

Queries

Summer 2014 / Issue 4 / €5.90

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+ **COLUMN**
JOSEPH STIGLITZ

+ **MY EUROPE**
LULA



MAY 2014

The turning point for European democracy?

28 analyses from 28 countries

FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES
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About Queries

*Isaac Newton's famous book "Opticks" concludes with a set of "Queries."
These "Queries" are not questions in the ordinary sense, but rather
rhetorical questions intended to stimulate thinking.
This was Newton's mode of explaining "by query."*



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Queries

No 4 / Summer 2014 / CPPAP 0416 U 92285 – ISSN 2032-9113 – Queries is the scientific magazine of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies. The Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) is the first progressive political foundation established at the European level. Created in 2007 and co-financed by the European Parliament, it aims at establishing an intellectual crossroad between social democracy and the European project **Publisher:** FEPS – Foundation for European Progressive Studies. First published in Belgium 2012/2013 **Magazine Editor of Queries:** Dr. Ernst Stetter (Secretary General – FEPS) **Editor-in-Chief:** Alain Bloëdt **Associate Editor-in-Chief:** Olivier Breton **Editorial Committee:** Charlotte Billingham, Giovanni Cozzi, David Kitching, Ania Skrzypek, Judit Tanczos **Journalists:** Iulia Badea-Guérinée, Cécile Calla, Lorenzo Consoli, Sam Davies, Jacques Docquier, Trevor Huggins, Moritz Pfeifer, Charlotte Saliou, Eric Sundström, Ian Willoughby **Cover Illustration:** Antoine Corbineau **Design & Production:** All Contents, France **Translation:** Semantis **Photo Credits (Pages 6-7):** DR, Félix Bernad, IRIS, European Union 2014 – EP, Ricardo Stuckert/Instituto Lula, Cédric Méraillles, Katherine Roberts, Policy Network, SPD/Marco Urban, VoteWatch Europe, Frédéric Latinis, FEPS, Socialdemokraterna, Archive of the Chairman of the Chamber of Deputies, foto-dd.com, Manfred Esser, Katsumi Saiki – Michael Holmes, Committee of the Regions, University of Leicester – Copyright © **FEPS – Foundation for European Progressive Studies.**

THE TURNING POINT *of May 2014*

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

For the first time since the first European elections in 1979, the declining trend of the turnout has reverted. Yet, 43.09% is still a very unsatisfactory result. Moreover, this slight increase of the turnout level (only by 0.9 percentage points) is to be ascribed to the populist and anti-European movements and parties, which have conquered the support of electors that, most probably, would otherwise have swelled the ranks of the abstainers!

If we compare the general features of the new assembly with the one elected in 2009, two main differences stand out. While five years ago the conservative forces clearly outnumbered the progressive ones, today these two blocs are substantially equivalent. The second element concerns the significant presence of Euro-sceptic parties, which can count on more than 120 MEPs. The conclusion seems obvious: the European electors have punished those parties that have been identified with the austerity policies and with the current management of the European Union. **Therefore, it has to be said that the Party of European Socialists (PES) as a whole has not been perceived as a strong and convincing alternative.**

This anti-European attitude is not only to be attributed to the social crisis and the rejection of austerity, but also, particularly in the richest countries, to the nationalist retrenchment, to the hostility towards immigrants and to the refusal of the principle of solidarity. Furthermore, taking into consideration the high level of abstaining, which concerns the largest part of the European electorate, it is necessary to acknowledge that in the member states there is a deep and widespread lack of confidence towards political parties and institutions, particularly the European ones. A lack of confidence that is now beyond the mere state of alert.

Having said this, **it is clear that last May electoral results impose a radical turn.** This is something that must be understood by all the pro-European forces in Europe, and in particular

by the EPP and the liberals. The goal shall be drawing the European people closer to the EU, both by increasing the transparency of the European processes and actively involving the citizens, and by changing the EU policies, which shall be much more growth-oriented than they have been so far. In other words, Europe needs more than discussions about oilcans, cucumber curves and chlorinated chickens! **An attractive Union has to concentrate on attractive concepts that convince the citizens and hence the voters.**

Against this backdrop, the socialists' condition is particularly delicate. Despite the PES initiative of the Top candidate which has been followed by the major parties in the European Parliament, despite the tremendous EU campaign of Martin Schulz who knocked the doors across Europe with many thousands of PES activists, despite a major loss of 53 seats, conservatives won. From its 2nd position, it was difficult for the PES and Martin Schulz to ask for the leadership of the Commission. Nevertheless, **the social-democrats cannot purely play the role of the opposition within the European Parliament, considering that now the progressive governments make up a significant share of the European Council and that in the European Parliament no other majority is possible.**

Additionally, the progressive movement should further challenge the trend and establish European social democracy as the real driving force for the European Union. The PES initiative of introducing the leading candidates in 2009 – to which FEPS contributed – was a substantial step forward towards more democracy. The next step should be to change the current Europarty system by offering to their national activists the opportunity to join their Europarty, i.e. for progressive activists to join the PES directly. With such new initiative, one can expect that national parties will not be only concerned with EU issues just for the few months before the European elections but that they will enhance the debate during the entire legislative term.

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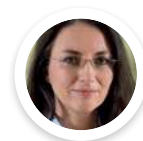
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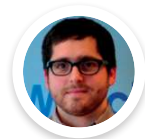
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THE MUSIC OF DEMOCRACY



© Manfred Esser

British conductor Sir Roger Norrington is worried about growing signs of Euro-scepticism and the rise of right wing parties. He sees himself as a European but believes in the sovereignty of Europe's nation states, and encourages musicians to become more politically active.



by Sir Roger Norrington

The strange thing about my job is that I am a dictator. An orchestra has to have one person making decisions. Actually, it does not have to. There are a couple of orchestras that work without a conductor. They are completely democratic and anyone can say what the players should be doing. Even the triangle player can say: "I think the violin should be louder." It is like in the worst kind of parliament. Decisions take forever! They spend one week rehearsing a symphony that I could probably rehearse in three hours. So those are the advantages of being a dictator. You can make decisions. Perhaps the top man in politics should also have more power. In politics the checks and balances are sometimes so strong that things do not get done. Obviously democracy is very inefficient, but it is the best we have. In music it is the opposite: dictatorship is not a good idea, but it is the best we have.

The most wonderful feeling for a conductor is when the musicians like what you do. Therein lies a connection between music and democracy. If the musicians do not like you, they will not ask you back. Sometimes they even vote. If they want you back, you know that enough of them have said "yes".

I am a very unpolitical musician who will happily go back to being a dictator. But I am certainly amazed by the amount of anti-Europe feeling and by the right-wing move. Certainly the swing to the right's party is also a protest against immigration that is going to be a constant problem in the future. I guess it is good to solve migration problems together with the other member countries. But each country might have a jurisdiction of its own. There are countries to which people want to come more than to others. Not a lot of migrants want to go to Portugal for instance. An awful lot want to go to Britain and to Germany, and quite a few want to go to France. Many people want to return to the nation state. My point of view is that I absolutely want to stay part of Europe and I feel myself as a European. I hardly work in Britain at all in fact, whereas I am con-

stantly in Germany, France, etc. I very much believe that Britain should stay in the European Union. But it would be very nice if all sorts of things were not only decided by people outside of our country. A strong Union and lots of interchange of ideas is good, but I do not want to be part of a United States of Europe. I would ask the European Union to listen to the criticisms and difficulties the less central countries have, to pay attention to all those questions and look at the individual states who really want to be together but who do not want to be dictated by a virtually unelected organization.

"THERE IS SOMETHING REALLY ROTTEN ABOUT THE PARTY SYSTEM."

I have an affinity with socialist leanings. But I find the whole party system rather tedious, particularly in the British Houses of Parliament

where the two parties are absolutely opposite each other. You do not get anywhere in an enterprise or in an opera house if there are two parties opposing each other. Everything that the ruling party says, the other party will attack. There is something really rotten about this. They shout at each other like schoolboys, and it would be really nice to find a third way.

It is very rare that musicians take part in politics. Marx said that religion is the opium of the people. Certainly music is the opium of a lot of musicians. Musicians participate in politics because they can vote. But they should participate more. They are using state money, especially in Germany, so perhaps they should be called to account and should be asked to speak more about politics. Most musicians are too isolated and live in a fantasy world of music. But who can blame them? Music protects you from the world. You can hide inside a cocoon of music. It's a wonderful thing!

Sir Roger Norrington was born in Oxford in 1934. *He has worked extensively with leading symphony orchestras, bringing historical insight to the modern-instrument mainstream.*



© SPD/Marco Urban

**YASMIN FAHIMI
ADVOCATING A TRULY
PREVENTIVE POLICY
ON EMPLOYMENT**

The new General Secretary of Germany's Social Democratic Party (SPD) is keenly committed to issues related to the job market. Among other things, she advocates stronger codetermination and a new social contract to balance work and free time.



by Cécile Calla

She could talk to you for hours about working conditions and ways of improving them. As General Secretary of Germany's Social Democratic Party (SPD), Yasmin Fahimi is of course tasked with defending her party's ideas and programme, as well as promoting SPD policy in government as part of the grand coalition between the CDU/CSU and SPD. Yet job security and the ability to find work are far more than just another topic on the table for this 46-year-old woman with a wise demeanour: it is an issue to which Yasmin Fahimi has been committed for over a decade. Her typically restrained, modest mode of expression grows more intense and at times touches on the idealistic when talk turns to such topics: "Economic conditions and the labour market have changed significantly. Improving job security and access to work is an ongoing, core concern," she insists. She repeatedly calls for the need to "organise the world of work to allow people to follow their dreams." Although she applauds Germany's decision to introduce a minimum wage in 2015 (which she describes as a principle that must never again be called into question), Yasmin Fahimi believes that it is "above all necessary to remedy the situation and that there is a need for a truly preventive policy on employment."

A TRADE UNION BACKGROUND

About ten years ago, while she was working in Recklinghausen, in Germany's Ruhr region, for the IG BCE, the country's number-three trade union (representing the chemical, mining and energy industries), she came to realise something: "We did not have the answers to the problems encountered in companies, such as extreme psychological strain, difficulties in working up to retirement age and the increasing rate of burnout." With her IG BCE colleagues, she undertook an in-depth analysis of these trends. That led to the "good work" campaign, designed to humanise and modernise the business world. The initiative was adopted by all other German unions and gave rise to an annual report published every year since 2007 on changes in working conditions.

However, Yasmin Fahimi is not content to rest on her laurels. She sees a need for a new social contract to balance work and free time: "On the one hand, the situation has become more demanding with more flexible hours and the need to be constantly available. On the other, there has been a change in lifestyle, along with new ways of educating children and different demographics." With clear focus, she steadily expands on a number of possible solutions, such as new approaches to working hours, further education

Key Points

- She comes from a trade union background, and has spent 15 years at the IG BCE.
- She joined the SPD at the age of 19, spurred by the German pacifist movement of the 1980s.
- She advocates a European policy of social justice, and more investment in education and employment.

and compensation for parents who cut back on their working hours.

A stronger approach to codetermination is another option to put an end to the lack of collective bargaining agreements in some firms. Unions are not just social movements: they must be more visible in companies. If not, they risk losing their meaning,” she exhorts. This is an issue she knows well. She spent over 15 years at the IG BCE. Some in the German media have somewhat ironically labelled her a “civil servant”.

STARTING OUT IN THE SPD

Yasmin Fahimi was 19 when she joined the SPD and was spurred to get involved in politics by the very strong pacifist movement in Germany in the 1980s. Her parents were not politically active in the traditional sense but did “watch the news on television”. “My mother was not afraid to talk politics with us when we were kids and teenagers.” Through a number of encounters, such as her involvement with Jusos, the SPD youth movement, she decided to join the party. “We tackled major international issues; we talked a lot about

“I FOUND THE SPD TO BE **A CONVINCING FORUM** FOR POLITICAL THOUGHT.”

the Sandinistas. We explored the question of violence and freedom. Where does it begin and where does it end? I found the SPD to be a convincing forum for political thought.” Soon, largely as a result of her foreign roots (her father is Iranian), she came to realise that her homeland did not end at the German border and that a number of different languages and cultures are an inescapable reality.

In appointing her to the job, SPD Chairman, Sigmar Gabriel, has sent out a strong message designed to reflect a sense of revival and to give the party a facelift. “I aim to bring a breath of



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fresh air and a new outlook," promised Ms Fahimi on her election in January 2014. Unknown to the general public before her nomination by Mr Gabriel, Ms Fahimi has yet to prove herself. Some observers see her appointment as a risky move on the part of the very powerful SPD chairman, who is expected to run for chancellor in 2017. When drawing comparisons with the previous grand coalition, Ms Fahimi remains a loyal SPD solidier: "We highlight our plans more effectively. We keep our promises and that is something people can see. There are a number of issues in government that clearly bear the hallmark of the SPD."

ADVOCATING A EUROPE WITH MORE FOCUS ON SOCIAL ISSUES

On Europe, she regrets that social issues have been overlooked in the past few years. "Europe needs a policy of social justice and investment in the future. We do not need less Europe; we need more," she insists, listing a number of Social Democrat proposals, such as giving the European Parliament greater powers, increasing investment in the future (education and employment) and introducing more benchmark social standards, such as a European minimum wage. For Ms Fahimi, the first thing that springs to mind when asked about the future of Germany is the image of "an open, tolerant society with a flourishing democracy." She herself could be seen as an ideal embodiment of this image, in terms of both her personal and professional achievements and background.

"THERE ARE A NUMBER OF ISSUES IN GOVERNMENT THAT CLEARLY BEAR THE HALLMARK OF THE SPD."



© SPD / Marco Urban

ABOUT

Yasmin Fahimi was born on 25 December 1967 in Hanover, the capital of Lower Saxony. She joined the SPD in October 1986 and began studying chemistry and engineering in her home town. In 1998, she started working at the labour and environment foundation of the trade union IG BCE. In 2004, she became IG BCE General Secretary in Recklinghausen, before joining the union's national executive in 2005. Since January 2014, she has been General Secretary of the SPD.



© Archive of the Chairman of the Chamber of Deputies

JAN HAMÁČEK, EUROPE'S YOUNGEST SPEAKER COMES OF AGE

Jan Hamáček turned down the opportunity of a top cabinet post in order to become the youngest speaker of parliament in Europe. But with close connections on the left around the continent now assuming positions of power, it seems only a matter of time before one of the most respected figures in the Czech Social Democratic Party also reaches the top.



by Ian Willoughby

Just a few weeks after turning 35, Jan Hamáček was elected the youngest speaker of parliament in the whole of Europe and the youngest in his country's history.

What's more, he was an extremely popular choice. With a reputation across the house for politeness and probity, partly earned in his time as a deputy speaker, the MP for dominant Czech left-wing party the Social Democrats received the unprecedented backing of no fewer than 195 members of the 200-seat Chamber of Deputies in November's vote.

It wasn't the first time Hamáček had attained a prestigious position at a relatively precocious age. In 2006, as a newly elected first-time MP, he was appointed chairman of the Czech Parliament's foreign affairs committee at a mere 27. At one of his very first meetings in Brussels of heads of EU foreign relations committees a bureaucrat attempted to move him, saying he had mistakenly taken a seat reserved for one of the chairpersons. "I said, actually, that's me," he recalls today with a still-boyish grin at his grand corner office in the 17th century palace in Prague's Lesser Quarter that houses the

Czech Parliament's lower house. "Being relatively young is an asset, because people do remember you," he explains. "You stand out a bit."

For such a high-flyer and skilled career politician, Hamáček does not come from an especially political background. But his parents did speak openly to him. Sometimes too much so: Just prior to the fall of communism, his parents received a warning from a friendly elementary school teacher that if he continued to repeat their non-party line views in front of his pre-teen classmates he could find himself in the kind of trouble that would impact his future and career.

Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution in late 1989 instantly swept away with any such fears. Weeks after the change of regime began, the 11-year-old Jan joined a hastily revived branch of the freshly un-banned Scouts, specifically the Water Scouts. He remained a member for several years and believes that the ethics and values inculcated in him by the youth organisation left a mark. "I learned that being fair pays off and that if you make a promise you should keep it," the married father of two says. "That's something I'm trying to do in politics. I guess it also contributed to my election as speaker and the number of votes that I got."

Key Points

→ Jan Hamáček was inspired to become involved in politics by New Labour as a 16-year-old at school in Great Britain.

→ He became Europe's youngest parliamentary speaker when his Social Democrats returned to power in the Czech Republic.

→ He believes further integration is the only way the European Union can remain competitive in a globalising world.

A NEW LABOUR INSPIRATION

While the reintroduction of democracy drew many into politics for the first time in the Czech Republic, it was actually a year spent on a scholarship at an old-fashioned public school in leafy southern England (which he describes as “quite an experience”) that sparked Hamáček’s interest. It was the mid-1990s, Tony Blair’s New Labour project was in the ascendancy and like many he got caught up in the excitement. Soon after returning home he was persuaded to join the Czech Young Social Democrats by a friend. Three years later he was elected Chairman.

However, it wasn’t all canvassing, congresses and policy meetings for the young Jan Hamáček. The Central Bohemian hometown he now represents, Mladá Boleslav, is also the home of the biggest Czech exporter, the carmaker Škoda, and he worked at the plant for several summers, first spending a brief period assembling engines on the production line and then serving as an intern in the spare parts marketing department, where he chiefly communicated with Škoda importers around the continent. “Later when I learned how the state and the civil service operated, I realised that some principles that are valid in the business sphere would be very well implemented in the civil service, such as the communal spirit, the will to succeed and the willingness to help,” he says.

It may seem unusual for a left-wing legislator to suggest that the state could learn from the world of capitalism. But then again Hamáček isn’t always conventional, as becomes clear when asked whether he has any particular political hero. “Look around,” he says, nodding to a large portrait of British wartime leader Winston Churchill that hangs on the wall of his palatial office. “He made lots of mistakes and I guess as a left-leaning politician I should have mentioned someone else,” says the 35-year-old. “But Churchill is someone I admire for his courage

“IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS THE CHALLENGE WILL BE TO EXPLAIN TO **VOTERS THAT THE EUROPEAN PROJECT IS THE ONLY VIABLE ALTERNATIVE.**”

and the fact that when he had an opinion he was able to stick to it, despite the fact that it wasn’t always comfortable for him.”

EUROPEAN CONNECTIONS

Hamáček’s own ability to follow a consistent path may have been one factor in his success as Czech representative at the International Union of Socialist Youth, now known as Young European Socialists (YES), of which he became Vice-President in 2006. The language skills of the trained translator and interpreter – as well as Czech and English, he speaks German, Spanish and French and can get by in Russian and Polish – no doubt also stood him in good stead at the Vienna-based organisation. Today, almost a decade after his time at the YES, a number of his old friends and colleagues from those days are coming to the fore in their respective countries. “My generation is gradually attaining high positions,” he says. “It’s very useful having personal contacts in similar parties around Europe.” Specific connections in high places include Romania’s prime minister, Victor Ponta, Italy’s foreign minister, Federica Mogherini, the Bulgarian foreign minister, Kristian Vigenin, and Niels Annen, foreign policy spokesperson of the parliamentary group of German coalition party the SPD.

As well as leaving him with some impressive numbers in his mobile, Hamáček’s spell at the YES also helped deepen his long-term interest in diplomacy and international affairs. He is a strong proponent of further European integration. “Though it may

sound brutal, I've always said that the size of the Czech Republic [population 10.5 million] roughly corresponds to the size of a provincial capital in China," he says. "If we are to withstand the pressure on the global market we have to unite and work together. If we don't, Europe is in danger of being marginalised."

Hamáček says calls on the right for the return of certain powers to national governments may be "catchy" with a section of the electorate but are a recipe for disaster – and the Eurosceptic surge in May's elections to the European Parliament (in which only 18.2 percent of Czech voters turned out, the second lowest rate in the EU) is a genuine cause for concern. "But I don't think it's a lost game," he says. "In the next five years the challenge will be to explain to voters that, though we have our ups and downs, the European project is the only viable alternative."

Alongside international relations, Hamáček's main area of expertise is the military and he was the Social Democrats' defence spokesperson ahead of elections last October that saw the party take the helm of a three-party centre-left coalition after eight years without power. Indeed, on the question of what change he would most like to effect in politics, the politician immediately says he would like to persuade the Czech public of the importance of defence outlay. The Czech Republic currently spends just over 1 percent of the equivalent of its gross domestic product on defence annually, some way below the NATO target of 2 percent. "I've always supported measures that would strengthen our membership of NATO," he says. "And the time is right for this – we all know what's happening to our East."

A SPEAKER'S POST TOO GOOD TO REFUSE

Given this interest and the expertise gleaned in years as his party's defence spokesman, wasn't Hamáček frustrated at not receiving the defence portfolio in the coalition government headed by his

party colleague and political ally Bohuslav Sobotka? Not at all, he insists. The prime minister gave him a choice between taking the helm at the Ministry of Defence and becoming speaker, and the latter – constitutionally the third highest position in Czech Republic and undoubtedly a chance to increase his influence among MPs – was too good an offer to refuse. Hamáček says he hopes to broaden the speaker's position, which involves hours upon hours of sitting and acres of paperwork, giving it an international dimension that has previously been lacking.

When quizzed about his ultimate ambitions, Jan Hamáček is somewhat guarded, falling back on well-worn lines about helping people and serving his hometown constituents. But given the Social Democrats' dominance on the Czech left and his own cross-party popularity, relative youth and unblemished reputation, the 35-year-old appears well-positioned to follow the lead of his old YES cohorts and eventually earn the kind of role that will make full use of his talents, connections and international experience.



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ABOUT

Jan Hamáček was born in Mladá Boleslav in 1978. He headed the Czech Young Social Democrats and later became vice president of the International Union of Socialist Youth. Soon after entering the Czech Parliament he was voted chairman of its foreign affairs committee and last year became the youngest speaker in Europe when the Social Democrats took power.

SUBSIDIARITY

Meeting the challenge of a changing world

In an era of globalisation, the EU policy mechanism of subsidiarity offers European citizens an opportunity to reassert their democratic power. As the influence of Europe's individual nation states continues to wane, it could also give policymakers the power to deal with the global challenges they face. So why is everyone frightened of it?



by Gerhard Stahl



“FOR CERTAIN QUESTIONS, EUROPEAN NATION STATES ARE **JUST TOO SMALL** AND FOR OTHERS THEY ARE TOO BIG.”

W

hen subsidiarity was introduced into European affairs in 1992, the world was a very different place. There

was no Internet for ordinary people, limited mobile use, the full force of globalisation had not yet made itself felt and China was still struggling to enter the international economy. Then, as now, subsidiarity could be given a simple definition – moving decision-making as close to the citizen as possible. However, our world has continued to change and the implementation of subsidiarity, since it does not exist in a vacuum, needs to change with it.

FACING UP TO HISTORIC CHANGES

Subsidiarity is not abstract an argument, but a fundamental question about how the European Union and its member states take the decisions that are needed to help improve the living conditions and demands of citizens in an interconnected world. How do we find the right governance for living together sustainably on one planet? For me, this fundamental question is framed by two historical changes that are taking place today. The first is one of economic power, which quite clearly is heading east

and is symbolised by the rise of China. To a certain extent, Europeans (and Americans for that matter) have to accept that their centuries-old predominance is fading. Though the European Union is still an economic powerhouse, its population represents only 7% of the world's total – and in a few years this figure will fall to 6%. The second historical change, which is actually linked to the first, is the challenge of climate change. One effect of globalisation is that more and more people are taking part in modern life and getting their share of the economic cake. However, this will inevitably aggravate the plight of the environment. To be sustainable, we need to adapt the traditional western economic model; for if the resource consumption of 7 billion people were like that of the average American – life as we know it would not be possible.

SECURING THE POWER TO ACT

So these two fundamental changes – the shifting balance of economic power and the stewardship of the environment – are now confronting our policymakers and our political system. And this is where we come to the role of subsidiarity in today's globalised world. Though the issues themselves are complex, the reality is very simple: for certain questions, our European

Speaking Points

→ The rise of Asian power and the challenge of climate change need a response that is beyond a single nation state.

→ Subsidiarity at a higher, European level can provide that response – if backed by the power of majority voting.

→ Subsidiarity at the local/ regional level improves economic development and local democracy for citizens.



China is now the biggest market for many car manufacturers and has played a large part in the recent success of German producers such as Volkswagen, Daimler-Benz and BMW.

nation states are just too small and for other questions they are too big. Take Europe's dealings with China as an illustration of the former. China is now the biggest market for many car manufacturers and has played a large part in the recent success of German producers such as Volkswagen, Daimler-Benz and BMW. However, China still doesn't allow a foreign corporation to have a majority holding in whatever company is established on its soil. By contrast, Chinese corporations are able to take over European companies, as has been the case with Swedish carmaker Volvo. So China can unilaterally change the rules of the game. Meanwhile, the experience of high-speed trains and also with solar panels has been that sharing European technology eventually leads to its adoption by Chinese com-

panies – and in a context where equal market access and equal competition is not guaranteed.

However, when it comes to attempting to negotiate with China on such issues, no one European nation state alone is able to exert sufficient influence at an inter-governmental level with a country of 1.4 billion people. A higher level, the European level, is clearly needed. But to take more decisions in common and to strengthen the European negotiating position, real European democracy is needed. Governments would have to accept that they could be outvoted in key areas of political and economic interest in order to create that strength of purpose at the negotiating table. So the debate about European democracy is actually a debate about chang-

es of national sovereignty that we have to accept as small countries in a big world.

LOCAL SUPPORT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

By the same token, when it comes to fighting pollution and climate change, a lot can be achieved at the local and regional levels – since it involves rethinking public transport, promoting sustainable mobility rather than car dependency, renovating buildings to make them more energy efficient, setting up a house recycling system, etc. So subsidiarity means two things: on the one hand, it means bringing decision-making as near to the citizens as possible – and by looking closely, you often discover just how much can be achieved at a local or regional level. It is reassuring that recent



“THOSE WHO REPRESENT THE EXISTING SYSTEM HAVE NO INCENTIVE TO ENGAGE IN A DEBATE ABOUT NATIONAL STRUCTURES.”

OECD studies prove that countries which devolve more competences to the regional level enjoy an improved overall economic development. On the other hand, subsidiarity also means shifting certain competences to a higher level where results can be delivered. The obvious model for this would be an increase in supranational powers for key areas of common interest at a European Union level, an increase in majority voting in order to provide policymakers with a workable mandate, and a greater role for a modernised and more representative European Parliament. Such a model would also feature an acceleration of decentralisation to the regional level and strong local self-government – thereby strengthening the role of local democracy.

However, this is where things start to get difficult. This is where subsidiarity theory comes up against realpolitik. Our stumbling block is the legacy of the European nation state. We are all historically educated to think in national terms and to respect the competences that have evolved over the centuries, even if they become dysfunctional. Not surprisingly, a political process that would involve national actors giving up certain roles is very difficult. It wouldn't be easy for a German Chancellor or a French President to say 'I can't give you an answer'. So those who represent the existing system have no incentive to engage in a debate about the functional limits of our national structures – and this runs very deep. Even certain decisions of the German Constitutional Court can be read as

a power play between the European and the national court.

BREAKING THE SUBSIDIARITY TABOO

Today, nobody in European politics dares to address this issue clearly – due its extreme sensitivity with the public, and especially the media. It is clearly unpalatable. But somehow this debate on subsidiarity has to be put on the table, because otherwise you will only get answers by default that are then perceived as being non-democratic – the response to the eurozone crisis being a notable example. Due to the incoherency of the political system, key questions were not answered at a European level. It should be the competence of the European Parliament to decide about

the support needed to keep the euro area together, rather than any dependence on a national parliament such as the Bundestag. With a stronger European Parliament, every voice would have been heard and the EU would not be in a situation where a minority can determine the outcome. A vote on a European Stability Mechanism is a decision on the extent to which the consequences of the international financial crisis are shouldered by Greek and Portuguese citizens, for example, and how much is shared with taxpayers from countries who are contributing with guarantees. Similar decisions are needed about the conditions under which national policies are developed and implemented to overcome structural weaknesses. At the moment there is an undemocratic situation, in the sense that some national actors are able to put their policy choice at the expense of the majority of Europeans.

THE BENEFITS OF GREATER LOCAL DEMOCRACY

That said, the subsidiarity question is not just about moving more decision-making to the supra-national level: the local and regional aspect is ultimately just as important. Without that link with the electorate, European citizens risk feeling disenfranchised by their own political system. The solution here is decentralisation and local self-government. A foundation stone of the European construct – it's worth noting that the Regional Policy is the European Union's second largest distributor of funds after the Common Agricultural Policy – EU integration and enlargement has always meant a stronger role for the local and regional level. However, this has not always been completed in a coherent way. To take only one example: while Spain has given its autonomous regions certain key com-

“GREATER SUBSIDIARITY AT LOCAL LEVEL CAN OFFSET THE SENSE OF POWERLESSNESS THAT A LOT OF CITIZENS FEEL.”

petences, a degree of incoherence remains. Despite the power located at regional level, there is still a dependency of the local and intermediate county levels on the national level. Spain aside, though, it's important for people to know what falls within the remit of their city and regional authority and what lies elsewhere. Local democracy needs clear responsibilities and structures.

Clearly, subsidiarity at the local level is not just about connecting voters with those who deliver city services – and holding them accountable at election time. It's a way of providing people with a tangible sense of democracy in action – a sense of power at the ballot box that is now being undermined at a national level because of this growing inability of nation states to exert the same influence as in the past in an interconnected world. Globalisation is indeed lifting many people out of poverty and into a better way of life – but it can also create a conflict with democracy. This is where greater subsidiarity at the local level can give an added benefit – by offsetting the sense of powerlessness that a lot of citizens feel. If mayors and regional presidents were given clearer competences, then at least for these politicians a higher democratic accountability can be assured. Citizens could see that democracy still works.



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ABOUT

Gerhard Stahl, until recently the Secretary General of the EU's Committee of the Regions, is a visiting professor at the College of Europe, Bruges and Peking University Business School.

EACH DIFFERENT FUNCTION MATTERS

by Juan Alberto Belloch

Generally speaking, the author has offered some very interesting reflections, especially concerning the new geopolitical situation and the role of Europe in a multipolar world. However, on the issue of subsidiarity, I differ with Mr. Stahl in terms of the contrast he draws between the necessary and desired role of national governments and the powers exercised at local level in matters such as environmental issues. One cannot deny that states have significant political weight, but in the context of a federal or autonomic model, although central governments may have the prerogative to define overall aims and even enforce basic legislation, regional and local governments have a wide-ranging role in the development. The distribution of competences within modern states is not a matter of allocating powers by category but rather according to the functions inherent to each and every competence in question. If taking this approach has always been advisable, during an economic crisis it is vital. Although cities have never required full competences in order to provide excellent services, they have needed the support of government at a higher level. Defending this rule of thumb within the European Union is more important than ever, given that local governments have historically lacked sufficient representation at EU level. National governments have always absorbed practically all structural funds distributed and have also controlled the management of CAP funds. Priorities have now shifted. The EU no longer has the economic wherewithal to invest in the conventional infrastructures that it once had and whatever funds that are available must be channelled into the weakest new member states. This is the moment for Europe to demonstrate a firm commitment to technological development and innovation, environmental stewardship and the quality of life—areas in which local governments should play a larger role than they have in the past. It is here that subsidiarity is set to make a comeback. The new approach to managing structural funds is taking these considerations into account, albeit timidly. After all, our city governments have demonstrated that they are the best, most innovative and most financially responsible managers.

Juan Alberto Belloch is a Spanish politician, and is the current Mayor of Zaragoza.

WE NEED STRONGER CITIES AND REGIONS

by Yvan Mayeur

Mr. Stahl has a very interesting approach of the subsidiarity principle in this modern age. It's a fact that old nation-states are losing a lot of their power and influence.

On the international level even the biggest European countries don't weigh enough to steer international politics. But the problem is that a lot of these countries are not yet willing or able to recognize this. They are afraid to give up any sort of power to a supranational institution like the European Union. Yet the whole European population would benefit from strong European supranational governance. Problems as the euro crisis or international political problems would have been easier to tackle. A beautiful illustration of this distrust of the national leaders against the European Level is the selection of the new president of the European Commission. Although the European parliament is democratically chosen by the European population, it can't decide alone who's going to be president of the European Commission.

I can also agree with mister Stahl's demand for stronger cities and regions. As a mayor I'm confronted every day with the importance of proximity in politics. The advantage of a democracy at city-scale is that the inhabitants really can have the opportunity to take part in the policy of the city. They don't only vote at certain times to choose a new mayor, they can also change policy by participating in district committees. Or in some cases they can even talk to the mayor and his alderman in person. This is a very pure form of democracy. You can't find this almost personal form of democracy at the national level. Although Eurosceptic politicians are on the rise on this continent, I still believe that we will eventually strengthen the power of our supranational European institutions. We will be obliged to join forces if we still want to play a significant role in this globalized world. The same is through for the local level. More and more people see that some things are better taken care of on a local level. So let's hope that a power transition to these two levels doesn't take too long.

Yvan Mayeur is a Belgian politician, and is the current Mayor of Brussels.



As we survey the damage from the years of crisis and recession in Europe that finally seems to be ebbing, there is a sigh

of relief that the Eurozone has not fallen apart. But the return to growth is a far cry from a return to prosperity. At the current pace of “recovery,” no return to normalcy can be expected until well into the next decade. Even Germany, which is often touted as the most successful country, has grown by a miserly .63 percent over the past 5 years — a rate that in other circumstances would be called an utter failure. The euro is not an end in itself. It was supposed to be the means to a more prosperous Europe, with higher living standards. For the Eurozone as a whole, incomes

today are some 20% below what they would have been, had the growth trend that prevailed in the years before the euro continued. Europeans have been asked to make continuing further sacrifices — lower wages, lower benefits, weakened systems of social protection — all in the name of saving the euro.

PROMOTING AN AMBITIOUS AGENDA

A much more ambitious, and different, agenda is needed: it is clear that, in its current form, the euro is failing the continent. And yet allowing the currency to dissolve would also be extremely costly. What is needed, above all, is fundamental reform in the structure and policies of the Eurozone. By now, there is a fairly clear understanding of what is required:

- A real banking union, with common su-

pervision, common deposit insurance, and common resolution; without this, money will continue to flow from the weakest countries to the strongest.

- Some form of debt mutualization, such as Eurobonds: with Europe's debt/GDP ratio lower than that of the US, the Eurozone could borrow at negative real interest rates, as the US does.
- Industrial policies to enable the laggard countries to catch up. Current strictures bar such policies as unacceptable interventions in free markets.
- A central bank that focuses not only on inflation, but also on growth, employment, and financial stability.
- Replacing anti-growth austerity policies with pro-growth policies focusing on investments in people, technology, and infrastructure.
- A solidarity fund for stabilization—just as

“IN ITS CURRENT FORM, THE EURO IS FAILING THE CONTINENT, **AND YET ALLOWING THE CURRENCY TO DISSOLVE** WOULD ALSO BE EXTREMELY COSTLY.”

there has been a solidarity fund to help new entrants into the EU.

Much of the euro's design reflects the neoliberal economic doctrines that prevailed when the single currency was conceived. It was thought that keeping inflation low was necessary and almost sufficient for growth and stability; that making central banks independent was the only way to ensure confidence in the monetary system; that low debt and deficits would ensure economic convergence among member countries; and that the free flow of money and people would ensure efficiency and stability.

ERRONEOUS DOCTRINES

Each of these doctrines has proved to be wrong. For example, partly because of their misguided focus on inflation instead of financial fragility, partly because of ideological presuppositions that markets, on their own, are always efficient and that therefore, regulation should be kept to a minimum, the independent U.S. and European central banks performed much more poorly in the run-up to the crisis than less independent banks in some leading emerging market.

Spain and Ireland had fiscal surpluses and low debt/GDP ratios before the crisis. The crisis caused the deficits and high debt, not the other way around.

The free flow of people, like the free flow

of money, seemed to make sense. But as money left the banks in the afflicted countries, lending contracted, a private sector austerity that exacerbated that of the public sector. Similarly, migration from crisis-hit countries has been hollowing out the weaker economies, and left an increasing tax burden on those left behind.

Internal devaluation – lowering domestic wages and prices – is no substitute for exchange-rate flexibility. Indeed, there is increasing worry about deflation, which increases leverage and the burden of debt levels that are already too high.

The extreme austerity that many European countries have adopted in the wake of the crisis has almost been a knockout blow. A double-dip recession and soaring unemployment are terrible costs to pay for slightly improved current account balances – which are better in most cases more because imports have decreased than because exports have increased.

Germany and some of the other northern European countries have balked at helping their struggling neighbors emerge from the crisis. But if they continue to insist on pursuing current policies, they, together with their southern neighbors, will wind up paying a far higher price than if the Eurozone adopts the program outlined above.

The euro can be saved, but it will take more than fine speeches asserting a commit-

ment to Europe. If Germany and others are not willing to do what it takes – if there is not enough solidarity to make politics work – then the euro may have to be abandoned for the sake of salvaging the European project.



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ABOUT

Joseph Stiglitz is an American economist and a professor at Columbia University. A recipient of the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, he is also a former senior vice-president and chief economist of the World Bank. He has been working closely with FEPS since 2009.

THE ANTHROPOCENE AND US

Whereas the geological eras took millions of years to change the shape of continents, seas and the composition of the atmosphere, human activities are increasingly having consequences on Earth in a very short time. We are living in a new geological epoch, which scientists call the Anthropocene, where the economic model we are using has become a factor that cannot be ignored for the future of the Planet. The Earth is experiencing a 'Great Acceleration' of its once natural changes. And we are risking to soon reach a 'Breaking Point' where the entire humanity could experience a sudden reduction and even the exhaustion of the resources it needs for its existence. Dr Zalasiewicz, a renowned geologist, and Dr Pauli, theorizer of the "Blue Economy", answer our questions on these issues.



Joint interview by Lorenzo Consoli



Jan Zalasiewicz is a senior lecturer in paleobiology at the University of Leicester.



Gunter Pauli is a Belgian entrepreneur, author, and theorizer of the Blue Economy.



Queries: How was the concept of Anthropocene born? What does it imply?

Jan Zalasiewicz:

The overall concept of the Anthropocene – an Earth with humans as a dominant force – is as old as geology. But geologists did not take these ideas very seriously, considering the large and dramatic processes of geology in deep time (mountain building, volcanism, glaciations and so on) as of far greater scale and impact than they considered any brief human perturbation could achieve. That changed late last century, when the idea of the Anthropocene, initially largely crystallized and driven by Paul Crutzen, rapidly became influential and regarded seriously by scholars in both the sciences and the humanities.

Q.: When did this new era start?

J.Z.: There have been various start dates proposed for the Anthropocene, and it is currently considered as a potential epoch rather than as an era (which is a much larger time unit) in geological terminology. Paul Crutzen initially suggested the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, in the late eighteenth century. The archaeological community tends to see human impacts starting much earlier, up to thousands of years ago, with changes associated with hunting and agriculture. More recently, the global changes (physical, chemical and biological) associated with the mid-twentieth century 'Great Acceleration' are being considered as perhaps the most recognisable and widely traceable beginning of a potential new epoch that could represent

"THE OVERALL CONCEPT OF THE ANTHROPOCENE IS AS OLD AS GEOLOGY. BUT GEOLOGISTS DID NOT TAKE THESE IDEAS VERY SERIOUSLY."

a major phase of Earth system change, rather than just representing detectable traces of human activity.

Q.: What is the "Great Acceleration"?

J.Z.: The Great Acceleration is the term given by Will Steffen, John McNeill and Paul Crutzen to the very marked, near-synchronous world-wide expansion and acceleration of human population, energy consumption and economic production (and all that stemmed from these primary factors) that began in the mid-twentieth century. It has been an extraordinary phase of our planet's history – and it is still continuing and still accelerating. It more or less equates with the nuclear age, but also with the entry and/or widespread use of plastics, aluminium, concrete and much else. To give an indication of the scale of this phase, it has seen the production of over six billion tons of plastic (enough to wrap the entire planet in Cling-film, if converted to that substance) and 500 billion tons of concrete (i.e. about one kilo for every square metre of the Earth's surface).

Q.: For how long can our planet endure such acceleration?

J.Z.: 'The Planet' can of course endure almost unlimited amounts of such change.

However, delicate and easily perturbed systems such as those of biology (e.g. rain forests, coral reefs), climate and sea level can be greatly changed in an exceedingly short time geologically, and such changes would undoubtedly have repercussions – potentially severe ones – for human communities also.

Gunter Pauli: Unfortunately, we ignore that our actions lead to the breaking point. The greatest challenge we face is to change the blind belief that we have an efficient economic model, which is based on the search for ever lower marginal costs (economies of scale) and the conviction that the more we globalize the economy the more wealth will be created. The search for lower cost – with free and global access to market – has been translated into a business model whereby companies focus on their core business based on a core competence, and everything else is outsourced to the cheapest supplier. The whole logic has been laid out in educational programs which are sold like sandwiches: the MBA or Master in Business Administration. As long as you have MBAs in charge and as long as you reduce business to finding the lowest production cost – then you can never see the breaking point, and then you never realize you are collectively responsible for the acceleration. These business models believe that doing less bad...

Speaking Points

→ The Anthropocene is a concept based on evidence that human-driven impacts are now significant at the level of Earth's deep geological time (such as the changes in the carbon and nitrogen cycles, global warming, sea level change, etc.).

→ The "Great Acceleration" indicates the simultaneous and unprecedented growth of population, economic production, energy consumption, generation of waste, resources depletion and environmental pollution.

→ "The Blue Economy" is a book in which Gunter Pauli theorizes the need to radically change our current wasteful economic model (dubbed "Red Economy") and go beyond the "Green Economy", by learning from the efficiency of nature.

© Gunter Pauli



Chido Govera explaining how she produces mushrooms on coffee waste.

is good! Reducing energy intensity or reducing material intensity is considered a panacea, but due to the ever increasing numbers of both citizens on the planet, and the ever increasing number of middle-class citizens, even a reduction per unit is far outpaced by a dramatic rise overall.

Q.: What would humanity look like, after the breaking point?

G.P.: What we need to see is what humanity looks like even before we reach it. What is alarming is not 400ppm of carbon, or the temperature rise, or another dramatic report about peak oil, peak copper, etc. The one parameter that should forewarn us that we are fundamentally on the wrong path is the massive amount of youth unemployment: Italy +50%, Spain +60%, the Arab World +80%, etc. so when you realize that the best minds and forces are simply not needed, how can you avoid them searching for their "aftermath" through alcohol, drugs, violence, isolation, or even terrorism. How

do you explain that 98% of the Palestinian youth is unemployed but knows how to trade the parts, build the whole and launch rockets over the border into Israel?

The real tragedy is that we are telling 50% of the world's youth, disappointed in society, which is incapable of coming up with a meaningful job for them, that they are not needed, they cannot emigrate, their nations are corrupt and not competitive, but that we should all strive to be like South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore.

On the other hand, 90% of the best brains – the best trained and the best paid – are dedicating their brilliant minds to things that are totally irrelevant in the light of the challenges facing our planet: apps! When we live in this polarized world, with massive youth unemployment and, at the same time complete misdirection of the greatest and the most dynamic, how can we not see that the breaking point will soon be reached?

Q.: What are decision-makers' responsibilities? How can we overcome the environmental crisis?

J.Z.: As a species, or as a global human community, or even as regional human communities, we seem currently unable to control disruptive by-products of our economic activity such as carbon emissions and the destruction of biological habitats.

G.P.: Who are the decision makers that count? That is you and me, because our leaders have lost their leadership capability. Politicians are certainly not taking up their responsibilities, no one is addressing the crucial questions: how can we best use what we have to respond to people's needs? Is it right to have created four globalized markets (one for raw materials, one for finished goods, one for money, and one for waste) and none of these are connected, so we keep on shipping everything around the globe? Is it right to only pay the farmer maximum 5% of the final purchase price but to pay 30% in shipment and 30% in marketing and distribution? This is where we have to wake up and say that it does not make sense to claim that the economy will grow by having more services: the economy needs to grow because we reconnect the primary sector with industry and distribution. That goes against globalization and against the logic of the supply chain management. If we don't demonstrate that there are fundamentally different ways of responding to basic needs, then we will hit a brick wall.

Q.: In what way are businesses responsible for how the environmental crisis is handled? Is it possible for businesses to reconcile growth and profit with minimising their impact on the environment?

G.P.: Business is not per se responsible,

“BUSINESS IS NOT PER SE RESPONSIBLE, THE PROBLEM IS THE COMMON AND BLIND BELIEF THAT “GROWTH” AND WEALTH ARE ENSURED BY THE HARVARD MODEL AT THE BUSINESS LEVEL, AND THE GLOBALIZATION MODEL AT THE MACROECONOMIC LEVEL.”

the problem is the common and blind belief that “growth” and wealth are ensured by the Harvard model at the business level, and the Globalization model at the macroeconomic level. And while we know that the gap between rich and poor has only been growing we remain blind and preach the same message to everyone.

J.Z.: It would seem to me that businesses are crucial to managing the inevitable global change, and to trying to control, mitigate and adapt to the most damaging features of that change. Of course it should be possible to better reconcile economic growth, profit and protecting the environment. Humans are creative and ingenious. But the system probably does need significant change to achieve such a path.

G.P.: Business has to go back to its original aim: respond to the needs of people. As the marketer Phillip Kotler stated convincingly: “only produce what your clients want and need.” We have long left that logic to the universities but practice something completely different. We sell what we produce, at ever-lower cost at ever-lower quality. Whereas in the past machinery used to function for 20-25 years and repair services were the rule, today's repair has become prohibitive since the sale of ever-cheaper products sets the rule of the game. Now there is no doubt that when you have to buy machinery 4 to 5 times

over 20 to 25 years, there is a massive drain of resources out of your local economy. And this has spurred a massive generation of waste (and material inefficiency). The only option forward that I see is that we respond to basic needs with locally available resources; and that we shift from ever-lower cost, to focusing on ever-more value added. If we aim to generate value out of everything, then we will be able to generate the jobs. However, this means we have to drop the “core competence” logic in business. How can a coffee company justify only focusing on soluble coffee produced at home or in the office in expensive machines, while what is finally ingested is only 0.2% and 99.8% is discarded along with plastic or aluminum capsules? We should realize that if we were to use the 100% of the coffee beans, then we could increase the value for the local economy by factor 500.

We cannot expect the existing business to make that shift. We need a new generation of (nearly) desperate young people who believe that they can do this better. In fact, the leadership we have today is incapable of imagining the transition. They have a hard time formulating a vision that is urgently required to leave behind this obsession of growth and profits, and start focusing on what matters in life: water, food, housing, health, energy, jobs.



UKRAINE

A mid-crisis assessment

The crisis in Ukraine is far from over. The country is chartering unknown and dangerous waters. Almost six months into the crisis, and after a series of important developments, several conclusions can be drawn concerning the three major actors: the Ukrainian government, the Putin leadership, and the European Union. Where is Ukraine going and what is the impact of the crisis on the longer-term perspective of the country and of Europe generally?



by André Gerrits

The Ukrainians have elected a new president, the oligarch and political veteran Petro Poroshenko having secured his victory in the first

round. Poroshenko's greatest asset is his political legitimacy inside and outside of Ukraine, while his greatest weakness is his lack of a stable and organized constituency in Ukrainian politics.

UKRAINE: BUSINESS AS USUAL

Unfortunately, Poroshenko's victory has done little to overcome Ukraine's deep lines of di-

vision. Substantial parts of the population in the East see Poroshenko as a product of the Maidan revolt, refuse to accept his presidency, and pursue their armed resistance. Additionally, some of the radicalized veterans of Maidan consider Poroshenko and his entourage as a hold-over from the old regime, and equally doubt his legitimacy. And worse of all, the tycoon-turned-president has no party-base of his own in parliament. Poroshenko depends on his political opponents, including Yulia Tymoshenko's party. This has become particularly important, given that the powers of the parliament have been considerably strengthened, at the expense of the presi-

dency—one of the reforms adopted after the Maidan revolt.

Will Poroshenko be able to reform the country's wild-west capitalism, to fight its endemic corruption, and to cure the many diseases of the country's body politic? There is not much reason to be optimistic. Poroshenko stressed continuity over change after his victory. He is a man from 'within'. Throughout the post-communist era, his business interests inspired him to occasionally align with every party in power. In this context, Ukraine's existential crisis today may be a blessing in disguise. Business-as-usual seems practically impossible.

PUTIN'S STRATEGY

Poroshenko's major asset is that all external players, including Russia, have accepted his presidency. Over the last few weeks, Russia has adopted a more moderate position towards the conflict in Ukraine. Gazprom agreed to postpone the deadline for solving another gas dispute with the Ukrainian authorities. Putin did not publicly endorse the referendum on independence of parts of Eastern Ukraine. And he did not openly question the legitimacy of the presidential elections.

Opinions differ on Russia's policies towards the Ukraine. Are they born out of increasing weakness or regained strength? Be it as it may, by using force, Russia has created a new reality in Europe, from which it has drawn a clear benefit that explains the recent conciliatory turn in Russia's diplomacy. For the time being, Putin has reached his major goals in Ukraine. The Maidan revolt removed Yanukovich, whom Putin considered as a political liability. The very same revolt however gave him also the excuse to intervene directly into Ukraine's internal affairs, to bring Crimea back into Russian Motherland, and to get a foothold in the eastern provinces. By now it has become doubtful whether the continuation of the civil war still serves Russia's longer-term benefit. The chaos, the lawlessness and the violence hurt Moscow's economic interests in the area, and it may lead to additional Western sanctions. And most importantly, Russia seems to have secured the wide recognition of its legitimate interests in Ukraine. More than ever before do the United States and the European Union seem to accept Russia's stake in the future geopolitical status of Ukraine. Ukraine is back into Russia's geopolitical sphere.

THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Ukraine has lost more than part of its territory in the current crisis: its political and administrative regime collapsed, practically turning

"POROSHENKO'S MAJOR ASSET IS THAT ALL EXTERNAL PLAYERS, INCLUDING RUSSIA, HAVE ACCEPTED HIS PRESIDENCY."

it into a failed state. Its status, if not its *raison d'être*, have been seriously undermined. Practically all scenarios for Ukraine have one aspect in common: the future of Ukraine is not anymore in the hands of the Ukrainians only. The country's sovereignty is limited, its administrative system, its foreign policy orientation, and its alliance policies.

The European Union is not without responsibility for the crisis in Ukraine. Policies vis-à-vis Ukraine have been based on three assumptions: the dichotomy between society and regime; the repressed desire of all Ukrainians to turn to Europe; and the win-win nature of the EU's external relations. These notions were flawed, misleading, and moralistically rather than realistically-inspired. Europe's most serious mistake was to immediately agree to regime change after the flight of Yanukovich. Not only did the EU disregard its deal with the opposition and the leadership in Kyiv, but it also provided Putin with the ultimate argument to intervene into the crisis.

The Poroshenko presidency will probably opt for the pro-European course, which Russia initially considered unacceptable. Meanwhile however, Putin has his stake in the future of Ukraine widely accepted, and he is happy to leave the bill to the European Union. The integration of Crimea into Russia is costly, but it concerns investment by Russia, in Russia. The financial responsibility of the EU will be more difficult to handle, because it lacks popular and political support. Few Europeans are prepared to get their wallets out for Ukraine, especially when the money might flow directly into the pockets of Russia's politico-economic elite. The citizens of Europe are not in the mood for additional financial responsibil-

ities. Contrary to what many Europeans may think, Russia has not so much exploited the Ukrainian economy: it has actually sponsored it. Russia invested heavily in the area for most of the post-communist era, and it bought a large share of its otherwise uncompetitive industrial goods.

The EU, the IMF and other institutions have few possibilities to compensate for the loss of jobs in Ukraine. We are not going to buy its products; we will mostly transfer financial assistance. Ukraine needs billions of euros in the near future but the economic return of our financial assistance will be negligible. The crisis in Ukraine has often been portrayed as a conflict between a 19th century Great Power (Russia) and a 21st century post-modern power (European Union). The image is wrong. For the moment, the crisis in Ukraine has convinced the Russians again that there is nothing specifically 19th century about great power politics.



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ABOUT

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FOCUS

MAY 2014: THE TURNING POINT FOR EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY?

The European elections are now behind us and it is time to assess the efficiency of the campaign, analyse the results and how Europe will evolve with its new representatives.

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D'ÉTUDES PROGRESSISTES



10 OBSERVATIONS ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE 2014 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

What does the future hold for inter-institutional relations? Have leaders shown respect to the values of legitimacy and accountability in their post-election statements and behaviour?



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1 The 2014 European Parliament elections were historically important.

The objective was to shift the balance of power in Europe in favour of voters, providing more power to the European Parliament with a view to enhancing European Democracy.

For the first time in the European Union's history, the major parties in the European Parliament launched top candidates who campaigned for the post of European Commission president. It contributed to the politicisation and democratisation of European politics at national level, and it has undoubtedly given a clear set of options to the voters.

However, the voters have given a resounding warning to the European Union estab-

lishment, with a remarkable increase in votes for populist, nationalist and often xenophobic candidates. In many member states, campaigners resorted to nasty national stereotypes of imperialist, arrogant Germans; lazy Greeks; and Romanians and Bulgarians seeking to take advantage of the welfare system.

The top candidates became recognisable names in many member states but so too did notable populist characters like Nigel Farage, Beppe Grillo and Marine Le Pen, who have all proved sensationalist successes for the media, at the expense of adequate scrutiny of EU joint politics. Thus, while there are positives, this election should serve as an important warning for the next legislature.

2 The hope was that voter participation would increase and that right-wing populists would be held at bay in most countries.

Turnout has fallen steadily and consistently since 1979, from 62% in the first election in 1979 to 43% in the 2009 election. This time, the average turnout across the 28 member countries remained stable and even increased slightly, at 43.1%.

The stabilisation of turnout was helped by the campaign of the leading candidates. However, it was also driven by anger, and by a rejection of the European demos.

Instead, as happened in the past, voters in a lot of countries settled scores with their own governments, either by voting for nationalist and neo-populist parties or by abstaining. The nationalist parties like UKIP in the UK, Dansk Folkeparti in Denmark, Front National in France, the Centre of the New Right in Poland, and Jobbik in Hungary got quite successful results. For them, anti-EU parties were a means to an end and in these countries national considerations outweighed European issues.

Voters highly used the European election to punish their respective national govern-

ments although the turnout was more successful in countries where the economy is doing relatively well, like in Germany.

However as the turnout in the UK (36%) and in France (43,5%) was very low, the result of UKIP with 27.5% and the results of the FN with 25% have to be relativised. Approximately only 10% of eligible voters backed UKIP in the UK or FN in France! As the large majority of citizens are not participating, parties like UKIP or FN are becoming relatively more important than they are in reality within their respective societies.



© European Union 2014 - EP

3 Even if the turnout wasn't as high as it could have been, this election has still made Europe more democratic. The leading candidates have set important precedents that will be hard to change.

The leaders of the groups in the European Parliament met and agreed to propose Jean-Claude Juncker as candidate for the presidency of the European Commission given his position as the leading candidate of the EPP (European People's Party) who emerged as the strongest group after the elections.

It is perverse that the conservative leaders amongst the heads of state are now blocking their own leading candidate for the position. When the progressive leaders in the EU Council supported the European Parliament's proposal, this was an act of respect for the will of the European voters. Although the leaders will still be able to nominate candidates for other important EU posts, including the other members of the Commission, the key job of Commission President was due to be based on the will of voters. That is how democracy should be and, if followed, it would be an historical and positive development.

4 Despite a rise in anti-European parties, political balances remained broadly unchanged in the European Parliament in which the populists will not play a major role in the new European Parliament. Nevertheless they will pose a challenge on their different national levels.

The centre-right European People's Party (EPP) won 213 seats in the European parliament, followed by the Socialists and Democrats (S&D), with 190 seats (out of 751). The centrist liberal group could get 64 seats, Green parties 53 and the right wing Con-

servatives and Reformist group 46 seats. The far-left obtained 42 seats, while the far-right Europe of Freedom and Democracy group got 38. The big question mark relates to the 105 Non-affiliated MEPs not yet belong to any political grouping. Most of those belong to populist and extremist parties hostile to European integration. Nevertheless it is obvious that the new European Parliament is a more fragmented one with a huge number of independent parliamentarians. Some of them have even been surprised to be elected, such as "Die Partei", a satirical comic movement in Ger-

many, who won a seat after the German Supreme Court abandoned the threshold of 5% for European elections.



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5 However, the two mainstream parties reached more or less only one third of the overall votes.

On the left and especially on the right new forces have emerged in some countries, even as the strongest party as in the case of the FN in France. Most of them will probably join the already existing EFD group, which includes UKIP, while the French FN will try to form an agreement with the Dutch PVV and others. If one compares the results of the two mainstream parties, it becomes obvious that they have been in particular difficulty in two specific types of member states: those with economic difficulties (Greece, France and Spain) and those where there has been a longstanding scepticism towards Europe (UK, Denmark, Hungary and Finland).

6 The big missing point of the campaign on both sides was an overall European topic on which to campaign.

For example the Transatlantic Trade and Partnership Agreement proposal (TTIP) was at the heart of the debate in Germany whereas it was hardly mentioned in Spain. One could have expected that especially for the centre-left, the problem of youth unemployment could have been the overall unifying campaign topic but this was not the case. While the post-electoral discussion seems to point to the importance of a new political agenda in order to restore the EU's credentials, it would appear that the campaign did not contribute to any larger extent in defining its common, pan-European building blocks. This is the case regarding the future of the European Economic and Monetary Union, Banking Union, but also with regard to the social agenda. The ambitions spelled out in the Lisbon Strategy or EU 2020, such as education and training were not picked up in the debates. What is more, there was no sufficient response to the social groups hit hardest by the consequences of the crisis – women being a prominent example.

“IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE CAMPAIGN **DID NOT CONTRIBUTE** TO ANY LARGER EXTENT IN DEFINING ITS COMMON, PAN-EUROPEAN BUILDING BLOCKS.”



7 The British case

The discourse leading up to the European elections did not get past the first hurdle of Britain's relationship with Europe, let alone a further debate on important policy issues.

UKIP received a lot of media attention, many would say far too much, and shook up the political and traditional bi-party system in the UK by winning the majority of its seats. Their result is of great concern, especially on policy matters and looking towards the General Election to be held just a year from now. However, the Liberal Democrats, the smaller coalition partner of the current national government have been decimated in these elections. Labour on the other hand has achieved large gains in seats this time round. Greens have also increased their number of seats.

The notion of Scotland's divergent voting patterns as one of the reasons for independence no longer stands. With a UKIP MEP in Scotland it will be interesting to see how the 'nationalist' debate will now play out. Interestingly, the latest elections have

shown that London is increasingly different from the rest of the country.

The transnational campaign for a top candidate of the European Commission did not reach the UK, which is a shame because this somewhat distanced the UK from the rest of the European debate. This also certainly benefitted Nigel Farage's campaign. Unfortunately he must be the only MEP that most Brits have ever heard of. Remarkably around one third of voters simply didn't know there was a European election last Thursday.



Getty Images/Laura Lezza

“ITALY IS ONE OF THE FEW CASES
IN WHICH THE VOTERS DIDN'T
PUNISH THE GOVERNMENT
IN CHARGE.”

8 The Italian case Matteo Renzi's Partito Democratico got the highest ever result for a left-wing party in the country's history, exceeding all expectations. With an outstanding 40.8%, it limited the very feared rise of populist Movimento 5 Stelle to a “mere” 21.1%, while Berlusconi's Forza Italia didn't even reach 17%, thus hitting its historic low. Such results are even more remarkable if compared to last year's national elections, where PD and M5S both stood at around 25%.

Italy is therefore a special case, as it is one of the few cases (alongside Germany) in which the voters didn't punish the government in charge, despite the country still facing a harsh economic situation and struggling to recover. In fact, Renzi has been even further encouraged to pursue his reform programme and obtained the legitimacy it previously lacked. Such a result, of course, is not only due to him. The party also stood united and put aside every internal dispute during the campaign and it achieved a massive mobilization of its traditional voters, as well as gaining new ones (mostly from Monti's moderate Scelta Europea, which was well below the 4% threshold). It is interesting to note that the overall campaign was far more European than in previous EP elections (even though it became more national in the last couple of weeks). In particular, PD chose to carry the PES logo, to make clear that any vote for them would ultimately translate in a vote for Schulz and for European Socialists. Overall, the newest PES member brought the largest increase of seats to the S&D Group (+8), thus becoming the strongest national delegation in it. This will make Renzi and Partito Democratico major brokers in the upcoming legislature.



© Council of the European Union

9 The EU Council appears to have already failed to accept the new role of the Parliament when electing the new Commission president.

With reference to the upcoming European challenges in different fields, like for the banking union, overall monetary and fiscal policy, common foreign and security policy etc., the purpose of an elected EU Commission President is to have a strong mandate from the majority of the European Parliament. This would also provide greater weight to parliamentary scrutiny during the overall legislative period and would further develop the role and importance of the EU parliament in the institutional set-up.



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10 The next step towards a new European democracy should be to change the current Europarty system.

The Europarties should from now on offer to their activists the opportunity to become formal members of their respective parties, i.e. for progressive activists, this means an opportunity to join the PES directly. The initiative of introducing the leading candidates in 2009 was a substantial step forward towards more democracy. The progressive movement should further challenge the trend and establish European Social Democracy as the real driving force for the European Union. The essential for the “mainstream” parties is to regain the power derived from democratic legitimacy; as only through democratic legitimacy a clear mandate for change can be obtained. Enhancing the opportunities for citizens to become members of a Europarty will be a clear step in that direction. One of the les-

sons from the elections is also that Europe needs more than discussions about oilcans, cucumber curves and chlorinated chickens. An attractive European Union has to concentrate on attractive concepts that convince the citizens and hence the voters. Therefore, it is important that national parties are not only concerned with EU issues just for the few months before the European elections but that they enhance the debate during the entire legislative term.

**“AN ATTRACTIVE
EUROPEAN UNION
HAS TO
CONCENTRATE
ON ATTRACTIVE
CONCEPTS.”**

AN ANALYSIS OF THE STATE OF THE LEFT AFTER THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

The rise of far-right parties was a surprise for no one. However, even though they garnered maximal exposure in the media, it does not necessarily mean that everything is lost for progressive parties. We must analyse the reasons of this populist surge and see what the left can do in order to recover and move forward.



Beyond the grand coalition

by Matjaž Nahtigal

In his analysis of the 2009 European Parliament elections, Simon Hix, from the London School of Economics and Political Science, argued that the outcome of

the elections was a disaster for Social Democrats with the smallest representation of socialists since the first elections in 1979. Among the key reasons for such an electoral outcome, Hix cited the adoption of many traditionally centre-left economic policies by the centre-right political parties, the fact that the voters in Europe exhibit a pattern of leaning rightwards in times of economic crisis, and the inability of the centre-left to nominate a common candidate for the Commission President.

On the basis of his analysis of the outcome of the election, he urged European Social Democrats to engage in a careful self-assessment in order to prepare for the elections in 2014.

There are two possible views when providing a preliminary assessment of the European parliamentary elections of 2014 with regard to European social democracy that remained close to the historically low levels of the 2009 elections. Both views deal with the question of why 'massive losses' of the EPP did not accrue to the European Social Democrats, but rather the seats went to the European populists and demagogues. The question about the low turnout should be also contemplated in this context.

SIMPLE ANSWERS TO COMPLEX PROBLEMS

One possible explanation for such an outcome would be to conclude that, in the midst of the protracted economic and social crisis – which has resulted in the highest levels of unemployment in many EU countries, especially for the young people; the rise of job precariousness and uncertainty for much of the European middle class; and cuts in education, health and regional funding, accompanied by an increase in general taxes – these hardships have opened the door for various demagogues and populists across Europe to provide simplistic explanations and propose even more simplistic solutions, creating an illusion of shortcuts to end the crisis. This view suggests that it is almost impossible to

confront the rise of populism and demagoguery, because people experiencing a period of hardship will always cling to illusory solutions, no matter how unrealistic they may be. There is, however, another and more substantive explanation regarding the electoral outcome. The European social democracy has largely failed to reconnect with the citizens, regions and member states in many places across the EU. It has failed to articulate and convey a comprehensive progressive alternative future toward a more inclusive, more balanced and more pluralistic EU.

CONTRADICTIONS & INSUFFICIENCIES

In the last five years of implicit grand coalition in the European Parliament, there were too many inconsistencies and missed opportunities to reorganize markets across Europe. For example, it was not sufficient to criticize the devastating effects of austerity while

adopting the excessively rigid and restrictive rules of the fiscal compact. There have been many other contradictions in the past five years, including support for massive bail-outs of large financial institutions but very limited support for retraining and re-skilling of workers; very limited support for educational opportunities for young and unemployed people; and very limited support for small and medium-size companies' access to various resources. The program of economic orthodoxy, imposed top-down, was the only real program that originated from European institutions; the rest were insufficient and half-hearted measures to compensate for the negative impacts of restrictive policies. The implicit grand coalition in the European parliament was an important part of this context. People across the EU understood this policy orientation, either directly, indirectly or intuitively. As a result, in the absence of credible social, economic and political alternatives

at the national and supranational levels, the opportunity to mobilize populists and demagogues across Europe emerged. A large majority of people across the EU stayed at home, disillusioned about the lack of programmatic alternatives and the lack of leadership.

CHANGE OR DISAPPEAR

The historical opportunity to revive progressivism in Europe did not succeed. The programs and practices of many social-democratic governments across Europe have adopted most of the elements of conservative opponents. The European social-democracy has failed to move beyond economic orthodoxy and pseudo-Keynesianism, as well as beyond classical federalism.

The frequently stated argument that the problem with the social democracy is that their conservative opponents adopted many traditional centre-left economic policies is inaccurate. In fact, the opposite is true.

The call for reinvention of European social democracy in order to address issues, challenges and opportunities for the twenty-first century should be put forward. Emerging social movements with new ideas, initiatives and energy should be embraced as partners rather than excluded. If conventional social democracy does not transform, open and enlarge its social base, it risks becoming a marginal political force, much to the delight of populists, demagogues, and well-organized interest groups.

Matjaž Nahtigal is a senior scientific fellow at UP ZRS and associate professor at the Faculty of Management of the University of Primorska, Slovenia.



Revolution for real Democracy in Barcelona on October 15, 2011.



Being against austerity is not enough

by Patrick Diamond

M

ay 25th was a bad night for the EP and a mixed night for the Socialists across Europe.

There is no room at all for complacency. Social democratic parties in Europe have spent the last six years arguing that the financial crisis would lead to an inexorable ideological shift to the left. It hasn't happened; after all, the vote share for centre-left parties across the EU actually declined by 0.2 per cent since the 2009 elections. There are two key strategic lessons that appear to stand out.

THE LEFT MUST STAND FOR ITS VALUES

The first lesson is that social democrats need a robust message on the economy, more than simply being against austerity. It is true that premature and overly aggressive austerity programmes have caused irreparable damage to growth and jobs especially in Southern Europe, but at a time of uncertainty voters want to know that the left can be a competent manager of the economy – taking tough decisions and preparing Europe for a competitive future. This has to be combined with a restatement of the left's traditional commitment to full employment, greater fairness in wages and living standards, and support for manufacturing industry as well as high

value services. The challenge for social democratic parties is to combine a politics of fair distribution with a politics of dynamic production that increases the growth potential of the economy. Our role is not just to divide up the pie more equitably, but to grow it in the first place. That requires co-ordinated action at European level – a European infra-

“THE CHALLENGE IS TO COMBINE POLITICS OF FAIR DISTRIBUTION WITH POLITICS OF DYNAMIC PRODUCTION”

structure strategy; a programme to upgrade and modernise education systems, especially higher education; strategic investment in manufacturing and an industrial policy for the growth sectors of the future; a globalisation stabilisation fund to support regions and areas which have been disproportionately affected by economic restructuring; and a long-term commitment to science and innovation. These programmes might be funded by an EU-wide financial transactions tax – continuing to shift the burden of taxation from

incomes to unearned capital, assets and wealth.

TACKLE RIGHT-WING TURFS

The second lesson of the European elections is that progressive parties cannot afford to ignore the contested politics of patriotism, identity and nationhood. The debate about immigration raises difficult questions for our parties: we are committed to openness and tolerance as well as convinced that economically with an ageing population Western Europe will need more, not less, migration in the future, but many of our traditional supporters have come to believe that immigration threatens their livelihood and way of life. We have to find a means of talking openly about immigration which does not concede the case for openness, but which addresses the need for competently managed systems and controls that protect wages, preventing a 'race to the bottom'. The case for the EU is another aspect of this dilemma: the left has to show that by pooling sovereignty rather than resorting to nation-state social democracy, we can best meet the challenges of the modern world in a way that upholds the imperatives of equity and fairness.

Patrick Diamond is a Lecturer in Public Policy at the Queen Mary University of London and Policy Network.



Who is the alternative?

by Oriol Bartomeus

The European election tried to answer one simple question: who was the alternative to the economic policies the European Union has been applying since the crisis began in 1998. This plain question received the simplest answer: not the socialists.

A TWO FACED-COALITION

Although the strategy of the 28 social democrats and socialist parties was based on an unambiguous opposition between right politics and left politics, that means on the idea that socialists had different answers to the austerity policies coming from the conservative side, an important part of the electorate has not bought that idea. The voters have looked for an alternative to more radical options, leaving the social democrat parties together with the conservatives as a two-faced coalition that develop the same economic and social policies.

The 2014 election was expected to be a turning point for the left. The 2009 election showed the weakening of all those social democrat parties that faced the financial crisis while in office, and that applied the program to save financial companies at a great social cost. Five years later, the so-

cialists and democrats decided to present themselves as the alternative to the unfair policies that have broken the social consensus in Europe.

A CLEAR CHOICE

Voters chose other parties to show their opposition to the "austericide" policies. Some of them chose the not-so-new populist and nationalists parties from the far right (like the FN in France or the UKIP in United Kingdom), other have gone to the far left parties (as Siriza in Greece or the indignados heirs of Podemos in Spain). Of course, they are not the same kind of organizations and political projects, they do not defend the same ideas, but they are the response to a same trend that can be visible all over the European countries, and that is the trend against the establishment, from which the social democrats are seen as an important part of.

That is probably the most important lesson we have to extract from this election. When voters got fed up of the "There is no alternative" motto and looked for an answer, when they finally mobilized (just half of the electorate, it is true) and tried to do something to end with social recession, they did not look at the socialists. We are not the alternative to all these people, we are part of the "problem".

FAMILIAR FACES

If we take a first look at the composition of this vote to the far right and far left options, we see some familiar faces. In France, a significant part of the FN electorate is composed of working people, afraid of their future, who search refuge on the nationalist protectionism and the hate of Brussels' bureaucracy. A similar profile we can find in the UKIP voters or in the Austrian Liberals or the Dutch De Wilders. They are the left behind, the ones who suffer the thinning of the welfare policies and the competence of the foreigners for the less and less subsidies. On the other side we have new generations with University degree who are unemployed or have to work in unstable intermittent poorly paid jobs. They have also looked for answers out of a "system" that has shown to be incapable of maintaining their living standards. They are the force de frappe of the new movements on the left.

Both of them, the dwindling working class in their banlieues and the impoverished middle class trying to keep their heads out of the water have been and must be a significant portion of the social democrat vote. They have given us a clear-cut warning.

Oriol Bartomeus is a Board Member of the *Fundació Rafael Campalans*.

THE NUMBERS ARE IN









The 2014 European elections results



A NEW THIRD FORCE IN THE PARLIAMENT









EVOLUTION OF THE PROJECTION OF SEATS IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Left side: 2009

EPP: 274	
S&D: 196	
ALDE: 83	
ECR: 57	
Greens/EFA: 57	
GUE/NGL: 35	
EFD: 31	
NI/Others: 33	



Right side: 2014

EPP: 221	
S&D: 191	
ALDE: 59	
ECR: 55	
Greens/EFA: 53	
GUE/NGL: 50	
EFD: 33	
NI/Others: 89	

DIFFERENCE IN NUMBER OF TOTAL SEATS BY GROUP

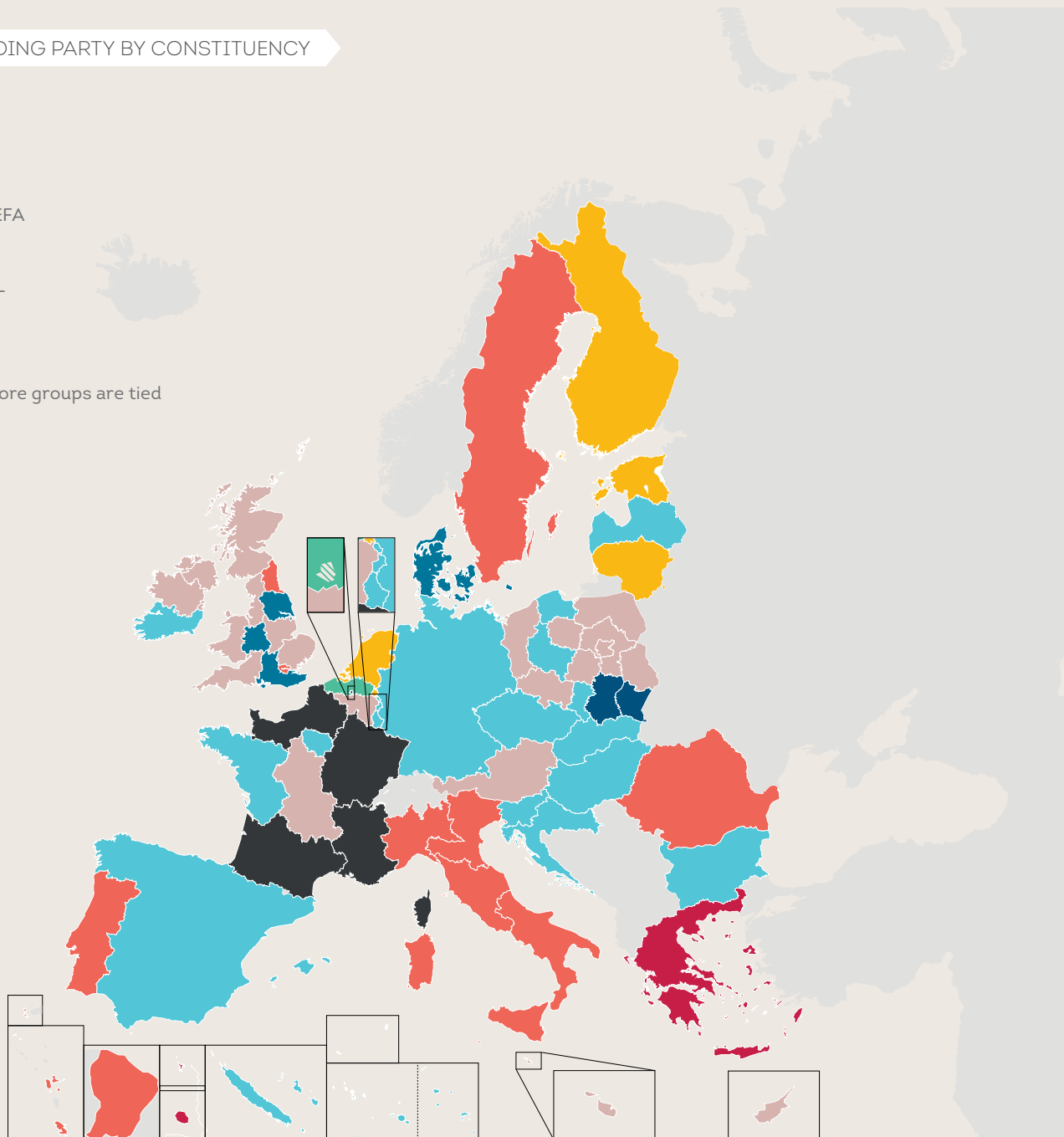


A NEW POLITICAL CARTOGRAPHY

LEADING PARTY BY CONSTITUENCY

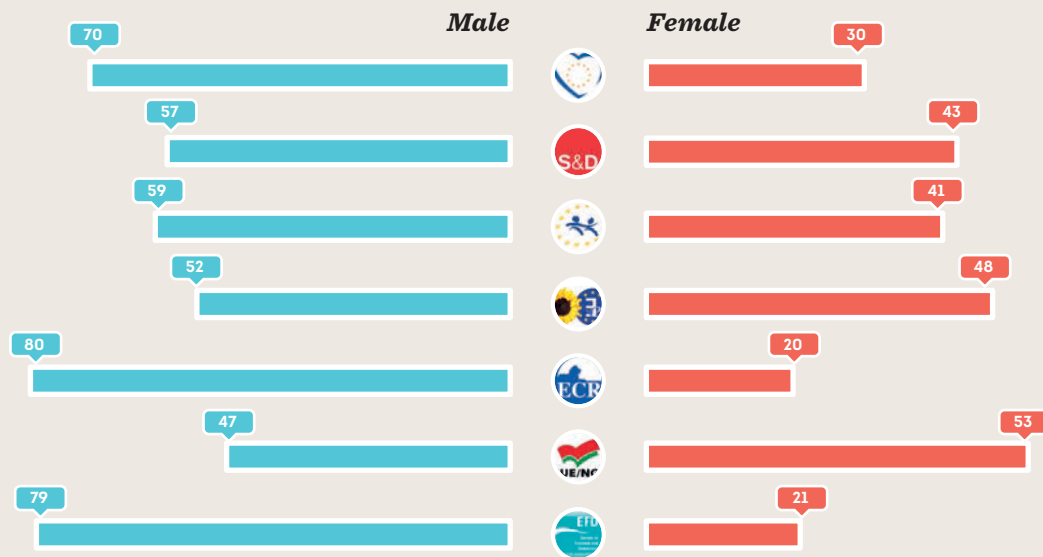
- EPP
- S&D
- ALDE
- Greens/EFA
- ECR
- GUE/NGL
- EFD
- NI
- Two or more groups are tied

Map: © IgnisFatuus



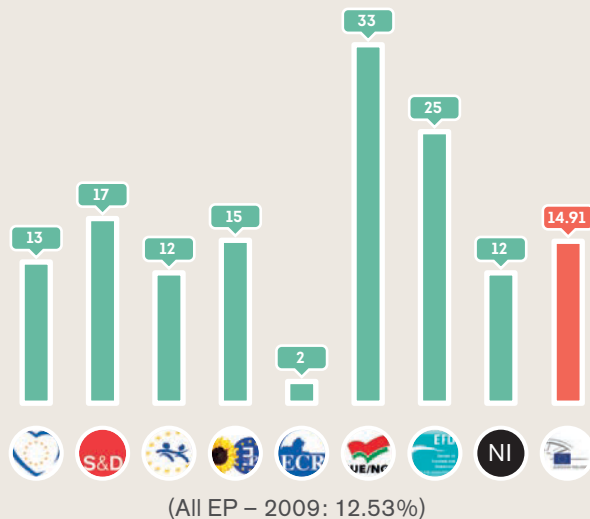
A FAR CRY FROM PARITY

GENDER BY EP GROUPS - 2014 (IN %)



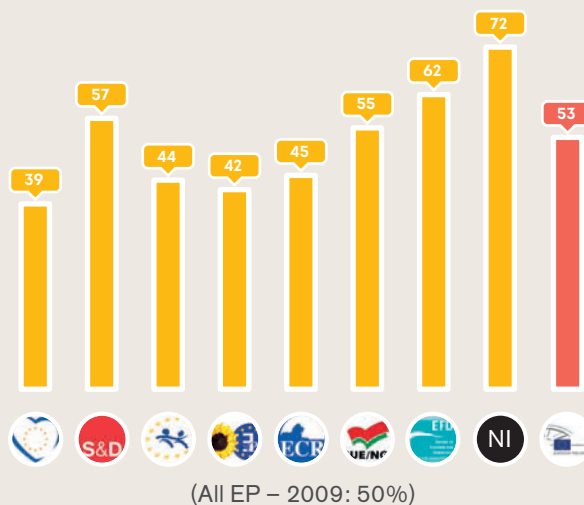
A SLIGHTLY YOUNGER PARLIAMENT

MEPS UNDER 40-YEARS-OLD
AT THE TIME OF ELECTION - 2014 (IN %)



NEW AND FAMILIAR FACES

RATE OF MEP RENEWAL (IN %)



2014 ELECTIONS RESULTS

What impact for EU policy-making?

The results of the 2014 elections show that the new European Parliament will be more polarised than the previous one, as centre and mainstream parties have lost ground, and extreme and radical parties to the left and right of the political spectrum have increased their representation.



by Doru Frantescu & Joan Manuel Lanfranco Pari

In comparison to the 7th legislature, the centre-left and the centre-right will not manage to gather a majority on their own. Moreover, there is no longer one single dominant political group, as was the case of the EPP during 2009-2014. The sum of extreme-right, Eurosceptic, Euro realist and EU-critical parties could represent around 30% of the new European Parliament. However, the competition to be the voice of Euroscepticism could endanger both EFD and the Le Pen-Wilders alliance (EAF, from the pan-European political party European Alliance for Freedom).

SOUND AND FURY

Even if the far-right does not manage to form an parliamentary group, their presence will be noticeable at EU and national level. At EU level, they will not have the numerical strength to block EU legislation, though they probably continue pursuing a rather vocal activity, taking advantage of speaking time at plenary sessions and submitting written and oral questions to the European Commission and the Council. At national level, their influence could be more noticeable, questioning the stances of national governments and, by extension, of MEPs from Member States concerned. The stronger presence of MEPs that oppose strengthening the EU institutions could put migration on the Parliament's agenda more often, and it is likely that the EU's external action as a whole will be more fre-

quently questioned. In terms of the Parliament's work, the new scenario means that the first few months of the term will be more agitated than usual, and that the outcomes of a number of dossiers are unpredictable. No matter how possible coalitions are put together, neither centre-right nor centre-left will have an absolute majority to pass their policy preferences. Therefore, the most likely scenario is a grand coalition between the winning EPP and S&D, with support of the Liberals and occasional support from the Greens/EFA. This new correlation of forces will have an impact on EU policies, starting with the confirmation of the next European Commission President.

INEVITABLE COALITIONS

On issues where the big groups, EPP and S&D, can agree easier, such as constitutional affairs and EU budget, they are likely to go for a 'grand coalition'. Given that even though they only have a fragile absolute majority of around 55%, they will probably invite the ALDE Group to join them and create a pro-European 'super-grand coalition'. However, on issues where the votes in the 2009-2014 term have shown that there are stronger ideological divisions, such as economic affairs, environment/energy, international trade (e.g. TTIP), internal market and civil liberties/security, it is not clear who will get the upper hand, and therefore what the

shape of the dossiers in these areas is going to be. The outcome of votes in these policy areas will depend on the internal discipline of the centrist groups (which vary from one policy area to another), but also on the positions of the new national parties, including the eurosceptic ones (among which there is a great variety of opinions in the above-mentioned areas). The European Parliament's positions are likely to slightly shift away from strict budget-discipline-oriented doctrine and allow more public spending at the level of national governments. The support for the continuation of the TTIP negotiations is unclear, as both the far-left and far-right oppose it, while the Greens/EFA and the S&D Group have raised objections concerning environmental and social standards, and oppose the integration of the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) in the agreement. A majority of MEPs are likely to support the creation, also via EU-funded projects, of a pan-European energy infrastructure. Such a majority is likely to favour the continuation of nuclear energy in the EU energy mix, while supporting new measures for renewables, energy efficiency and CO₂ reduction.

Doru Frantescu is Policy Director and Co-founder at VoteWatch Europe.
Joan Manuel Lanfranco Pari is Policy and Communications Manager at VoteWatch Europe.

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national and European standpoints.*



AUSTRIA

In the middle of Europe



by Georg Hubmann

The result of the elections in Austria was very similar to the European trend: a neck-and-neck race between Conservatives and Social Democrats, and anti-Europeans coming in third position, followed by Greens and Liberals.

The participation also lay within the European average.

AUSTRIA AND THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

The election result and the loss of Martin Schulz in the race for the Presidency of the Commission was also a loss for the Social Democrats in Austria. The Austrian Peoples Party won the election and will again appoint the Austrian member of the Commission, moreover the European debate about the financial transaction tax and the discussion of taxation of wealth in Austria might get stuck again. Both are main topics for Social Democrats in Austria and their performance in the coalition government with the Peoples Party. Beside this, the election campaign triggered a political debate on some European topics that were not really discussed in Austrian media before, for instance poverty and European migration policy as well as the European constitution.

RE-LAUNCHING EUROPE

The crucial challenge for the next mandate in Europe is recovering growth and employment. If the new Commission and the Parliament can handle these questions and bring young people back into employment, then the next five years will be good for Europe.

“THE CRUCIAL CHALLENGE FOR THE NEXT MANDATE IN EUROPE IS RECOVERING GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT.”

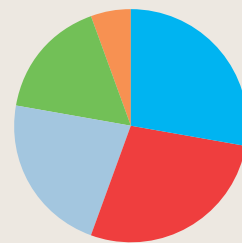
European Peoples Party and Socialists and Democrats must cooperate to tackle these questions and bring Europe back to track. Young people need to be able to live their dreams and develop their independency. If we are able to convince the current generation of young people to view the European Union as a promising political project, which works in their favour, there will be a good chance to re-launch Europe and stop the anti European parties after their recent election wins.

KNOCKING OUT THE VOTE

At various events, the Austrian election campaign focused on establishing a personal contact to the voters on the street. Many local social democratic organizations supported the campaign. Analysis shows, that the personal contact was the most effective tool. Especially phone calls and door to door canvassing brought local results above the national trend. Due to the low voter participation and the euroscepticism of many old people,

party members were the main target group for these activities. Evidence shows that face-to-face contact was the most effective strategy in this campaign.

RESULTS



■ People's Party	5
■ Social Democratic Party	5
■ Freedom Party	4
■ The Greens.....	3
■ New Austria	1



BELGIUM

A new pro-European awareness



by Ariane Fontenelle

In contrast to the majority of EU member states, Belgium organised three elections on Sunday, 25 May 2014: European, federal and regional. This unusual situation was largely due to the impact of the federal vote on the very future of the country. It may also have given the impression that European issues were somewhat overshadowed in the campaign. However, the 2008 crisis has made people more aware of the importance of European affairs.

VLAAMS BELANG LOSES GROUND

Unlike in other member states, our country was not affected by the rise of Eurosceptic and xenophobic parties. Compared with the 2009 elections, the far-right party, Vlaams Belang, lost over 5.6% of votes cast and a seat in the European Parliament. Among the Dutch-speaking electoral college, it was the nationalist party N-VA that topped the polls, drawing votes from the pro-fascist right. Among the French-speaking electoral college, the Parti Socialiste—in power for over 25 years—received the most votes while the Ecolo greens in the south lost over 4% of votes cast (nearly half of their electors) and one seat.

THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

The Europhobic upsurge reflects a lack of confidence among European citizens with regard to Europe. We need to shift towards a Europe underpinned by solidarity and stable employment, and to stop playing citizens off against one another. It must be built around industrial policy and energy

issues. EU institutions require significant reform, and I would not rule out the creation of a new “convention on the future of Europe” during this administration.

A EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN

The nomination of Martin Schulz and other candidates in the running to become the next President of the European Commission marks the most radical change compared with previous ballots. By giving each Euro-

pean political party a single official representative, the process has made it possible to tackle initiatives for the future of Europe more directly and to develop a real European election campaign. In nominating these candidates, European political parties have once again shown that they are the representatives of European citizens and that they must have a greater say in choosing the next President of the European Commission and in putting European democracy into practice.

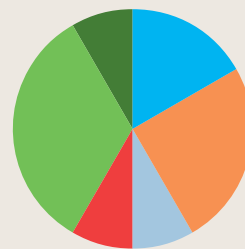
RESULTS

French college



■ Socialist Party	3
■ Reformist Movement	3
■ Ecolo	1
■ Humanist Democratic Centre	1

Dutch college



■ Christian Democratic & Flemish	2
■ Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats	3
■ Flemish Interest	1
■ Socialist Party Different	1
■ New Flemish Alliance	4
■ Green!	1



BULGARIA

Bulgaria remains politically moderate



by Mihail Mirchev

Euroscepticism and far-right nationalism did not manage to win in Bulgaria. None of the successful party formations dared to offer an honest and aggressive eurosceptic election platform, though there is a 40% eurosceptic share in the electoral body. Therefore, eurosceptic citizens didn't find political representatives to vote for. This is one of the main reasons for the 15% decrease in turnout this year, in comparison with the 2009 European elections.

It is the same case in the right-nationalistic space. Its potential voters make for about 12% of the population, but both nationalist formations collapsed with a total of 3% of the votes. The marginal pro-fascist Bulgarian party did not even participate in these elections, and thus its voice was not heard. Bulgaria remains a politically-moderate zone in Europe but populism is rising at its centre-right wing. Two populist parties ended at first and fourth places, winning 8 of 17 Bulgarian seats in the European Parliament.

NEW POLITICAL BALANCES

The Bulgarian Socialist Party is on the verge of losing its monopoly at the centre-left side of the political spectrum. About 20% of its partisan base has been cut. There are two left-wing contestants: the first one is the new political formation of the ex-socialist leader and formal president of Bulgaria. They gathered two times less votes than what they

expected. However, they are going on with their ambition to form an alternative centre-left party, with an anti-BSP orientation. The second one is a group of marginal far-left parties with a potential to raise their rate. But eventually, they received insufficient votes.

EUROPE IN THE NEXT MANDATE

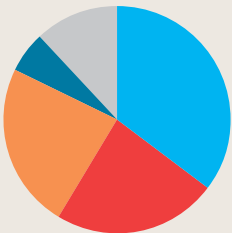
The results of the European elections show that the EU faces three crucial challenges. The first one is economic stabilization. Re-industrialisation and development of agriculture and tourism are extremely important for countries like Bulgaria. Of course, all this should be done with high-tech means and quality. The second challenge is to restore civil confidence to Brussels authorities and central power institutions. And the third is an ideological reappraisal of the concepts of national sovereignty within an effective European Union, partial economic protectionism within the open European space, and the deterring of neo-fascism and neo-nazism within real democracy, as well as social tolerance.

ALONG THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

The election campaign in Bulgaria was unexpectedly quiet and lifeless, without a European accent. It was focused on domestic issues of political, economic, and ethno-nationalist character. It was conducted with a high degree of personalization, in an emotional rather than rational discussion of the main issues, risks and perspectives.

Martin Schulz as a candidate for President of the European Commission was well presented as a political symbol during the European campaign in Bulgaria, and the BSP spread a series of appealing visual propaganda forms. However, the three European debates were hardly noticed in Bulgarian media.

RESULTS



	Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria ...	6
	Coalition for Bulgaria	4
	Movement for Rights and Freedoms	4
	Reformist Bloc	1
	Bulgaria Without Censorship.....	2



CROATIA

A new green arrival growing from what's left

The crisis of the governing left-liberal coalition provided fertile ground for the reinvention of the left in Croatia.



by Tonči Kursar

The last EU Election in Croatia brought a significant rise of support for the HDZ (the Croatian Democratic Union, a central-right party), and a modest defeat for the SDP (Social-Democratic Party). The HDZ and its coalition took six mandates (almost 42% of the votes) while the SDP and its Kukuriku coalition achieved four (30%). As Croatia has 11 mandates, the last available mandate was won by the party known as ORaH (the Sustainable Development for Croatia), a new green party which was founded by Mirela Holy, a former minister of the environment in the current left-wing government. I think that the SDP passed relatively well, given the particularly poor condition of the Croatian economy and the rising ambitions of its left-wing competitors, the ORaH as well as the Croatian Labour Party. In fact, the Croatian Labour Party didn't even manage to reach the 5% threshold but the ORaH established itself as a significant alternative to the SDP. Not only did the ORaH get almost 10% of the votes but it also managed to mobilize new, younger voters. The ORaH has been able to unite many of the green voters for the first time in the Croatian political history as well as to attract those who are disappointed with the political style of the SDP and the lack of achievement of its coalition

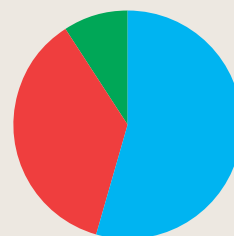
government. Nevertheless, Croatia is turning to the right even though there is no extreme variant of the latter in the Croatian parliament.

MINIMAL EUROPEAN EFFECTS

Even though the HTV (the Croatian state television) broadcasted two debates of the candidates for the EU Commission Presidency, their real impact was barely noticeable among the general public. Regardless of a higher turnout for this election (25%), in comparison to last year's EU election (20.84%), it remains particularly low according to textbook expectations for a liberal democracy. I think that it could be related to the apathy of Croatian voters and the widespread feeling among them that the institutions of formal democracy (regardless as to whether it is a national or European level), are not capable to cope well enough with the current economic crisis. Therefore, the latter became a political one, which opens a space for the radical right-wingers to represent themselves as the saviours of their national cause from the expensive, alienating, and immigrant-friendly EU. In my opinion, it is going to be the main struggle of European central-left parties, one in which they should find a politically sensible response to the extreme right-wing challenge.

“CROATIA IS TURNING TO THE RIGHT EVEN THOUGH THERE IS NO EXTREME VARIANT.”

RESULTS



■ Croatian Democratic Union et. al	6
■ Kukuriku coalition	4
■ Croatian Sustainable Development	1



CYPRUS

Abstention: the main characteristic of euro-elections



by Lefki Panteli

With the financial crisis that hit Cyprus being only one year ago, the main characteristic of euro-elections in Cyprus was abstention. This abstention is firstly due to the deep disappointment of the people of Cyprus towards the Euro-group's decision to impose a trim on people's deposits and subsequently damage the banking system. One of the country's largest banks collapsed and people's savings were lost in one day. The second factor is people's disdain for the Cypriot political system, which citizens hold responsible for the economic crisis. Four of the six MEPs were elected for the first time, including Demetres Papadakis, the new MEP of EDEK. However, the allocation of seats among the four bigger parties remained the same. This could be an indication that traditional voters did vote. This also means that contrariwise, nontraditional voters and younger people chose abstention over voting to express their discontent.

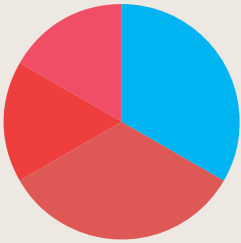
A FALLOUT OF AUSTERITY

It is certain that the abstention of European citizens, as well as the strengthening of Eurosceptics and right-wing parties, is due to people's dissatisfaction with the policies implemented by the EU. It is the consequence of austerity policies, along with hard fiscal discipline, and reduced wages and pensions. These policies led Europe into its

deepest recession since the 1930s, with massive unemployment and social misery. Therefore, those who make the decisions in Brussels must 'interpret' the results of the elections correctly. The direction of the Union must change towards policies of development, job creation, social cohesion, and solidarity. In the case of Cyprus, people's frustration was expressed as abstention. Consequently people did not give a 'protest vote' to extremist parties. The campaign of the Party of European Socialists (PES) abetted the campaigns of national socialist, social-democratic, and labour parties. It was intense and inclusive and well-presented by the social media. However, there is room for improvement. For example, the leadership of PES could tour in all EU member states, with no exception, to support the campaigns run by its members. This would allow for the PES campaign to integrate national member parties and have a greater impact on citizens. Especially considering that in Cyprus, Turkish Cypriots who reside in the occupied areas of the island were allowed to vote for the first time, via special election centers. The elections are now over, but they taught us a lesson: there is work to be done. At the moment, the duty of the PES is to act within the European Parliament and other institutions to promote the policies adopted at the PES conference in Rome last March. There

should be a visible distinction between our policies and those of conservatives and Eurosceptics. EDEK will be actively participating to the Alliance of Socialists and Democrats and we will be using the PES Manifesto as our guide to create a better Europe for all the European citizens. It is up to us to turn our words – the PES Manifesto – into actions: developmental policies.

RESULTS



- Democratic Rally/European Party 2
- Progressive Party of Working People 2
- Democratic Party..... 1
- Movement for Social Democracy/Ecological and Environmental Movement 1



CZECH REPUBLIC

Further integration is needed

The main takeaway from the European elections in the Czech Republic is that the country recorded the second-lowest turnout (18.2%) of all member states.



by Patrik Eichler

Support for European integration varies among the various Czech political parties, but among those in favour, there is a distinct lack of debate on exactly how Europe should be governed.

RESULTS AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

The clear winners were the pro-European parties: the Social Democrats (14.7%, 4 MEPs, S&D), the conservative TOP09 party (15.95%, 4 MEPs, EPP) and the Christian Democrats (9.95%, 3 MEPs, EPP). The Communist Party (10.98%, 3 MEPs, GUE/NGL) more or less supports integration. One notable exception is the populist movement led by billionaire Andrej Babiš, ANO/YES 2011 (16.13%, 4 MEPs, most likely ALDE), but even it could be considered pro-European within the context of Czech politics.

In addition, two steadfast opponents of European integration, the national-liberal ODS (7.67%, 2 MEPs, ECR) and the fanatically neoliberal Free Citizens' Party (5.24%, 1 MEP, not clear yet), scored their first-ever success in state elections.

The Social and Christian Democrats partnered with ANO 2011 to form a government coalition. We can expect continued support for European integration, although the new government has yet to formulate

"THE EXISTENCE OF APES "SPITZEN-CANDIDATE" WAS ONLY MARGINALLY NOTICED IN CZECH CAMPAIGN."

its policy on Europe, so it is difficult to speculate as to what concrete steps it will take. The coalition agreement does however include plans to prepare for adoption of the euro.

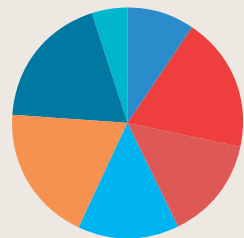
MARTIN SCHULZ'S ROLE

The media explained the new system of candidates for President of the European Commission, but Czechs took scant notice of Martin Schulz. The PES' Spitzenkandidat was barely mentioned by the Czech Social Democrats, save at a public meeting he attended in Prague, and his "Knock the vote" campaign even less.

Voter apathy was the main factor in the election results, enabling the breakthrough by the Free Citizens' Party and increasing the share of votes won by the Christian Democrats, which both have a strong voter base. It also played a role in the gains made by TOP09 and ODS.

The two main groups of voters were those who come into contact with the EU in their daily lives and loyal supporters of small parties.

RESULTS



- Civic Democratic Party 2
- Social Democratic Party 4
- Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia 3
- Christian and Democratic Union – People's Party 3
- Action of Dissatisfied Citizens 4
- Tradition Responsibility Prosperity 4
- Free Citizens Party 1



DENMARK

Right-wing populism triumphs amid growing insecurity among Danes

The Danish People's Party won with a landslide, whereas Social Democrats and the broader Left lost out. While the result of the Danish elections is part of a European tendency, it would be too simplistic to blame the result on euro-scepticism alone.



by Kristian Weise

This year's EU-elections were expected to be a tough round for the Danish centre-left. Though several of the central themes in public debates before the elections were social ones – such as the so-called social dumping and welfare tourism –, progressives were often on the defensive during these discussions. Thus, the undisputed winner of the elections is the nationalist Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti). Its leading candidate, Morten Messerschmidt, got no less than 465,758 personal votes. This is quite a lot in a small country like Denmark where only 56.4 percent of an electorate of 4.1 million (out of a population of 5.6 million) voted. This also means that Mr. Messerschmidt broke the record for most personal votes in the Danish history of European elections. His fellow party members all got less than 10,000 personal votes.

RETREAT OF CENTRE-LEFT

The pro-European centre-left got 5 out of 13 seats while the EU-sceptical centre-left alliance, Folkebevægelsen mod EU, gained one seat. All in all, the centre-left captured 44.6 percent of the votes. For the Social Democrats this election was

another step in a steady decline since their heyday at European elections ten years ago. In 2004, with former PM Poul Nyrup Rasmussen as the leading candidate, the party won 32.6 percent of the votes. In 2009 it was 21.5 percent. This year the tally only reached 19.1 percent. The Socialist People's Party ended up with 10.9 percent of the votes, which is 5 percentage point lower than their result in 2009, but which is also way better than expected just a couple of months ago. However, it was not only the Left that took a beating in these elections. Denmark's leading right-wing party, Venstre, whose leaders held the position of prime minister from 2001 to 2011, got 16.7 percent. In 2009 they won 20.2 percent of the votes. And in several polls for national elections they have been close to 30 percent over the last couple of years.

Part of the reason for the demise of Venstre should however be found in a personal crisis of its leader, former PM Lars Løkke Rasmussen, who has been fighting criticism for spending party funds on his own wardrobe and a private holiday. This situation, which culminated in the week leading up to the elections, should also be

seen as one of the reasons why Mr. Messerschmidt and his colleagues were able to get the result they did.

SOCIAL DUMPING AND WELFARE TOURISM WORRIES ELECTORATE

The elections in Denmark were marked by intensive discussions around so-called social dumping and welfare tourism. Integration of the European labour markets and the free movement of people have not come without challenges, and are seen as increasingly worrying by the electorate. In a new survey conducted by Cevea, 55 percent of the Danish population stated that they fear that citizens from other European countries will migrate to Denmark with the sole purpose of getting a share of the Danish welfare benefits. At the same time 58 percent of Danes perceive the possibility for other EU-citizens to make use of the Danish welfare system as a threat towards the latter.

This is indeed a high percentage. However, it does not mean that all of the Danish population is without any sense of solidarity towards other European citizens. According to the survey, 49 percent of the Danish people believe that citizens from

other European countries ought to have access to the Danish healthcare system on the same terms as the Danes. 41 percent are against.

When it comes to other EU citizens gaining access to unemployment insurance benefits on the same ground as Danes, 44 percent of the Danes concur and believe that they should have the opportunity to do so.

Overall, the signal from this survey and the general debate in Denmark is that the Danish population is concerned about the future of welfare and the influence on it of the EU-institutions. Furthermore, it seems clear that Brussels has become even more disconnected from ordinary citizens and local life during the last five years.

A GROWING GAP BETWEEN PEOPLE AND POLITICIANS

The growing gap between the institutions of the EU and the citizens of the member states leaves room for right-wing populism. When the distance between politicians and ordinary people grows, the result is most often radical but easy choices: voting for people who offer some kind of reassurance and genuine concern as well as appear to be at the level of oneself.



Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Danish Prime Minister

There seems to be no doubt that a great part of Danish voters are disenchanted and feel let down by both their local politicians and the EU's response to the financial and economic crisis. While the attention should have been on saving jobs and strengthening social safety nets, Merkel and Sarkozy talked about the confidence of the global markets summit after summit.

TRADE UNIONS CONCERNED ABOUT INFLUENCE ON POLICY

The success of right-wing populists in Denmark is seen with much skepticism from Denmark's strong trade union movement. In fact, the day after the elections the traditional LO trade union movement expressed fear for the consequences of the massive success of the Danish People's Party.

The president of LO believes that the EU-skeptical party will complicate and obstruct the political struggles against social dumping and for better rights for Danish workers. He is supported by several other presidents of Danish trade union federations who point out that the Danish People's Party's might promise to fight social dumping but that their critical attitude towards the Single Market and free trade is a serious obstacle in the struggle against it.

According to one trade union leader, the success of EU-critical parties in both Denmark and Europe means that trade unions need to stand together and increase their cooperation – both within each member state, but also across borders.

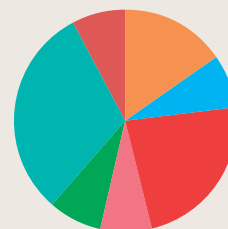
A LOST BATTLE NEED NOT LEAD TO A LOST WAR

This round of EU-elections has showed that the rise of right-wing populists is more than a temporary phenomenon. The elections come with a warning that Social Democrats and the centre-left in general have far from solved the problem of connecting with disenchanted voters.

More than half of the people voting for the Danish People's Party should be stable Social Democratic voters. They are people who fear for losing their jobs and who value a strong social safety net. People who believe that employers shouldn't be able to exploit workers by paying them less than what is the norm. Disempowered citizens who worry for the future and look for someone to present a solution to those fears. Sadly, the centre-left hasn't been able to provide an answer to them which includes co-operation within the EU as a positive difference.

The task for Social Democrats will be to show that unemployment rates matter more than interest spreads. That the plight of ordinary people is more important than the conditions of financial markets. That they understand the concerns of ordinary people and that they are ready to act on them.

RESULTS



■ Liberal Party	2
■ Conservative People's Party	1
■ Social Democrats	3
■ Social Liberal Party.....	1
■ Socialist People's Party	1
■ People's Party	4
■ People's Movement against the EU	1



ESTONIA

Europe? What Europe?

The 3rd European Parliament elections since Estonia joined the European Union in 2004 took place on the 25th of May. In reality nothing changed as all the European level political groups kept the same number of seats.



by Jörgen Siil

This time, the EP elections in Estonia did not have a bigger impact on national politics, as nothing really changed.

The only visible difference was that the two ALDE parties swapped their number of seats, but their group still maintained three MEP-s, i.e. half of Estonian seats. Another noteworthy issue in the results was that this time the Chair of Centre Party Leader and mayor of Tallinn did not get elected, and he was surpassed by his party colleague, a representative from the Estonian Russian minority. This is also another important development, as it is the first time that someone from national minorities gets elected to the EP in Estonia.

THE RESULTS

Otherwise the election result confirmed the existing situation: all four parliamentary parties are still represented in the EP with one seat (and one ALDE party with two) and independent candidate (who sits with the Greens) Indrek Tarand managed to get re-elected (though with considerably less votes). The other independent candidates (including one MEP from ALDE) and the small nationalist or left-green parties did not get elected. Reform Party's newly elected MEP, former Prime Minister Andrus Ansip was nominated right after the elections as Estonian Commissioner candidate.

The turnout dropped from 44% to 36.5%, probably due to exceptionally good weather and the lack of a real election debate. However, this still remains higher than the 27% participation of the 2004 elections.

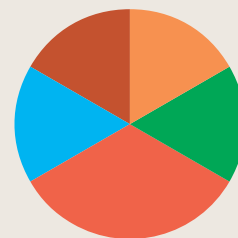
The share of votes for Social Democrats (SDE) was lower than expected, considering that the party has been either first or second in national polls for some time, but only fourth in the EP elections, though the difference with the IRL Party (EPP) was merely 1,000 votes.

EUROPEAN INFLUENCE

What was the influence of the European campaign on these results and how to assess its effectiveness? The European-level political parties and their campaign were not really an issue in the Estonian election campaign, as usual. Of course, these issues are always mentioned, but they did not influence the result. The only party that tried to integrate the European dimension into their campaign was the IRL who drove around with Juncker-minibus. In the beginning of the campaign, Schulz was attacked a bit for being too careful with Russia in the Ukrainian crisis, which however was not an issue anymore afterwards. None of the Spitzenkandidaten visited Estonia during the campaign and only Guy Verhofstadt did it before the campaign

in order to get endorsement from Centre Party (Schulz had done a visit last autumn as President of the EP). So in reality the European campaign has minimum influence on the election result in Estonia.

RESULTS



Centre Party	1
Independent.....	1
Reform Party	2
Pro Patria and Res Publica Union.....	1
Social Democratic Party	1



FINLAND

Pro-Europe in a nation state way

Finland did not see the landslide of Euroscepticism that many expected and others feared. Instead the results strengthen an intergovernmental approach to the European Union.



by Mikko Majander

The prospects looked good. The parties nominated heavy-weight candidates, including one former prime minister and four ministers of the present government, even the European commissioner for economic affairs. Media, both television and radio as well as the main newspapers, made a great effort to explain the workings of the European Parliament and the different Europarties and groupings. Against this background, the Finnish turnout of 41 percent was a clear disappointment. The European elections lacked an electrifying dimension. Even the populist Eurosceptic True Finns failed to mobilise as their share of the vote dropped from 19.1 in general elections 2011 to 12.9 percent.

NOT MUCH EUROPEANISATION

The nomination of the top candidates to lead the new commission did not Europeanise the campaigns. Olli Rehn's role as one of ALDE's front men was naturally well recognised but the visits of Martin Schulz and Jean-Claude Juncker to Helsinki were hardly noticed. More interesting was always to speculate whether Finland's prime minister Jyrki Katainen could obtain a central EU post as a compromise candidate of the European People's Party. The left faced a slight radicalisation. The Social Democrats continued a slide towards their

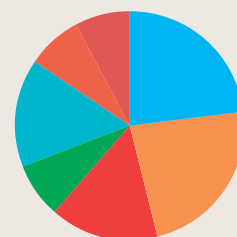
"THE FINNISH TURNOUT OF 41 PERCENT WAS A CLEAR DISAPPOINTMENT."

all time low 12.3 percent, while the Left Alliance bounced back to the Parliament with 9.3 percent support, becoming equally strong as the Greens that arguably led the most federalist campaign. All of them remain far behind the Conservatives (22.6 %) and the Centre (19.7 %).

NOT MUCH EUROSEPTICISM EITHER

Taken together, Finnish results did not actually strengthen Euroscepticism – but instead boosted intergovernmental orientation. A clear mainstream holds steadfast to the view that European solidarity does not require eurobonds or other forms of joint liability. Each and every member needs to keep its own state in order, including the debt loads. One fears that the elections pushed the European Parliament towards further fragmentation. That would not provide a great base for the democratic legitimisation the European Union lacks. Thus, the Finns are likely to keep their politics in a national framework.

RESULTS



■ National Coalition Party.....	3
■ Centre Party	3
■ Social Democratic Party.....	2
■ Green League.....	1
■ True Finns.....	2
■ Swedish People's Party	1
■ Left Alliance.....	1



What's wrong with France?



by Gilles Finchelstein

All the conditions were in place for the results to be ugly – bad for the government, and good for the extreme right.

Ugly they have been. Indeed, since 1981, that is for the past thirty-three years, every presidential or parliamentary election has brought political alternation – with only one (tiny) exception. In the voting booth, the French love to punish their leaders. Concerning the elections to the European Parliament, the members are elected in France on proportional representation, the only election with such a ballot system in France. This always translates into a large dispersion of votes. When one looks at the sociology of participation, what is striking? What counts is neither your profession, your income, nor your political views – what counts is your age. A worrying statistic is the difference of thirty-three percentage points in participation between those above 60 and those below 35 years old. Europe ought to be a project for the younger generations – yet they have deserted the European vote. To sum up the results, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius' expression speaks for itself: "There is one winner and many losers."

THE NATIONAL FRONT

The dynamics of the vote in favour of the National Front is striking. Its score has significantly improved over time. For a long time after its first emergence into the political

arena in 1984, the National Front achieved approximately the same score at the elections for the European Parliament election after election: around 10 percent and even only 6 percent in 2009. When we analyze the characteristics of this progression, we have two characteristics. First, strength in depth: among the working class electorate, workers, employees, the National Front won by 40% of the voices. This is as much as

graphical base used to be confined to the North-East and the South-East.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY

European elections have always been difficult for the Socialist Party and it has always had disappointing results in the latter. It was in a position of strength in 2009. Nevertheless, it represented only 16%. It is in position of weakness today: with 14% of the votes,

"FRENCH DEMAND A RE-ORIENTED AND REFOCUSED EUROPE, BY WHICH THEY MEAN ONE MORE FOCUSED ON GROWTH AND JOBS."

the sum of the scores for the Socialists, the Conservatives, the Centre, and the Green Party. The second characteristic is widening: the National Front made progress where it once was weaker. They have achieved results close to their average levels among women, senior citizens, and the public sector. There is a breakthrough among young people, gaining 30% of voters. Geographically speaking, it has established a base throughout almost the whole of the country, winning in 5 of the 7 European electoral districts, whereas its geo-

and the same number of MEP's as in 2009 nonetheless. It is possible and indeed tempting, to put this underachievement into perspective. But this would be a mistake for three reasons. First of all, a comparison with the number of ballots won in the Presidential Election in 2012 is enlightening. During the second round, 18 million ballots went to François Hollande. In the first round, 10 million ballots. During the primary, 2,8 millions of voters voted to select the socialist candidate. On 25th May, the Socialist Party has only gathered 2,6 millions voters, that is less

than in the primary. Secondly, the collapse in support among young people is worrying. Out of every 100 young people from 18 to 34 registered on the electoral roll, only 3 actually voted for the Socialist Party. And the youth was the number one priority of the President's Campaign in 2012. Finally, much more than the results of the Socialist Party alone, there is historical significance in the weakness of the Left in general. Each time before, when the Socialist Party performed badly at the European election, another electoral list of the Left had good results. In 1994, the dissident list obtained 14% of the ballots. 12% for the Left of the Left (communist or Trotskyist) in 1999. 16% for the Green Party in 2009. Now, this time, none of this happened. No one among the Left took advantage of the weakness of the Socialist Party. With 31 percent, the cumulative results of the Left have never been so low.

THE FRENCH AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

French people have only basic knowledge about Europe but do remain Europeans. A year ago, a series of questions probing the level of European knowledge was asked in the Eurobarometer Survey. It was simply asking if, right or wrong, "Citizens elect directly their MEP's at the European Parliament". Half of Europeans answered correctly, and only 40 percent of French voters did. At the same time, only a small minority of them consider that belonging to the Union is a « bad thing » or would want France to leave the Eurozone. Going into details, what strikes is the difference due to political alignment. For instance, more than 80% of partisans and supporters from both the Left and the Right are in favour of the Euro, but 66% of the National Front partisans and supporters are against it. A real divide.



Electoral posters in France

Indeed, the French are disappointed and worried by the European Union. Disappointed by the past, as 51% consider that the EU contributed to the economic crisis and only 27% consider that it protected them from its consequences. The French are worried about the future too, fearing that 'Europe' means more unemployment in France (71%), more immigrants (62%), and less social protection (62%).

Finally the question should be asked: what do the French want? A "re-centered" Europe is probably the answer. 64% want a strengthening of French national powers at the expense of European powers; they also demand a re-oriented and refocused Europe, by which they mean one more focused on growth and jobs.

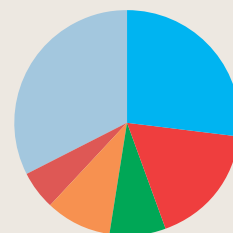
THE FUTURE OF THE LEFT

The Left is in a state of doubt. It is implementing fiscal discipline and promotes supply side policies – which the right considers too weak, and the left too hard. President Hollande became quickly unpopular. The Socialist Party was severely defeated at the local elections last March, and this led to a new Prime Minister and government. The

Greens walked out of the government. But, the right is in bad shape, too. It has not overcome the defeat of Nicolas Sarkozy in 2012. It has no leader. It does not know what arguments to use against the National Front nor what positions to take up. It has no political line anymore. Its major party, the UMP, is undergoing a severe crisis. It is rotted by scandals over its finances – to the point its president had to quit.

So, what's next? If you think about the next presidential election in 2017, the landscape is in movement but no candidate is certain to qualify for the second round in this race of three people for only two seats in the final competition.

RESULTS



■ Union for a Popular Movement.....	20
■ Socialist Party	13
■ Europe Ecology – The Greens	6
■ Democratic Movement / Union of Democrats and Independents.....	7
■ Left Front	4
■ National Front	24



GERMANY

Germany and its “spitzenkandidat”



by Ernst Hillebrand

The European elections in Germany have produced three winners. First of all the conservatives from CDU/CSU who came first with 35,3% of the vote. Then the SPD, which made strong gains compared to 2009 and scored a decent 27,3% of the vote, slightly above the result of the federal elections of 2013. And finally the eurocritics from AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) gaining 7%, clearly above the 5%-threshold for representation in the Bundestag. Among the winners is also the European Parliament itself and its political legitimacy. Having already slightly risen in 2009, voter turn-out grew significantly this time, reaching 48,1%, well ahead of the EU average. Two factors played a role here: the fact that a German

was “lead candidate” for the SPD allowed for a real personalization of the campaign. And the skillful combination of the EP elections with local elections or referenda drove up participation in parts of the country. The turn out rate here was 6% higher than in regions without local elections.

In stark contrast to some other countries, the political effects of the European elections in Germany will be minimal. The outcome differs hardly from that of the 2013 federal elections. None of the two governing parties suffered or gained particularly; nor did the two main opposition parties Die LINKE and the Greens. The fact that AfD would pass the symbolic 5%-threshold did

not come as a surprise after the party's relatively strong showing in the federal elections of last September (4,7%). The real stress and survival test for AfD will only start now. More interesting is the poor showing of the liberal FDP (3%). Its chances to successfully rejuvenate itself in the role of an extra-parliamentarian opposition party do not look good. And something else comes out of the results: even after the abolishment of the 5%-threshold for parliamentary representation by the Federal Court of Justice, the attractiveness of right or left wing fringe parties has proven to be quite limited. The established parties still bind an overwhelming majority of voters.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND TOPICS

The poster campaigns of the major parties were largely devoid of concrete political content. The really important and contentious topics of the coming period of European politics – more or less transfer of sovereignty to Brussels, more or less communalization of debt and liabilities, more or less transfer of resources between stronger and weaker economies – were largely avoided, in the best German tradition of “stealth integration” with no or minimal involvement of the citizens. Only the SPD campaign came close to something like a politicization of the European elections. It gave at least some hints on what should be the direction of future European initiatives, pointing at possible alternatives



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President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz discusses with German Chancellor, Angela Merkel prior to the family photo during the Youth Employment Summit in Paris.

“EVEN IN THE HOME COUNTRY OF ONE OF THE CANDIDATES, THE MOBILIZING EFFECT OF THE “PERSONALIZATION” OF EUROPEAN POLITICS LOOKS LIMITED.”

to an economically and socially unsatisfying status quo.

Beside its role as “kingmaker” for the presidency of the European Commission, the European Parliament as an institution did not figure prominently in any of the parties’ campaigns. This was a somehow unavoidable consequence of the strategy of the SPD to put, via the “Spitzenkandidaten”, the function of the president of the commission at the center of the election campaign. Yet, all in all, this year’s campaign was certainly more “European” in its character than earlier ones. This holds true also for voters: While in 2004 and 2009 “European” issues had been decisive only for a third of German voters, this share rose to 39% this year. Still, “national” political aspects stayed decisive for 54% of the voters.

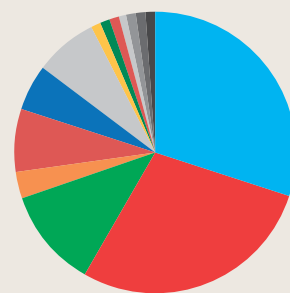
THE ROLE OF THE “LEAD CANDIDATES”

The creation of an European “Spitzenkandidat” for the function of President of the EU Commission had a major influence on the campaign in Germany. Especially as the SPD put Martin Schulz right at the center of its campaign. This had a mobilizing effect on the social democratic electorate, producing a record swing compared to the last European elections (+6,5%). Martin Schulz was clearly the more popular of the two candidates. He was seen as more competent, likeable and closer to the citizens than

Jean-Claude Juncker. Yet, the inverse result came out when people were asked which party was more competent on European questions: here the CDU had a clear lead against the SPD. Asked, which candidate they would prefer as next president of the EU-Commission, 37% of voters favoured Schulz against 22% for Juncker (41% wished none of the two or did not know the candidates). Yet, even in the home country of one of the candidates, the mobilizing effect of the “personalization” of European politics looks limited: only 17% of voters declared that the figures of the lead candidates were decisive for their vote, against 41% for political aspects.

In sum, it can be stated that the SPD clearly profited from the “home field advantage” for Martin Schulz. For the bulk of the electorate, the attempt to “personify” the European elections proved less mobilizing than expected or hoped for. Part of this can most probably be explained by the candidates themselves. Both are seen as figures of the Brussels “federalist” establishment with only minor differences in their take on central questions of European integration. However, this absence of stark alternatives must not necessarily be a bad thing in the social and political context of Germany. Germans are quite happy with the European Union. And they are quite happy with the Grand coalition in Berlin. So why should they dislike one in Brussels?

RESULTS



■ <i>Christian Democratic Union</i>	29
■ <i>Social Democratic Party</i>	27
■ <i>Alliance '90/The Greens</i>	11
■ <i>Free Democratic Party</i>	3
■ <i>The Left</i>	7
■ <i>Christian Social Union of Bavaria</i>	5
■ <i>Alternative for Germany</i>	7
■ <i>Free Voters</i>	1
■ <i>Pirate Part</i>	1
■ <i>Animal Protection Party</i>	1
■ <i>National Democratic Party</i>	1
■ <i>Family Party (Familie)</i>	1
■ <i>Ecological Democratic Party</i>	1
■ <i>The Party</i>	1



GREECE

The forward march of Europe halted?

by Yannis Caloghirou

For Greece these elections had a much more national than European character. The very fact that the country has suffered a long period of deep and sustained recession and experienced tough austerity policies has tailored the European electoral campaign in Greece to the domestic agenda and the respective party antagonisms. The outcome of the elections points to the need for securing political stability combined with a strong commitment to renew the political system and restart economic growth. A new policy agenda for innovation-based growth, industrial restructuring, job creation and the enhancement of structural competitiveness of the Greek economy is urgently needed. The reorganization, unification and renewal of the fragmented centre-left political forces is a prerequisite for the political and economic reconstruction of the country. Last but not least the fight against the neo-nazi, xenophobic and antisemitic Golden Dawn Party should be conducted systematically on the grounds of restoring the rule of law and ending impunity for hate violence.

SUSTAIN THE CORE OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL MODEL

The main strategic challenge facing Europe is its diminishing position in the new

emerging global landscape, where new and very dynamic players are entering the scene. In this respect, looking to the future the current and emerging strategic priority for Europe as a whole is to deliver an economic and political strategy of the necessary reforms in order to sustain the core of the European social model in the age of globalisation and at the same time to rebalance the North-South competitiveness division in the European Union. Meanwhile, European elites and European leadership should be attentive to the everyday concerns of ordinary citizens. This should not lead to the adoption of parts of the right-wing Eurosceptic Agenda and the promotion of political slogans such as «we want our country back». On the contrary, the forward march toward European unification should be gradually restored and the purchasing power of a population of more than 500 million citizens should be utilized for the benefit of

the European producers and the respective job creation. Furthermore, this march should demonstrate that member states would fare a lot worse on their own.

HISTORICAL CAMPAIGN

The personalization of the electoral campaign facilitated the participation of the European citizens in the process. The political linkage between the elections to the European Parliament and the appointment of the Commission President that was established in the Lisbon Treaty and was put into practice for the first time is a necessary motive. In this respect, the heads of the 28 European states and governments should respect the results and nominate the President of the European Commission accordingly. As the philosopher Jürgen Habermas put it: "If this group [the European council] really were to suggest someone else as a leading candidate, it would be a bullet to the heart of the

"EUROPEAN ELITES AND EUROPEAN LEADERSHIP SHOULD BE ATTENTIVE TO THE EVERYDAY CONCERNS OF ORDINARY CITIZENS."



Greek left-wing opposition leader Alexis TSIPRAS is hugged by a supporter after casting his vote at a voting center, in Athens, on Sunday, May 25, 2014.

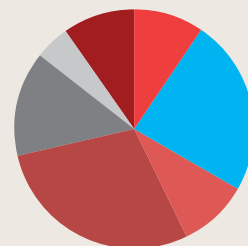
European project. In that case you couldn't expect any citizen to ever involve themselves in another European election again".

Martin Schultz conducted a very decent and fighting campaign for changing the course of Europe in order to deal effectively with the big issues of stimulating growth and combating unemployment, especially that of young people. But, more generally, a comprehensive pan-European agenda to restore the forward march of Europe that began to falter some years ago did not emerge from the electoral debate. The foundations of a renewed European "public sphere" are not in place yet. The notions of "European interest" and "European identity" are still too vague for the European people.

"IF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL REALLY WERE TO SUGGEST SOMEONE ELSE AS A LEADING CANDIDATE, IT WOULD BE A BULLET TO THE HEART OF THE EUROPEAN PROJECT."

JÜRGEN HABERMAS

RESULTS



■ Olive Tree.....	2
■ New Democracy.....	5
■ Communist Party.....	2
■ Coalition of the Radical Left.....	6
■ Golden Dawn.....	3
■ Independent Greeks.....	1
■ The River.....	2



HUNGARY

EP-elections: This is all about the Left

The election in Hungary has ended in a clear victory for the governing Fidesz. Apart from that, the election was an internecine competition on the left.



by Tamás Boros

Since the governing Fidesz party's massive victory was a certainty among Hungarians for months, two crucial questions remained which made this ballot intriguing: would the extreme-right Jobbik be able to clinch second place and how would the parties of the left fare relative to one another?

When the election results arrived, it became clear that not only did the populist Fidesz get 51.5%, but it reached a European record among the right-wing parties. As rhetorically being a euro-sceptical party and implementing anti-multinational companies measures in the last 4 years, Fidesz might act as a fifth column within the pro-Junker parliamentary group of EPP.

LOW RESULTS FOR JOBBIK

Despite its second place (14.7%) ahead of the Hungarian Socialist Party, Jobbik had little reason to be happy as they dropped a substantial 6 percentage point since its strong performance in national elections in April. The Russian spy allegation against its MEP Béla Kovács during the campaign obviously exacted a heavy toll. As Jobbik is too extremist even for Front National and UKIP to form a common platform in the EP, the party will not have too much room to manoeuvre at European level.

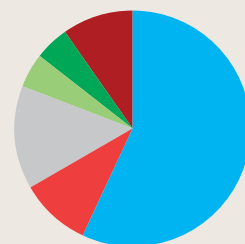
The day of the election was a nightmare for the biggest left-wing party, the Hungarian Socialists (MSZP). Despite the involvement of Martin Schulz and Hannes Swoboda in their (otherwise ineffective) campaign, this was MSZP's worst result (only 10.9%) in a national election since 1990, the year of the first free elections in Hungary. Correspondingly, the chair of the Hungarian Socialist Party, Attila Mesterházy and the entire party presidium resigned.

THE VICTORY OF MINOR PARTIES

The real winners - in terms of outperforming expectations - were three minor parties, though with Jobbik's and MSZP's weak performance that concept is increasingly relative. The liberal-left DK (9.8%) almost reached MSZP's tally nationally. Apparently, DK managed to win over a significant number of (former) socialist voter, which makes its leader, former PM Ferenc Gyurcsány the most important opponent of the Socialist Party. The centre-left/green Együtt-PM (7.2%) took the 5% threshold easily and remains a viable force on the left, especially in Budapest. Finally, despite its dedication to rural issues, the green party LMP (with 5%) also remains very Budapest-centred, drawing almost 60% of its votes from there. On the whole, the left in Hungary is far too strong to fret about its very survival, but is further still from being strong

enough to be able to compete for a victory involving a parliamentary majority. But there is a piece of good news: together the parties of the left were nearly twice as strong as Jobbik. That puts Jobbik's second place in perspective. For the time being Jobbik's dream of becoming the main opposition force are on hold. But the left's situation has not become much easier either.

RESULTS



■ Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Union	12
■ Hungarian Socialist Party	2
■ Jobbik	3
■ Politics Can Be Different	1
■ Together 2014	1
■ Democratic Coalition	2



Labour gets a ‘Shellacking’ as Sinn Féin Rises

Ireland alone in the EU will not return MEPs to the S&D grouping. However, contrary to the rise of the European right, Irish voters went to the left.



by Nat O'Connor

The Labour Party leader has resigned, crystalizing Labour's woes since entering coalition with conservative Fine Gael. A new Labour leader may well exit the coalition before the scheduled elections on the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Rising.

Labour's Deputy Leader described the elections as a 'shellacking', echoing President Obama in 2010 after the Democrats' severe defeat. The presumably intended implication is that Labour can bounce back, as Obama did to a second term. But unlike the Democrats, Labour has fallen from second place (19.5% of first preference votes in 2011) to polling sixth (7.4%) in its Dublin stronghold, and 5.3% overall – a quarter of the vote received by each of the three larger parties: Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil both on 22.3% and Sinn Féin on 19.5%. Smaller parties and independents secured 30.6% of votes and won three seats. The local elections boosted voter turnout to 52.4%.

NO S&D MEP

Ireland, alone in Europe, will not return any members to the S&D grouping. Ireland's 11 EP seats went to: Fine Gael (EPP) 4; Sinn Féin (GUE/NGL) 3; Fianna Fáil (ALDE) 1; and independents 3 (one previously NI, one ALDE and one new Euros-

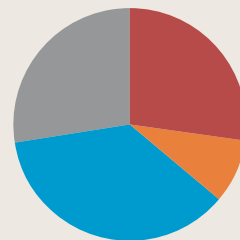
ceptic). Sinn Féin's Martina Anderson MEP was also re-elected in Northern Ireland. The 15.3% combined left-wing Socialist Party and People Before Profit vote in Dublin was twice Labour's 7.4%. However, the real challenge to Labour is the wider appeal of Sinn Féin's left-wing nationalism.

EAMON GILMORE'S RESIGNATION

In his resignation speech, Eamon Gilmore explained his decision to lead Labour into a right-left coalition: "I asked the party to take on the responsibility of Government during the worst economic crisis in the history of the State. [...] to put the country first. To address the crisis, to get out of the bailout, to reverse the loss of employment, to get the economy to recover, and to do so in as fair and just a manner as humanly possible. [...] But it was a course which carried a high political risk, and Labour has paid the price for that." Some argue coalition was not in the national interest, given the alternative of providing strong opposition to a minority conservative government. Whatever might have been, Irish voters have withdrawn their recent support for Ireland's social democrats. One interpretation is that social democracy is already a compromise between socialism and liberal economics. When that compromise is further compromised, nationally in a coalition government

or with a right-wing EU-IMF 'troika', social democrats become "remote and incomprehensible" to voters, to paraphrase French President François Hollande's remarks about the European Union itself.

RESULTS



■	Independents.....	3
■	Fianna Fáil Party	1
■	Fine Gael Party	4
■	Sinn Féin.....	3



Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi makes a speech at Piazza Alberto Sordi during a campaign meeting of the Democratic Party (PD) on May 20, 2014 in Bari, Italy.



Behind the victory...



by Michele Prospero

The results of the European elections have shaken up the political scene in Italy again due to the high degree of electoral volatility. Unusually, in the new dispensation, one party—the Democratic Party—has dominated with a 15% increase in votes compared with the previous election. This is due to the fragmentation of the Right, which is still searching for a new direction after the fall of Berlusconi and to the sui generis nature of Grillo's non-Party, now strug-

gling with early existential doubts after losing about three million votes in just one year. As a result, the single party now in power, the Democratic Party, has also changed shape under its stronger leadership.

SIGNIFICANT VOLATILITY

According to political analysts, half of the vote for the Democratic Party came from other political formations, either from the disillusioned right or from Monti's Scelta

Civica, which previously had won about 11% of the vote and this time managed just 0.7%. This changes not only the cultural but also the social make-up of the party. The Democratic Party now appears to be a large, post-ideological organisation with a mission that stretches across various constituencies. Rather like an "archipelago" party that has to open up to lots of different islands, it is obliged to fuse together a multiplicity of small-scale movements that are

fundamentally very different from each other. And none of them is able to impose a single, uniform identity on the others.

BERLUSCONI CAN THANK GRILLO

Despite the massive shift in voting, there are still a number of structural hotspots in a three-party system that reveals a highly asymmetric distribution of electoral preferences. Since approval for the new electoral law (the Italicum) has become more difficult as a guarantee of a two-party configuration, the new balance of power would seem to foreshadow a grand coalition as an unavoidable step forward towards building a government. So long as Grillo remains an outside variable in the political game, Berlusconi might hope to conserve a role for bargaining and posing political threats. These knotty problems of the political crisis in Italy have not yet been solved. Even the electoral campaign overlooked the major European issues and took on a very provincial flavour in terms of the issues on the agenda. The three main leaders don't have a seat in Parliament and are not candidates for a seat in Brussels, so they are fighting it out via the media—mainly television.

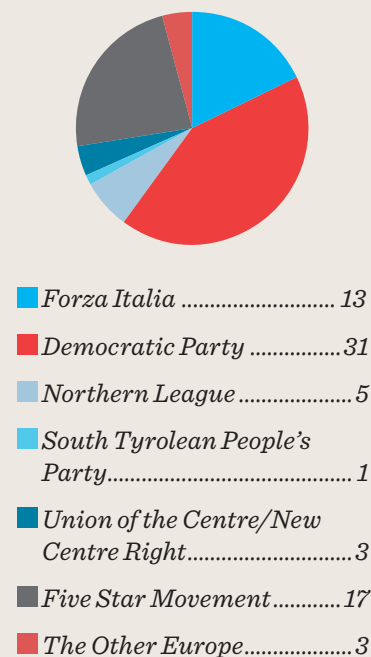
The Italian vote shows a powerful rejection of European policies of austerity and restraint. The pro-government vote (attracted by the story line, the leader's physical energy and also the tax bonus for employees and lower company tax) is taken as a strong mandate to launch expansionary new policies to promote growth and jobs. Yet this vote is in fact ambiguous as it is pro-government from an internal perspective, but radically anti-government when viewed from a European perspective. In the end, only a change in European policy will help provide effective governance of the crisis in Italy.



Campaign poster of the Partito Democratico

“SO LONG AS GRILLO REMAINS AN OUTSIDE VARIABLE IN THE POLITICAL GAME, **BERLUSCONI MIGHT HOPE TO CONSERVE A ROLE FOR BARGAINING AND POSING POLITICAL THREATS.**”

RESULTS





The voice of the Europeans who are not there



by Maris Grinvalds

With more than half of MEPs returning to their offices, it is tempting to assume that recent European Parliament (EP) elections in Latvia weren't worth a deeper look into the process and its outcome. EPP has clear mandate from Latvia and even the new MEPs are too typical for standard composition of any national delegation – a stubborn populist (I. Grigule), popular journalist (A. Mamikins) and a mild hard-liner (A. Pabriks). Nevertheless, there are at least two and a half facts that weren't expected even by mature experts.

AN UNEXPECTED VICTORY

First, it turned out that "Vienotiba" won in all voting districts, including Riga and Latgale, which are considered as strongholds for "Saskana" because of large Russian-speaking communities living there.

One of the assumption that of those 30% of voters who actually participated, only those that either care about European issues and policies or have clear political favourites took part. To understand what such statement implies, one has to understand the local specifics. "Let's go to Europe" or "as Brussels will decide" are such widely used phrases in Latvia that it is very rare when anyone actually notices how fit they are to describe the political behaviour and the choices of local population in the context of EP elections. Despite huge investments, fundamental shifts in governance and widespread "Funded by EU" signs on numerous infrastructure projects all

over the country, despite Riga being the culture capital of Europe in 2014, the mental gap is clearly there. What's more, a substantial part of population is living in the information space dominated by an agenda set in Russia. And recent events in and around Ukraine gave advantage to those who prefer more security in stronger Europe.

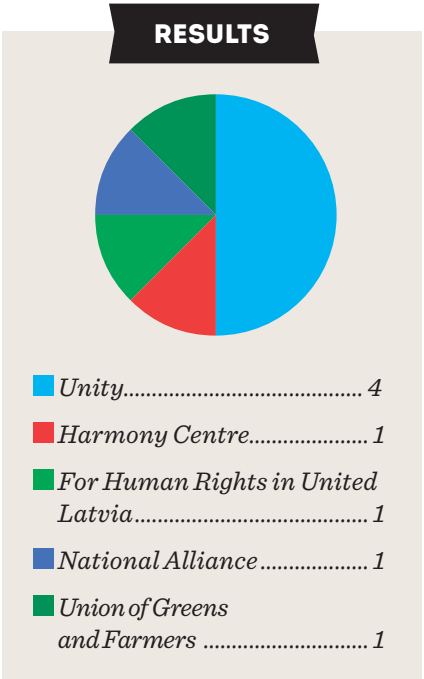
SASKANA'S DEFEAT

"Saskana" (a PES-affiliated party) suffered an humiliating defeat. It lost to both principal political adversaries – the center-right "Vienotiba" and the far-right "National Alliance" (14.2%). "Saskana" was courageous enough to part their ways with ex-MEP Alfrēds Rubiks' "Socialist Party" and ex-MEP Aleksandrs Mirskis' "Alternative" before the elections (~5.2% of all votes combined). And it clearly lost some of the votes to more energetic MEP Tatjana Ždanoka's "Union of Latvia's Russians" (pre-election polls – 1.2% and result – 6.4%). As put by one of "Saskana" leaders Nils Ušakovs, they failed to convince their voters to participate. Considering the fact that a majority of "Saskana"s supporters are from the Russian-speaking community, not the least important reason for their weak result was the events in Ukraine. Active Russia sympathizers chose Tatjana Ždanoka, who dreams of a USSR 2.0.

PROTEST BY DISDAIN

Finally, the half-surprising fact – low turnout. In general – nothing special for one of the most euro-skeptic nations of the Union. How-

ever, even if low turnout of voters was expected, no one thought it would be so low – around 30%, the lowest recorded turnout in recent history. It is rather sad that good weather, assigned voting places and other such silly reasons for not voting overweighted citizens' right to choose their future. Considering the result of the elections, Latvian way of protest is disdain. National elections in October will show how serious it is.





LITHUANIA

Lithuania's youth shoots itself in the foot



by Andrius Bielskis & Linas Eriksonas

The European Parliament elections in Lithuania this year were held jointly with the second round of the presidential elections, which were won by a landslide majority by the incumbent president supported by the conservative and liberal parties.

Due to these circumstances the EP elections were determined by the right-wing parties in opposition, which have aimed to severely impede the political space for manoeuvring of the ruling social democratic party by dismantling the existing centre-left coalition government and trying to force the social democrats into creating a rainbow coalition with the conservative party. The latter scenario, however, is unlikely, but such possibility does remain. Also, due to the massive support of the media, the liberals and conservatives orchestrated a successful election campaign, and gained additional voters, especially among the urban electorate in major cities. Since the campaign was not focused on the EU agenda, the discourse in media lacked the reflections about anti-European sentiments.

LOSING THE YOUTH

One of the reasons why the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party performed not as well as it expected to was the mobilization of the right-wing electorate in the presidential elections. Re-elected President Dalia Grybauskaitė has been far more proactive than Zigmas Balčytis, the social democratic presidential candidate. He was also on the list for the European Parliament elections,

which did not go well with some of the moderate left-wing sympathizers. And even though social democrats still are the most popular and influential political party in Lithuania today, they performed relatively badly because of their inability to attract the urban vote of 18-34 years old. The latter voted in favour of the liberals, a fact which needs extra attention and reflection.

THE SHADOW OF COMMUNISM

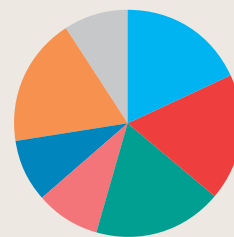
Given the fact that liberals in Lithuania are hard-core neoliberals, their success is telling. In this respect liberals could be considered to be true winners of these elections. If then in Germany, for example, liberals were wiped out during the past two elections, in an East European country such as Lithuania, liberals have been able to hold the ground and advance their electoral position further. The fear of the long gone Communist past, which the young generation did not experience, still does play a role in Lithuania. That is to say, the left-right divide is still wrongly partly perceived as the divide between the ex-communist Russia friendly Left versus patriotic, pro-transatlantic, pro-European/American Right.

THE MISTAKE OF THE YOUTH

What is most surprising, however, is the superficiality and, one may say, false-soullessness of urban-young voters. The 18-30-year-old generation is, as it is the case in other European societies, a lost generation. It is a generation of people who will be heavily indebted to banks and forced to rely on

their "generosity" in every step they will take. And yet the youth votes for neoliberals who invest in their social-media driven electoral campaigns in order to look "cool". It will be the "cool" neoliberals who will entice the youth in loans and mortgages in its pursuit of post-modern happiness.

RESULTS



■ Homeland Union – Christian Democrats	2
■ Social Democratic Party.....	2
■ Order and Justice.....	2
■ Labour Party	1
■ Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania/Block of Valdemar Tomaševski.....	1
■ Liberal Movement	2
■ Lithuanian Peasant and Greens Union.....	1



LUXEMBOURG

Luxembourg: issues, impact and interests



by Tom Krieps

Ever since the introduction of direct universal suffrage, in 1979, the European elections have been held on the same day as the general election for the Chamber of Deputies in Luxembourg, the only difference being that there is only one constituency.

As a result, the general election overshadowed its European counterpart. Yet there was still a high turn-out, since Luxembourg nationals and European residents on the country's electoral roll are required to vote by law. And because the same candidates often appeared on both the European and national lists, it was not clear who would be elected in the end and, above all, who would choose one of the six European seats. Another distinctive aspect of the European elections in Luxembourg is that—given the restricted number of MEPs (6)—the smaller political parties have virtually no chance of securing a seat in Strasbourg.

THE JUNCKER ISSUE

One of the key issues in the 2014 election was whether the CSV would hold onto its third seat or whether that seat would go to the Democratic Party (DP) or the LSAP. The situation was made all the more interesting by the fact that the former prime minister, Jean-Claude Juncker, had chosen not to stand for election as an MEP but was instead seeking nomination to lead the European People's Party (EPP) and run for President of the European Commission, as fellow Lux-

embourg prime ministers Gaston Thorn and Jacques Santer had done before him.

There is no denying the fact that, at the time of writing, the healthy CSV haul at the polls (37%) puts the party in a position to retain its third seat. However, Mr Juncker's bid to become President of the European Union is far from a done deal.

One of the reasons for the CSV's impressive performance was undoubtedly the fact that many people were under the impression that their vote would be used to appoint the future President of the European Commission. Will they be left frustrated?

THE OTHER CONTENDERS

The three remaining seats were shared between the triumvirate of parties that make up the ruling coalition comprising Socialists, Greens and Liberals—a somewhat disappointing result that should at least push the Socialists to ponder their future strategy very carefully.

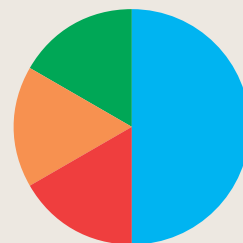
It is also worth noting the impressive results obtained by the candidate from the Greens, Claude Turmes, who successfully portrayed himself as a committed MEP willing to combat the powerful lobbyists in Brussels. The Socialists, who entered the race without an outgoing MP, found themselves in fourth place following an election campaign that will doubtless leave a bitter taste in the mouths of candidates and party faithful.

The smaller parties seized an important opportunity to fill their campaign coffers by

taking advantage of the state financing for political campaigns, even though their chances of securing a seat were practically non-existent. In addition, the only overtly right-wing Eurosceptic party (ADR) achieved results similar to those obtained in the 2004 and 2009 elections, failing to produce a surge similar to that of other European populist parties.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that if Jean-Claude Juncker fails in his bid to become President of the European Commission, there is a risk that Euroscepticism will also find a following in Luxembourg.

RESULTS



■ Christian Social People's Party	3
■ Socialist Workers' Party	1
■ Democratic Party	1
■ The Greens	1



A vote of confidence



by Aaron Farrugia

A large crowd gathered to celebrate victory outside the headquarters of the Malta Labour Party before any official results were declared. Minutes

after the countdown began, it became clear that Labour was way out in front. In fact, nearly everyone was surprised by the size of the victory. Labour (PES) won 53% of the vote to 40% for the Nationalists (EPP).

The Labour Prime Minister of Malta, Dr Joseph Muscat viewed the result, achieved on a 75% turnout, as a vote of confidence in his 14-month-old government, not least because the opposition leader had asked voters to treat the poll in that way. There can be little doubt about the popularity of Joseph Muscat among the Maltese people. He reached out to all sectors of society to build a coalition of support, and has led

from the front, tackling corruption, introducing social reforms, and delivering on his promises.

Labour won a landslide general election victory last year on a manifesto of reducing electricity bills by 25%, introducing free childcare, cutting income tax, bringing in civil unions and refunding VAT illegally charged on car imports. All have been enacted. And the economic performance of Joseph Muscat's government can't be underplayed. The economy is growing, banks are sound, investment is flowing in and unemployment is low.

NO DEBATE ABOUT WITHDRAWAL

The unease about the European project seen in other countries was not a feature of these elections in Malta, mainly because

the issue was settled at a referendum 11 years ago when the country decided to join the EU. There is no debate about withdrawal, only about how to get the best out of our membership.

Five years ago only men were elected to the European Parliament from Malta. This time it is four women and two men. Malta uses the single transferable vote so the destination of the final, sixth seat was in doubt until the 66-hour count concluded. The Nationalists scraped in, meaning Labour took 3 seats (down one) and the Nationalists 3 seats (up one).



Dr. Joseph Muscat, Labour Prime Minister of Malta

RESULTS



■ Malta Labour Party 3
■ Nationalist Party 3



NETHERLANDS

Mainstreaming populism

Despite the surprising national vote in the Netherlands, the results of the European elections reveal the prevalence of populism in mainstream politics.



by Jiska Engelbert

The results of the European elections signal both an increase in anti-European sentiment and a relative consolidation of the political establishment.

This development may appear at initial odds with the results of the national vote in the Netherlands.

MASKING EURO-SKEPTICISM

Geert Wilders' anti-immigration and anti-Europe Party for Freedom (PVV), formally unaligned in the European Parliament, in fact lost a seat. Moreover, only smaller opposition parties in national politics, notably the Democrats (D66), saw a significant increase in support. However, these results only mask an actual acrimony towards European political institutions. This can be read in the low turnout (37.3%), but also in the 'assertive' rhetoric of big government parties. The latter provide a socially more acceptable version of Wilders' anti-immigration, anti-expansion and anti-bail-out idiom. The message entrenched in the European results — that Europe's po-

litical establishment needs to acknowledge nationalism and anti-Europeanism — thus gives ideological leeway to the further 'mainstreaming' of populism in the Netherlands.

PERFORMING POLITICAL CONTROL

In the light of these European results, the turnout and the message both convey that Europe — more than ever before — will need to attest its political mandate. This is likely to reflect in mainstream alliances in the European Parliament exploring the plasticity of their ideological boundaries, as already exemplified in the ALDE considering the Belgian Flemish-nationalist N-VA. This strategic maneuvering of existing European alliances may indeed see other currently unaffiliated parties claim institutional retreat. More importantly, it affects how the EP attends to the inherently related challenge to address its democratic deficit and assert its hunger for more legislative and political powers. Unless and until such reforms are enabled by a treaty,

"IN THE LIGHT OF THESE EUROPEAN RESULTS, THE TURNOUT AND THE MESSAGE BOTH CONVEY THAT EUROPE WILL NEED TO ATTEST ITS POLITICAL MANDATE."

populist — especially anti-immigration and anti-bail-out — (pro-)positions will prove powerful resources in performing such political control vis-à-vis Council and Commission. Consequently, 'Europe' is likely to pursue a course defined through the prism of cultural, financial and economic risks that



Martin Schulz meeting Dutch King Willem-Alexander

others, both within and beyond the EU, allegedly pose.

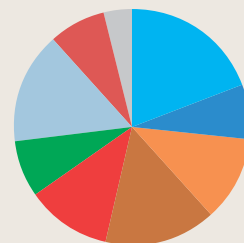
THE PERILS OF PERSONALIZATION

There is a remarkable similarity between how the Commission/Parliament and journalists attracted attention for Europe. Both drew on personalization devices to give a voice and face to parliamentarians, potential governors, voters and their concerns. This overlap is understandable from the vested civic and commercial interests that both the political and journalistic realm have in making Europe less abstract and more accessible. However, the strategy backfired and may have contributed to the increase in anti-Europe votes. Whether they were journalistic behind-the-scenes documentaries following an MEP, televised opportunities for the public to confront MEPs with everyday concerns, or the initiation of a head-to-head between candidates for the parliamentary presidency; these faces and voices foremost made too visible and audible the lack of agency of MEPs and com-

missioners in the EU's current political infrastructure. If anything, personalization has warranted – rather than discouraged – the anti-Europe vote.

**“PERSONALIZATION
HAS WARRANTED
– RATHER THAN
DISCOURAGED –
THE ANTI-EUROPE
VOTE.”**

RESULTS



Christian Democratic Appeal	5
Christian Union – Reformed Political Party	2
People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy	3
Democrats 66	4
Labour Party	3
GreenLeft	2
Party for Freedom	4
Socialist Party	2
Party for the Animals.....	1



POLAND

How Ukraine influenced the Polish vote

*25 years after introducing democratic reforms
and 10 years after joining the EU the Polish (pro-European)
society is highly distrustful of politicians.*



by Michał Syska

A decade in the united Europe has been beneficial to Poland in many ways.

The ongoing grand modernisation process would not be possible without EU budgetary funds. Poland used them to fund large public investments which enabled it to avoid a recession at a time of global economic crisis. Polish citizens expressed their appreciation for these changes – the support for the EU and European integration remains at a high level throughout the country.

Unfortunately, this pro-European approach – representative of the majority of the Polish society – has not found its way into the ballot boxes during the European election, as only as few as 23.8% of voters decided to participate. The low turnout is not only due to a common lack of knowledge regarding the competences of the European Parliament and the misconception that it bears little meaning in the everyday lives of Polish citizens. 25 years after introducing its first democratic reforms, the Polish society is highly distrustful of politicians and the institution of the state.

A WORRYING NEIGHBOUR

Since 2005 the Polish political scene has been dominated by the battle between two right-wing parties: the Civic Platform (PO) and Law and Justice (PiS). Only a few months ago election polls indicated that the opposi-

tional PiS would emerge victorious in the European elections, as the supposed result of voters being exhausted after seven years of PO governance. The crisis in Ukraine proved to be a turning point in the election campaign. Due to Ukraine's geographical vicinity to Poland and common historical experiences, the issue has become one of the central points in the public debate. Prime Minister Donald Tusk has aptly made use of the feelings of uncertainty and danger stemming from the dramatic events in Kiev, indicating that the main thing that is at stake in the European elections is the safety of Poland. His message has become the main theme in the PO electoral campaign. In a short time Tusk's party caught up with PiS, winning over those voters who decided to congregate around the powers that be at a time of danger.

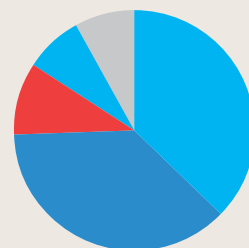
A HOPE FOR PROGRESSISTS?

The social democrats are the victims of the division of the political scene into two right-wing fractures. The Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) still cannot find a way to deal with the crisis it has found itself in after its defeat in the elections to the Polish parliament in 2011 (8%). The party's result in the European elections (9.4%) can hardly be considered a good sign for the future.

But, paradoxically, Poland's experience might become an important source of inspiration for

those working on a social democratic programme agenda. Poland is the biggest beneficiary of EU funds, which allows the government to execute a grand public investment programme. This is why the country was able to avoid recession and maintain economic growth. This example provides the European social democrats with a strong argument for the active role of the EU and a public investment programme directed at infrastructure and public services, among others.

RESULTS



■ Civic Platform	19
■ Law and Justice	19
■ Democratic Left Alliance – Labor Union	5
■ People's Party	4
■ Congress of the New Right	4



PORTUGAL

Reality's new clothes



by Gustavo Cardoso

The Portuguese view of Europe is split. First, for the majority of Portuguese non-voters, Europe is remote and responsible for the current situation in Portugal. Secondly, Portuguese voters'

feelings were mixed. They felt that Europe's importance lay in solving Europe-wide problems, such as unemployment, lack of growth and a still somewhat toxic financial system. But, in the European elections, they voted from a national perspective, for the parties that would best form the next Portuguese government and only then for the ones that would best represent their concerns at the European level.

PROTEST AT THE ONLY OPTION

However, viewed from the perspective of Portugal, other conclusions can be drawn from the European elections. Like in the story of the "Emperor's New Clothes", they told us that all political parties and the system of power—whatever we may mean by this term—will eventually have to face up to reality.

Reality wears no clothes in Europe, and nowhere is this truer than in Portugal, since in 2014, the majority of potential voters lost confidence in the Portuguese system of power. More importantly, these potential voters are not willing to give the benefit of the doubt and to trust any idea, any person or any party. They see protest as their only option, which they do by voting for the Earth Party (MPT) for example, by not voting, or by casting blank or informal votes.

EVERYONE IS HELD GUILTY

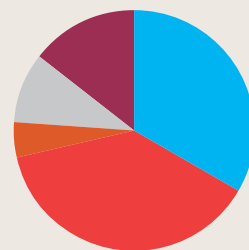
Ordinarily, the negative perception of a party's actions would tend to affect votes for that party alone. However, what seems to be happening today is that voters are tarring all parties with the same brush for the failings of any politician whatever the party he or she may belong to. Voters are tending to see all parties as acting the same, irrespective of any differences in their ideas or of whichever public figure is the target for criticism. What might surprise is why this is happening at this precise historical moment in our democracy. In fact, what is happening is collateral damage from the external intervention of the troika: the system of power is being eroded faster and that is affecting all political parties. Citizens are tired of believing in something only to discover later that it was a lie. It is this reality, which has been staring us all in the face, that is the root cause of the contempt with which politicians and political parties are held—unfairly in many cases, but fairly in others.

NO MORE FAITH IN THE SYSTEM

A lack of trust in others is a characteristic trait of Portuguese society. The data from the World Values Survey about interpersonal trust shows that the Portuguese have the lowest level of trust in others. This lack of trust in others creates a barrier to forming associations, to entrepreneurship, but also to participating in the political process and to trusting in political parties and politicians. Those who do vote are in the minority, but they send a similar message saying that the system of

power no longer reflects reality and is incapable of cultivating empathy and trust. Perhaps we could introduce some major change, such as change the voting system in national elections, providing voters with the possibility of a vote of confidence for pro-citizen parties. This could be achieved by introducing multiple, single-member constituencies where it is possible for voters to really choose the person they want to have their vote. Such a change would not merely be for the sake of change: it is a last chance for us all. If things continue the way they have been, political parties will fight to resist elections and not to win them.

RESULTS



■ Social Democratic Party/ People's Party	7
■ Socialist Party	8
■ Left Bloc.....	1
■ Earth Party	2
■ Democratic Unitarian Coalition	3



ROMANIA

The Social Democratic Party made Romanians vote pro-European



by Victor Negrescu

The results of the European elections in Romania confirmed the fact that the Social Democratic Party (PSD) is the strongest political party in the country. With 37.6% of the votes, the Romanian PSD confirms the fact that it is regarded as the best fitted party to represent Romanians in the European Parliament.

A TEST FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

In the Romanian political life, the European elections are considered to be a test for the presidential elections, which are always taking place the same year in November. Furthermore, due to the low turnout of this type of elections, they are regarded as a test for the capacity of political parties to mobilize their voters. Fortunately for the social democrats, the PSD is known to have the best-organized structure in the country. This race for mobilization brought 5% more people to the polls than in 2009, when only 27.67% of the population took part in the elections.

Another interesting figure shows that people from rural areas voted more than those from urban ones, with turnouts reaching respectively 36.88% against 28.68%. Again, the high representativity of the party in the local administration, especially in rural areas, was successful in explaining to people the need to vote in these elections. In the case of the PSD, the party wanted to take advantage of the result to assume the leadership position for the forthcoming

presidential elections. The most probable running candidate, current PSD president and Romanian prime-minister Victor Ponta, actually asked for a vote of confidence for the government during this election and convinced the local political branches to get involved in the campaign.

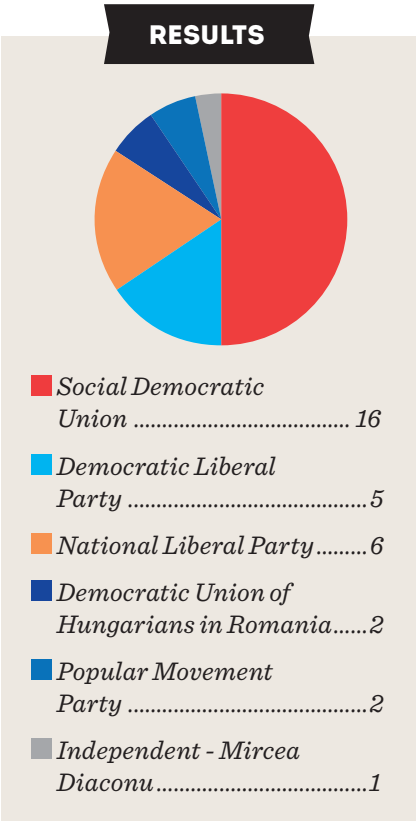
This is why during the campaign the PSD president participated in political rallies all over the country and was promoted in all campaign materials as a guarantee for the PSD European list of candidates.

TOWARDS A NEW STATUS QUO

Today, the true political fight is actually between European politicians and national governments. Both European political families need to join forces in order to impose to the national leaders a president of the Commission stemming from the majority in the European Parliament. This fight must be won to defend the democratic and political principles that the results of the elections should be transformed in the capacity of making political decisions.

For the Romanian political system, the European results may affect the future development of different political partnerships or coalitions. This was reflected in the fact that the Romanian National Liberal Party (PNL) left the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe immediately after the elections to join the European Popular Party. This change, negotiated before the European elections, is part of a plan established by EPP leaders to reunite centre-right parties

in a united block. The first negotiations already started between the second and third party during this election, the PNL and PDL, in order to merge and propose a common candidate for the European elections.





SLOVAKIA

The EU as a different galaxy?



by Ľuboš Blaha

Slovakia sends four representatives of the Social Democratic party Smer-SD to the socialist faction in the European Parliament. It is one less than SMER-SD had in the last period, thus we cannot speak of success.

EXTREMISTS DID NOT SUCCEED

The European elections turned out to be more successful for the right wing, although it remains highly fragmented. Out of the thirteen MEPs attributed to Slovakia, nine will represent the right wing and only four the left wing (the S&D faction).

The good news is that Slovakia does not send any right wing extremists to the EP. Half a year ago in the regional elections, a neo-Nazi politician Marián Kotleba was able to win in one Slovak regional constituency. It was expected that his party could succeed in the European elections as well, but fortunately it did not gain even 2%. Eurosceptic voters did not vote for extremists or populists. They preferred not to take part in the election. This is one of the reasons why Slovakia ended up at the tail of the EU in terms of voter turnout again, and even set a new record, with 87 % of voters who did not come to the polls.

WHY SUCH LOW PARTICIPATION?

The SMER-SD continues to maintain its over 40 % of public support, but it fails to mobilize its voters in European issues. The current crisis in Ukraine and the EU's negative relationship with Russia also contrib-

utes to it. Many pro-Russian voters of the SMER-SD perceive the EU politics towards Russia very critically. Given that the electorate of SMER-SD rather belongs to conservatives in cultural issues, they do not identify themselves with the cultural-liberal agenda of the European Socialists, and this may be another reason why they ignored the election. They are also irritated by the neoliberal direction of the EU and they do not feel that the European Socialists offer an alternative.

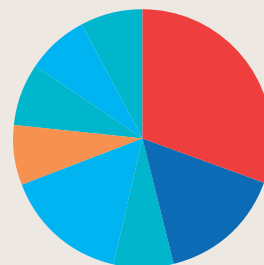
In Slovakia an overall instrumental relationship with the EU prevails, whether at the level of elites or the public. Citizens do not feel like they are part of the decision-making process. The EU is perceived as something useful - though alienated by the significant part of the electorate. This explains the so-called Slovak paradox as well: Slovaks strongly support the membership of Slovakia in the EU statistically, but they do not feel the need to participate in the EP election.

THE EUROPEAN UNION AS A MARGINAL TOPIC

The European elections will have only a minimal impact on Slovakian politics. Despite the failure of the SMER-SD, the governing social democracy remains the dominant force. The Spitzenkandidaten did not play any role in the election. The only statement that resonated was that of Martin Schulz in the pre-election debate who was shocked by the fact that some people have to live on disastrous 1000 or 2000

euros per month. Most people in Slovakia earn about 500 euros. The statement was felt to be detached from reality, which only compounded the overall mood that the EU is a different galaxy, which does not have much in common with the Slovak reality.

RESULTS



■ <i>Direction – Social Democracy</i>	4
■ <i>Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party</i>	2
■ <i>Party of the Hungarian Coalition</i>	1
■ <i>Christian Democratic Movement</i>	2
■ <i>Freedom and Solidarity</i>	1
■ <i>Ordinary People</i>	1
■ <i>Most-Hid</i>	1
■ <i>The New Majority</i>	1



SLOVENIA

A paradoxical EP election

A swing of the electorate to the left brought victory to the moderate part of the right.



by Sonja Lokar

The electoral campaign for the European parliament started in the framework of a terrible national political crisis, with the fall of the centre-left government due to the split of the Positive Slovenia party. A number of lists and parties emerged, combining moderate neoliberalism with strong human rights stances and a rule of law agenda. An unpopular leader of the Social Democrats (SD) put himself on top of the SD list, instead of an excellent woman candidate, and opened fire on newly-established parties on the left of the SD. These new left parties, which emerged from the 2011 protest movement, were not able to cooperate and unify either. What's more, in the middle of the campaign, the leader of the biggest right wing party, a corrupt former Prime Minister, was sentenced to jail. It galvanized his hardcore activists and pushed the more moderate ones towards the right-wing list led by New Slovenia (NSi) and the Slovenian People's Party (SLS).

A CHANGE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

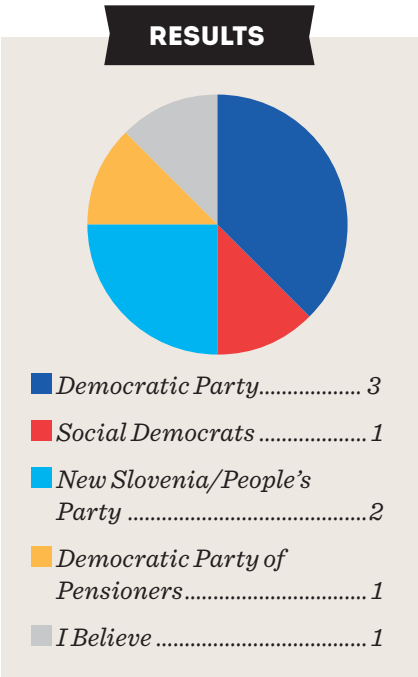
In this turmoil, the European election had a hard time trying to catch the attention of the public: the turnout fell to 24.43 %. Nevertheless, this was the first time that voters realized that the EU is at the crossroad, and

that its election matters for their everyday life. It was also the first time that they were aware that both the PES and the new left are offering a different approach of the EU than the EPP's and the far right's. The visit of Martin Schulz and Al  xis Ts  pras in Slovenia did help in making these differences clearer. Slovene voters did not support any of the new Eurosceptic parties that emerged. Although their support for the Victor Orban-like EPP party (Slovene Democratic Party) stayed high, it remained at its 2009 level, while voters doubled their support for the NSi/SLS list.

THE SLOVENE CONTRADICTION

Due to the dispersion of liberal democrats and infighting within the left spectrum of the "left" block of Slovenian parties, the swing of the electorate to the left paradoxically materialised in a victory of the moderate right. 2014 EP elections in Slovenia are not in tune with the EU megatrends, yet at the same time, the challenge for the Slovene SD is the same as the one for the PES: how to forge an effective coalition of diverse progressive political forces in order to create a strong alternative to a neoliberal Europe.

"SLOVENE VOTERS DID NOT SUPPORT ANY OF THE NEW EUROSCEPTIC PARTIES."





Low voter turnout despite high stakes



by Juan Moscoso del Prado Hernández

The main impact of the European elections in Spain has been a resounding repudiation of the austerity policies implemented since 2010. The result shows that people do not want to continue down a path that poses a threat to the welfare model in the medium and long term and has widened the inequality gap across the continent. The second consequence is the clear call by citizens to re-examine the European institutions' *modus operandi*.

CLOSE THE NORTH-SOUTH GAP

Europe must strengthen the democratic underpinning of its common policy decision-making; otherwise, it will be impossible to hone the details of these policies or even pursue them. At the same time, the north-south divide in Europe could widen dangerously if the European Union does not rebalance the patently unfair distribution of costs stemming from the crisis.

The EU must continue its process of political integration, taking a realistic approach that will require maximum democratic legitimacy. Progress should not be hindered by attitudes such as that of Britain and the handful of countries that do not take part in enhanced cooperation initiatives such as Schengen or, above all, the euro.

AN ELECTION TAKEN TOO LIGHTLY

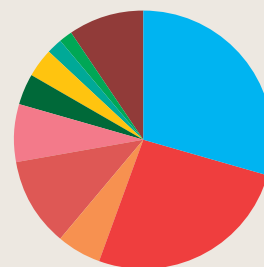
The turnout was the same as five years ago—lacklustre—which is very worrying. Contrary to what might have been expected, and de-

spite the severity of the crisis, voters have yet to fully grasp the importance of the decisions to be taken by the new European Parliament. It is somewhat of a paradox that the election of a European Parliament that now has greater powers—including the capacity not just to decide on policies that can only be adopted at European level, but also to right Europe's course—has not won greater public support. The decline of Spain's great "traditional" parties is due to several factors. First, their links with the policies that led to the crisis and the austerity measures that followed. Second, their identification with the so-called "system" or "establishment". And third, they are perceived as closed parties that shun participation from their members and the public.

IN NEED OF ANOTHER WAY OUT

We need a Europe that moves faster towards political union, harmonises taxation and budgets, standardises its labour markets without downward competition, and bands together to defend the welfare state. This route is perhaps impossible to achieve with a "Europe of 28". Again, these changes must be led by democratic institutions such as the European Parliament and national parliaments. Modernisation and building a more social Europe based on the welfare state model require a different way out of the crisis, a more united approach to the dualistic and profoundly unequal path we are currently walking and which could spell the end of the European dream.

RESULTS



■ People's Party	16
■ Socialist Workers' Party	14
■ Convergence and Union/ Basque Nationalist Party ...	3
■ United Left/Initiative for Catalonia Greens/Anova- Nationalist Brotherhood	6
■ Union, Progress and Democracy	4
■ Republican Left of Catalonia/Nova Esquerra Catalana	2
■ Citizens – Party of the Citizenry	2
■ European Spring	1
■ The People Decide	1
■ Podemos	5



SWEDEN

A national game changer – and a European pregnancy

One of the two biggest parties comes from the right-of-centre. That has been the rule in every election since democracy was established in Sweden. But the EU-election became a game changer in a "super year", as national elections loom on September 14th.



by Eric Sundström

The Social Democrats (SAP) got 24% but the Greens came in second with 15%. And the governing Moderates? A distant third with 13%. A game changer had arrived. Stefan Löfven's first election as SAP-leader was far from a success. The result was a tiny bit worse than in 2009 – and therefore the worst in history. One mandate was lost by only 453 votes and Löfven was saved from further humiliation by a campaign in which activists spoke to over 600,000 voters. However, the spotlight is now on the Moderates.

Prime Minister Reinfeldt has accused Löfven for not having a clear governing alternative. But the SAP and the Greens became bigger than the four parties of the centre-right government. The racist Sweden Democrats (SD), however, got almost 10% and has started to grow also in northern Sweden. Whether the SAP and the other progressive parties can shore up 50,1% in September, keeping the SD from the balance of power, emerges as a key question as Reinfeldt hit rock bottom.

But there are several reasons for Löfven to worry. The Greens became the biggest party in Stockholm, Göteborg and Uppsala. A new Feminist party (Fi), with a woman of Roma origin as top candidate, was successful in trendy urban areas and won one mandate. The SAP labels itself "the party of the future"

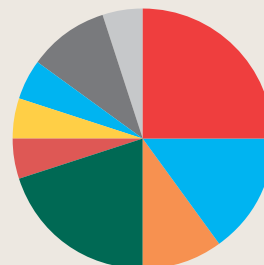
but seems to have forgotten the old days when new trends were absorbed. It would be risky to end up with the traditional left vote, leaving issues such as climate change, anti-racism and feminism to the Greens, the Left party and Fi. The EU-election also reconfirmed that Europe remains a paradox for the SAP. Their election ad focused on a truck driver who almost falls asleep at the wheel. The ad's message is a national version of the ambition known as "Social Europe": all workers should receive Swedish salaries and conditions when working in Sweden. But Marita Ulvskog, the SAP's top candidate, gave an interesting answer in her most important TV-interview of the campaign. Ulvskog would cast a no-vote if Sweden were to have a referendum on EU-membership today, preferring the EEA. How a free-trade agreement without political tools would help the truck driver remains unclear.

Ulvskog also declared that a vote on the SAP should not at all be regarded as a vote on Martin Schulz – disagreeing with what Schulz told the Swedish viewers in the same TV-segment. It was no coincidence that Schulz only election rally in Sweden took place in Umeå, 650 kilometres north of all the major news desks in Stockholm.

The fight between the spitzenkandidaten was a step forward for the EU, but it never became a part of the Swedish EU-election. The SAP

married the EU for the money during a national economic crisis in the 1990s – and got pregnant with an ambitious vision of a social, more democratic Europe. In 2014, that marriage and the kid still bewilder the SAP. It's a shame, not least for the truck driver.

RESULTS



■ Social Democrats	5
■ Moderate Party	3
■ Liberal People's Party	2
■ Green	4
■ Left Party	1
■ Centre Party	1
■ Christian Democrats	1
■ Swedish Democrats	2
■ Feminist Initiative	1



UNITED KINGDOM

Ukip: much ado about nothing



by Ivana Bartoletti

In the aftermath of the European elections, most of the headlines were shouting about how extraordinary UKIP's victories were. In fact their gains

were not only expected, but a direct result of the peculiarity of the electoral system for the European elections, and more pertinently, of how many British voters regarded these elections – a chance to 'send a message' and even 'experiment' rather than to elect their representative to Brussels.

NOTABLE SUCCESSES

It is crucial that, amidst so much hostility to Labour from the media, we set the record straight. These latest results show how Labour has recovered well from its worst ever performance in a national election in 2009: beating the Conservatives into third place for the first time in their history, winning at least one seat in every region and county – with seven more MEPs – and making the kind of progress in marginal seats that will be all-important in the general elections next May.

The results in London can properly be called extraordinary – the best for over 40 years. Not since 1971 has Labour done so well, getting four Labour MEPs and victory in areas which had never been Labour before. London's multicultural communities have rejected the UKIP monologue, and

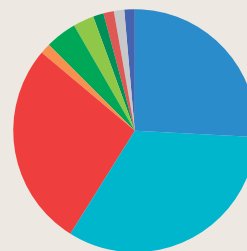
so have other urban areas of the UK where Labour has made huge strides, eroding the LibDem's vote in particular.

BACK TO THATCHERISM

The impact of these elections is yet to be seen but the affirmation of UKIP does indeed give a message about the general discontent of many across the country who feel they do not have a good enough stake in society. With inequality deepening, the impact of technology on our labour markets, and the challenges of building a solid industrial policy to up our game in this new global world, there is a great sense of displacement which cannot be left unanswered, and which UKIP is exploiting despite having nothing of substance to offer. UKIP's policies are, in fact, pure Thatcherism: pursuing liberalisations, dismantling workers rights and the National Health Service.

However, this does throw down a great challenge for the progressive movement and the Labour party – not just in the UK but all across Europe – to turn this discontent into hope through a message of hope, radical change and openness to the world.

RESULTS



Conservative.....	19
UKIP.....	24
Labour.....	20
Liberal Democrat	1
Green.....	3
SNP.....	2
Plaid Cymru.....	1
Sinn Féin.....	1
DUP.....	1
UUP	1

CONTRIBUTORS

They have contributed to this Queries Inquiry.



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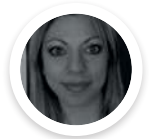
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WOMEN AND THE YOUTH FIRST?

Whereas they used to be electorates traditionally anchored on the left of the political spectrum, it seems that one of the major phenomena of the 2014 European election was the disaffection of the youth and women towards social democrat candidates.

More vulnerable in the crisis than adult men, they were meant to be the main targets of the left's campaign. Have progressives been able to put the improvement of their living conditions back at the heart of the campaign and win back these voters?

We interviewed three female members of the new European Parliament, and three younger MEPs, to assess the aftermath.





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Corina Crețu is a former Romanian journalist. She is currently an MEP and is vice president of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament.

35.4%
OF WOMEN MEPs
IN 2014

CORINA CREȚU

Let's make gender equality a reality

by Iulia Badea-Guérîtée

Queries: What is the position of women in Europe today, from both a political and general standpoint?

Corina Crețu: I believe it is important that women be in a position to play a greater role in every aspect of social, economic and political life. Thus, I support a similar process in national parliaments, where women are under-represented, and also in both state-controlled and private companies.

Q: Were you able to make these issues a cornerstone of the campaign for the European elections?

C.C.: Yes, it was part of my election campaign in Romania. Over 25 years after the fall of the former regime and the return to democracy, changes in this regard are increasingly visible, both generally speaking and in politics. More and more women hold key positions among the political leadership on a national and European level. Issues relating to the rate of female representation should be discussed more often and with more conviction than they have been in the past. Although we represent over half of the world's population, we do not hold even a quarter of key positions. That is a truly lamentable fact.

Q: On a European level, are the quotas proposed by commissioner Viviane Reding enough to improve the situation?

C.C.: The fact that major problems facing Europe today stem from the impact of the economic crisis is now an open secret. Unfortunately, social problems resulting from the austerity measures adopted in Europe have overshadowed issues related to gender equality, which have now been forced to take a back seat in the minds of European people. Soaring unemployment figures have diverted their attention from the question of unequal pay between men and women. In this respect, I welcome the European Parliament's decision to support the 40% quota for female representation in companies—proposed a year ago by the European Commission. However, I fear the time frame is very limited. The most important thing is that legislative measures should go hand in hand with a change in mindset. Only then will we be in a position to talk about real gender equality in the not-too-distant future.



European Parliament, plenary session week 16, 2014

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Evelynne Gebhardt is beginning her fifth term as an MEP. She is currently campaigning to improve the position of women in the European Union and particularly in Germany.

Queries: Do you think the issue of gender equality was given enough exposure in the last campaign.

Evelynne Gebhardt: Sadly, it wasn't even touched on. In Germany, the campaign focused on the choice between Juncker and Schulz as President of the European Commission and women were completely over-

EVELYNNE GEBHARDT

There is still a lot of work to be done to make gender equality a reality **by** Jacques Docquier

shadowed—including on my own side, among the socialists. The candidates talked about the economic crisis, about youth unemployment and about Ukraine, but not about the position of women. I find that somewhat strange since women are the first to suffer the effects of the crisis and unemployment.

Q: Do you expect any progress over the next five years with the advent of a new European Parliament and Commission?

E.G.: There are really no guarantees. We need to rally public opinion to achieve our goals. Two decisions will reveal a lot. The first involves the choice of the President of the European Commission, the President of the European Council, and the High Rep-

resentative for Foreign Affairs and Security. We need a capable, committed woman in one of these three positions. Talks are already underway but ensuring female representation does not appear to be a core concern among heads of state and government. At the last meeting in Brussels, they even set out a list of priorities for the new commission, which did not include the lot of women.

The second key point lies in the willingness of the new European Parliament to put pressure on the Commission and Council of Ministers. I really hope MEPs will rally to the cause, as I myself intend to do.



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Alessia Mosca became an MEP in May this year as head of the PD list for northwest Italy.

Queries: What is the situation for women in Europe today?

Alessia Mosca: Clearly, some steps forward have been made in reducing the disparity between men and women, and the European Union has been instrumental in many of these – through its numerous directives and pro-

ALESSIA MOSCA

Setting the equality agenda **by** Trevor Huggins

grammes that have supported the principle of greater equality for women over the years. However, we cannot say that equality has been achieved, and I say this coming from a country that was ranked 71st in the 2013 World Gender Gap survey by the World Economic Forum and is very far behind the European benchmark for equality.

Q: Did the position of women in Europe receive the attention it deserved during campaigning for the recent elections?

A.M.: No, there certainly wasn't a great deal of time and space devoted to this question. There was a lot of talk about the economic crisis, the euro and the Eurosceptic movement – but very little about the social impact of the crisis and how that had affected women more than men. If, for example, social services are

reduced – as they have been during previous crises – it has a disproportionately greater impact on the lives of women than on men.

Q: What action needs to be taken to improve the situation in Europe?

A.M.: At a policy level, I'd like two things to happen. The first is to see the approval, at last, of the directive on female quotas for the boardrooms of public companies that Viviane Reding (Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship) has worked on. The second is for a directive whereby if the EU provides funds to a country, a percentage of those funds go automatically towards the cost of providing the services that would enable women to achieve greater equality.



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Javi López, 28, is a Spanish MEP elected in May 2014. He has been First Secretary of the Joventuts Socialistes de Catalunya since 2009 and has participated in the coordination of the Young European Socialists (YES).

14.91%
NUMBER OF MEPs
WHO ARE YOUNGER
THAN 40

JAVI LÓPEZ

A generation with no alternatives by Elena Gil

Queries: What is your assessment of the situation in which young Europeans find themselves today? What challenges are they facing?

Javi López: The relative situations in which young people in different parts of Europe find themselves have never been so dramatically different. The crisis has been fuelling a devastating inequality gap that is especially acute between northern and southern European countries. In Spain and Catalonia, where the rate of youth employment stands at over 50%, young people are facing the fact that they have no alternative other than to emigrate. The waves of people leaving Catalonia to seek their fortunes abroad today are greater than those that occurred during the period immediately after the Spanish Civil War.

Q: It looks as though this message didn't hit home, given the shift of young voters to parties other than the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), or did it?

J.L.: The message did hit home in Spain. There isn't any part of Spanish society that isn't aware of what young people are going through because this situation is affecting their parents and grandparents as well. It is true that many voters, particularly young-

er ones, did not view us as being the best vehicle for tackling this problem, whereas they did make a move to the left.

Q: What are the first measures that the new European Parliament should take to improve the current situation of younger EU citizens? Do you think that the composition of the new Parliament will impede progress on this issue?

J.L.: EU policy must undergo a sea change. It has become abundantly clear that the austerity policies that have been implemented have only created more unemployment. Monetary policy is also very restrictive. There are some signs of changes on the horizon, but it's going to be necessary to dismantle the very pillars on which current policy rests, and that should be the priority of the new European Parliament. We are very concerned about the rise in xenophobic rhetoric in the European Parliament that is coming from both the extreme right and the radical left. It's like a new incarnation of Attila sweeping down to destroy everything and bring all things to a grinding halt. The EU must be a space in which to share dignity rather than just the colour of bank notes, and it must be returned to its citizens.



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European Youth Event 2014 in Strasbourg Yo!Fest EYE Closing Plenary Session with a presentation of ideas for a better Europe in the European Parliament



© Socialdemokraterna

Jytte Guteland, 34, is a Swedish MEP, first elected in 2014. She is a former political expert for the Swedish government.

Q: What kind of concrete projects would you encourage in favour of the youth?

J.G.: Projects that will create jobs for the young generation. It's such a waste to leave young people outside society. We social democrats have always understood the value of investing early, in order to prevent damage

JYTTE GUTELAND

We got what we deserve! **by** Eric Sundström

from worsening. If you experience unemployment at a young age, you are at risk of getting permanent difficulties in the labour market. By acting early, you can prevent social problems and you will also reduce the long-term costs to society.

I recently visited the Second Chance School in Norrköping. It's a school founded as a EU-project where the idea is to find new ways to jobs for young people who failed in high school. This type of school is now spreading across several EU-countries. I would happily contribute to more projects like that, which would require financing through the European Social Fund (ESF).

Q: Are you surprised by the low turnout among people who are under 30 years old?

J.G.: No, not really. We got what we deserve.

In order to increase the interest our national parties need to engage more in Europe and the future of the EU. We human beings don't act in accordance with what the political leadership says, we follow how the leadership acts. If we want to increase the interest, we must consequently show in everyday life that we care.

Q: How do you explain that the youth does not feel concerned by Europe?

J.G.: I think it comes down to our own commitment in everyday life. Young people are sensitive to what the older generation conveys. We show up every five years and try to ensure that we are talking about something important, even though we haven't shown any warmth towards the subject in the meantime. How credible is that?



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Young Dutch leader Kati Piri, 35, was elected to the European Parliament on 22 May for the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) group.

Queries: What could you do to reengage the young generation?

K.P.: If the EU does not deliver on the key concerns young people are facing, the most immediate one being youth unemployment, there is no way we can gain their confidence in other projects. The prospect of a big body of youth growing up without sustainable jobs is frightening, and something we need to fight.

KATI PIRI

If young people hit 40 and still haven't voted, they are unlikely ever to **by** Sam Davies

Q.: What concrete steps do you propose?

K.P.: Member states should make an agreement that if they have to cut budgets, the last thing they cut is education, because education and innovation is where growth will come from. A key point in the 'Europe back to work' 10-point plan for change is to make sure that mobility programs such as Erasmus+ receive much more funding. There is also the Youth Guarantee, which is a new approach to tackling youth employment to ensure all youth under 25 are offered a job or traineeship within four months.

Q.: Are you surprised by the low turnout among people under 30 years?

K.P.: Unfortunately not. In general it's extremely alarming that young people feel less

and less engaged in politics. This is something that all political parties should take seriously, because if they hit 40 and still haven't voted, they are unlikely ever to. If young people don't vote, political parties will stop making policies towards them.

Q.: How do you explain that youth do not feel concerned by Europe?

K.P.: The impact on your neighbourhood is less tangible with regards to European elections than local politics. People see Europe as a threat rather than a solution. We have to find ways, rather than just meetings inside the Brussels bubble, to connect with young people, and not just during election time but also for the whole mandate.

Try Burning



This one

ENGLISH DEFENCE LEAGUE

JUST WHO
IS
ASSAULTING
WHO HERE?

ENGLISH
DEFENCE
LEAGUE
NO PL
IN
FOR

ENGLISH
DEFENCE
LEAGUE



JUST WHAT
WOULD
YOU DO
ABOUT THIS?





THE RISE *of populism in Europe*

Initiated by Dutch photographers Dirk-Jan Visser and Jan-Joseph Stok, and led by Fotodok, a space dedicated to documentary photography based in Utrecht, in the Netherlands, “The Rise of Populism” project aims to document the populist phenomenon since 2012 through testimony pulled from European countries. These series highlight the issues on which social frustrations (sovereignty, immigration, recession, etc.) have crystallized and, assuming their share of subjectivity, they examine the crisis into which our democracies are plunged.



Comments by Jean-Yves Camus, a French political scientist, specialist of the extreme right.



Nuneaton, England. 2010. A large English flag is laid out in a car park in Nuneaton just before an English Defence League rally begins. Phrases that are legible include the slogan of the E.D.L 'No Surrender', as well as other phrases such as: 'Was born for this, the British Empire'.

© Ed Thompson

COMMENTS



The English Defence League came at the forefront on the British Extreme-Right scene as a strange and scary mix between skinhead street gangs and more mainstream Islamophobia. Following the London bombings of 7 July 2007, the British Extreme-Right became more than ever focused on fighting the “peril” of “Islamization”. Because of the internal in-fighting which plagued the British National Party and eventually led to its electoral failure, there was room for a movement that stayed away from party politics and would stir up racial hatred and religious bigotry through violent demonstrations and clashes with both Anti-Fascist militants and Muslim Extremists. However internal conflicts on both the leadership of Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (aka “Tommy Robinson”) and political strategy have put an end to the threat of the EDL evolving into a political party and disturbing community relations.

An EDL member with a lion tattoo on his head.

This photograph was taken in Luton, the centre of the EDL during the Lee Rigby wreath laying memorials that took place after his murder by two 'home grown' terrorists.



© Ed Thompson



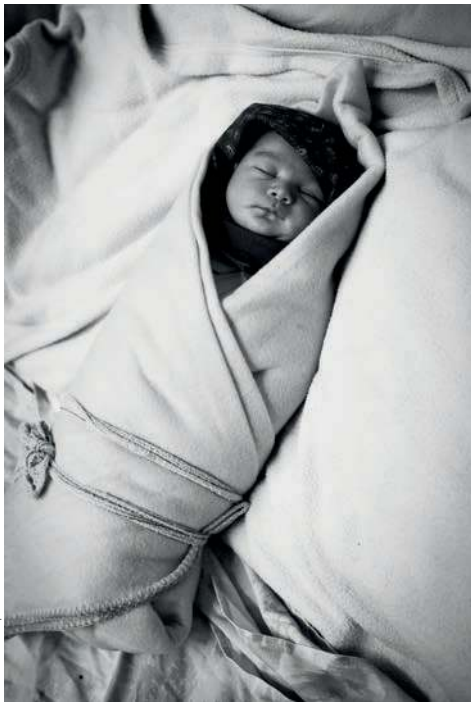
© Ed Thompson

Sean Reah exposes his exploding Mosque tattoo at an EDL march in Birmingham. Causing outrage once images were in the media he has since had it removed. You can see a video of him explaining himself here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RF1_uzaWb8

Ed Thompson, (UK), *photographer, and part of the project 'The Rise of Populism in Europe'*

www.edwardthompson.co.uk



© Jan-Joseph Stok

The Roma are dehumanised as individuals and human beings, and stripped of even the most fundamental rights that are normally a symbol of egalitarian France. In early August 2012 a new wave of evictions took place, dismantling major Roma settlements in different regions.

In the north of the country, in particular Villeneuve d'Ascq, Roma houses (wooden bungalows or caravans) were destroyed or removed.



© Jan-Joseph Stok



© Jan-Joseph Stok

Two hundred people were made homeless with no prospect of alternative accommodation. Some were even deported. Long term project.

Jan Joseph Stok, (NL/FR), photographer, and part of the project

'The Rise of Populism in Europe'

www.janjosephstok.com

COMMENTS



The Roma people have been living in Europe since the Middle-Ages, after they came from the Indus valley in today's India to settle permanently here. Contrary to a widespread opinion, they are not wanderers who come and go across borders: the majority of them live in villages and towns where their presence has been documented for centuries, such as in Alsace and the Pays Basque. As in other countries in Europe, some Roma people living in France are still travellers, as they are referred to in Ireland, while others live a sedentary life. Anyway, there are long-lasting prejudices which portray them as thieves living on welfare and, more important, people who never assimilate into urban societies, much like the "wandering Jews". Those Roma immigrants who fled Eastern Europe for France did so because they are discriminated against. Would they have decent living conditions in their native countries, they would most probably have chosen to stay.



© Rami Hanafi

The small towns in rural areas of Finland offer a different seedbed. Many things occurring in Central Europe might feel very abstract and remote. Kihniö, a regular small town with some 2100 inhabitants was the biggest supporter, compared to the population, of the True Finns party in the general elections of 2011.

Lot of the young in Kihniö are students at the local art school, coming from other towns close by to get education. Many of them feel there is nothing to do in town and they're looking to move to the close by cities.



© Rami Hanafi



© Rami Hanafi

A couple in their garden. Their older daughter lives next door, in the oldest house of Kihniö, with her family. Their younger daughter is constantly traveling the world, looking for the right place to settle.

Rami Hanafi, (FI), *photographer, and part of the project 'The Rise of Populism in Europe'*
www.ramihanafi.com

COMMENTS



The True Finns is a strange name for a party in a country where 90% of the population is ethnically Finnish, except for foreign immigrants, the indigenous Sami people and the Swedish minority. It is in fact a catch-all party which has succeeded the now defunct Finnish Rural Party, an Anti-Communist, law-and-order, agrarian minor player in the politics of the late 20th century. The True Finns want to implement a strict immigration policy based on quotas of skilled workers. They stand against the EU and NATO and want to reduce development aid to Third-World countries. They are of the "Welfare Chauvinist" type, which means they support the Social State as long as welfare goes to native Finns only. The party insists on preserving and even enhancing the "Finnishness" of the country and traditional values and culture. Curiously enough, given the status of State Church granted to the Lutheran denomination, party leader Timo Soini is a Roman Catholic and his hobby is Irish culture.



© Wendy Marijnissen

Extreme right party Vlaams Belang used a campaign poster of a woman in bikini wearing a burqa with the slogan 'Freedom or Islam? Dare to choose' in the latest local elections, presenting 'Islam' as the biggest threat in Flemish society.

Wendy Marijnissen,
(BE), photographer,
and part of the project
'The Rise of Populism
in Europe'

www.wendymarijnissen.com

COMMENTS



Although the Vlaams Belang (VB) has lately focused on Muslim immigration, it was originally representative of the Extreme-Right fraction of the Flemish movement that seeks the break-up of Belgium and the independence of Flanders as a Republic. Over the last few years the VB has lost its momentum and the mainstream Right Conservative party Nieuw Vlaamse Alliantie (NVA) has become the major pro-independence movement in Flanders. The lady on the poster is An Sofie Dewinter, the daughter of VB leader Filip Dewinter. The anti-Niqab campaign launched by the VB is based on a concept that used to be part of the secular Left's ideology namely, that monotheistic religions are opposed to women's Rights and keep them in an inferior status. Therefore the feminist concept of "my body belongs to me" is now used by the Extreme-Right as a political weapon against Islam.



© Nico Baumgarten

This series is not about Berlusconi's success, but about the political culture in Italy that he created and that will persist for a longer time even now that he is gone. Here, a supporter of Berlusconi shows off one of her paintings during a rally in Milan.

Nico Baumgarten, (DE),
photographer,
and part of the project 'The
Rise of Populism
in Europe'

www.nicobaumgarten.net

**This portfolio is proposed
in partnership with**
The Eyes, the first bilingual
dual-media European-inspired
photography magazine.

COMMENTS



Silvio Berlusconi is no Fascist and the Extreme-Right is not his political home. He is a populist leader and a media mogul who has built his career in politics upon his successful business endeavours. This totally fitted the mood of the Italian voters in the 1990s, when they were fed up with the old political establishment and parties, and were looking for a new charismatic leader who could do as well for his country as he had done for his companies. After 20 years in power, Berlusconi was kicked out of his Premiership and his legacy is one of corruption, moral decay and ridicule for Italy. The irony is that one of the men who stood in Berlusconi's way and hastened his fall was Gianfranco Fini, who changed the Fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) into a mainstream Conservative party, Alleanza Nazionale. But then, Fini was at least a Statesman, while Berlusconi was emblematic of the traditionally weak Italian State.



For more information
on the project:
www.fotodok.org

ABOUT

Jean-Yves Camus is a research fellow at IRIS, and the director of the Observatory on political radicalisms of the Fondation Jean Jaurès.

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N°2 in March 2014

**Stephen Gill
Cartier-Bresson
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The rise of populism
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WHAT DOES EUROPE MEAN TO LULA?



© Ricardo Stuckert/Instituto Lula

Lula and Colombian President Evo Morales

I believe that the construction of the European Union is not just a European legacy, but rather part of the world's heritage. It is a political institution that inspires countries to work together and increase cooperation and integration in their regions. It was the inspiration for South America with Mercosur and the Union of South American Nations, and

for Africa with the African Union and the regional economic communities that are now engaged in developing the continent. It is an amazing achievement that countries that have been at war for centuries, begun to work together peacefully to resolve their differences through dialogue and politics and not by force of arms.

EUROPE HAS COME A LONG WAY

It is perhaps difficult to perceive at this

moment, especially from inside a Europe that suffers from unemployment and the loss of worker's rights after years of economic crisis, which dates from the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008. Mainly for a generation that had the good fortune to grow up in a developed society and did not have to suffer the pain of war. But, just as it is advisable to step back some distance in order to discern the magnitude of a giant monument, certain achievements are only

clearly visible when seen from a distance and with a broader perspective of time.

The social rights and the standard of living that Europeans enjoy are still a distant goal for the populations in the majority of countries in the world. The social welfare state is a great achievement, the result of the struggle of generations and generations of workers. We in Latin America, are still struggling to achieve part of that which you, in Europe, must fight to protect against opportunistic initiatives to reduce rights that arose with the economic crisis.

Working people, the middle class and immigrants cannot be held responsible for the crisis caused by the irresponsibility of the financial system. Banks were too heavily leveraged, with huge speculative investments, rather than responsible and productive ones. It cannot be left to the most vulnerable segments of our society – the immigrants, the retirees, the workers, and the countries of southern Europe – to pay the bills for the greed of few.

The brutal adjustments imposed on the majority of European countries – which has been justly called “austericide” – has delayed the resolution of the crisis without reason. The continent will need to have vigorous growth to recover the dramatic losses of the last six years. Some countries in the region appear to be emerging from the recession, but the recovery will be

much slower and much more painful if the current contractionist policies are continued. More than imposing sacrifices on the European population, these policies are prejudicial even for those economies that managed creatively to resist the crash of 2008, such as the United States, the BRICS and a large share of the developing countries.

offering advances and hope, we will see, sadly, an increase in the voices that promote fear, intolerance, and xenophobia.

In March, I had the opportunity to talk in Rome with the Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. His courage and skill trying to solve ancient impasses in Italian society was rewarded by the population with heavy voting in favor of the Democratic Party. It

“SOCIAL FUNDING SHOULD NOT BE SEEN AS SIMPLY SPENDING, BUT RATHER AS AN INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE.”

WE NEED A NEW UTOPIA

In order to overcome this crisis, we needed in 2008, and still need today, more political than purely economic decisions. It is essential to understand and explain to the peoples the origins of the current crisis. Politics, still analog in a digital world, must be renewed to engage in a dialogue with society to identify the problems and to create new solutions. Political decisions cannot simply be outsourced, shifted to technical commissions, multilateral organizations or third or fourth level bureaucrats. The roles of leaders and political parties cannot be replaced in a democracy. If progressive forces are not capable of presenting new ideas and representing workers and young people,

is a clear demonstration that it is possible to overcome the scepticism with politics. We need to create a new historical horizon. Not a new theory, but a new utopia capable of motivating the population and serving as a horizon for progressive forces in Europe.

RETHINKING OUR SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The world has changed in the last 30 years. But instead of lowering the standards of European worker's rights against the competition of workers from emerging countries, what is needed is to raise their standards of living to levels similar to those of the Europeans. We need a broader and more generous vision of Europe, facing the

“WE NEED TO CREATE A **NEW HISTORICAL HORIZON.** NOT A NEW THEORY.”



© Ricardo Stuckert/Instituto Lula

Lula and French President François Hollande

fact that it's possible to achieve the goal of a world without poverty.

30 years ago, when most of South America lived in sombre times with dictatorships spread throughout the continent, the solidarity and support of the European Union and progressive parties were of great help in strengthening the forces of the left and achieving a return to democracy in our region. Today after great popular and political efforts, our continent is a peaceful and democratic region, with significant advances in economic development and the struggle against poverty made in the last decade.

In South America it was the inclusion of the poorest levels of society that helped propel the economy forward, increasing the income and consumption, creating strong internal markets, that allowed a progressive agenda with the advancement of social and worker rights.

In Brazil, the numbers that best translate

the success of that strategy of investing in the poor are the more than 20 million jobs created in the formal sector in the last 11 years, the 36 million people that emerged from extreme poverty and the 42 million people that moved into the middle class.

SEEING THE POOR AS A SOLUTION

I am convinced that the solution for the economic crisis worldwide lies in the fight against poverty on a global scale. Social funding should not be seen as simply spending, but rather as an investment in people. We must stop viewing the poor of the world as a problem and start viewing them as a solution, both within countries, and on a broader scale around the world. Investments in social programs, agricultural production and in financing infrastructure in developing countries, especially in Africa, can create new jobs and a new consumer market. Despite the worldwide

economic crisis, African GDP grew consistently at rates of 5% and 6%, making space for the demand for more sophisticated goods and services produced in the wealthy countries and contributing to a sustainable recovery of the economies of Europe and the rest of the world.

The Europe that managed to be reborn after the devastation of the wars of the first half of the 20th century is a proof that it is possible, through politics and democracy, to improve the standard of living of the population. In South America, a generation of leaders like Dilma Rousseff, Cristina Kirchner, Michelle Bachelet, Pepe Mujica, Rafael Correa and Evo Morales, among others, succeeded, against all kind of conservative, and even reactionary opposition, to reach power by democratic means and promote great social and political advances in their countries.

The contribution of the progressive political forces is crucial to our continents. Therefore, a more direct political dialogue and closer ties are needed between South American and European lefts. It is important not only for our regions, but for the whole world.

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was President of Brazil (2003-2010), and is a founding member and Honorary president of *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' Party).

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DISPUTE OVER THE TRANSATLANTIC TRADE AND INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP

The EU and the US want to boost trade on both sides of the Atlantic by creating the world's largest free-trade zone. Critics point to the lack of transparency in the negotiations and fear social and environmental standards could suffer. What is the price of more trade?



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14.02. 2013

New transatlantic counterweight to China

A free trade zone between the EU and the US would finally put the focus of international policy back on transatlantic relations, the business paper *Expansión* writes enthusiastically: «This is excellent news, both from an economic and a geopolitical point of view. For the economy, an agreement will help create a situation every liberal democracy strives for (or should be striving for): more international trade that boost the citizens' prosperity through reductions in prices and

creates additional jobs. [...] From a geopolitical point of view it will give transatlantic relations, which have suffered greatly as a result of the financial crisis and the simultaneous rise of the emerging economies, an enormous boost. After all, it's no news that in recent years the US has concentrated mainly on strengthening its relations with Asia (and above all an unstoppable China) and has paid little attention to Europe.»





14.02.2013

BATTLE CRY AGAINST PROTECTIONISM

Europe and the US aim to give the flagging economies on both sides of the Atlantic a powerful boost with the creation of the world's largest free trade zone. By doing so the transatlantic region would demonstrate new strength and initiative, the daily Público comments gleefully: «In a world increasingly dominated by protectionism, the Europeans and Americans would send the message with this gesture that the West has not been reduced to passiveness and decline. However this pact won't put a brake on the self-assertive trend of the up-and-coming powers. And yet if this agreement does come to fruition, that is, if Brussels and Washington manage to counter the protectionist forces in their own camps, said pact will be seen as a paradigm for other economic blocs in the world. [...] And what's more it would show that they are capable of finding common answers. And this at a time when the worst phase of the crisis affecting both sides seems to be over. The whole world would benefit from this alliance.»



14.06.2013

Data protection endangers agreement with US

The real threat to the success of the free trade agreement is not France's opposition, since a compromise will be found for the French film industry, the left-liberal daily Der Standard writes, stressing that data protection will be the true sticking point: "The Europeans fear the power and data hunger of the US Internet giants, who in turn fear the strict laws of the EU and the costs they incur. It will take creativity and patience to unravel this Gordian knot. But precisely the data scandal involving the US's National

Security Agency, which has little to do with economic issues, threatens to turn the fine tuning of technicalities into an ideological conflict that will never lead to an agreement. ... Yet a fundamental matter is at stake with these negotiations, namely the economic future of the West. ... The coming weeks will show whether the transatlantic partnership is still strong enough to ensure that not just single trees, but the whole forest is protected."





13.06.2013

FRANCE GIVES PRIORITY TO CULTURE OVER COMMERCE

The potential French veto against the planned free trade agreement between the EU and the US is understandable, the left-liberal daily SÜddeutsche Zeitung writes: "France defines itself as a grand cultural nation, whereby it understands culture not just as the fine arts, but also as *savoir vivre*, a heightened sense of beauty and 'esprit'. Others prefer to own nuclear weapons, to be the world export champion or to usher in the Pacific century: the French console themselves with their culture and don't want it to be treated just like any other commodity, such as drilling machines or lean hogs. [...] At the same time, the clash of cultures is the expression of a basic discord. [...] With its Latin roots, France has a different, more sceptical attitude to money than Britain or Germany. The triumphal march of capitalism and the marketing of almost every cultural expression meets with a deep sense of unease in France. [...] That explains why the promise of a transatlantic free trade agreement is less attractive in France than elsewhere."

28.10.2013

Loss of trust will cost the US dearly

At their summit meeting at the end of last week, the EU heads of state and government harshly criticised the US for its spying activities but continued to show respect for the country's interests in the planned free trade agreement. That won't be the case for long, the left-liberal daily Le Monde prophesies: "If truth be told, Barack Obama can no longer keep count of the number of friendly leaders whose hackles he's raised. [...] But does that matter? So what? people are no doubt whispering in the corridors of the White House. Barack Obama has no friends, but does he need any? [...] The ferocious competition of globalisation is less comfortable than the discipline among blocs in the Cold War. Americans and Europeans will remain united in the war on terror, and their respective intelligence services will find common ground. Politically and commercially, however, the loss of confidence resulting from the Obama administration's handling of the NSA scandal will do more harm to the US than the last EU summit."

04.11.2013

Trade agreement with US a threat to democracy

The planned free trade agreement between the EU and the US could undercut the rights of the citizens of Europe, the left-liberal daily The Guardian warns, criticising the agreement above all because it would allow businesses to sue governments seeking to protect the people's interests: "It would allow a secretive panel of corporate lawyers to overrule the will of parliament and destroy our legal protections. [...] Investor-state rules could be used to smash any attempt to save the NHS from corporate control, to re-regulate the banks, to curb the greed of the energy companies, to renationalise the railways, to leave fossil fuels in the ground. These rules shut down democratic alternatives. They outlaw leftwing politics. This is why there has been no attempt by the UK government to inform us about this monstrous assault on democracy, let alone consult us."



12.02.2014

FRANCE AND US TRUST EACH OTHER ONCE MORE

The bond of trust between France and the US has been restored, the left-liberal daily El Periódico de Catalunya writes, commenting on Hollande's visit to the White House and hopes that this will accelerate the transatlantic free trade agreement: "Thomas Jefferson and Lafayette. These two names on which the long-standing historic ties between the US and France are based were cited repeatedly during yesterday's meeting between François Hollande and Barack Obama. They symbolised the renewed alliance between the two countries with which they have overcome the grave differences that emerged over the Iraq war a decade ago. [...] This renewal of trust should accelerate the free trade agreement between the EU and the US which would be beneficial to both sides. However the pomp of the visit to the White House can't hide the fact that Hollande is very weakened in France and in Europe and that in this increasingly multi-polar world the US is no longer the super-power it once was."



11.02.2014

GM maize will boost anti-EU sentiment

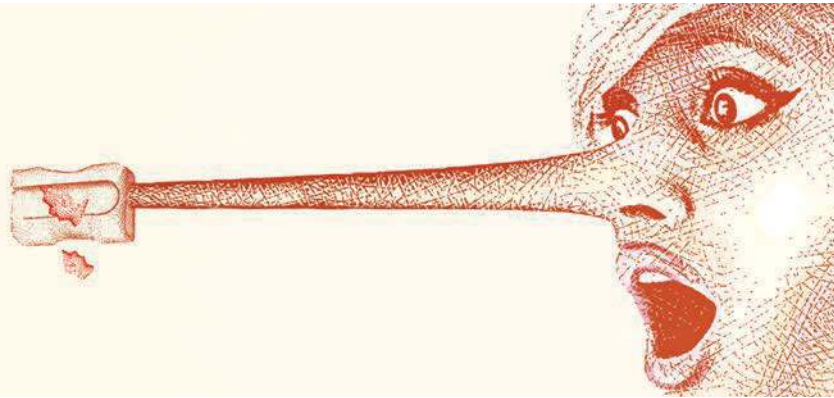
A genetically modified type of maize produced by the US hybrid seed producer DuPont Pioneer is on the verge of being authorised in the EU. Despite hefty criticism at a ministerial meeting on Tuesday in Brussels, there were not enough votes to reject the authorisation. The daily Kurier fears a new wave of anti-EU sentiment: "Three months before the elections to the European Parliament, the Commission wants to force through the authorisation of a highly controversial type of genetically engineered corn, despite the resistance of 19 (!) states. Such a move flies in the face of the desires and concerns recently expressed by people across Europe. After the ban on light bulbs and the attempt to prohibit the cultivation of old varieties of fruit and vegetables, this is the next anti-consumer action to come from Brussels. [...] Their warnings against hormones in meat, chlorine-rinsed chickens and genetically modified food from the US in the context of the free trade agreement could intensify people's frustration with Europe."



18.05.2014

TTIP COULD FAIL WITHOUT TRANSPARENCY

Negotiations over the TTIP free trade agreement between the EU and the US will enter their fifth round today, Monday. But popular opposition to the agreement is growing and Brussels must react, the left-liberal daily Libération warns: "The goal of the operation is to work out common norms that should then also hold for emerging countries. The problem is that discussions about this project have been so lacking in transparency and so badly explained by those in power (including both the member states and Brussels) that rejection is sprouting from all sides: both in Europe and in the US, where the unions and the NGOs fiercely oppose the agreement. This would not be so dramatic - after all, we still have a year or more for negotiations - if the European elections weren't taking place on Sunday. Because they will only entrench people more firmly in their positions. Since information is the best weapon against fear and hysteria, Brussels has every interest in launching a broad and above all transparent debate."



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Tomorrow will be Truth Well Told.





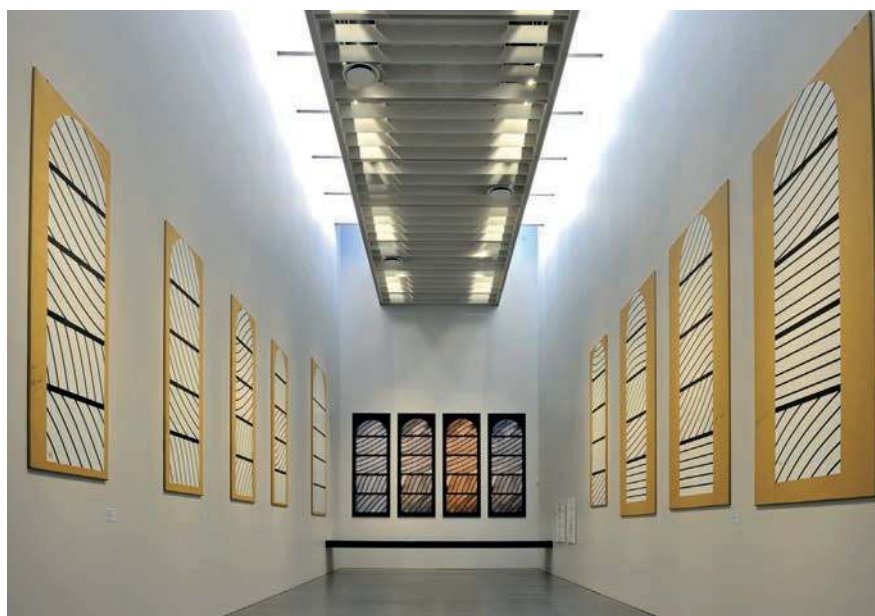
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OUTRENOIR SHINES ITS LIGHT ON EUROPE

The new Musée Soulages opened its doors to the public at the end of May in the small city of Rodez, in southwest France, showcasing work donated by the artist and his wife, Colette. The museum aims to convey a more universal view of the creative process. The Musée Soulages is one of the few museums to open during the lifetime of the artist to whom it is dedicated, offering a scope that encompasses all of Europe and making it a key cultural attraction.



by Charlotte Saliou



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ORIGINS: RODEZ

Rodez is a small city home to nearly 84,000 people in France's southern Aveyron region, where Pierre Soulages lived as a child. The town is known for its cathedral and its pink sandstone, and is now home to a 6,000 sqm museum devoted to Soulages' work, built around a collection of 500 pieces donated by the artist and his wife, Colette, on 15 September 2005. The municipality's slogan—"Where art is a way of life"—aptly reflects the spirit of the place, neatly reflecting the pleasure of wandering leisurely through small streets and indulging in local specialties. Pierre Soulages sees the city as a part of himself. It influences his work. He talks about his "dual origins: Rodez and painting."

He believes the city has a unique disposition, which he describes as a "world of severity and fidelity" that never ceases to inspire him and fuel his creative imagination, giving rise to a wide-ranging wealth

of work that has garnered a following well beyond the city's ramparts. This year's spring opening of a museum dedicated to a "local lad" became a key date in many a cultural diary.

In donating his work, Pierre Soulages reflects his faith in the French state, enriching its cultural heritage and injecting new life into the region. At the same time, he is helping to promote French culture throughout Europe through a fresh, lively image that marks a new departure for a country that has traditionally subscribed to the cliché of posthumous recognition by opening museums decades after the artists in question have passed away.

IDEAL ARCHITECTURE

The Jardin de Foirail, a park near the cathedral in the heart of the city, was chosen as the location for the new museum. The building was designed by a talented team of Catalan architects from Barcelona (REC

arquitectes, Roques & Passelac), who created a series of cubes clad in glass and Corten "weathering" steel as a seamless feature of the landscape. The effect of oxidation gives the metal a hue that blends discreetly with the pink sandstone found throughout the city. The volumes—hollowed out in places to create openings and passageways—give the structure a lighter feel conducive to meditation and of course to appreciation of the works housed within. The perfect balance between architecture and painting, showcase and content, imbues the surroundings with a sense of subtle harmony. According to the artist, the museum is "unusual" in that the architects have successfully demonstrated the process of capturing the kind of light first experienced by Soulages in Conques. Inside the museum, a combination of low and high ceilings with different plays of light that enhance the pieces on show, in harmony with their different messages.



© Cédric Méraillès

WALKING TOWARDS THE LIGHT

Musée Soulages offers dynamic surroundings with an impressive layout that combines biographical information with a holistic approach to the painter's work, history and techniques used for each piece. The resulting showcase contributes to greater awareness and pleasure in visiting the exhibition. This is a museum in which everyone can immerse themselves in a truly enjoyable journey of discovery.

The Conques collection (1987-1994) includes 104 stained glass windows commissioned by the Ministry of Culture for Sainte-Foy Abbey Church in Conques, near Rodez. Their silent song echoes Pierre Soulages' decision to make full use of rhythm by employing asymmetrical patterns—seen in the waves of lead without any symmetrical structure—to inspire a soft “murmur”.

The various rooms used to house the exhibition continue the allegorical journey

“1979 BROUGHT A REAL ARTISTIC REVOLUTION WITH **THE ADVENT OF LIGHT** IN PIERRE SOULAGES' WORK.”

with the Brous de Noix (walnut stain) pieces and paintings on paper on the lower level. The calligraphy and gestural devices of these paintings mounted on canvas offer “traces” of movement revealing light through the interplay of contrast and transparency. The permanent exhibitions feature Soulages' printed work, including silk-screens, lithographs and etchings.

The last section houses paintings on canvas, featuring 21 pieces produced between 1940 and 1970. This is where black is

really brought to the fore, its use initially partial then all-encompassing. These were the first works by Pierre Soulages to be shown in Europe and around the world from 1946 to 1950. They beautifully embody his oft-repeated claim that “what I do shows me what I am looking for.”

It is at this point that the black takes precedent through the light reflected by this “colour of origins”. 1979 brought a real artistic revolution with the advent of light in his work.

A EUROPEAN EXHIBITION

Next comes the temporary exhibition in which a wide range of work is on display. The current exhibition focuses on *Outrenoir(s)* in Europe: museums and foundations, comprising 25-30 works selected by the artist that represent an unprecedented, exclusive body of work in Europe. Although he initially felt the colour was "hopeless" and "a dead end", he went on to develop his techniques, taking breaks and letting time take its course. The picture gradually comes together and the light appears. This was the dawn of "Black Light", which might be described as a physical interaction with light. The exhibition features 25 pieces on loan from countries throughout Europe, including Germany, Switzerland, Spain, France, Norway and Austria. This is in keeping with the approach of the artist himself, who admits to having "never liked monographic museums." However, he also notes that "this museum is different. It focuses on the creative process, on the way in which the works take shape. Most importantly, it will be open to other artists and contemporary art."

From an allegorical standpoint, Soulages' work clearly reflects the nature of the continent to which the museum appeals: a region of countries united by both the dark and that light that stems from it, all unique and at the same time linked by the search for the same ideal. The artist's work embodies the idea of union and forges ties in places where others would not even see a glimmer of hope. It is exactly this notion that this beacon of French culture conveys through a moment in time during which each visitor can finally find hope in beautiful brightness found "beyond black".



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"THE ARTIST'S WORK EMBODIES THE IDEA OF UNION AND FORGES TIES IN PLACES WHERE OTHERS WOULD NOT EVEN SEE A GLIMMER OF HOPE."

ABOUT

*Born on 24 December 1919 in Rodez, **Pierre Soulages** is known for his use of reflections on black, which he calls «Outrenoir» (Beyond Black) as a result of the remarkable play of light. Even as a child, he could be heard telling a friend: "What I want to do with my ink is to make the white of the paper even whiter, brighter, like snow."*

MUSÉE SOULAGES:

All Rodez lead to... Europe

With such a universal collection, the new Musée Soulages already has everything it takes to become a leading international museum. All that remains is to establish the ties needed to make that goal a reality. Benoît Decron, the museum's chief curator, tells us about some of the initiatives designed to promote the museum.



by Charlotte Saliou

Queries: What is the goal of the new museum, apart from providing a worthy showcase for the work of Pierre Soulages?

Benoît Decron: Above all, the museum aims to present the donated works through a focus on the techniques and the creative process itself. For instance, the stained glass windows are a real feat of technical prowess. We provide explanations to make people aware of this side of things. The technique involves an impressive weaving process that includes an element of chance and underpins the work of Pierre Soulages. We aim to present his pieces in worthy fashion, conveying his background with the help of detailed information. This is not an "intransigent" museum. It remains flexible. The architecture alone is proof of that. We can modify the layout and play with the light to suit the works on show.

Q.: What are your goals with regard to the short- and long-term development of the museum? What kind of European ambitions are involved?

B.D.: We will seek to establish contact with people countries inside the EU and outside the EU (such as Switzerland) to promote mutually beneficial exchanges. Outrenoir has a strong following in Europe. On a European level, we would like to house col-

lections from other museums; works that reflect our own commitments.

Q.: Has the European Union helped you implement the project? Has it provided financing or development aid?

B.D.: Not really, due to the difference between "museum time" and the time it takes the EU to act: you need to plan things five years in advance, which is hard to do for a museum. Still, I think they are behind the initiative.

Q.: Do you think the EU currently does enough to support culture?

B.D.: No. It used to do a lot more. For us, things work mainly on a regional level. The help so far hasn't been very convincing.

Q.: How could the EU improve its contribution to the development of European cultural life to build a better future for its museums?

B.D.: The EU needs to put in place networks to improve "circulation" and facilitate exchanges. For instance, it is hard for a French curator to go to a European museum but people from elsewhere in Europe can easily come to French museums. Things aren't really balanced.

Q.: In what way can Musée Soulages contribute to the construction of a European cultural identity?

B.D.: We will expand to include design, contemporary art and architecture, but we will also host themed exhibitions. We will work with Europe as well as with the United States and Japan, since both of these countries are a key part of Pierre Soulages' artistic background. We have a key channel in the shape of the monograph, which is relevant to other art establishments.

Q.: Do you envisage any partnerships with other European museums?

B.D.: Yes, we could set up exchanges with other European museums that have major collections of monographs, in line with our goal of remaining true to the work, seeking to portray it in the best light and promoting it throughout Europe.

Benoît Decron is the chief curator of the new Musée Soulages in Rodez, France.

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RENAISSANCE COMES HOME

"Ernst Stetter, Kathleen Van Brempt, Martin Schulz, Marie Arena, and Massimo D'Alema at the Renaissance Leaders Debate"

After Paris, Turin and Leipzig, the Foundation for European Progressive Studies brought the Renaissance Forum home, in Brussels, to gather progressive forces and ideas before the European elections.



by Moritz Pfeifer

The Renaissance was the first time in history that the words “Europe” and “European” made their way into common language. It gave birth to the most intense wave of intellectual and cultural energy, which passed all over the continent, from Stavanger to Sicily, from Lisbon to Crete. It saw the emergence of what were regarded as the most valued facets of our civilization. It was a period of

dramatic changes – political, economic, and scientific –, which made more people than ever believe that they were living in a unique era. They called it “this new age”, “the present age”, “our age”, and “the blessed age.” With a slogan such as “A Progressive Renaissance for Europe”, the FEPS uses well-chosen terms to gather the Party of European Socialists (PES), along with its own affiliated think tanks and political foundations. Indeed, “Renaissance” not only suggests that change is possible in the future, but also that since

there actually has been such a time of zest and splendor, it can happen again. The “Progressive Renaissance” sees itself as a forum of debates, started by the FEPS in 2012 in Paris at the Assemblée Nationale and at the Cirque d’Hiver, to back François Hollande’s presidential campaign. It then traveled to Turin, shortly before the Italian parliamentary elections, and later to Leipzig for the celebration of the 150-year anniversary of the SPD. In anticipation of the recent European elections, a large event was held in Brussels that

© FEPS

“THE FEPS VERSION OF THE SHOW INVITES ASPIRING POLITICIANS TO PITCH A POLICY PROPOSAL IN FRONT OF THE INVITED GUEST.”

included a TV-like debate, academic workshops, and conferences on key political issues. Over 40 participants spoke about such pressing topics as the financial crisis, populism, gender politics, labor rights, and the Ukrainian crisis. The event culminated with a series of speeches by Marie Arena, Kathleen Van Brempt, Bruno Tobback, Massimo D'Alema, Elio Di Rupo, and PES candidate to the presidency of the European Commission, Martin Schulz, and closed the next morning with workshops led by the FEPS Young Academics Network and the Young European Socialists.

A SHOW OF UNANIMITY

The first debate of the Brussels event – “Renaissance spotlight: open, equitable, sustainable” – began on a Thursday afternoon at the Square – Brussels’ meeting center. It featured prominent members of the PES such as Zita Gurmai, Mercedes Bresso, Hannes Swoboda, as well as Massimo D'Alema.

Those who frequently attend such events probably foresaw it as another ceremonial gathering of bureaucrats and academics; an exchange of selective ideas radiating under the clinical glow of fluorescent light tubes. But that would be forgetting that “Renaissance” also implies change and novelty: here, a round stage furnished with half a dozen microphones stands in the middle of a spacious room of the Square. LED moving heads light it up with shades of red, blue and purple, while three multi-monitors decorate the back

of the arena. Set and concept were inspired by a BBC TV-show – *Dragon's Den* –, in which an ungenerous jury of entrepreneurs evaluates the business ideas of preselected candidates. The PES version of the show invites aspiring politicians to pitch a policy proposal in front of the invited PES members. The audience is encouraged to challenge the speakers' ideas and engage in the debate by showing approval or disapproval of the speaker's suggestions with red or green cards.

Clearly, the hottest topic of the evening was minimum wage. The suggestion came from Amaury Caprasse, a political advisor working in Brussels. “We have to fight against social dumping and reduce income inequality,” he argued, and to do that “a European minimum salary is needed,” provoking disagreement among the jury. “Each country has to decide for itself the structure of revenues,” replied Massimo D'Alema, to which George Dassis retorted, “A uniform European Salary is a lie,” telling the speaker that minimum revenue can only work as a percentage of some other number, such as the median income, or be the result of collective conventions. When the crowd was asked to raise its cards, nobody disagreed with the speaker. Hannes Swoboda closed the evening by clearing remaining doubts: “We disagree on details,” he admits, “but there are factors which unite us.” With its strong presence and contribution, the S&D Group clearly showed its will to bring together the progressive forces, even combining their own “Relaunching Europe” programme

with Renaissance, which it also inspired. With this first telegenic debate, the Forum clearly demonstrated a sensitivity to the changing tastes of the political youth, and thus stayed true to its image of innovation, progress, and development. But it may also raise the question of what lies behind ceremony and splendor. Is the PES united? How will it concretely carry out the change it purports to convey?

RESTORING THE BROKEN PROMISE

In 2009, the number of MEPs of the S&D group hit a historical low. Many people formerly attracted to social democratic values felt that the PES had somewhat betrayed its own principles. This lack of trust was one of the recurring issues identified in “Tackling Populism: the democratic deficit and public disaffection,” one of the Friday morning debates. Uwe Optenhögel, from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, read a paper in which he spoke about these broken promises: “People who have belonged to the middle class lost their position in society.” These members of the former middle class now switch political sides, radicalizing the social democrat voting base. To win these voters back and solve the problem of populism, two solutions are mentioned again and again during the workshops: more political participation and redistribution of wealth. The first solution is about more direct democracy. Matthew Goodwin, associate Professor at University of Nottingham, reported that 40% of the working class in the UK

say that they do not have a say in politics. The equivalent figure of the more-financially-stable and secure middle class is 16%. Preventing populism is a question of impeding social decline.

This specific aspect was discussed in the next workshop – “How to break the nexus between finance and inequality?” There, Gary Dymksi, professor in applied economics at Leeds University, provided concrete proposals. Among his policy proposals for a more regulated European banking and financial sector, he mentions “the elimination of excessive financial risk-taking.” This would be possible “by introducing a financial transaction tax, by reining permitted activities, especially paying attention to regulatory gaps, and through ringfencing”, which, in this case, means to separate core from non-core banking activities. The other economists participating in this workshop welcomed Dymksi’s dense proposals and complemented them with more reasons and facts on why they should be followed. A provocative voice came from Thierry Philipponnat, secretary general of Finance Watch – an NGO advocating for financial regulation. About excessive financial risk-taking, he asked, “Why social democratic governments, when they are in power, do nothing about that?” Thierry Philipponnat recalled that the French Socialist government introduced a banking reform in 2013, yet he regrets that this reform did not adopt genuine regulatory principles. “Worse than that, it pretended to do something, but did nothing,” he said. “There was a discussion about separating the lending by banks from hedge funds,” – an idea similar to Gary Dymksi’s ringfencing proposition – “but it was blocked because we supposedly need hedge funds to finance SMEs.” Here as well, the promise “to do what we announced” appears to be paramount. Most of the criticism that appeared throughout the workshops was therefore not so much



Pascal Lamy, former Director of the WTO

“PREVENTING POPULISM IS A QUESTION OF IMPEDING SOCIAL DECLINE.”

centered on the proposals themselves as on doubts about their applicability. This would shift in the course of the afternoon, especially during a discussion on the Ukrainian crisis. While Massimo D'Alema argued, “Europe needs to decrease its dependence on Russian gas supplies,” Hannes Swoboda cited recent failed attempts to find alternative suppliers, and recommended that the EU “better take gas from Russia”. And while André Gerrets, a professor in Russian History at the University of Leiden, proclaimed that “the real problem for Ukrainians is extremely poor governance and leadership” and that this “is their own problem,” András Inotai, professor in economics based in Budapest, was convinced that it is “the Eastern Partnership Project that has been unable to develop any

so-called pro-Western, pro-democratic movements in Ukraine,” suggesting that the problem may as well be the EU’s. Most speakers did, however, agree that there is a need for more dialogue, even though unfortunately no Ukrainian speaker attended the discussion. The last panel dealt with the question of subsidiarity. It included four European mayors who were asked to discuss how cities could build a Europe based on subsidiarity and solidarity. The mayors’ experiences revealed the extreme differences in policies that exist throughout Europe. Alex Bodry, Mayor of Dudelange, hailed his region’s fiscal policies in which 10% of housing taxes are reserved for rental subsidies. While this sounds like a great proposal for other regions, it did not impress Jean-François Istasse, First Vice-

Chair of the Committee of the Regions in Belgium, who said that he is mostly worried about the fact that there are not enough houses in the first place. Perhaps because of such large regional differences in social politics, Pascal Lamy, former director of the WTO, called for more uniformity: "We should recognize that subsidiarity has another face: federalism."

SIMPLIFY, SIMPLIFY, SIMPLIFY

Friday evening, after a marathon of political brainstorming in which dozens of renowned contributors from a myriad of countries tried to find challenging answers to Europe's most difficult problems, Martin Schulz offered a reassuring conclusion: "A feeling many of you may have while talking with political leaders is: you, the socialists, you look promising but can you really be trusted?" His answer: "We have to do what we announced."

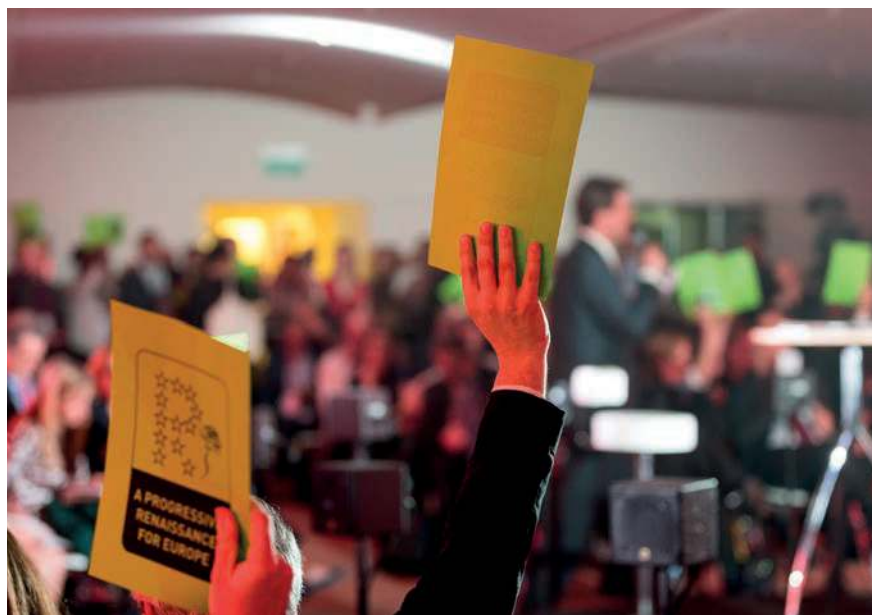
One of the things Martin Schulz wants to do concerns tax regulations. "The country where you make profit is the country where you pay taxes," he boldly announced, adding: "very, very simple." He has another "simple message," this one addressed to those who want to have access to the European market: "You have to understand that you have to respect our values and that you have to respect our rules," he continued, earning applause from an enthusiastic audience. Belgian Prime Minister Elio Di Rupo found the right formula to sum up this progressive vision of Europe: it must "be fair, show solidarity, and be democratic." It is a vision he applied in his own country, noting that Belgium has been able to keep its social model since the beginning of the crisis, without having to give in to austerity.

Back to the question of the salaries, Belgian senator Marie Arena and her compatriot S&D MEP Kathleen Van Brempt advocated for a unified European minimum wage. Indeed, in

her speech, Kathleen Van Brempt affirmed that "we need a minimum wage in all Europe," while Marie Arena suggested that a minimum of 60% of the median salary would be an acceptable calculation, during the debate of the previous day. But other contributors, such as Pascal Lamy, were more reluctant to make such claims. For instance, two days before the Renaissance Forum, he announced to French newspaper *Le Monde* that he was favorable to jobs paid under the French minimum wage.

Martin Schulz's claim is right: the only way to test the credibility of his proposals is to try them out. In that sense, whether he will be able to implement his agenda largely depends on the new balance between political forces, and not only on whether the PES agrees among its own members. Finding supports among other parties will thus be essential. Nevertheless, simplicity is a credible message. After all, the northern European Re-

naissance famously rejected the cultural pomp of the southern one, which was deemed too impious for the serious tastes of the ongoing Reformation. If one thing is for certain, then it is that the PES is indeed serious. Whether they will be able to provoke their Reformation remains to be seen.



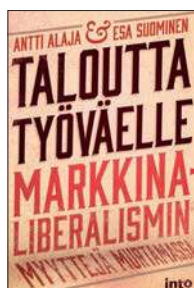
Green cards during the Dialogue with Progressive Leaders

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THINK TANKS'

ECONOMICS FOR WORKERS – BUSTING MYTHS OF MARKET LIBERALISM

Antti Alaja and Esa Suominen



Seeking alternatives for laissez-faire capitalism, Alaja and Suominen turn to the post-Keynesian economic tradition, where government policies and institutions have a more permanent role in managing economic uncertainty and stabilizing economic development. They show that Keynesian economic policy is much more than simply crisis management in a down turn. They propose a European New Deal and wage-led growth.



[+] www.intokustannus.fi/kirja/taloutta_tyovaelle

ITALIANIEUROPEI 3/2014

Various authors



Italianieuropei 3/2014 focuses: on the decline of the Italian families' average income and the consequent growing number of "poor because of the crisis" within the ranks of the middle class; on the abolition of public funding for the political parties which risks making politics a game only for the rich, and on the need to reorganize local public utilities to make them financially, socially and environmentally sustainable, while effective from an industrial perspective.



[+] italianieuropei.it/it/italianieuropei-3-2014.htmlb

MONDOPERAIO

Various authors



Mondoperaio is a monthly publication founded by Pietro Nenni back in 1948. The magazine is currently directed by Mr. Luigi Covatta. Mondoperaio focuses on features and contributions from academics, scholars and political leaders referring to the liberal and center-leftist political area. The magazine led a campaign for promoting the membership of the Democratic Party to the PES. The June 2014 issue will be accompanied by a special report in memory of Giacomo Matteotti, the Socialist MP killed by Mussolini's thugs ninety years ago.

[+] www.mondoperaio.net/la-rivista/

MAKING PROGRESSIVE POLITICS WORK

Various authors



This edited volume brings together over 40 contributions from leading international experts on how progressives should approach the major economic and political challenges of our times. Contributors include: Philippe Aghion, Will Hutton, Thomas Piketty, Anne Wren, Jacob Hacker, Saskia Sassen, Silja Hausermann, Andrew Gamble, Bo Rothstein, Alan Manning, Bruno Palier.

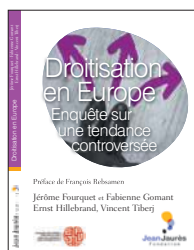


[+] www.policy-network.net/publications/4624/Making-Progressive-Politics-Work

PUBLICATIONS

EUROPE'S SHIFT TO THE RIGHT

Various authors



Based on a survey in 7 countries, opinion pollsters and researchers go beyond alarmist discourses and deceptive forecasts by confronting their analyses. They reveal the complex and puzzling phenomenon triggering a shift to the right in the European political landscape.



[+] www.jean-jaures.org/Publications/Notes/50-nuances-de-droite

FIFTY SHADES OF RIGHT

Jean-Yves Camus



Who exactly are they: Eurosceptics? Populists? Sovereignists? Jean-Yves Camus, director of ORAP (the Observatory of Political Radicalisms at the Jean-Jaurès Foundation), elaborates and discusses a typology of the European right – a political family strikingly more diverse than polls would tell.



[+] www.jean-jaures.org/Publications/Etudes/Droitisation-en-Europe

LES PORTUGAIS DU LUXEMBOURG

Sarah Vasco Correia



The author is a young sociolinguist born in Luxembourg of Portuguese origins. She has won the yearly prize of the Fondation Robert Krieps for her study of the transmission of language and culture of origin of Portuguese immigrants of the first and second generation in Luxembourg. She shows how the integration of the second generation leads to different attitudes towards the original language and culture.



[+] The book (258 pages, 25 EUR) is available in book shops in Luxembourg or can be ordered at Fondation Robert Krieps by mail to benfayot@pt.lu.

RIGHT WING POPULISM IN EUROPE – HOW DO WE RESPOND?

Ernst Hillebrand



Right wing populism is on the rise in Europe. The traditional responses, from ignoring to diabolization, have proven to be largely ineffective. To fight populism successfully, established political parties, especially on the centre left, will have to look for new approaches. This volume of gathers short papers from France, the UK, the Netherlands, and Germany. The authors discuss how to best confront and contain right wing populism.



[+] <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/ipa/10756.pdf>

CRISI E RIFORMA DEL PARLAMENTO

*Pietro Ingrao, with a Exchange with Norberto Bobbio
and an essay by Luigi Ferrajoli*



The most striking aspect of these essays by Pietro Ingrao (a former president of the Italian Camera dei deputati and president for many years of the CRS-Center for the Reform of the State) is the distance between the Italy when they were written (1985-1986) and the present, together with their still poignant relevance. Distance from contemporary Italy and enduring relevance are both caused by the fact that the critical elements affecting Italian institutions thirty years ago were far less grave compared to

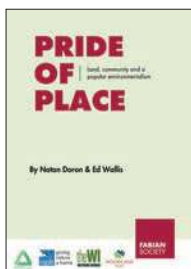
those currently ailing our democracy. Nevertheless, in Ingrao's writings they are perceived and anticipated with extraordinary lucidity. Lobbies and vested interest have greatly accrued their capacity to influence legislation in "perfect" bi-cameral parliament. So the question that Ingrao poses is: why not one chamber only capable of effective decision making? This is an important contribution to the debate on constitutional reform currently underway in Italy.



[+] www.ediesseonline.it/catalogo/carte-pietro-ingrao/crisi-e-riforma-del-parlamento

PRIDE OF PLACE: LAND, COMMUNITY AND A POPULAR ENVIRONMENTALISM

Natan Doron and Ed Wallis

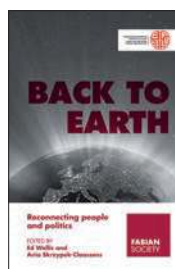


People's sense of identity, shaped by their attachment to their local area, can sit at the heart of a new politics of the environment. Pride of Place: Land, community and a popular environmentalism calls for a revolution in the culture of environmentalism, which puts a much greater focus on rebuilding democratic capacity rather than focusing on securing legislative change at a national and supranational level.

[+] www.fabians.org.uk/pride-of-place/

BACK TO EARTH: RECONNECTING PEOPLE AND POLITICS

Edited by Ed Wallis and Ania Skrzypek-Claassens



With public trust in politicians to tell the truth at a paltry 18 per cent and the forthcoming European elections set to be a new low watermark for democratic engagement, the democratic deficit has never felt so real. In 'Back to Earth', innovative new research from BritainThinks reveals that change must be rooted in an understanding of what citizens feel is wrong with politics.

[+] www.fabians.org.uk/publications/back-to-earth/



The Fondazione Italianieuropei is an autonomous institution designed to fuel ideas, projects and scenarios that are to be the breeding ground for fostering new political and economic proposals and promoting new figures for the political, cultural, business arenas and for the Public Administration.



On 6 February 1998, a group of personalities of the Italian reformist culture convened a public seminar in Rome, attended by leading figures from the world of politics, culture, business, and labour. It included current and former Presidents of the Italian Republic Giorgio Napolitano and Carlo Azeglio Ciampi. Their goal was to promote a thorough discussion on the nature and mission of a new cultural foundation, which should aim at building a common European conscience for the future of Italy's institutions, economy, and society. That meeting prepared the ground for the establishment of the Fondazione Italianieuropei.

IDEAS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Italianieuropei is a political foundation established to encourage a Europe-minded political culture. It is also a think tank designed to promote debate among the public on the main issues posed by political and economic innovation. This research institution develops studies and analyses to support the production of ideas that can meet the challenges posed by the new century. Lastly, it is also a training

institution that attracts thinkers and experts, to contribute to the competitive promotion of new leaders in politics and in the economic arena.

TACKLING EUROPEAN ISSUES

Italianieuropei plans and organizes conferences, round tables and seminars for the discussion of specific issues related to the political or economic, domestic or international agendas, led by prominent personalities from the world of research, politics, and from the institutions. The foundation also involves young and promising researchers and academics. Moreover, it organizes training activities in order to bring together professionals and experts, university students and young politicians, with the aim of contributing to the making of the ruling classes of tomorrow. In more than fifteen years of existence, it has tackled many issues of domestic and international nature. More recently it has focused mainly on the economic crisis and the means and recipes to overcome it, the reform of the welfare state, the formulation of innovation policies and R&D, the question of the party systems and the types of democratic organizations in a quickly changing society, the development and spread of populist movements across Europe, the need to enhance the democratization and politicization of the European Union, the changes of power balance taking place at the global level, the political and social developments in the Mediterranean countries, and immigration policies.

In 2008, Italianieuropei, which has always made a great effort to establish a wide network of international relations, became a member of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies.

Italianieuropei communicates the results of its activities through its own bimonthly magazine "Italianieuropei" – which has now reached its fourteenth year of publication – as well as books, pamphlets, and its web site www.italianieuropei.it



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CAPITAL

in the 21st century

Review by Sir Richard Jolly



This magisterial study is a book to be eagerly read and kept on the shelf for consultation, not just bought or reviewed. The Nobel Laureate economist Krugman has called it the economic book of the year, if not of the decade. It forever changes how economists think about inequality.

Capital in the 21st Century provides an overview of levels and long-run trends in wealth from early years to 2010 – in France and Britain (from 1700), in Germany (from 1870), and in the US (from 1770), with less comprehensive data for other countries like Canada, Japan, Italy, and Australia. References are given to online data sets backing up the statistics. In itself, this is a major contribution. As Piketty says, Ricardo and Marx had theories but no data. Kuznets, the distinguished American economist who did early work on income distribution trends, only had data for the mid-years of the 20th century, when inequality was declining.

Piketty draw several major conclusions from this wealth of data. First, from 1914 to 1970, inequality did indeed decline in most of the countries reviewed, as the result of wartime destruction, progressive taxation, and social services in the post-Second World War decades. In contrast, long-term trends and trends since about 1970 in all developed countries show rising inequality – with today's level of inequality approaching those of the pre-First World War Belle Epoque in France, United Kingdom, and Germany. Lastly, recent growth in incomes of the top 1% and top 0.1% have soared, but the composition of these groups has changed. Indeed, a century or more ago, the very rich were mostly rentiers, living off returns from property – land, housing and industrial capital. In the last 30 to 40 years, the group of the very rich have changed, now receiving much of their income in the form of extremely high salaries. Piketty estimates that such "super-managers" account for some 60% to 70% of those with top incomes. Superstars – athletes, actors, and artists – account for less than 5%. What are the economic forces behind these trends? This is where Piketty is at his most original, focusing on two basic and memorably

simple factors, "r" and "g" ("r" being the real rate of return on all forms of capital after tax, and "g" the real rate of economic growth of a country's GDP). Using what has been a neglected but basic

**"ACCORDING TO PIKETTY,
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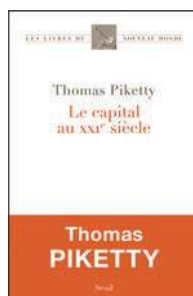
tautology, Piketty emphasises that if "r" is greater than "g", the share of total returns to capital in a country will be rising faster than the returns to labour, as has been happening since the 1970s. This is certainly true for the countries he focuses upon – and probably many others too, though not of course for China, India, and other fast growing emerging and developing countries.

Piketty then looks ahead, to the rest of the 21st century. He gives reasons for expecting that "g" in the developed countries of Europe or in the United States will only grow in real terms by 1% to 2% per year. In contrast, unless there is a major unexpected decline in technological advance, the real returns to capital are likely to continue at 4% to 5%. Thus unless there is major government action, inequalities will continue to grow, both as a rising share of capital in GDP compared to a declining share for labour and as a rising share for the top 1%, within the share going to labour.

So what can European countries do? Piketty recognizes that political power is increasingly under the influence of super-managers, the interests they represent and the contacts they have with those in government and with the rest of the high-income



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Capital in the 21st Century

*Thomas Piketty (Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014 – published originally in French as *Le Capital au XXI^e Siècle* at the Éditions du Seuil)*

elite. Therefore action will not be easy. Piketty underlines the importance of individual countries continuing with land and income taxes, wherever possible making them more progressive. He shows that present marginal levels of tax are far below the high levels of 1940 to 1980, suggesting there is scope for some increases. Moreover, it is interesting that the highest rates were set in the United States and United Kingdom, with very sharp declines over the 1980s. Germany and France had lower rates at their peaks and slower rates of decline after 1980 to 1990, with slightly higher rates today. Piketty's new proposal is for a global wealth tax. The focus on wealth is necessary if the forces of accumulating individual wealth are to be reined in and, if possible, the tax must be global to prevent the wealthy simply skipping abroad. He suggests that such a tax should also be progressive – with rates of 0% on net assets under one million euros, 1% between 1 and 5 million, and 2% above that – perhaps with a 5% to 10% rate on assets above 1 billion. Piketty emphasises that one advantage of wealth taxes is that they would stimulate the collection of data

on wealth ownership, which at present is woefully missing. But he stresses that their main purpose is to curb the forces making for ever greater inequalities, which he sees as a threat to democracy as well as a stimulus to greed among the few and serious disillusion among the many.

But will any of this happen? Piketty points out that property taxes have long existed in the United States and many developed countries. France, Switzerland, Spain, and until recently Germany and Sweden have had wealth taxes, though often with important loopholes. So there are examples and structures to use or learn from, as soon as political demand for action builds up. And although global wealth taxes are what Piketty calls a utopia, it is possible for an individual or for a region like Europe to introduce elements of them – for instance a mansion tax as proposed in Britain. This is therefore a book of enormous importance for the future of the European social model.

Sir Richard Jolly is a Research Associate and Honorary Professor of the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.

RESILIENT LIBERALISM

in Europe's political economy

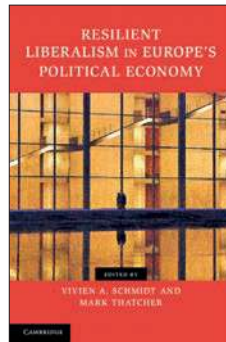
Review by Christophe Sente



This book, edited by Vivien Schmidt and Mark Thatcher, does not delve into the populist phenomenon or the European elections of May 2014. However, it does provide vital insight to help us understand such issues. This, at a time when ballot-box results have shown that even if neo-liberal ideas were responsible for the 2008 financial crisis and today's economic stagnation in Europe, they have yet to lose their appeal. As a result, just like the traditional parties, the representatives of the new right who criticise the choices of the Commission by demanding a reassessment of the role of the State have not entirely turned their backs on the doctrines of Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, which have inspired governments since the 1980s. In this respect, the writings of Vivien Schmidt, Andrew Gamble and Maurizio Ferrera are useful in that they show how criticism of deficit spending and the welfare state has not led to any sort of consensus among the neo-liberal authors with regard to libertarian or anarcho-capitalist views. In fact, state control appears far less an exclusive trait of the left than the principle of socio-economic redistribution handled by a political authority.

Although they share the same line of questioning as Colin Crouch, who, in 2011, highlighted "the strange non-death of neo-liberalism," Vivien Schmidt and Mark Thatcher have avoided an overly economic approach. Their work represents a new milestone in the bid to clarify the characteristics, contradictions and paradoxes of European politics, following on from earlier books by Vivien Schmidt.

Included as an epigraph to the first chapter, Keynes' comment that "the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas" illustrates a methodological approach that seeks to analyse the interaction between



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institutional developments and political ideas. In this context, the use of the word resilience—which, in psychology, denotes an individual's capacity to adapt to stress and adversity by rising above the situation—is not a simple metaphor. Aside from the originality of using the term in the field of political science, it reflects an approach closer to the Hegelian tradition, which makes "sublation" (*Aufhebung*)—rather than antithesis—the focal point of dialectical reasoning.

The explanation provided by Vivien Schmidt, Mark Thatcher et al. with regard to resilience is stimulating and provocative. Stimulating because it encourages the reader not to succumb to the easy option of labelling neo-liberalism as *pensée unique*: the authors remind us that the notion that the free market is superior to market regulation by the authorities is rooted in a range of arguments from a number of different schools of thought. Their explanation is provocative because it suggests that the popularity of neo-liberalism lies notably in the limits of its effective application in Europe. When the time comes, will social democracy prove resilient enough to spare Europe the full impact of Hayek's thinking? The book does not say. That particular responsibility falls to its readers.

Resilient liberalism in Europe's political economy // Vivien A. Schmidt, Mark Thatcher (Cambridge University press, 2013)

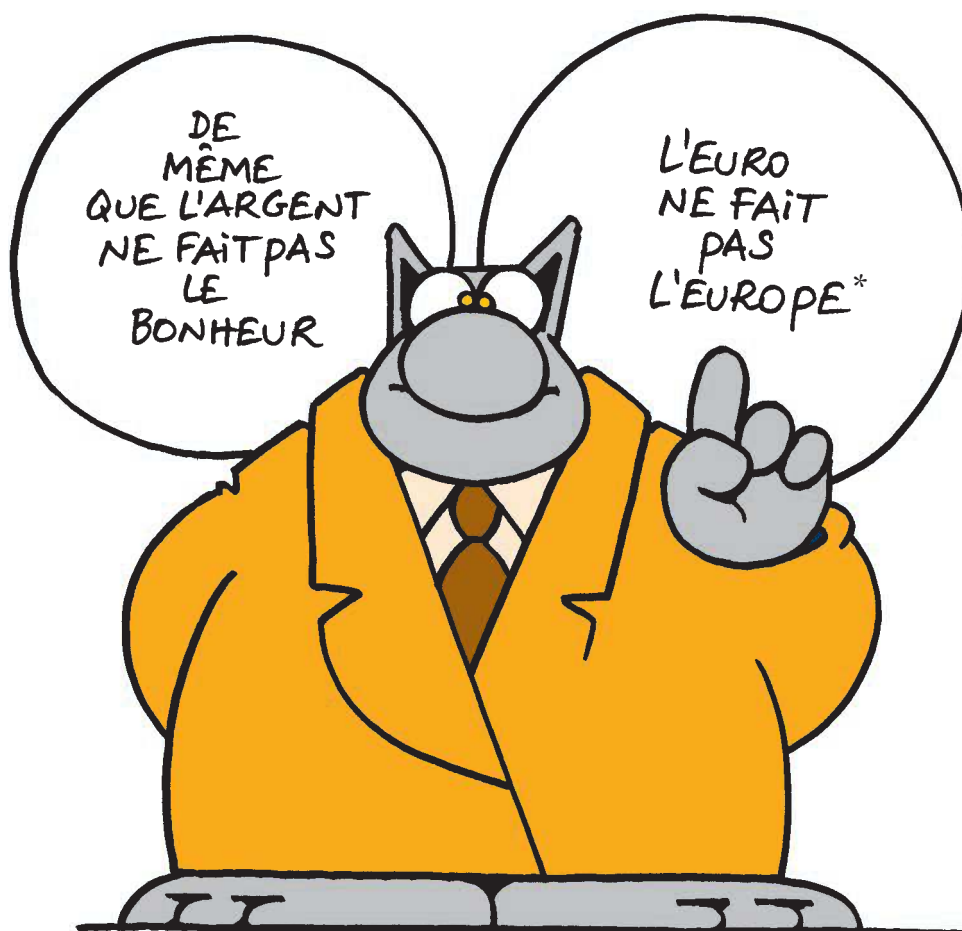
Christophe Sente holds a PhD in Political Science from the Université Libre de Bruxelles, and is a member of the *Gauche Réformiste Européenne* think tank and the FEPS Scientific Council.

LE CHAT

on the European Union



by Philippe Geluck



**Just as money does not buy happiness, the euro does not Europe make*

Philippe Geluck is a Belgian cartoonist, humorist and comedian, born in 1954. He has never stopped drawing, publishing his first cartoon at the age of 15. His famous cat was created in March 1983 for Belgian newspaper *Le Soir*. Its albums are best-sellers and «*Le Chat*» has been published in periodicals around the world (France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Greece, Chile, Switzerland, Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States, Italy, Iran, etc.).



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