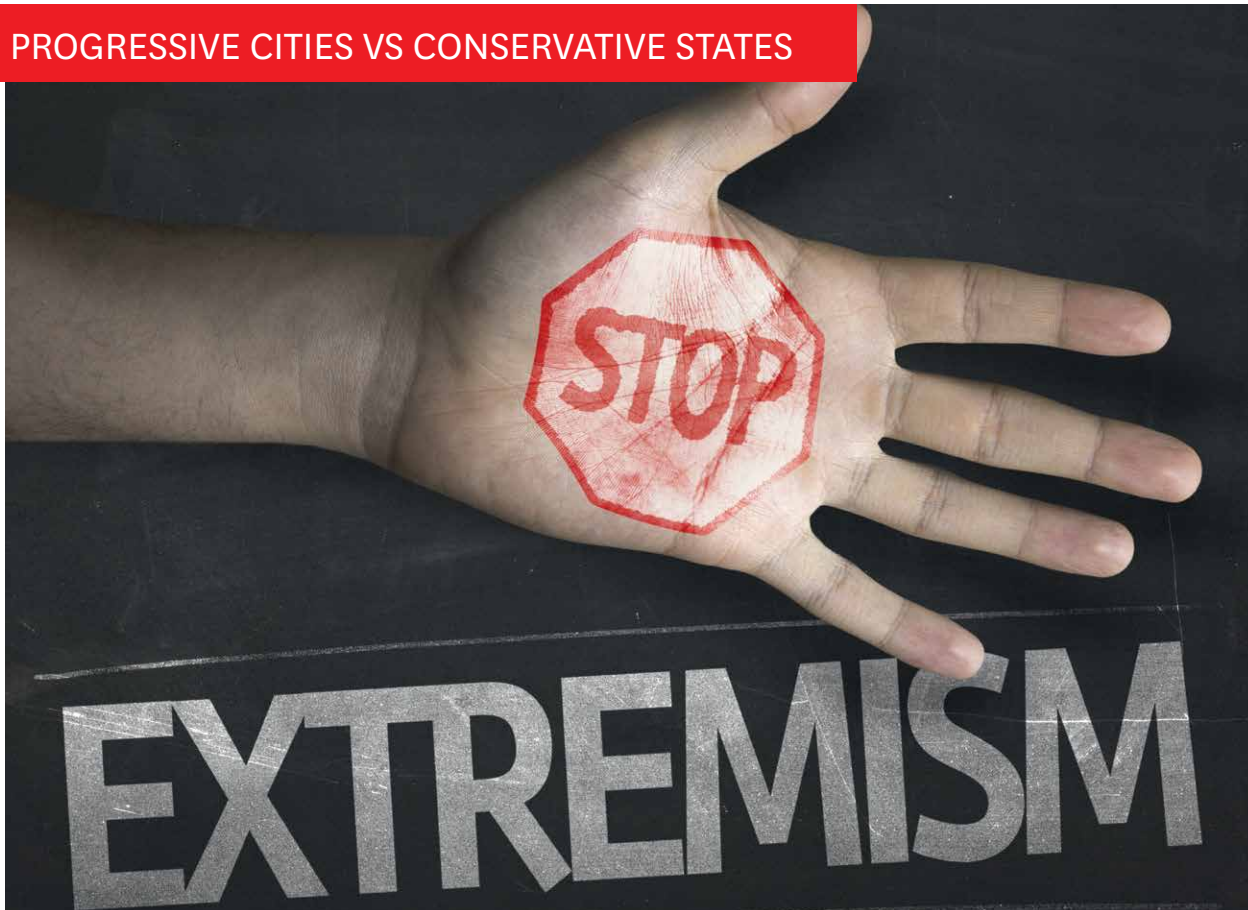
Cities have the experience and knowledge to help the EU achieve its goals, but we need the means to do so. The next EU budget should reflect this by acknowledging the role of cities and ensuring that funding is targeted in the best way to help all residents succeed.



> AUTHOR

Anna Lisa Boni is secretary general of EUROCITIES, the political platform for major European cities. EUROCITIES is a network of local governments of over 140 of Europe's largest cities and more than 40 partner cities which, between them, govern some 130 million citizens across 39 countries.

PROGRESSIVE CITIES VS CONSERVATIVE STATES



I The far right has reared its ugly head in elections in various countries, including France and Poland

HOW TO BOOST THE LEFT AND STOP THE FAR RIGHT

by Marc Tarabella

As we move closer to the 2019 European elections, there is a shadow in the form of far-right conservative parties, which is being cast over all the Member States and which is undermining the various European institutions. The expansion of the far right can be explained, in particular, by a lack of action by traditional democratic parties, by the way in which institutions operate and by the divide between rural and suburban areas and the city centres of large metropolises. MEP Marc Tarabella explores how the Left can boost its standing among the electorate and how to stop the march of the far right.

When we look at the results of the elections in recent years in the various Member States of the European Union, we see an increasingly significant rise in far-right, populist and conservative parties in the countryside and periphery where nearly 59.6% of the European population lives. This is the case, for example, for Poland, with an increased share of the vote for these parties from 1.13% to 25.04% from 2013 to 2018 or, for France, where the extreme right went from securing 17.90% of the vote in 2012 to 27.88% in 2015.

The low level of education but also, and mainly, the lack of wage balance and social security due to a fall in support coming from the welfare state are the reasons for this rise in the far right in Europe. People in rural areas in particular are suffering from globalisation and are, for the most part, deprived of any meaningful training due to difficulties for them to access training and education. This means that they are not in a position to take opportunities to develop

their abilities. Neoliberal forces have thus divided and provoked the beginning of the fall of the European Union by reinforcing the new populist, nationalist and xenophobic forces that demand a return to national borders and self-centred solutions.

Reviewing the EU's priorities

Through these votes against traditional parties and for the far right, European citizens are demanding a better quality of life and more protection in terms of security, employment or social rights. That is why I am firmly convinced that it is Europe itself, as it currently stands, guided by neoliberal oligarchic interests, which represents an obstacle to the future development of citizens.

I therefore believe that we need to rethink the European project through a green and civic 'New Deal' that is based on common values of social justice, individual freedom, sustainability and solidarity, i.e. values that serve the general interest. The combination of these values will guarantee the future of the European Union and curb the rise of far right forces, which offer no alternative to the current system. What is more, combining these values will address the justified rage of those forgotten by globalisation and the losers of globalisation.

For the Party of European Socialists and myself, it is imperative in Europe that every citizen should be able to benefit from decent wages and working conditions

and be offered higher level qualifications or high quality training. Today, only 33.4% and 27.9% of the population aged 30-34 in rural and peripheral areas of the European Union have higher education qualifications. That is why we must make the training of the victims of globalisation a priority in European policy so that they acquire the skills to take up new jobs and to fight against the dark shadow of populism and extremism. We must show that the European Union is the solution and not the problem to what our citizens are experiencing.

The EU's role

In my opinion, it is essential that the European Union has a role to play in redefining the common rules for decent working conditions and health and safety at work because there is still a great deal of effort to be made to bridge the differences between north and south but also east and west. It is therefore time for us progressives to focus on the focus on the working classes and people in rural and peripheral areas of the EU with low levels of education, who are often harmed by the current European Commission's policy, which, through and despite its desire to do the right thing, ends up keeping the citizen at a distance from the European project and creates or reinforces a feeling of distrust towards the Union's institutions.

We must ensure that there are good quality jobs and social protection for all, equitable economic development, prosperity for all and vibrant, fully equal and

#SocialRights
We need to rethink the EU project via a green and civic 'New Deal' based on common values of social justice, individual freedom, sustainability and solidarity

@marctarabella



non-discriminatory democracies. The Party of European Socialists and I are ready to renew the European Union's policy and to implement these various priorities in order to restore citizens' confidence in the Union's institutions and to remove this far right populist shadow.



> AUTHOR

Marc Tarabella has been a Member of the European Parliament since 2009. He is the head of the Belgian delegation of the Socialist and Democrats Party and a member of the Agriculture (AGRI) and Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) Committees. He is Secretary General of PES Local.

#SocialRights
Make training of victims of globalisation an EU policy priority so that they acquire the skills to take up new jobs and to fight against populism and extremism

@marctarabella



PROGRESSIVE CITIES VS CONSERVATIVE STATES



I The Rathaus (town hall) in Bergkamen

BERGKAMEN: A MODEL FOR CITIES RUN BY SOCIAL DEMOCRATS ?

Interview with Roland Schäfer

Roland Schäfer was elected Mayor most recently in 2014. He won the election in the first round against three candidates, with nearly 70% of the vote. After the City Council elections, nearly 60% of members are social democrats. In addition to being the Mayor of Bergkamen, he is a Member of the Executive Bureau of Unites Cities and Local Government and President of PES Local, an organization of Socialist Local Representatives in Europe. In another role, as First Vice President of the Association of German Towns and Municipalities, he regularly meets high ranking representatives at the regional (Land) and the national level, such as Chancellor Angela Merkel, especially during the 'refugee crisis' in 2015 but also on many other occasions. As will come clear from the interview below, many of the policies he has put in place are a real success story for the Socialists and Social Democrats and a source of inspiration for other cities run by progressive parties and mayors.

FACED WITH THE PROBLEM OF AUSTERITY, BERGKAMEN KEPT PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND PUBLIC BATHS OPEN FOR PEOPLE AND MADE THEM FREE OR CHARGED A SMALL ENTRY FEE AND DEALT WITH FINANCIAL PROBLEMS IN OTHER WAYS.

Progressive Post:How do you explain why many big cities in Europe are run by progressive mayors?

Roland Schäfer: About half of the 140 biggest cities in the EU (i.e. with over 250,000 inhabitants) are run by mayors belonging to social democrat, progressive or socialist parties. In Germany, for big cities with over 100,000

inhabitants, 45 out of 76 are run by social democrat mayors. There are always specific regional reasons for this success but one underlying reason is historical. When industrialisation began, industries sprung up in or near big cities and they grew rapidly as workers streamed in to work in the factories. Social Democrat and socialist parties were the ones who tackled major problems they faced such as poverty, insufficient housing and non-existent public services. Workers realised that Left wing parties would really look after their needs and voted for them.

Are those the only reasons?

Our main political aim is the cohesion of society in cities and solidarity. People are aware of that and vote for us. New demands from society, including those relating to climate change, renewable energy and digitalisation are questions socialists

and democrats across Europe are taking seriously. We're responding to the interests of the majority and not just privileged groups of society.

What do you see as the future trend in terms of whether the Left or the Right will run cities in the future?

I see a movement towards populist parties that we need to address. Whilst many cities have social democrat mayors, there may not be a majority of social democrats in city councils. The populist parties can cause serious problems. And a glaring example is the city of Rome, where the Mayor is from the eurosceptic populist party Cinque Stelle [Five Stars]. There are similar concerns in Germany with the rise of the right wing populist party Alternative für Deutschland [Alternative for Germany]. Their core technique is to pretend to have easy solutions but there are never easy solutions for complex problems.

Can you give an example of how populists operate?

They bundle problems together, such as insufficient housing, unemployment, refugees, crime and public security, and pretend that they have easy solutions such as to chuck all the foreigners out of the country and to not let anyone in. There is also an anti-Semitic tendency in some right wing populists.

What could progressives do to tackle the populists?

In cities, we can help the police by creating open spaces with

plenty of light and fewer dark spaces, organizing communal patrols looking for garbage and giving people the feeling that the cities care about their security and cleanliness. Populists talk a lot about crimes perpetrated by refugees but the percentage of refugees and of locals committing crime is about the same in my city. I would also urge cities to organise direct contact between refugees and citizens.

*#EuropeanCities
Recommendation to
mayors in EU cities:
Listen to citizens
in person or via
social media and
respond to them
@RoScha15*



How did you manage the wave of refugee in 2015/2016 in your city of Bergkamen?

There was fear among people in Bergkamen. But I had over 170 volunteers who called city hall to offer to translate for the refugees, to accompany them and to distribute clothes, especially for children. A hundred of those volunteers are still active today. They set up their own association. Churches provided big rooms where meals were distributed. A refugee café was set up where refugees were given German lessons and information on practical everyday things like how to use the buses or bicycles in the city. Most of this was done with volunteers with some

financial support from the city. The city also cooperates with five Sunni mosques.

How did you integrate these people?

We have an 'Integration Committee' made up of members of the City Council and members directly elected by the foreign population of Bergkamen. The deputy chair is always a foreigner. In Bergkamen's case the foreigners are mainly Turks. The members of the committee can present opinions on everyday topics to do with the city. So we're giving foreigners a voice in how the city is run. At the end of Ramadan, when Muslims break their fast, we'll organise an open air public event with music. And there are organisations of foreigners invited to schools for their end of term festivities along with parents and children. So people can eat not just German Bratwurst but also Turkish and Arabic food. At the school that my children attend, about half of the class is of Turkish origin. Parents bring along their national food and music. This is a great way to help with integration between Turks and native Germans.

What is your advice for other cities across the EU in terms of integration policies?

Be present in public and on social media. Be as close as you can to the people and listen to them. Find ways to allow them to talk with you. Every week, I have a two hour open door session in my office for people so that they can come and tell me about their problems. I go to a

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BERGKAMEN ORGANISES
ELECTRICITY, GAS AND FRESH WATER
SERVICES WITH TWO OTHER CITIES
AND OFFERS A CHEAPER AND
BETTER SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC
THAN PRIVATE COMPANIES
DID IN THE PAST.
”

public marketplace from time to time to hear what people have to say. I also get a lot of feedback from people via a city Facebook page or my personal Facebook page or Twitter feed. My advice to city mayors: Don't be afraid to say openly and transparently if things cannot be changed. For example, people may complain that a private building is ugly but I can't do anything about that unless it poses a public danger.

What was the secret of the success of social democrats in Bergkamen?

It is partly to do with the social structure of the city. Its origins were in coalmining (this has ended now) and there is a big chemical plant owned by Bayer with some 2,000 workers. So there is a tradition of social democrat citizens that has lasted until today. We're building on that. For example, in the face of the big financial problems that

swept across Europe, we didn't close everything, such as public libraries and public baths, but kept them open for people and made them free or charged a small entry fee. We coped with the financial problems in other ways. And people have accepted that we're trying to make the city nice and inhabitable. Another thing we have done is to make previously privatised services public by creating municipal enterprises to do this work. So the city has teamed up with two neighbouring cities to organise electricity, gas and fresh water services and we now offer a cheaper and better service to the public than the private companies.

And what should national social democrat parties do to push ahead with their progressive, left wing agendas?

The EU won't exist without strong cities as a basis. Around 70% of EU legislation has to be implemented at communal level. We have to build the EU from the bottom up. The communal level can tell people about the benefits of the EU.



> AUTHOR
Roland Schäfer has been the Mayor of the city of Bergkamen, a medium-size city of about 50,000 inhabitants in North Rhine Westphalia, in western Germany since 1998. Before that, he was Chief Executive of the City from 1989 to 1998. "He's President of PES Local"

CITY: THESSALONIKI



| Participants at the 3rd Colors day in Thessaloniki, Greece. A recreation of the famous Holi festival celebrated in India

OVERCOMING CONSERVATIVE ATTITUDES: THESSALONIKI'S PROGRESSIVE IDEAS

by Leonidas Makris

The city of Thessaloniki has traditionally been a stronghold of a deeply conservative political stance. The election of Yiannis Boutaris as Mayor of the city back in 2011 came as a surprise for a place which was used to being governed by pious, traditional and nationalist figures. Before him, the alliance of political and religious interests reached unprecedented levels, which provoked a popular reaction supporting his candidacy. An unconventional winemaker, a former alcoholic, a fervent advocate of wild life protection and a successful businessman, he was quick to adopt radical (for the city and its past) methods in order to govern and promote it. The fact that his first electoral term coincided with the culmination of the worst economic crisis ever to hit the country compelled him to come up with alternative ways to support his fellow citizens.



I Thessaloniki, Greece - February 25, 2016: Refugees living in tents in the center relocation Diavata waiting to continue their journey across the border between Greece and FYROM and from there to Europe

While lacking in funds to market the city, the Mayor of Thessaloniki had a clear vision regarding its role in the area. He initiated a plan to transform it into a major port and commercial centre serving its inland, an inland that extends far beyond the existing national

borders. The core of this plan was to envision an open city that would be tolerant to difference, as it used to be in the past, be it in Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine or Ottoman times. He did not shy away from challenging Greek national myths and prejudice, promoting the city as an intriguing tourist destination by uncovering its multicultural past. He dared to promote it as the birth place of Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, an eternal enemy of Greece. He was quick to unveil the vibrant Jewish presence, dominating the life of a city which was once called the 'Jerusalem of the Balkans' until its Sephardic community was almost brutally obliterated by the Nazis. He forged majorities

with Greece's Balkan neighbours by advancing what he called 'diplomacy of the cities'. And he did all this contrary to the Greek stereotypes, which suggest a people inimical to most neighbouring countries.

A melting pot with a multi-ethnic history

To the surprise of most of his conservative critics the bid to present Thessaloniki as a melting pot with a multi-ethnic history managed to yield impressive results. For example, the number overnight stays of visitors in Thessaloniki increased from about one million in 2011 to almost four million by the end of 2018! And the majority

of them now come from countries or groups targeted by the municipal strategy. With the cooperation of the local Jewish Community, the city managed to attract funds in order to erect a museum dedicated to the continuous Jewish presence in Thessaloniki. It will be an important cultural and educational landmark commemorating the unique Jewish contribution to the city, highlighting all of its aspects, including the brutal attempt to annihilate it.

Gay Pride success story

Furthermore, the Mayor attempted to open up the city not only to outsiders but to its own residents. In recent

years a very successful Gay Pride has been organised every year. Promoting tolerance, the parade attracted many locals and visitors as well as international attention and not only from southeast Europe. It also convinced the organisers of the EuroPride that Thessaloniki was the best equipped city to host this pan-European event in 2020. Under Yiannis Boutaris' administration the city has adopted not only a tolerant but a friendly attitude towards immigrants and refugees, aiming to integrate them in the best possible way. The Mayor's striking emphasis on social policy aiming to protect the city's most vulnerable citizens is yet another indication of a successfully implemented progressive political agenda. This is vindicated by the fact that, in 2014, the people of Thessaloniki

rewarded the current mayor with a landslide victory and a second electoral term. Boutaris' eagerness to differentiate himself from his conservative predecessors and his readiness to innovate in many policies and sectors could potentially become a paradigm for the country as a whole.

Supranational and infranational politics are key

Yet, it seems the case that country's politics are less amenable to progressive initiatives than politics at a local level. It suffices here to say that it is the nature of nation states to function around divisive political agendas that prioritise ethnic competition, if not rivalry. In an inevitably and increasingly globalised world with issues and problems that

affect everyone, the emphasis should shift towards supra-national as well as infra-national politics. While it seems evident that international cooperation is a sine qua non in order to face global challenges, at the same time big cities are natural loci of continuous coexistence and vivid interaction of all sorts of people. Thus, it is not a coincidence that they are still receptive to progressive political agendas. They naturally help them to function better. And as the example of the Mayor of Thessaloniki demonstrates, a politician who dares to challenge the establishment, even against the odds, has a good chance of making progress. Providing politicians have a concrete plan and a clear vision of progressive politics, they can still succeed: locally as well as globally.



> **AUTHOR**
Leonidas Makris is Advisor to the Mayor of Thessaloniki, Yiannis Boutaris in Greece.

CITY: VIENNA



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Vienna is a leading city in the area of social housing construction. 'New Social Housing' will be the theme of the International Building Exhibition in the city in 2022

SOCIAL HOUSING: THE VIENNA MODEL

by Michael Ludwig

Numerous international delegations have travelled to see Vienna in the past couple of years to get to know its subsidised housing programme. Almost as often, the city has been invited to present the 'Vienna Model' abroad. Most of the topics broached focus on the overriding question: 'How is Vienna doing it?'

There are many harmonised solutions that together make up the 'Vienna Model' for a social housing programme. The programme is also subject to continuous development and adaptation to changing structural societal conditions. This is because a supportive housing programme, as is in place in

Vienna, pushes in the direction of an integrated city or rather its neighbourhood development, ensures efficiency, sustainability and intensifies social but also technological innovations.

Beyond that, continuity also plays an essential role. Public housing can look back at a history of nearly a hundred years.

Subsidised housing policies are key ways to achieve a high standard of living and social harmony. Without them, cities risk experiencing deepening social inequality

#FBPE



Vienna's total of 220,000 subsidised council flats dates back to the 'Red Vienna' when the former Socialist Government created the first housing programmes.

Nowadays, the council flats are spread across the entire city. Sixty percent of the Viennese population now lives in either a subsidised or council flat. In addition to the communal flats, Vienna's inventory includes another 200,000 housing units from charitable housing associations, which are permanently tied to social housing.

Active housing policies are inclusive

Proactive housing policies are primarily a political commitment. The Viennese housing programme aims to increase the segment of affordable flats continuously. In the past years, approximately €300 million was used to create around 7,000 new housing units.

Social housing in Vienna is aimed at the middle class to provide the best possible social mix. This approach has enabled Vienna to avoid socially fragile neighbourhoods.

Vienna has also adapted its housing programme to the changing economic conditions, which started with the last global financial crisis in 2008. The SMART housing programme ensures that at least a third of all promoted new housing projects created are affordable flats with a maximum of €60/m² equity contribution and €7.50/m² gross

rent.

The city buys land at an early stage as space for affordable housing is needed. Currently, the city owns more than 200 hectares [approx. 494,00 acres] of land reserves.

Financing sustainable grants

The City of Vienna uses approximately €650 million each year for housing subsidies, which are invested in new housing, redevelopment and housing allowances.

A substantial part of these funds is paid out as loans to ensure their sustainable use, especially in the promotion of new housing. Furthermore, the returns secure the future financing of housing developments. Additionally, as a federal state, the City of Vienna receives annual federal funding of approximately €150 million.

New social living arrangements debate

Tools such as housing policies are of key importance for achieving a high standard of life and social harmony. If they are missing, this puts cities at risk of experiencing deepening social inequality and situations of crisis.

Even though nearly a century of social housing in Vienna has led to thriving structures, the City still faces numerous challenges. Population growth, increasing prices for land and construction, as well as stagnant or declining

real incomes lead to increasingly challenging framework conditions. Vienna's answer to this is a range of measures that make construction more affordable and quicker but also increase the construction rate in the medium term.

In the framework of the International Building Exhibition – IBA_Wien – experts, in conjunction with the public, will develop answers to the questions concerning Neues Soziales Wohnen [New social living arrangements]. It will cover the area of new construction as well as redevelopment. The International Building Exhibition – the presentation years are 2020 and 2022 – not only serves to increase Vienna's leading international role further but shall also help to establish the City as the European centre of excellence for social housing.

Vienna's total of 220,000 subsidised council flats dates back to 'Red Vienna' when the former Socialist Government created the first housing programmes

#FBPE



> **AUTHOR**

Michael Ludwig has been the Executive City Councillor for Housing, Residential Construction and Urban Renewal since 2007 and designated Mayor of Vienna since May 2018. He was born in 1961, studied political science and history and is from the (SPÖ) [Social Democratic Party of Austria].



CITY: BIRMINGHAM



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| An aerial view of Birmingham city centre

DEVELOPING MIXED OPEN CITIES OF THE FUTURE

by Jon Bloomfield

Race and migration are the most volatile issues in European politics today. Social Democracy is paying a heavy price for its neo-liberal mistakes. Cities are showing the way towards an intercultural future as they offer a 'Third Way' which promotes mixed, open cities. This avoids the twin dangers of assimilationism which tells newcomers 'you must become like us' and multi-culturalism which slips towards separate development, where communities lead parallel lives in what Amartya Sen has called 'plural mono-culturalism'.

Race and migration are the most volatile and dangerous issues in European politics today. Across Europe, they are hurting established parties severely, with the social democratic Left hardest hit of all. The fast pace of change in a rapidly globalising world has

disrupted economies, communities and traditional institutions. Together, they have undermined long-established political parties and ideologies. Many have struggled to make sense of what has been happening.

Yet for several decades migrants

have been making a crucial contribution to the life of many European cities. The reality is that successive waves of migration have changed the character of major European cities for ever. Living with difference is the great challenge for European politics in the 21st century.

Crucial role played by migrants in Birmingham

My forthcoming book on Birmingham, entitled *Our City: Migrants and the Making of Modern Birmingham*, shows

how crucial they have been to the city's economic survival and daily functioning – from its hospitals to its taxis; the social and cultural impact they have made; and how the tensions that have arisen have gradually eased. In the process Birmingham has been transformed.

My fifty interviewees defy the doomsday scenarios painted by Enoch Powell fifty years ago and the pessimism of the right-wing press and authors like David Goodhart. The migrant presence has reshaped Birmingham and the country as a whole. From its football teams to its food culture; from its workplaces to its TV screens; to its popular music, Britain and above all its cities has adapted and changed. They show that migrants have a sense of place, that they put down roots, see Birmingham as their home and have an affection and affinity with the city and the country. Their integration has been a positive story that is all too rarely told.

of Christian worship to school pupils, who are either increasingly agnostic or where many come from different religious backgrounds. The answer has been the emergence of general assemblies in schools which highlight human values, morals and ethics while detaching this from any specific religious faith. This is a genuine innovation responding to the multi-ethnic reality of Birmingham and other conurbations. This should be consolidated, extended and given proper legal recognition.

Slowly and unevenly, cities are showing the way towards an inter-cultural future. For too long, too many of those broadly supportive of immigration have overlooked issues of class and focused just on cultural diversity. They ignored the competitive economic and social pressures that large-scale migration brings to those at the lower end of the labour market. And Social Democracy is paying a heavy price for its

Italians quickly followed as did PASOK (Greece) and the eastern European Left.

Cities: the test beds of integration

An intercultural city can only thrive if it has a sound economic basis and offers opportunities for all those from low income backgrounds irrespective of ethnic background. Cities are the test beds of integration. They are where migrants and refugees congregate and where the capacity for an interactive process of integration is tested. To adapt a phrase, inter-culturalism proposes a 'Third Way' between assimilationism and the cul-de-sacs of conservative, plural mono-culturalism.

A new politics is emerging, especially among the younger generations, where genuinely mixed, open cities can develop. It is the route for all municipalities to follow if they are to create genuinely intercultural cities, which recognise that people come from different backgrounds but does not try to 'freeze' them there or restrict them into ghetto neighbourhoods but rather seeks to develop interculturally and promote actively places and spaces for mixing and integration. That spirit of an open city drawing on the talents and skills of all its citizens is well captured by the Berlin slogan, 'No one asks where you come from, but each asks, where do you want to go?' In the coming decades this is the path that Europe's cities consciously need to follow.

#EuropeanCities

Europe's cities need to follow the path towards genuinely mixed, open cities

@jonbloomfield2



Inter-cultural solution for school challenge

To give one specific example, the education authority and schools have addressed the conundrum arising from the statutory obligation to provide a daily act

naive belief that the neo-liberal model of globalisation of the late 1990s/2000s guaranteed continued prosperity and removed the contradictions within capitalism. Blair, Mandelson and Brown (UK) were the key architects of this thinking; Gerhard Schroder (Germany) and the

*#EuropeanCities
Cities: test beds of integration that need to develop interculturally and actively promote places and spaces for mixing and integration*

@jonbloomfield2



> AUTHOR

For fifteen years **Jon Bloomfield** headed the European unit at Birmingham city council and then the West Midlands region. He now works part-time as senior advisor to the EU's largest climate change programme. He writes on a range of European topics including cities, sustainability and migration for Birmingham University.

CITY: BRUSSELS



#Cities
#SocialDemocracy
Creating excellence
in popular
neighbourhoods
@ PhilippeClose



In Brussels and the surrounding area, residents come from 184 nationalities, of which 35% are non-Belgian (of which 85% are European)

FIT OUT THE LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOODS!

Interview by Alain Bloëdt editor-in-chief of the Progressive Post with Philippe Close

The Progressive Post:
How do you explain the increase in public trust in local politics vis a vis national politics?

Philippe Close: The question is difficult to answer in a country like Belgium where the vote is compulsory and thus forces elected officials to take an interest in all sectors of the population. I am also a big advocate of compulsory voting for this reason.

Why?

It's a real progressive step forward to make voting compulsory. Moreover, it is not a coincidence that in Belgium, it is the right wing parties that oppose this system and the left-wing parties that defend the system.

Where does the mistrust among citizens come from?

The mistrust comes from an increasingly individualised

society that "uberises" the way we help more and more. We do not talk a lot about the mechanisms born in the 20th century which include health care, social security, etc ... Citizens want direct, practical results and the quicker the better. They want local authorities which respond quickly. If you go to see your member of parliament, this will be slower and more complex! Yet supra-local data (covering multiple local regions) is important and one does not exist without the other. We could

not have a city government for example. It is not the model of the Left that I defend which generates megacities such as Monaco, Singapore, Hong Kong, etc.

But it works for the Left at the local level?

Yes, but it would be a mistake for the Left to believe that we will manage everything locally and leave macro issues to others.

How do you think we can stop this urbanisation?

The dream of any decision-maker is inclusive gender diversity. That's what happened in Brussels, putting our suburbs in the city. Even if there are accidents, there are no neighbourhoods where there is only one facility or feature.

How does the Left intend to solve this inclusive diversity challenge?

We do not work on big, large scale projects but we work towards fitting out individual neighbourhoods. A social democratic mayor would think structurally and therefore focus on the long term. Even if it is a little overly simplistic to suggest this, the trend does speak for itself in some ways. This in itself is very Keynesian. The more we

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THE MORE WE FIT OUT OUR
NEIGHBOURHOODS, THE MORE
WE WILL SUCCEED IN HAVING
A MIDDLE-CLASS 'CONTRIBUTOR'
RESIDE THERE, WHICH WILL MAKE
IT POSSIBLE TO PAY FOR
SOCIAL SERVICES.

”

#Cities
#SocialDemocracy
Retain the working
classes and
attract a young
and middle-class
contributor base
@ PhilippeClose



fit out our neighbourhoods, the more we will succeed in having a middle-class 'contributor' reside there, which will make it possible to pay for social services.

And effectively, how is this articulated?

The best example in Brussels is our public hospitals. Our university hospitals are located in impoverished neighbourhoods but care for the poor as well as the rich. We have succeeded in creating excellence within working class neighbourhoods. This is undoubtedly one of the strengths of social democracy.

Does this model hold up well in the long term?

In 1996, we were ready to close these hospitals. Twenty years later, they have been rebuilt, they employ 9,000 people and they are among the best performing hospitals in Europe. They have a future despite a seemingly complex organisational system.

What is the challenge then?

We must find a way to stop the increasing population density within the city centres. The debate that social democracy must keep bringing up is: what level of quality are we going to provide? What new facilities are needed (cultural centres, sports facilities, schools, local shops, public transport, green spaces) next to your homes so that you want to choose to live in the city?

Is this an operation designed to seduce the young?

We have an opportunity in Brussels. We have a demographic boom and a rejuvenation of the city, signs of a city that is doing well. In stable cities, which do not want this to

take place, these are the cities that are ageing.

Brussels is also an extremely cosmopolitan city. Is this a strength or a weakness?

Indeed, Brussels and the surrounding area residents come from 184 nationalities, of which 35% are non-Belgian (of which 85% are European). This is an opportunity and an incredible path of development, which requires, in my opinion, giving them the right to vote in regional elections. Unfortunately, this is not a widely held view at the moment although the merging of the 19 municipalities within the region has occasionally been discussed. And this would, de facto, offer the vote to foreigners since they have been given the

right to vote in local elections and in the European elections!

What is your key message to citizens as the mayor?

We need to retain the working classes thanks to increasing social mobility but also attract a young and middle-class contributor base with this message: you have a future in our cities both in terms of sustainable development because you will save money spent on transport, lose less time and you will not want to live anywhere else because there is a special atmosphere in the city.

You also need job prospects to attracting young people. How will you respond to this challenge?

You cannot become a city which provides only services. There is a need for an administrative city and an industrial city. We are no longer going to build car factories as we once did. Today our industry is the research industry, the digital industry, the tourism industry, etc. It is a smart city that will produce the professions of tomorrow.

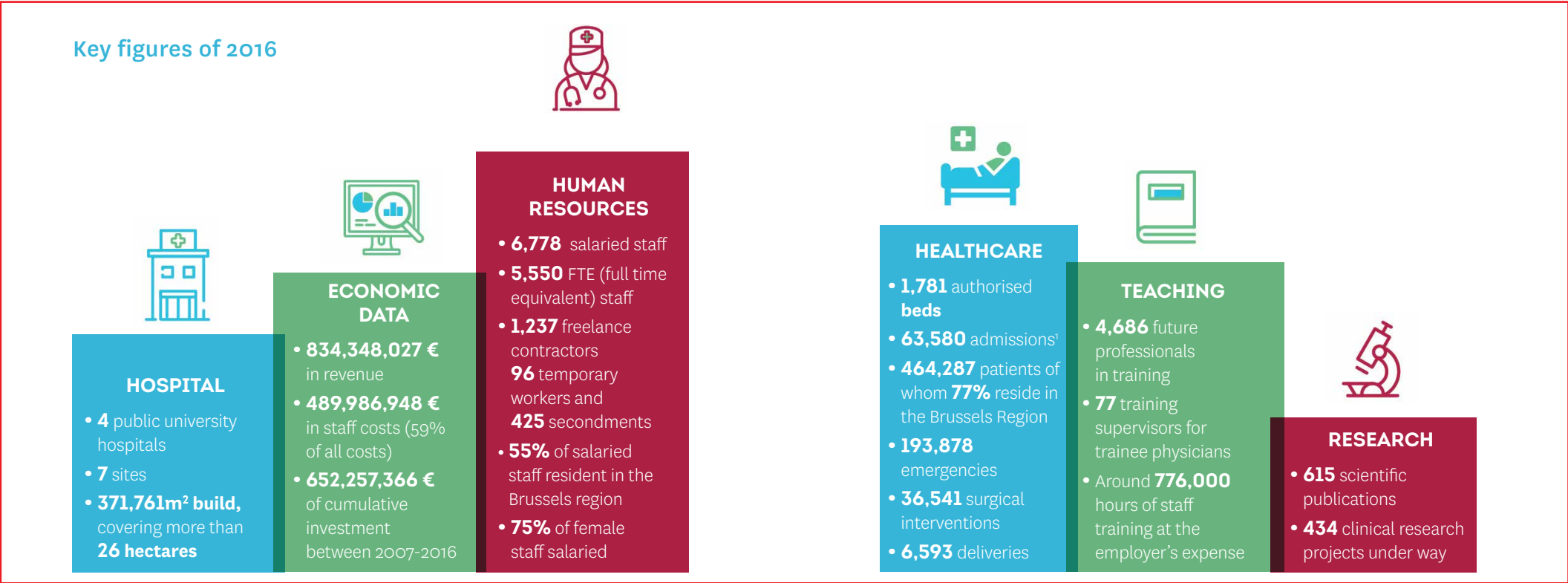
How do you finance the resources required and respond to the criticism traditionally associated with left-wing town halls when it comes to public spending?

The concern here is mainly about European standards. I am in favour of monetary stability and against inflationary policies, but the European rules that have

been imposed on us push us to invest and place constraints on us to repay those investments during the same financial year!

Is it just a budget issue then?

It should be understood that 47% of public investments are currently made in Belgium by local authorities. Everything here is privatised. There is no longer a bridge, a road, a school that is built by public (municipal) employees but the process is as slow as ever! From the moment the mayor decides to the time when the project is completed can take up to seven years!



SOURCE
Key figures of 2016
of CHU BRUSSELS 2016
(BECI- Brussels enterprises
commerce and industry / CHU)



Philippe Close has been the Mayor of Brussels since 2018.

1 Recorded admissions include all days charged as admissions as defined

CITY: PARIS



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| The City of Paris is planning an unprecedented investment of more than 150 million euros by 2020 to become the world's cycling capital

BUILDING THE DEMOCRACY OF TOMORROW IN OUR CITIES

by Pauline Veron

While the percentage of the global population living in urban areas continues to rise and now exceeds 50%, the construction of sustainable, democratic cities represents one of the major challenges of the 21st century. As places featuring lots of intermixing, innovation, cultural creation and dissemination as well as strong economic driving forces, cities simultaneously face the full force of the social and environmental crises of our time. Deputy Mayor of Paris Pauline Véron tells us about her experience of the French capital's participatory budget.

All over the world, elected officials and citizens are attempting to face these challenges by devising new democratic practices and new ways of using public space. In this spirit and firm in the belief that citizen participation in public policy contributes to making our cities fairer and more sustainable, we hoped to make Paris the social laboratory of tomorrow, using it to test several innovative forms of public participation. We believe that such measures are currently vital for at least two reasons. Firstly, they offer a response to the crisis of confidence afflicting representative democracies, as demonstrated by a 40% abstention rate in the latest municipal election in Paris, by restoring dialogue between politicians and the people. Secondly, they can be used as tools for promoting integration and social justice, aimed at disadvantaged populations who have been marginalised by the traditional machinations of government.

#EuropeanCities Participative democracy: 5% of Paris's investment budget of 100 million euro per year is being decided by citizens. @paulineveron



A model for the cities of tomorrow

The democratic impact of these measures is potentially huge, and we believe that it is a model that could be developed in the cities of tomorrow, in order that it is understood by all citizens and achieves its full potential. Four major transformations made possible by citizen participation are worth highlighting. Firstly, it represents an excellent tool for modernising and improving public policy. Underpinned by the expertise and desires of the people, land use planning genuinely fulfils its public purpose and adapts to the uses and concerns of those living in the city day in, day out. For example, the participatory budget has enabled

us to go further in the creation of green spaces and pedestrianisation, and to establish a very ambitious cycling plan. It has also helped us to improve services for the homeless, such as secure lockers, wash kits and the renovation of numerous shelters. These measures also generate social connections and genuine reflection on community life, through discussions, forums and project co-construction workshops, providing many spaces for debate and collective con-

struction of political and social projects for our city. They also represent a powerful learning tool. First and foremost, they promote well-informed, active citizenship from an early age as children are able to vote on the participatory budget and even have their own budget for their schools. What is more, placing citizens in the shoes of the decision-makers enables us to educate them on how the city functions on the budgetary, administrative and technical level. Finally, these tools are truly transformative as they endeavour to seek out populations traditionally marginalised by political life, in order to genuinely redistribute resources, public services and power. Our measures allocate a third of the participatory budget to projects in working

class neighbourhoods, making them a true force for social and spatial justice. The implementation of these tools requires a genuine political desire to open up and share decision-making authority, a trust in the collective intelligence of the people as well as an adaptation and transformation of internal working methods. These efforts may be considerable but pay dividends through the immense potential unlocked by democratising the very fabric of the city, in terms of quality of life, community, social justice and citizen empowerment. This great potential should be at the heart of the progressive urban policy of tomorrow.

The participatory budget

We have therefore developed several physical and digital spaces which enable Parisians to learn about development projects, give their opinion, debate, submit ideas, develop their collective intelligence and vote for certain proposals. We believe that offering many means of participation ensures genuine involvement by the



Pauline Veron is assistant to the Mayor of Paris and an elected representative for the 9th arrondissement.

CITY: KARLSRUHE



| Festival of European Culture 2016: A welcome dinner in the theatre bringing together people from Karlsruhe and refugees

KARLSRUHE’S FESTIVAL: ‘UPHEAVAL - AWAKENING. EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL’

by Suzanne Asche

Art and culture can create an atmosphere of cosmopolitanism and can encourage people to resist racism and xenophobia. Suzanne Asche presents us with the most important structures and events through which art and culture and the department of cultural affairs of the city of Karlsruhe sought to defend democracy and bring together many different people in 2016: the Karlsruhe festival of European culture.

In the city of Karlsruhe we try to bring people from different social and ethnic groups together by organising cultural festivals on specific political topics.

For example, for a long time we have, every two years, held the Festival of European

Culture as a collaboration of the cultural department of the city of Karlsruhe and the State Theater Karlsruhe. We look for sociopolitical themes and questions in Europe. In 2014 the festival was called ‘2014 – 1914: Peace + War’ and in 2016 it was called ‘Migration: Happiness, Suffering, Foreignness’.

Lots of major anniversaries this year

This year the festival is called ‘Upheaval - Awakening. Equal rights for all’. We chose this topic because of the various anniversaries of democratic revolutions or developments that are being

commemorated this year: In Germany, the 1918 revolution led to the Weimar Republic, in which women were granted full political equality for the first time. On 10 December 1948, the United Nations proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. At the same time, in Germany the Parliamentary

Our aims are clear:

- To strengthen the cultural and social identity of the city and citizens.
- To discuss important sociopolitical topics via the arts and culture.
- To develop ideas for the development of the city (and of the European ideal) via culture.
- To bring together different groups and cultural scenes in the city.
- To strengthen the role of the arts and culture for cultural and social development and integration.

Council began drafting the German Constitution, called the Grundgesetz [Basic Law]. In 1968, there was Europe-wide unrest in which a young generation defined new values, demanded more social justice and fought against the discrimination and exclusion of certain groups of people. 1968 also marked the beginning of the new women’s movement. ‘Equal rights for all’ is also based on the self-image of the City of Karlsruhe as a capital of human rights and fundamental rights. For Karlsruhe hosts the Federal Constitutional Court and the Federal Supreme Court of Germany. These anniversaries and facts are an occasion to reflect on the fight for equal rights for all through art and culture and to say ‘no’ to the rise of populism, racism and nationalism in Europe.

Syrian Drama Group that is living and working in Europe and reflects not only Syrian but also European issues. Furthermore, the theatre asked a Theatre Group from Teheran performing a play about the situation of women in Iran.

The Cultural Department invited all the cultural institutions and many groups and artists in the city to think about their contributions to the festival. This year we are working with 34 partners from all over the city, many of whom invited European artists. They are putting on more than 80 events, including exhibitions, lectures, cinema, theatre, discussions, workshops, conferences, concerts, parades and so on.

All of them have a unique view on the possibilities as to how to defend democracy, human

rights and the effects of revolutions, upheavals and changes in the last two centuries in the history of Europe, Germany and Karlsruhe.

#Culture
#EuropeanCities
To bring together different social and ethic groups
@SuzanneAsche



A wide range of partners

The theatre was looking for own productions in opera, drama, dance and other areas and for people to invite as external guests. It opted for a

Two top tips for other cities:

- Use arts and culture to come up with ideas for the development of the city
- Build up a very strong network of cultural institutions (Karlsruhe did this thanks to its festival)



> **AUTHOR**
Suzanne Asche is Head of the City of Karlsruhe's Department of Cultural Affairs

CITY: MALMÖ



| 'Forward Malmö' is a project bringing forward citizens and citizens' stories as a basis for more in-depth discussion as to how we can change society

'COLLABORATIVE FUTURE MAKING' EXPLAINED

by Per-Anders Hillgren

A key challenge today is that we have lost both our individual and collective capacity for imagination. The ability to imagine radically different versions of what could constitute a future sustainable city and to involve and engage citizens on equal terms will be crucial to cope with increasingly complex societal challenges.

I have had the privilege to spend many years as a researcher exploring how to democratise social innovation in the city of Malmö in the south of Sweden. The city has around 330,000 inhabitants representing 178 different nationalities. On the one hand, things seem to be going in the right direction in Malmö: the number of jobs and people with higher education and employment is increasing and reported levels of crime are going down. On the other hand some of the more complex problems seems to be extremely hard to tackle, especially different forms of inequality. I would argue that this, to a large extent, is part of a broader societal challenge: the increasing difficulty to engage in what my colleagues and I refer to as 'Collaborative Future-Making'. This is a process that challenges institutional deadlocks and dominant worldviews at the same time as it explores and creates visions of multiple, inclusive and sustainable futures.

#Malmö
#EuropeanCities
Collaborative Future-Making : New visions of multiple futures
@Per-andershillgren



Three components of 'future making'

'Future-making' is very hard work. There are several reasons for that, such as the scale, complexity and wickedness of societal challenges with conflicting values, path-dependency and hegemonies that are taken for granted and difficult to challenge. I will bring forward three essential components in 'future-making'. One is the importance of nurturing people's capacity for imagination, that is, to be able to extend the repertoire of perspectives of what can constitute socially, culturally, ecologically and economically sustainable ways of living and thriving together. The other is to stubbornly push for more citizen inclusion when we explore opportunities and decide about the future city. The third is to cultivate hope.

Citizen participation

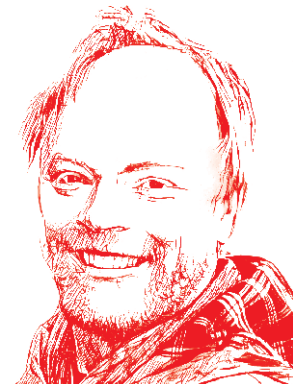
But, how do we make the future city together? Citizen participation is often said to be key to a thriving and innovative city. However the term "participation" often implies that frames and basic conditions already are set and that you are welcome to "participate" within these frames.

Many also express frustration at what seems to be a tension between aiming for inclusion versus being efficient in innovation projects. They truly believe in inclusive societies, but still choose to limit their engagements due to an increased pressure for efficiency. How can we put inclusion and mutual conditions for collaboration at the top of the agenda?

Forward Malmö's citizens' stories

In the city of Malmö some actors have already taken the first steps in this direction. Save the Children initiated a process of self-reflection in which they started to question their own way of operating in local neighborhoods and realised that sometimes their internal logic and organisational structure hinder collaboration on mutual conditions. Today they are in partnership with representatives from civil society, the city of Malmö and the academy driving a process called 'Forward Malmö' to bring forward citizens and citizens' stories as a basis for more in-depth discussion as to how we can change society. Here, civil servants and citizens will be able to go beyond their everyday roles and identities while constantly aiming for, not one, but multiple visions

of a sustainable Malmö. This broad repertoire and inclusive network will hopefully both strengthen collective resilience and be a small but important engine of hope.



> **AUTHOR**
Per-Anders Hillgren is an associate professor in design and social innovation at the School of Art and Communication and coordinates the research network Collaborative Future Making at Malmö University. He is passionate about exploring opportunities for how to democratise innovation.

CITY: HAMBURG



© Claudia Hoehe

I The Elbphilharmonie has a musical education programme offering interactive concerts and musical activities, such as this 'family day' event, for different groups of people

HAMBURG: PROMOTING INTEGRATION VIA INTERCULTURAL PROJECTS

Interview with Laura-Helen Rüge

The Ministry of Culture's aim is to support arts in the city of Hamburg. Intercultural projects for migrants and native Germans can be in different disciplines (e.g. theatre, music, fine arts, films, festivals). In 2018, Hamburg had a large fund for projects for refugees. The Ministry of Culture's general aim is to support diversity and the projects of intercultural teams, which includes giving those who live in Hamburg, but are originally from other countries, a voice and helping them to be successful in Hamburg.

#CulturalEurope
Hamburg has a fund for cultural projects to help empower refugees so that they can successfully integrate and find their way in the city

@hh_bkm



Progressive Post: Do you have examples of successful projects where funding from the City of Hamburg has helped migrants integrate in the city of Hamburg and in Germany and helped migrants integrate with Germans?

Laura-Helen Rüge: In 2015, many refugees arrived in Hamburg. Most of the theatres, museums, alternative art spaces etc. reacted in a welcoming way. The Deutsches Schauspielhaus, a theatre, let refugees sleep in their rooms, the Thalia Theater founded the 'Embassy of hope', where refugees can, for example, learn the German language, ask for legal support and act in the theatre.

Together with a many foundations in Hamburg we launched a fund for cultural projects. The City put 200,000 euro into the pot and the foundations matched it with the same amount. That enabled us to spend 400,000 euro on cultural projects with refugees. To access the funding, the projects have to be designed and planned together with or by refugees. The aim is to support their ideas, to help them become empowered to take action themselves to

integrate into the city, to network with each other and with local Germans and to find their way in the bureaucratic systems in Germany.

How successful has this overall effort been for integration? What have been the most important (and perhaps surprising) positive results?

The most important thing is for everyone to learn that diversity is an opportunity and that diversity is something from which we all gain. Looking at the world through someone else's eyes always opens up new options. One project, which has been going on in Hamburg for 19 years, is very special indeed: 'Hajusom'. Its focus is to produce art together with, for example, musicians and artists, from different countries. The name 'Hajusom' is the first two letters from the names of three people in the very first group, Hatice, Jusef and Omied, who were unaccompanied young refugees who either fled, were deported or have become citizens of Hamburg.

'Hajusom' is a community of performers who develop interdisciplinary theatre productions. Their plays are coproduced with theatres in Hamburg,

Duesseldorf, Muenser and Berlin and are shown throughout the world in international tours.

The community helps refugees (who have mostly come here without their parents) to find a place to live in the City of Hamburg. They try to give them jobs in the team and generally help them out when they can. <http://www.hajusom.de/english/hajusom/about-hajusom/>

Can and should similar projects be set up in Germany and in other cities across the EU? How easy is it for them to carry out similar projects? What would you recommend for them to do?

In my opinion Hajusom is a great project because the team there works very sensitively with refugees who have suffered trauma on their journeys to Germany and they are more than just a place for work and arts. They are a community that helps people find their way in the city as well as in the world of arts. There should be more projects like this.

How is music used for cultural integration ?

The Elbphilharmonie is a musical education programme offering interactive concerts and musical activities for every each group. The Elbphilharmonie has brought a lot of attention to musical education from the beginning. There are a lot of projects going on. For example, they offer concerts even for babies, etc. (see more: <https://www.elbphilharmonie.de/en/children-and-families>)

What has been the impact on citizens of this cultural integration policy?

The aim of the Mayor of Hamburg is that every child living in Hamburg should have visited the Elbphilharmonie at least once. We'll see if this will work out...

#CulturalEurope
The aim of 'Hajusom' is to produce art together with musicians and artists from different countries
@hh_bkm



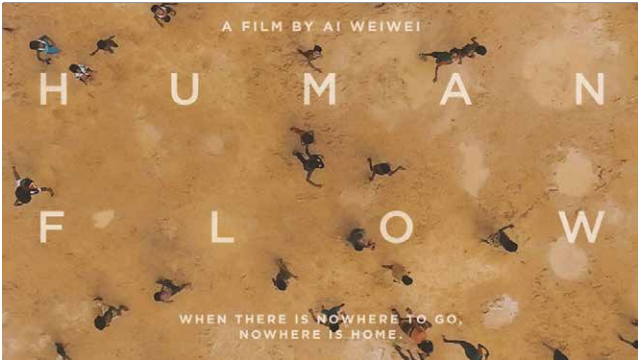
> AUTHOR
Laura-Helen Rüge is in charge of Intercultural Projects in the Ministry of Culture of the City of Hamburg. She is responsible for intercultural projects, which means that artists with a migrant background that live in Hamburg can ask for funding to carry out their projects as can native Germans to carry out their intercultural projects.

TO WATCH

Human Flow

Ai Weiwei (2018)

In 2018, 65 million people were uprooted around the world. From Iraq, Bangladesh, Turkey and Northern Greece, this film tells the story of millions of men, women and children travelling thousands of miles to find a home. And yet the world seems to shrink. Today, people of different cultures and religions must learn to live together. Ai Weiwei, the director of Human Flow, is known for being an artist within the independent Chinese art scene. Sculptor, performer, photographer, architect ...as in his own life, his film transcends borders. In 2011, in the line of fire in Beijing, he was imprisoned for 81 days in degrading conditions arousing indignation around the world. This documentary remains more educational than revolutionary.



Living Change: Inspiring Stories for a Sustainable Future

Jordan Osmond and
Antoinette Wilson, 2018

‘We are the change.’ Nowadays, this phrase is a common leitmotif in documentaries focused on a better world. The future is in our hands but for this to have meaning we must take steps to preserve what we have in our garden or on our plate. Filmmakers Jordan Osmond and Antoinette Wilson have collected stories from their road trip around New Zealand to showcase truly inspirational stories inspired by nature. Like the successful movie ‘Tomorrow’, each initiative and individual effort appears to be the key to revolutionising our lifestyles. From the composter and the forester to the vegetable vendor who sells kitchen garden produce to the school canteen, everyone is getting their hands dirty.



The landscapes of New Zealand offer a breath of fresh air. Here we do not showcase what has gone wrong but what is working. The blue and green tones intensely dominate the visual of the film. It is a wonderful world on our doorstep. This film is a real pleasure to watch and showcases real solutions that can be emulated.

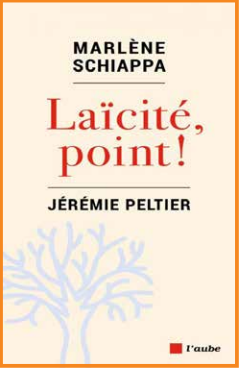
TO READ

Laïcité, point (Secularism, full stop), Editions de l'aube, Paris, 2018

Marlène SCHIAPPA,
Jérémie PELTIER

In this volume by Marlène Schiappa and Jérémie Peltier, the notion of secularism, all too often nebulous and vague in political discourse, finds both its roots and its definition in the Republic. Or rather, as in the work of Laurent Bouvet, in a progressive interpretation of the meaning of the French Republic. While a touch of romanticism is present in its defence by these two intellectuals, one a Secretary of State in the Edouard Philippe government and the other a director of studies at the Jean Jaurès foundations respectively, their republican secularism can be understood as an expression of Jürgen Habermas’ “constitutional patriotism” rather than a defence of historical heritage limited to just one country or people. Furthermore, while they frequently refer to the law of 9 December 1905 concerning the separation of Church and State, brought before the Chamber of Deputies by Aristide Briand, they do so on the basis of its content and not its country of origin.

This work by Marlène Schiappa and Jérémie Peltier is also important because, rather than justifying the importance of secularism in the usual general terms, such as the need to safeguard political life from the influence of the clergy, it justifies its present day significance by reminding us that it is a prerequisite for the



exercise of women’s rights. And it is not only the founding fathers of secularism who are cited in the first chapter, inspired by a speech given by Marlène Schiappa at the Grand Orient de France, but also contemporary figures including philosopher Catherine Kintzler, whose words we cannot resist repeating: “Leaving the domestic sphere, being in a public place without having to justify their presence is a fundamental right. Secularism can liberate women from calls to justify their presence in public space. You cannot send them back into hiding in the name of religion”. Therefore, for Schiappa and Peltier, secularism is more than a dogma, or in their terms, a “magic word”: it is a collective drive for liberation, which still has a long way to go. Because, as the two authors mischievously and uncompromisingly remind us, “the law of 1905 made no reference to women, and secular organisations did not all immediately support women’s right to vote- it is a euphemism”.

While rigorous, Marlène Schiappa and Jérémie Peltier’s account is not austere. Secularism is also defined in terms of hedonist morality, a right to pleasure, rather than in terms of a single mortal sin, still encumbered by religious meaning.

La place de l’Europe dans le monde du 21^{ème} siècle, Académie royale de Belgique, Brussels, 2018

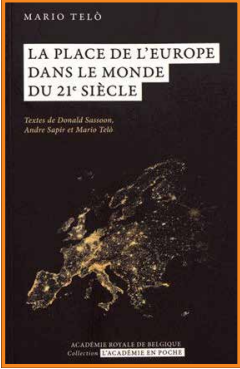
M. TELO (ed)

‘La place de l’Europe dans le monde du 21^{ème} siècle’ [Europe’s place in the 21st century world] is a work based on lectures delivered at the Belgian Royal Academy. It is as intelligent as it is disquieting.

It is intelligent as it is the fruit of conversations between three leading academics: André Sapir, an economist with links to the Bruegel think tank and the Center for Economic Policy Research; Donald Sassoon, Professor at Queen Mary College in London and, finally, Mario Telo, President Emeritus of the Institute for European Studies at the Free University of Brussels (ULB).

It is disquieting for the same reasons. Despite their differences, these three professors share the same diagnosis on the ‘state of the union’ of European countries, finding the community acquis, and the immediate outlook thereof, in terms of it falling far short of the federalist project.

Of the three, the point of view argued by Mario Telo, who, from a Hegelian perspective, seeks rationality in reality rather than in a transcendental ideal is, without doubt, the most optimistic. While the EU does not constitute an aspiring ‘United States of Europe’, it does at least serve as one of the most successful regional organisations in the



world against the backdrop of turbulent international relations that have existed since the revolutions of 1989. As such, for both its partners and its members, it may represent a stabilising factor in an environment in which the isolationist politics of the Trump presidency represent a retreat from the internationalisation of trade, considered unprecedented in US history.

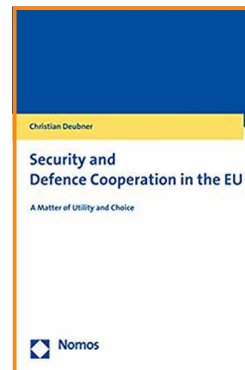
Adopting a typical historians’ approach, the contribution of Donald Sassoon aims to understand the present by placing it in context. Though far from championing the intrinsic superiority of the nation as a means of defining the identity of peoples, Sassoon remarks on the successes that he attributes to “a State that has given them a bureaucracy, a school system, a common language, shared institutions and, as a result of wars, national anthems, sporting tournaments, the Eurovision Song Contest”. Judged against such achievements, the EU acquis, which recently celebrated the anniversary of the founding Treaty of Rome, may seem minor, although this other, purely political, construction has also faced revolutions and armed conflicts over its borders.

Like Sassoon, André Sapir begins his analysis by establishing perspective. However, the latter

TO READ

Security and Defence Cooperation in the Eu: A Matter of Utility and Choice

Christian DEUBNER (NOMOS)



focuses on the economic argument and adopts a synchronic, rather than diachronic, approach. He also calls on us to reflect on the 'state of the Union' within the context of the new 'great transformation' brought about by the adaptation of national economies, not only to the globalisation of trade, but also to the threat of recession present since the financial crisis of 2009. Sapir paints a picture that distinguishes between the rapid growth of China and the difficulties facing the countries once considered "advanced".

This volume, edited by Mario Telo, deserves attentive reading, not only because it is intelligent and disquieting, but also because the pessimism of the analyses does not dispel the optimism of the will of new generations of pro-federalist campaigners.

Today's world is fraught with complex policy challenges and developments confronting complex decision-making processes and actors. The European Union is now facing a fundamentally different environment, demonstrated by the stark contrast between the opening line of the 2016 EU Global Strategy that 'the purpose, even existence, of our Union is being questioned' and the 2003 European Security strategy that started with the now infamous words that 'Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure, nor so free'.

Owing to a diverse range of factors such as the rapid shrinking of the space between internal security and external defence, the renaissance of geopolitics, a series of terrorist attacks on European soil and the advent of Donald Trump in the White House, there has been a resurgence of debates and a multitude of policy initiatives surrounding the way forward for European security and defence policy. The formation of a single military planning and conduct capability for the strategic command of some of the EU's military Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operations, and the creation of Permanent Structured Cooperation, form

only part of this rapidly shifting policy landscape.

Against this backdrop, Christian Deubner's attempt at untangling this multi-layered and quite intricate tableau of efforts is both timely and significant. Timely, because it aims to shed some much needed light on the whirlwind of policy developments in this area while analysing the interlinkages between the Union's internal and external security policies. Yet, instead of simply being yet another addition to the growing corpus of works that focus by and large on the same set of objectives, this book also -crucially- succeeds in being a highly significant contribution that offers fresh insights into the issues at hand. Part analytical, and part critical, Deubner succeeds in this regard by virtue of the book's precision, specificity, and detail-oriented dissection both of the theoretical landscape but also of the facts on the ground.

Evidently, this could have not been made possible without the author's depth of expertise, knowledge and interest in aiding our shared understanding of the subject matter. Such an endeavour would also have been impossible in the absence of an incredibly rich and

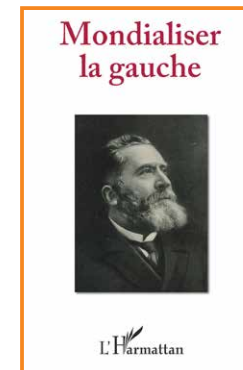
historically-grounded understanding of the prime motives behind the EU members states' interest in pushing the security and defence agenda forward.

Echoing what the book's subtitle suggests vis-à-vis this agenda, reading this book should also be a matter of both utility and choice. First, utilising the opportunity to benefit from the incredibly solid analysis included in it as a way of understanding what is currently happening in this very technical policy domain; secondly, choosing to do so on the basis of the book's offer of a truly realistic diagnosis of the deeply incremental nature of the progress achieved in terms of the Union's security and defence cooperation. Distancing themselves both from the triumphalist and the alarmist takes on the steps taken so far in this policy field, readers would be well advised to invest their time in unpacking the dense material contained in this book. It is a valuable compass towards interpreting a large part of the EU's praxis (or lack thereof) in today's complex world.

TO READ

'Globalisation of the Left'

Gérald Fuchs, 2nd edition
L'Harmattan, 2018t



The latest book from the former French member of parliament and Member of the European Parliament (MEP) could have been entitled 'Gauchiser la mondialisation' (Making globalisation left-wing) as Gérald Fuchs proposes a number of solutions that reflect this concept. Whilst the author also discusses the need to "advance and ensure human dignity" on a global scale. He emphasises that, since the beginning of the 21st century, a number of significant threats have arisen that pose a risk to society: the proliferation of nuclear weapons, climate change and immigration of the "damned of the earth".

The book reminds the reader that the current globalisation trend is the fifth of its kind and the Asia Head at the Jean-Jaurès Foundation is critical of the French left for never committing to a real debate on globalisation.

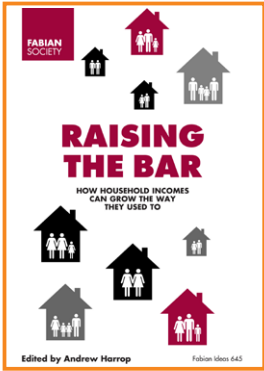
At the same time this book provides a thorough analysis of the ideology which underpins liberal globalisation with a notable focus on the financial aspects of the concept and the lack of regulation related thereto. This is what led to the crisis that is just beginning to emerge, 10 years after the crisis began in the United States.

Each analysis is strengthened as the author provides practical proposals to support his analysis. There are fifteen in total, for example the introduction of a world carbon tax to combat climate change, the introduction of a minimum worldwide tax rate on corporate profits where the turnover of a multinational company exceeds a threshold yet to be defined.

He also advocates the introduction of a localised training plan and grant programme for any technological development or technology transfer project. Another proposal outlined by the author as a means to alter the current state of globalisation is that multinational companies and their subsidiaries and their respective suppliers should comply with the standards set out by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Anticipating that the ideas he proposes may be met with an accusation that they are nothing more than utopian constructs, he invites the reader to look at the objects around them which did not exist before and that represent, the author asserts, "another vision of a possible future".

TO THINK

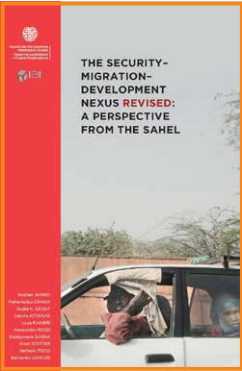


Raising the Bar
How household incomes can grow the way they used to

Anneliese Dodds, Chi Onwurah and Rachel Reeves
Freelance international gender equality expert

The UK economy may be growing but most households are not feeling the benefit. Stagnating wages, a rise in insecure work, public spending cuts and regional inequalities have all contributed to a squeeze on family incomes.

What do we need to do now to get household incomes growing the way they used to before the financial crash? This collection explores some of the ideas to create the sustainable economic growth that will be needed if living standards are to rise significantly and how to ensure that that rising prosperity is fairly shared.



The Security-Migration-Development nexus revised: A perspective from the Sahel

Bernardo Venturi

The nexus of security, migration and development in Africa is crucial, but certainly not only because of the flows of migrants coming to Europe. It is evident that development, migration, peace and security are connected in several ways, but more light needs to be shed on the concrete effects of their interactions. In this complex framework, the Sahel region represents an important region where the security-migration-development nexus is particularly present and deserves further analysis. This research aims at re-conceptualising this nexus through the analysis of this linkage in the Sahel region, and in particular vis-à-vis three case study countries: Niger, Senegal and Sudan. The publication also recasts the European Union and the United States approaches to these dynamics and explores current and potential partnerships in the region.



The other democratic deficit: A toolbox for the EU to safeguard democracy in Member States

Expert Group of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

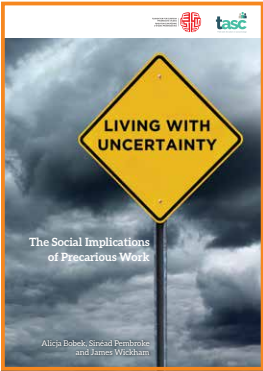
This publication makes a number of concrete suggestions on how the EU can safeguard and promote democracy in its Member States. The suggestions include monitoring, conditionality of EU funds, judicial enforcement by the European Union, the support of civil society through a new fund for NGOs and the appointment of a Special Representative on Civil Society, measures to guarantee media pluralism and recommendations to European parties, which should exert influence on problematic member parties.



The effects of financialisation on investment: evidence from firm-level data for the UK

Daniele Tori and Özlem Onaran

This paper estimates the effects of financialisation on physical investment in the UK using panel data based on balance sheets of publicly listed non-financial companies supplied by Worldscope for the period from 1985 until 2013. We find robust evidence of an adverse effect of not only financial payments (interests and dividends) but also financial incomes on the rate of accumulation. The negative impacts of financial incomes from interest and dividends are particularly strong for the pre-crisis period. Our findings support the 'financialisation thesis' that the increasing orientation of the non-financial sector towards financial activities is ultimately leading to lower physical investment and hence to stagnant or fragile growth, as well as to long-term concerns for productivity.



Living with uncertainty: the social implications of precarious work

Sinead Pembroke, Alicja Bobek, James Wickham

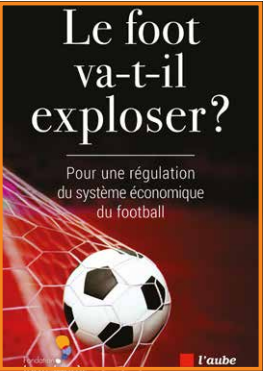
This report maps out the nature and extent of precarious work in Ireland today, as well as its effects on the personal choices and quality of life of those engaged in precarious employment activities. The report explores precarious work's implications for maintaining health and accessing healthcare services, finding housing, having children and accessing childcare services. This research involved 40 in-depth interviews with men and women living in Ireland, aged between 18 and 40, who were engaged in precarious employment activities.



Are we worse off than our parents? What the data tell us

Ignacio Martín Granados

The economic, social and institutional crisis in recent years in Spain has opened up a big gap between the generations. That distance is very evident between two population groups, the baby boomers and the Millennials. To understand the problems of the young and the risks of this generational gap the Felipe González Foundation has launched the 'Generational Intergenerational Forum' project. This article analyses the first report, entitled 'European Comparison of Intergenerational Trends', which highlights the extent to which the intergenerational standard of living problem is reproduced in different high-income economies and in the same areas, mainly in the areas of the labour market, income and housing.



Is the football bubble about to burst? The case for financial regulation in football

Richard Bouigue, Pierre Rondeau

A short abstract: While football's growth figures are exceptional, the risk that the 'football bubble' will burst cannot be ignored and the view from behind the scenes is not so bright. Football is a globalised sport under constant media scrutiny and is also a social reality. Richard Bouigue, Deputy Mayor of the 12th arrondissement of Paris and Pierre Rondeau, sports economist and professor at the 'Sports Management School', analyses its economic and social challenges.



Malta to allow 16 and 17 year olds to vote

Aaron Farrugia
Malta Parliamentary Secretary for EU Funds and Social Dialogue

In March, Malta's Parliament unanimously approved a constitutional amendment that will allow 16 and 17 year olds to vote in general elections. This is a natural step forward in Malta's journey of progressive social reform, especially given that the Labour Government had already granted 16 year olds the opportunity to vote in local council elections. One of the core arguments for reducing the voting age is that, if a 16 year old can leave school, seek full-time employment and be liable for tax, then they should also be entrusted with the civic responsibility of voting. My view is that lowering the voting age will ensure that more young people take part in democratic processes by voting.

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