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The Progressive Post

SPECIAL COVERAGE

THE TREATY OF ROME
AND THE ROAD AHEAD

FOCUS

TRANSNATIONAL DEMOCRACY
VS. POPULISM

Featuring contributions from:

Michel Serres

Colin Crouch

Pascal Lamy

Carlos Zorrinho

Harri Hursti

Vytenis Andriukaitis

Anna Diamantopoulou



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INTEGRATION IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY



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

Progressives and democrats thought that the insanities certain candidates came out with during their electoral campaigns would stop once they were elected. So far, however, President Trump seems to be meeting the promises he made to his electorate.

This is disconcerting, as we seem to have forgotten that the above should apply to all candidates. At the same time, it remains important that we understand how and why this is happening, because when the President of the United States thinks and acts as Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán does, it is the entire European democratic camp and all of our fundamental values that are under threat.

The results of the US election represent a qualitative leap and a radical change in the character of the right and the dangers that might potentially deepen the rifts in the global scene. This version of the right is the offspring of the crisis of globalisation, the defeat of that optimistic and neoliberal vision that has dominated the

world for around 20 years. If the conservatives lost control of the Republican Party to a man who could never have succeeded alone, progressives should be aware that the people's need for protections, highlighted by the US campaign, is very real. This is especially true for workers and the more vulnerable sectors of our societies; groups that progressives have unfortunately become disconnected with, because we became the party of the elite and not the party of the people.

An unsustainable situation

It is not by chance that the nationalist right has been on the rise. We did not deliver a strong response to the economic and financial crisis that started in

2007-2008. The emergency has certainly been contained, but no substantial step forward has been made in the field of structural reforms aimed at guaranteeing a reasonable governance of the global economy and finance. At the same time, we bore silent witness to the destabilisation and chaos of the Arab world, which exposed the extreme weakness of international organisations and the lack of a coherent, efficient strategy of action on the part of the European Union and the Obama Administration. Increases in threats and conflicts, the very disturbing and dangerous challenge posed by Islamic terrorism, and inequalities and poverty have generated fear, a wide-spread need for protection and a reflex of closure in large numbers of women and men who feel that their security, jobs and lives

have been jeopardised. We cannot ignore this situation. We need to be aware that this lawless globalisation, without institutions able and willing to guarantee an international order, is unsustainable.

A challenge for Europe

The new American strategy questions the role of the Old Continent and requires a bold and effective response. Angela Merkel's proposal to re-launch Europe's political integration by an alliance of countries willing and able to deepen cooperation is not a new idea, nor is it a bad one. Progressives should challenge conservatives in this way and condition further political integration by strengthening policies focusing on growth, employment and social justice.



© Frederic Lagrand

I PARIS, FRANCE - Theresa May under pressure over Brexit negotiations.

BREXIT: NOSTALGIA FOR THE OLD BRITISH EMPIRE

by Colin Crouch

Now that the United Kingdom government has started to clarify its intentions for life outside the European Union, we can increasingly see that the decision to withdraw from the EU is a double irresponsibility.

The economic risk

First, we decided to tear up the economic relations that we have enjoyed for over 40 years, not just with the EU but with every part of the world. Second, we risk crippling the EU, an act that would bring both economic and general chaos.

The referendum was set up irresponsibly; it imposed no obligation on Leave campaigners to specify what they meant by 'leave'. Did it mean leaving the single market but remaining in the customs union? Did British voters realise that our trade with the whole world and not just EU member

states was governed by our membership of the Union? During the referendum campaign, after it and on until mid-January, no-one knew. A variety of different positions were advocated by the Leave camp, concentrating on two themes: a completely dishonest statement of how much money would be available to spend on the National Health Service if we left the EU and spreading panic about

immigration from EU countries by dishonestly linking it to the Middle Eastern refugee crisis, which was in turn linked to Islamic terrorism. since the Leave campaign was not a party seeking to form a government but groups of people who came together for the referendum alone, no-one carried responsibility for reconciling the many contradictory and confusing things it said. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister,

who herself barely participated in the referendum, has now declared that the meaning of the vote was clear: people voted to withdraw entirely from the single market and the customs union, and want to renegotiate from point zero our trade relations with the rest of the world. Anyone who expresses doubt about the feasibility of such a project is told they are defying 'the will of the people' (well, the will of the 52% of the 72% of voters who voted) and should shut up. Meanwhile the country will spend the next two years tearing up all our trading relationships and several beyond that trying to build up new ones – with all our potential partners knowing that we are desperate for deals.

The threat to the EU

In January, Theresa May stressed that it was in the UK's interests that the EU survive and thrive and that she wished it no harm. However, she also said that unless the 27 EU member states were willing to give the UK everything it wanted in negotiations, Britain would become an offshore tax haven with a low-regulation economy – implying that we would drag the rest of Europe into a 'race to the bottom' of social standards. This seemed like a threat to engage in self-harm, but the newspapers that support her interpreted it as Britain's threat to 'crush' the EU if we did not get our own way.

Here's another ambiguity in the stance of Brexit protagonists: does the UK want to exist alongside a strong and stable Europe or does it want to destroy institutions for

European co-operation, reducing trade relations among European countries to trade wars, with central European countries left alone and exposed to a return of Russian domination? Donald Trump has made clear that the break-up of the EU is one of his goals and that he intends to use Brexit as the first step in this. Without a strong Europe, the USA could gain more unilateral power across the globe. This is why he is generally hostile to international organisations. Vladimir Putin would also like to see an end of the EU in order to regain various kinds of access to central Europe for Russia. This is not one of Trump's idiosyncrasies, but a long-standing goal of US neoconservative opinion: if there are no international bodies but just individual states, then the US is clearly the most powerful force on the planet. We saw this in the position of the Bush Junior administration on the Iraq war. It demonstrated a refusal to accept decisions of the United Nations and the preferences of a majority of NATO members, and a determination to build 'coalitions of the willing' around and under the control of the US. And no government was more willing to help it in that task than Tony Blair's New Labour. What chance does Britain now stand of adopting foreign policy positions autonomous of the US, when we are much in need of new trade agreements and when the Brexit campaign shared so many ideas with Trump?

The return of imperial dreams

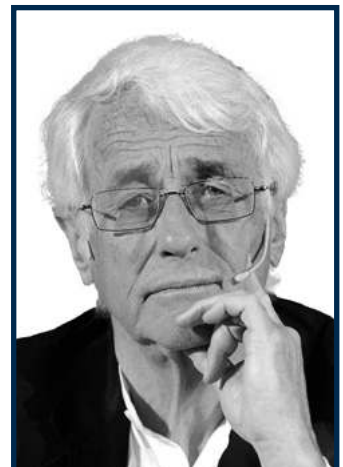
Through their relationship with the US, British governments seek to

keep something of the global role the country enjoyed as the ruler of a vast international empire. By working closely with the US militarily and by running a joint global financial system, we feel we are still a global power. It is ironic that the Americans were the first people to rebel successfully against the empire, but the idea is powerful.

For the first three post-war decades British governments, Conservative and Labour, realised that we are better off without these lingering imperial delusions and tried to teach us to accept the independence of nearly all the former colonies; that we are nowadays a regional European country and should therefore be members of the EU. A minority on the left and the right never accepted this new vision, but they remained small until immigration and perhaps wider anxieties about globalisation led more people to listen to them. Nostalgia for the old British Empire, or at least a dream of turning the development, cultural and sporting body that is the British Commonwealth into a global trading bloc, stands behind Brexit and the willingness of many British people to accept its risks. A growing part of the political class is coming to believe that only EU membership prevented us from doing this. They forget that the Empire did not embody true free trade but a relationship with subordinate colonies. These countries are all fully independent now; they might well be willing to make trade deals with a UK desperate for them, but not on generous terms.

This is the real danger for Britain of Brexit: that with our judgement

clouded by memories of the great days of the 19th century when we turned our backs on our neighbouring continent in order to dominate large parts of the world, we shall embark on a Quixotic attempt to reconstruct that situation as an economic future, leading us deeply into the embrace of a profoundly worrying US presidency and encouraging the disparate forces – American, Russian, right-wing populist and Islamist – that would very much like to destabilise Europe at this difficult moment in its history. The battle cry of regaining 'sovereignty' dominated the Brexit referendum. Achieving this goal now means giving up our place as the second largest, fully voting member of the EU in exchange for a minor, totally dependent, and entirely non-voting partnership with the US, at a time when that country itself is becoming highly unstable.



> ABOUT

Colin Crouch coined the concept of post-democracy and is the author of several books on European societies, social and labour policy, and problems of democracy.

EN FOI DE QUOI les plénipotentiaires soussignés ont apposé leurs signatures au bas de la présente Convention.

ZU URKUND DESSEN haben die unterzeichneten Bevollmächtigten ihre Unterschriften unter dieses Abkommen gesetzt.

IN FEDE DI CHE i plenipotenziari sottoscritti hanno apposto le loro firme in calce alla presente Convenzione.

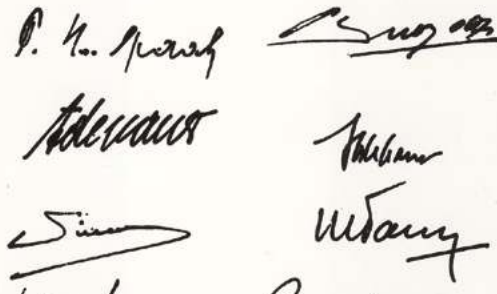
TEN BLIJKE WAARVAN de ondergetekende gevolmachtigden hun handtekening onder deze Overeenkomst hebben gesteld.

Fait à Rome, le vingt-cinq mars mil neuf cent cinquante-sept.

Geschehen zu Rom, am fünfundwanzigsten März neunshundert-siebenundfünfzig.

Fatto a Roma, il venticinque marzo millenovecentocinquantesette.

Gedaan te Rome, de vijftentwintigste maart negentienhonderd seven en vijftig.



© Communautés européennes 1950-1959.

ROME, ITALY - The Treaty of Rome was signed on 25 March 1957.

A TREATY TO CELEBRATE WITH AMBIVALENCE

by Aleksander Kwaśniewski

While the turn of the century witnessed the unprecedented march of nations towards democracy, starting with Poland's 'round table' and 1989 elections and ending with the Arab spring, not even a decade later we are right to share intense concerns. What is at stake is the quality of democracy.

Even in those parts of the world where it seemed deeply rooted, some have recently been questioning its core standards and weakening crucial institutions. As if it were just about the result of a ballot and procedures, respect for laws, resolving conflicts through dialogue, freedom of the media, taking into account the interests of those whose representatives have not won the election, following political traditions and customs – as if all those features were insignificant. Moreover, in today's globalised world, the notion of democracy must also encompass openness, co-operation and solidarity.

Populist shortcuts

Populism is the name of democracy's most powerful contemporary enemy. In the wake of the economic and financial crises of 2008-2010 and from 2010 onwards, a number of citizens and voters in different countries have become increasingly eager to believe in easy remedies to their real problems. It may be tempting to appeal to their prejudices. Politicians who do so, when elected, may choose shortcuts instead of solving issues in their complexity; the social and political processes they entail would lead them to undermine the functioning of a democratic state.

This is a period of 'crash-testing' for democracies. Their viability is being verified in at least two cases, but more may come as a re-

sult of elections over the next two years. Do democratic political systems have internal safeguards strong enough to halt those who would wish to abuse power? I believe they do.

Otherwise we might one day wake up in a mixture of semi-democratic governance, economic inefficiency, isolationism and weakened safeguards for human rights and social protection.

The European Union as we know it will not survive without its foundation of democratic values. There would be no regional or cohesion policies without mutual trust. No efforts to build an innovative, knowledge-based economy without joint leadership. No great body of common laws without the directly elected Parliament, impartial Commission and respected Court of Justice.

A union of shared principles

Everything begins with shared principles and rules. Therefore, the Union has to reinforce its commitment to freedom, democracy, pluralism and the rule of law. This is of the utmost urgency. Populists cannot take the lead. Citizens – societies – must be reassured that they will not be left alone.

It seems obvious that in case of the risk of systemic and persistent infringements of basic values that each EU country is legally committed to observe, an early warning and effective EU engagement would be helpful. On the other hand, the Community's

traditional behaviour, based on discrete consultations and patience, at least at an initial stage, seems appropriate. The goal is to improve the situation, not to provoke anti-EU sentiment. Developments have to stem from the willingness of societies themselves to restore full respect for democratic standards. But a country in such a situation, if it is really devoted to the principles of integration, should not obstruct the performance of the Union as a whole. There is security, prosperity and peace at stake.

The Union itself, although already a democratic political system, could also be slightly adjusted. Demands to 'bring it closer to the citizen' have become a cliché, but I am afraid no spectacular effects are attainable in the short-term. Certainly, the idea of *Spitzenkandidaten*, nominees from European political parties competing to assume the position of the Commission's President in case of electoral victory, has been a good attempt. It must continue in 2019 and subsequent campaigns. I would be cautious, however, in too hastily imprinting a pan-European mark on the list of parliamentary candidates. In central Europe, at least, we have a problem with excessively low voter turnout for the EU's legislative elections. We need to anchor the significance of this political act in the voters' consciousness before we move forward with more ambitious solutions.

A time for new ideas

So, we shall be celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of

Rome with ambivalence; wishing to proceed with making the EU stronger and more democratic, but at the same time overshadowed by forthcoming problems and challenges. We will not solve them by March, but we will eventually. New opportunities may happen sooner than many would imagine. The Union, even if shaped anew after Brexit, may again become more cohesive and integrated. It will start looking for new ideas. The crisis and enormous levels of unemployment seem to have been overcome. Governance in the Eurozone has improved. I expect the planned national elections to be stimulating rather than frustrating. If you look more closely at the situation, the prospects seem better than first imagined.



> ABOUT

Aleksander Kwaśniewski was the President of Poland between 1995 and 2005. He is also the founder of Amicus Europae Foundation.



ROME, ITALY - The goal of the Treaty of Rome was a Europe free from war.

THE WORLD'S FIRST TRANSNATIONAL DEMOCRACY

by Klaus Hänsch

The Treaty of Rome was born in a time of deep crisis. After failed attempts at a military union (EDC) and a political union (EPC), the Treaty made the economy the focal point of European unification.

Social policies were merely a band-aid to cover the scars caused by the markets. There was no talk of a social market economy before 2009. The Treaty still does not mention distributive justice;

it is mentioned neither between the rich and poor within a society nor between Member States. Yet if the union, like any other political entity, is to remain stable, it must not let inequalities become too large. For governments, the EEC Treaty was an enabling act

for lawmaking. Parliamentary democracy was only to be found at the level of the Member States. It was not until the European parliamentary election in 1979 that the Parliament received broader legitimacy. And only by 2009 had it carved out the appropriate le-

gislative rights. With one treaty reform after another, the Union has become the world's first transnational democracy.

Brussels-blaming

This has certainly not done much to improve its acceptance among citizens. Many people believe that democracy is threatened to a larger extent by elected governments in Brussels than by a self-proclaimed group of a hundred supercilious bankers playing Monopoly in New York, London and Singapore. Many of those who believe they must defend their national democracies against "Brussels" cede their very democracies and even their voters' choice to the algorithms of international, private big-data systems and to allied and enemy secret services. It is these attacks on democracy itself that the European democrats must defy.

European foreign policy did not appear in the Treaties of Rome. Western Europe drove in America's slipstream during the Cold War. Over the past decade, the election of Donald Trump as US president is only the third milestone in a series of fundamental changes in the geopolitical environment in Europe. "Make America great again" is Trump's version of Vladimir Putin's ambitions for a Great Russia and Xi Jinping's aspirations for China, building an "Asian-Pacific-Area that leads the world". Each of them follows an authoritarian domestic impulse. Every "deal" between them will establish spheres of influence that will drive Europe apart unless it finally begins to act with its own interests in mind. It

is the heritage and mission of the unification of Europe to secure a place for peace and freedom, democracy, justice, security and secularism in the world and to keep those concepts fit for the future. It needs a cause that goes beyond economy and power. It should strive to be more than a big marketplace in which justice, nation and government vanish. Brexit will only become a crisis if the Union does not assume a clear position in the question of "in" vs "out" and if years of self-absorbed behavior take it further down in its citizens' esteem.

No need for new treaties

Downgrading the European Union to a marketplace without common rules for social affairs, environmental and consumer protection, and other areas would render it more irrelevant, but not more attractive. Its citizens could not care less about new treaties, and with good reason; if the Member States apply and fulfill the existing Treaty, they will be able to revive anemic economic growth in the south, prevent tragedies involving refugees in the Mediterranean Sea, dry up tax havens, establish distributive justice throughout Europe, strengthen cooperation on internal and external security, and free the Union from national concerns and jealousies.

Is nationalism returning after 60 years? It was never gone. At the end of the day, the Union did not come from another planet. It was founded by nation states that made the Union into what it is and how it is today. None of the

great protagonists of Europe's unification worked towards removing national constitutions and the statehood of their countries. They were thinking nationally and that is why they kept pushing the unification of Europe forward.

At that time, however, the concept of "the national" represented courage for a new and pragmatic beginning, for reconciliation and inviolable cooperation between the peoples and states of Europe. The neo-national today stands for the cowardice against the toil of consideration and compromise and links itself with the anger and resentment against what has been created. In France, it threatens to reach its critical mass as National Socialism and to break the Union.

The goal was for Europe to be free from war. No one promised a Europe free from crises. Being built on the Treaty of Rome and expanding it step by step, European unification has proven to be astonishingly stable since 1957. It overcame crises of unification and "Euro-sclerosis", it handled the political consequences of the peaceful revolutions in Eastern Europe, including the reunification of Germany, and it accommodated the EU's enlargement from six to twenty-eight (minus one) states. It has shaped the political culture in Europe more profoundly than what is generally acknowledged, as is shown by the reactions to the current dangers in Poland, Hungary and Romania. And while the Cassandras in politics, science and culture conjure twilight and doom, we seek for the glimmer of hope in the shadows of great internal and external challenges.

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FROM CRISES
”



> ABOUT

Klaus Hänsch is a member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany. He was the president of the European Parliament from 1994-1997 and a Member of the European Parliament from 1979-2009.



| WARSAW, POLAND - Brexit negotiators will be playing a strategic game.

BREXIT NEGOTIATIONS: WHY THE EUROPEAN UNION HAS NO ROOM FOR CONCESSIONS

by Gerhard Stahl

The exit of Great Britain from the European Union is taking shape. At the end of January, the British Prime Minister presented a Brexit bill to the British Parliament.

The House of Commons approved the EU Notification of Withdrawal Bill on Wednesday 8 February with a large majority. In public statements and in a white paper, Theresa May has laid out the contours of the British position: a complete and rapid separation from the EU. Fears about the negative economic consequences of a withdrawal from the European single market have been answered by reference to trade and investment agreements to be concluded.

The political landscape has become opaque. The approval of a majority in the UK for leaving the EU and the election of a political outsider to the US presidency have shattered established political assumptions. Many voters wanted far-reaching political change. Fundamental beliefs of recent

decades, such as the need for European integration and the benefits of free trade and an open society, are being called into question.

The complexity of the British divorce

This will form the background to the exit negotiations, which will be one of the most politically and technically difficult tasks that the EU and the UK will have to deal with over the next two years. The British exit, after forty years of belonging to the EU, affects all major political and economic areas: affiliation to the internal market, trade agreements, payments to the EU budget, research policy, regional policy, agricultural policy, competition policy, judicial co-ordination, common foreign policy, security policy, and so on. For all the technical complexity, it should not be overlooked that the “British divorce” also requires basic political decisions that will shape the future of the European Union and its remaining members.

National governments, but also the EU itself, have to face the fact that the losers from globalisation are rejecting the current policy of international competition and open markets. This has been shown by the British vote, where workers in the industrialised regions voted to leave.

The new Conservative government is responding to this electoral message with a clear change of course. An industrial policy has been announced, which will focus on the creation of British jobs. At the same time, an end to

free movement for Europeans is being demanded and restrictions on the access of foreign workers being prepared. The budgetary consolidation planned by the previous government has been put on hold. In addition, efforts are being made to offer more favourable terms to international partners in future UK trade and investment agreements than in EU agreements. Multinational companies such as Nissan have already been promised state support to bring investments to the UK.

The British and American votes are also a warning sign for the European Union. There are more and more citizens who are also demanding protection from the European politicians from the negative effects of globalisation. The growing inequality in society is not just an Anglo-Saxon problem. Securing social cohesion is also a European challenge. After years of neoclassically dominated policy, which has been decisively influenced by Great Britain, the European Union must remember its funding promises of a social market economy. A change of course is necessary. It is an irony of history that the increasing orientation of the EU towards free trade, supply-side and competition policy without social cushioning has been rejected by voters precisely in one of the countries of origin of this policy. The belief in the self-regulation of markets must be replaced by a responsible interplay between public and private players. The purpose of European Economic and Monetary Union is not only improving

competitiveness by opening up national markets, but also, in accordance with the EU Treaty, promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion. Behind the word cohesion stands a promise of protection, which has been taken up by the European Structural Funds, namely to support the losers from competition.

Major British Brexit demands are inconsistent with the policy necessary for the further development of the EU. If the UK wants to participate in the European internal market through trade and investment agreements without accepting freedom of movement for European workers, this will undermine an important balancing function in the common market. A common market is dependent on the fact that there can be a balance between the strong and weak parts. The balance can be struck by means of financial transfers, social policy and central expenditure programmes or market adjustments. Since the EU has so far had very few compensatory instruments, the market mechanism must be able to work. Therefore the free movement of workers is also legally anchored in the EU Treaties. The mobility of workers allows persons in the EU to go wherever there is work. This reduces unemployment in crisis regions and prevents labour shortages in growth regions.

Participation means common rules


Participation in the internal market requires compliance with com-

mon rules. Without the recognition of a community of law with appropriate jurisdiction, there can be no functioning single market. If the UK wants to regain full national sovereignty and rejects the jurisdiction of a higher court on internal market questions, this will exclude equal participation in the European internal market.

If the UK wants to participate in the single European market, it must take part in the financing of European spending programmes, such as the Structural Funds. These programmes were created to promote the cohesion of the EU. In view of the regionally and socially unequal distribution effects of competition in the European single market, which have increased strongly since the 2007 international financial crisis, a strengthening of the European solidarity instruments is essential. This is also the appropriate response to increasing EU criticism in some EU Member States particularly affected by the crisis. The negotiations with the UK must take this into account. Any country wishing to benefit from the advantages of the internal market must also participate in the financing of the policies necessary for a socially responsible expansion of the internal market.

These substantive claims remain valid even if participation in the internal market is regulated by trade and investment agreements and no longer by the EU Treaty. Of course, the EU has trade relations with many countries without any further commitments. The discussions about TTIP and CETA, the trade and investment agreements with the USA and Canada, have shown that any closer economic

cooperation raises additional regulatory and compensatory issues. The extent of EU-UK economic integration has become so close that the continuation of economic relations requires a solution to these questions. There is, of course, a great common interest in these economic relations. However, the EU must be able to counteract the protectionist pressure of a "Buy American" or "Invest British" policy through its own trade and industry policy instruments. Only then will it be possible to maintain support for European integration in the future as well as an open European economic and social model. This objective should not be jeopardised in the exit negotiations with the UK, a future competitor on the world market. This competitor will no longer be bound by European competition policy and state aid legislation. A Conservative British government could therefore also try to gain a competitive advantage through fiscal and social dumping and lower environmental standards. The particularly close envisaged US-UK trade agreement also raises the risk that American goods and services which do not comply with EU rules could enter the EU through the UK. The internal market of over 400 million people must be used for employment and economic development. Free international trade is in the interest of Europe. However, the EU cannot allow jobs to be endangered by unfair competition and lower standards.

 Read the entire article online at www.progressivepost.eu



> ABOUT

Gerhard Stahl is a visiting professor at College of Europe and Peking University HSBC Business School.



■ BUDAPEST, HUNGARY - Most conflicts between Orbán's government and the EU have arisen as a result of the migrant crisis.

PEACE AND DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE SINCE 1957

by László Kovács

On 25 March 1957, six Western European countries started the process of European integration when, drawing upon the lessons of two world wars, they signed the Treaty of Rome. Their goal was to prevent further destruction by strengthening their interdependence and accepting a system of common values. One element of this value system was their commitment to peace and democracy - two values strongly connected to each other.

With the establishment of the European Economic Community on 1 January 1958, new horizons opened up for the economic and social development of the continent. The internal single market has gradually developed, a common judicial system was established (based on the aforementioned common values), and rules for the operation, deepening and expansion of integration were established. The Treaty of Rome has been amended multiple times since, but democracy, freedom, constitutionality and solidarity have remained its basic values.

Democracy was a basic criterion for accession. The entry of Greece, Spain and Portugal took place only after dictatorships were eliminated in those countries. The political transformation of 1989-1990, the elimination of the one-party system and the establishment of the democratic, constitutional state and market economy were key steps in making accession possible for countries that formerly belonged to the Soviet bloc.

The Hungarian journey

I would like to briefly sum up the journey that my own country, Hungary, took to join European integration. The revolution of October 1956 was a clear sign that Hungarians demanded freedom, independence and democracy. Although the revolution was oppressed by the Soviet army, some small reforms in economic and cultural policy were introduced

by the end of the 1960s. At the beginning of the 1980s, using the opportunities set by the Helsinki Conference in 1975 and the agreements accepted there, along with the fall in tension between the two opposing political, economic and military systems, Hungary started a careful opening up to the Western democratic countries. The globally accepted peak of this overture was the dismantling of the Iron Curtain and the opening of the Hungarian-Austrian border on 9 September 1989. This made it possible for the more than 60 thousand East-German citizens located in Hungary to move to the Federal Republic of Germany through Austria. The Hungarian decision contributed to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the integration of the two German states in October 1990. With these acts, Hungary proved its commitment to democracy, freedom and political transformation, making it easier for the country to later join the European Union.

European integration was so attractive that after the accession of nine Western European countries, the European Union accepted eight countries on 1 May 2004 and two more countries in 2007 from the former Soviet bloc. The vast majority of the general public in all of the newly integrated countries was in favour of this accession. Although there was later a certain level of disappointment in most of the new Member States, the membership of each country is still supported by the majority of their populations; even in Hungary, where Orbán's government has been leading a tough campaign against the European Union and its leaders - a campaign

based on falsehoods. It is also a problem that in those countries which belonged to the Soviet bloc for decades, democratic traditions have not developed in the same way as in Western European countries.

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**VIKTOR ORBÁN
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 DRIVE**
 ”

Despite a promising start following integration, tension between Hungary and the European Union has become permanent ever since Orbán took office in 2010. Before the 2010 election, he made it clear that his goal was to establish a central political field in which a single, great and strong governing party would be able to make any important decisions that needed to be taken without any so-called unnecessary debate. This “democracy without debate” – in the name of which Orbán dismantled the system of brakes and counter-balances necessary to democracy, limited the power of the constitutional court, the independence of jurisdiction and the freedom of the press – does not conform with the values of the

European Union. Over the past seven years, there have been several conflicts between the leaders and institutions of the European Union and Orbán’s government. Any comment regarding the violation of the values, standards and rules of the European Union is conveyed as an attack against the sovereignty of Hungary. The government of Orbán has been condemned by the European Commission several times for failing to meet its obligations. The European Parliament has also made its dissatisfaction clear several times due to violations of the Union’s key principals and values.

Orbán’s anti-immigrant campaign

Orbán’s government and the European Union have arisen as a result of the migrant crisis. The government refused all community-level solutions and pushed only national ones. Viktor Orbán talked about conspiracy between the leaders of the Union, the Obama administration, György Soros, certain NGOs and human traffickers. He accused the European politicians who criticised him of betraying Europe and inspiring the mass inflow of Muslim “migrants”, while positioning himself as the champion of a Christian Europe. Several member states of the European Union objected to receiving refugees and the application of the mandatory quota. However, only the government of Orbán has called for a referendum, which ultimately resulted in a failure for them. Among the Member States of the European Union, only the government of Orbán led a billboard campaign

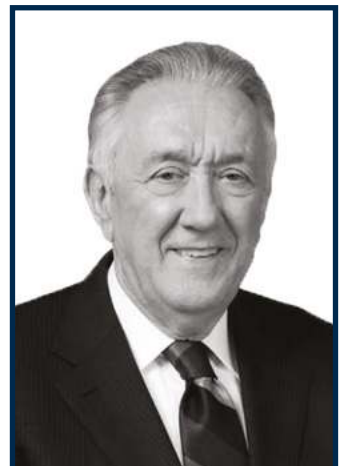
based on false statements, igniting hatred against refugees.

The leadership and institutions of the European Union have played an important role in developing integration in recent years. However, Viktor Orbán is attacking the European Union with ever-increasing drive. He made his rudest outburst against the European Union at the beginning of February, during a conference held in remembrance of the economist and professor Sándor Lámfalussy, who recently passed away in Belgium, the creator of the Euro and who was of Hungarian descent. He claimed that the Union is sinking and that its influence in the world is decreasing. The goal was to significantly strengthen national authority at the expense of communal aspects.

Referring to the US president Donald Trump, he said that the interests of the Member States were more important than those of the community. He also praised the illiberal states - Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan – to the detriment of the Western European democracies. He made it clear that he supported the populists gaining strength in some of the Western Member States. He repeated these statements a few days later in Brussels, at an event co-hosted by the Antall József Foundation and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

Ever since the signing of the Treaty of Rome 60 years ago, European integration has played a significant role in maintaining peace and strengthening the economic and social development of the Member States, reinforcing democracy and

constitutionality and tackling the regional and global challenges of the continent. The continuation of this process is not only in the interest of the Member States, but also of the continent and the world as a whole. In order to achieve this goal, it is essential that the supporters of democracy stand together and that populist politicians and parties are unveiled and isolated. The governments of the Member States need to stop thinking of their countries’ successes as products of their sole endeavours while accusing the institutions of the European Union for any difficulties they encounter. In this context, it is important to improve the communication of the representation of the European Commission in the Member States. This is the goal that socialists have set themselves in Hungary.



> ABOUT

László Kovács is a former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, and a former European Commissioner.



ALABAMA, USA - Trump's definition of "greatness" refers to the benefit of the US against all others.

MAKING EUROPE GREAT AGAIN: THE PROGRESSIVE WAY

by Anna Diamantopoulou

As we approach the celebration of the EU's 60th birthday, the European project has become more relevant than ever. This is not another cliché. Developments in the global scene and certain events that seemed unimaginable until recently are simply occurring on top of a financial crisis that revealed inherent weaknesses and continues to shake up political systems across the continent.

At this point and within the current context, the crisis has become truly existential with daunting consequences. The road ahead is undoubtedly a hard one and requires collective determination and action. At the time of writing, a simple internet search of the term "EU dissolution" reveals 18,900,000 results, while "EU in crisis" produces 152,000,000 results in less than half a second. This is surely a call to action! On the other side of the Atlantic, a simple yet powerful message caught on and catapulted its

messenger into the White House: “Let’s make America great again”. A positive message for the American nation, but one that entails hostility towards everyone else as the underlying notion of “greatness” refers to the benefit of the US against all others. A classic demonstration of an ‘Us vs. Them’ mentality amplified by introversion, ignorance, lack of insight and short-sightedness.

Progressive action

“Make Europe Great Again” is our response to the manifold challenges and threats Europe faces. In sharp contrast, however, our message is progressive in both meaning and action; it blends commitment with progress and is shaped by principles and values. We envision Europe making a progressive leap in line with its previous achievements: Greco-Roman civilization, the French Revolution and the Enlightenment, the social state, respect for human rights and a high quality of life. This is a truly European dream, collective in its conception and with none of the individualism that the American dream implies.

Reinvigorating our European vision presupposes a commitment and steps towards the following:

1. Policies ensuring the security and safety of citizens (from cyber-war to terrorist threats) and collaboration without divides among Member States.

2. An Economic Union, a genuine banking union, an earmarked common budget and the alleviation of internal inequalities between the centre and the periphery. The central driving force behind the

deepening of integration is the enhancement of the EU’s competitiveness with policies that promote growth for a sustainable, prosperous future.

3. Bold steps towards the deepening of democracy and the strengthening of European identity accompanied by concrete action demonstrating to European citizens that beyond their differences and geographical boundaries there lies a common interest.

4. A spectrum of effective, proven policies for young people and children to counter the effects of Europe’s ageing population and its harsh demographic realities, with positive discrimination if so needed.

5. A commitment to the goal of making Europe a beacon of innovation and technology through the abolishment of any kind of barrier or national border between the continent’s universities and research institutions.

6. In these times in which geopolitics are of the utmost importance, Europe should rise to be an influential global actor empowered by hard, soft and smart power to ensure world peace and stability. Through numbers 2 and 6, Europe will be able to assist regional economies in Africa and the Middle East to prosper in peace. This is the only way to abate the waves of millions of refugees and migrants arriving on European shores in the coming years.

No nation can stand alone

The progressive school of thought also has a responsibility to ensure that an understanding that

no nation can stand alone in these globalised times enters into the mainstream consciousness. Even the largest European nations together only represent 1% of the world’s population. Only united will Europeans make their voices heard, ensuring their words are taken into account and their interests protected in the ever-changing global scene. Our power comes from the fundamental values and principles already in the collective psyche of European citizens. So, we can indeed go back to the basics. Re-awakening them, however, demands different and additional strategies and tactics.

First and foremost, we must acknowledge the root causes underlying the problems citizens face. The easy answer would be austerity, but it is not enough: citizens feel a lack of control, ignored, left behind, anxious, powerless in the face of their own destiny and, reminiscent of Jacques Delors, a “widening distance between the governed and their governments”.

The progressive way forward is to be simple and sincere. It is our duty to make the European project and its vision clear to citizens, so they can grasp it, comprehend it and accept it as part of their future. This is an especially hard task because the message needs to be put across to all segments of the population. We ought to show and convince Member States’ citizens that a strong state cannot exist without a strong EU, that a sustainable recovery and the prosperity and fulfilment of national visions can only be secured through the achievement of the European project’s full potential. How can

this be achieved? Perhaps by following what science tells us: to convey messages effectively. The key for people to listen, attach and identify is to offer emotional resonance and symbolism. Our armoury for appealing to European citizens should accommodate these two powerful tools. It is in our hands to harness the power, once again, of Jean Monnet’s wise words: people “act in a state of necessity and usually only recognise necessity in a situation of crisis.”

So “Carpe Diem” European progressives! Let us make Europe great again! Let us make it according to the European way. Let us “make Europe great again” for everyone’s sake, not just our own.



> ABOUT

Anna Diamantopoulou is the President of the DIKTIO-Network for Reforms in Greece and Europe, an Athens-based think tank. She was the European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities between 1999 and 2004.

WŁODZIMIERZ CZARZASTY

Włodzimierz Czarzasty has been the leader of Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (SLD) or Democratic Left Alliance since January 2016. The SLD party was formed in 1991 as an electoral alliance of centre-left parties, and became a single party in 1999. During the 2014 general election the left suffered a crippling defeat, and currently is not represented with a single MP in the lower house of parliament (Sejm). In the mean time, with the new leader there is expectation for a successful recovery.

— Do you consider PiS [English: Law and Justice] to be a legal party?

WŁODZIMIERZ CZARZASTY: PiS have an absolute right to govern but they have no mandate to change the constitutional system in Poland.

— Do you support the social reforms introduced by the government?

WC: We would probably support these policies if we were members of the parliament but we are not, despite 7.5% of the Polish population's votes. Nevertheless, no one can say that there is a good social agenda which, by the way, is carrying out some of the plans of the social democrats. I mean, I am not talking about the extra 500 euros for the second and every subsequent child of every family, but the decrease in the retirement age.

— Is it financially sustainable?

WC: No, Law and Justice does not have the financial guarantees for its social plan: the result will be greater debt for the country. The budget deficit plan for 2017 equals 60 million zlotys [Editor's note: about 14 million euros] at a growth rate of 2.3-2.5% of GDP.

— What is your opinion of Brexit?

WC: We are close friends with Great Britain, but the problem is that the UK wants to exit the European Union, which the Democratic Left Alliance introduced Poland into. Furthermore, we are very concerned about foreign issues. PiS politically isolates Poland in the international area.

— According to you, what is the most painful reform?

WC: Our constitution, which was introduced by the Democratic Left Alliance, is under attack. They are making the president of Poland into a mere notary, someone who

just signs the bills. They are suspending the normal functioning of the parliament, something I think is unprecedented at EU level. Members of the government discussed matters in a separate room. With the same ambition to control, through the Council of National Radios and Television, they are making the public media dependant on the ruling party, depriving it of independence.

— How are people reacting?

WC: As can be observed in the US since the election of Trump, PiS supporters and its opposition are demonstrating and they opposed figures of participation. But I am slightly scared by the splitting up of society and the limitation of rights. Our party will continue to support a dialogue.

— Could SLD have an influence?

WC: We are one of the few social-democratic parties outside the Parliament in Europe, but we have 10% support according to the latest polls.



> ABOUT

Włodzimierz Czarzasty is the leader of the Polish social-democratic party, the SLD.

HISTORY



| ATHENS, GREECE - Democracy at a crossroads?

REFLECTING ON SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

by Christophe Sente

fers the re-establishment of forms of economic, cultural and social control with an aim to create a more direct link between the government and the governed.

Far from undermining the classic thesis advocated by Jean-Louis Quermonne in the footsteps of Raymond Aron, the American elections of November 2016 and the campaign that preceded them could very well prompt commentators to rethink the characteristics of “Western political regimes”. At the same time, the failure of the Democratic Party, especially the “socialist” option Bernie Sanders, despite having won sufficient popular support should serve as inspiration for the European left to escape the threat of extinction that hangs over it, pointing to a need to clarify their ambitions for the 21st century.

It is too early to decide to what extent a division between the “il-liberal democracies”, as coined by Fareed Zakaria and characterised by a centralisation of executive power beyond the preservation of elective mechanisms, and classical parliamentary or presidential regimes, weakened but nonetheless more respectful of political and economic freedoms, will replace the classic 20th century opposition between “democracy” and “totalitarianism”. On the other hand, the electoral results of progressive parties recorded since the 2007 financial crisis in the “Western regimes” could lead to a decline in social democracy in Europe, raising two fundamental questions. The first is one initially posed as early as 1906 by the German sociologist Werner Sombart regarding the

absence of a socialist movement in the United States. The second, explored with uncompromising lucidity by both Eduard Bernstein and Lenin, deals with the very meaning of socialism as movement and objective.

From Werner Sombart to Donald Trump

A hundred years after it was first asked, Sombart’s question has once again become relevant. The answer to this question forces us to recall the historically accidental, and therefore fragile, character of the development of a socialist movement in Europe.

The American experience of the brutality of financial capitalism and the precariousness of employment and health coverage testifies to the fact that, contrary to the Marxist prognosis, the popularity of any political programme presented as humanist socialism is not guaranteed by economic factors. The hope of individual social ascent and individual satisfaction, observed by Sombart at the beginning of the 20th century and made possible by the Fordist formulas prescribing individual consumption, should in effect suffice to distance citizens from the necessity of regulatory mechanisms and redistribution plans put in place to guarantee social solidarity. Similarly, as the nation now witnesses a transition towards a new system of production – the features of which remain vague – the popularity of the renewal of the Republican programme by Donald Trump’s team demonstrates that the subscrip-

Contemplating America

Donald Trump’s victory, the conclusion to the long decantation of the American presidential elections, illuminates the transformations taking place in the United States. Similar themes can be observed in Europe, where Silvio Berlusconi and Pim Fortuyn – the figures of a new generation of political entrepreneurs – are unconvinced of the effectiveness of the union formed in 1945 between the social economy of the market, open to international trade, and the dynamic of negotiations between parties in the context of traditional representative democracy. On the contrary, this new generation pre-

tion of millions of voters to the idea of defending employment and purchasing power does not necessarily entail a commitment to a generous and universalist project. On the contrary, the proposal to restore collective prosperity on the basis of mass exclusion is accepted without remorse by large parts of the labour force. Thus, the revival of the term 'socialism' by Bernie Sanders in the context of the Democratic Party's primaries could have been a mere *trompe l'œil*, not the prelude to an alignment of American political culture with that which characterised the "Old Europe" of the past century. The failure of Sanders could determine the fate of the various leftist parties who, throughout the world, hinge their programmes on nostalgia and the longing for an old order swept away by the neoliberal wave of the 1980s and 1990s.

In such an environment, our interpretation of the political phenomenon that is the election of the American billionaire to the presidency must not resort to the argument of the cultural exceptionalism of the "new" continent, the anomaly of the receptivity of voters to an outrageous discourse, or generalities related to the populist wave.

On the one hand, the presentation of a socialist, nationalist, and even statist orientated programme by a party of the right does have precedents on both sides of the Atlantic. In Europe, it is characteristic of the "Bonapartist" right, identified by Maurice Duverger as a reactionary form of political Catholicism, such as the *Estado Novo* set up by Salazar's dictatorship in Portugal.

In the United States, it is hardly necessary to look back further than to the election of Richard Nixon to the White House, the product of a strategy which sought the support of the popular vote through a national, social discourse and which serves as a precedent to the voice of contemporary leaders specialised in criticism of the elites.

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On the other hand, beyond the radical tone used during his campaign, Donald Trump's discourse is not unreasonable, but rather expresses the progressive abandonment by the American right of both the classical "Reaganian" version of neoliberalism and its more recent neo-conservative avatar.

What fundamentally distinguishes the new orientation of the American Republicans from that of previous presidencies, from Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama, is a dissociation with the promotion of

national prosperity and the project of the country's increased integration in world economic relations. The resurgence of the argument for protectionism, consistent with the history of political ideas in the United States since George Washington, is not unheard of in Europe, where new sovereigntist currents on both the right and left, hostile to European federalism or to the integration of the EU into a deregulated world economic space, affirms and renews discourses already heard in the 1930s or 1970s during previous transformations of the capitalist economy. But nowhere other than in the US has a party achieved such a crucial electoral victory by linking the issues of immigration to trade policy.

In other words, Donald Trump's victory over Hillary Clinton could go down in the history books of this century's Western regimes as the moment of both the crystallisation of a divide between supporters and opponents of protectionism and the right's ability to capitalise on the increasing receptivity of the working-class to an anti-globalisation discourse. The anti-globalisation discourse being referred to is obviously not that of the World Social Forum, but rather the expression of an economic nationalism that is possibly xenophobic.

Source «*La social-démocratie a-t-elle un avenir ?*», dossier de *l'Économie politique* n°73, 1^{er} trimestre 2017

 Read the entire article online at www.progressivepost.eu



> ABOUT

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| Will increased access to WiFi lead to a more connected Europe?

WIFI4EU

A CONTRIBUTION TO A PROGRESSIVE DIGITAL UNION

by Carlos Zorrinho

Digital connection as a means for social inclusion. In what way can the Wifi4EU initiative ensure fully participative access to the digital economy for European citizens?

The Digital Union, the Digital Single Market and the energy transaction process are all critical elements for the modernisation of the European economy, as well as for its sustainable and competitive development.

This modernisation is not a technocratic procedure; it is a process that needs to be based on our planet's sustainability and on our citizens. To achieve this, citizens need to be involved and regain their trust in the European project. We also need to reinforce the values of democracy, social inclusion and European leadership.

Towards a European Gigabit Society

The Wifi4EU initiative represents a contribution to the design of the Digital Union and the Digital Single Market framework. The main goal is to develop an inclusive European Gigabit Society, meeting the specific needs of citizens and companies. Technologies and digital applications - designed to make life easier - are increasingly present in our daily lives. At the same time, these tools have divided society into two poles: those who manage

to keep up with and walk alongside technological development, and those who are overwhelmed by the so-called 'Information Society'. This digital rupture - amongst other aspects - has contributed to an increase in income inequality, which in turn compromises the security, quality of life and dignity of billions of people all over the world, as well as in Europe. Increasing availability of access to digital services and public interest content generates a double level of exclusion for those who, for economic reasons or because of a lack of knowledge or specific skills, cannot have access to them.

Connectivity to fight exclusion

It is crucial to fight against this process of double exclusion in order to guarantee the continued development of our democratic society, as well as to uphold the universal access principle for all European citizens. This would also boost the definition of information society and contribute to an inclusive, transparent and equal digital globalisation.

How can the Wifi4EU initiative achieve all of these goals? I am conscious of the fact that it is not an easy challenge. Many people think that the private sector should be in charge of dealing with our market's needs. Others argue that, due to the subsidiary principle, the EU should stay away from the process. Moreover, the limited resources allocated to this initiative constitute a restriction about which we may need to be concerned.

However, the potential for this initiative to promote citizenship

and consolidate on the European Gigabit Society - making it more democratic and inclusive - is an important reason for investing in the project. The Wifi4EU initiative is a pilot project that will serve as a reference point for the development of new inclusive network platforms; one that boasts free access to the internet whilst simultaneously demonstrating resilience against rapid changes in technology. This initiative is also an opportunity to develop the concept of a European Digital Identity, thanks to the European values that bring together both solutions for citizens and new opportunities for companies and content creators.

Internet access to generate growth

Because of this, it will be possible to reinforce local digital ecosystems and deepen the connection between the European Union and its citizens. Moreover, this initiative creates opportunities to boost 5G networks and generates more investment, employment and growth within the EU.

The project is still being debated in every European institution involved in the legislative procedure. My opinion, however, as the European Parliament's rapporteur in charge of this file, is that the final version should provide: high-speed internet access and a high-quality user experience; a valid EU-wide authentication system in line with the "one login only" scheme; a simplified application system between public entities and authorities; a balanced geographical distribution; and the

guarantee of digital cohesion and inclusion. In addition, national entities should allocate national and structural funds to support the project, whilst guaranteeing that there is no overlap with other public or private seminal schemes in the same territory.

Wifi4EU is an ambitious, visionary and risky project, but this is also a reason to move forward with it. With initiatives like this, we can bring the true meaning of the EU back to its citizens by making the union globally stronger, more inclusive and more powerful when it comes to accessing high-speed network services. This will also contribute to making the Union a humanist and progressive leader within the new framework of globalisation.



> ABOUT

Carlos Zorrinho is a Portuguese Member of the European Parliament in the S&D group. He is PhD professor in IT management and previously served in the Portuguese government as Secretary of State for Energy and Innovation.



! The digital divide in Europe runs deeper than connectivity.

WIFI4EU: ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK?

by Andrea Renda

Internet connectivity is a key driver of social empowerment and an essential precondition for economic equality and growth. Research suggests that broadband can significantly boost productivity. Moreover, the jaw-dropping efficiency gains promised by e-government and e-health services can only be realised if all citizens are connected.

The breath-taking development of online platforms, which gradually re-intermediate news, media and e-commerce, is shifting overall public and private life to the internet, simultaneously determining the exclusion of those that cannot “connect”. This rising inequality can only be exacerbated by current and future developments, including the Internet of Things, the rise of pervasive artificial intelligence, and the blossoming of distributed architectures such as BlockChain. Once again, new technologies seem unlikely to spread to the whole population. This can further magnify economic and social inequality in our already very unequal societies.

The digital divide

This rising digital divide has several causes. One is geographical: rural areas are systematically less connected than densely

populated ones. The European Commission recently reported “patchy” rural broadband coverage, as low as 28% fixed line and 36% mobile (4G) household coverage. This is striking if one compares the EU with the much less densely populated US: there, 94% of citizens have access to speeds that easily allow for the delivery of public services (10Mbps). And even though these figures dwarf the EU ones, the US authorities have called their situation unacceptable. But the digital divide is a much more multi-faceted phenomenon than a mere geographical issue. In particular, digital literacy is so low in some areas that even if connectivity were available, demand for broadband-enabled services would not emerge. Data from 2015 shows that in one third of the EU28 more than half of the population has low or no digital skills, and even in top performing countries 20% still lack such skills. Hence, it comes as no surprise that the (already obsolete) connectivity goals set by the EU Digital Agenda for 2020 will be missed by half of the Member States. Demand is lacking for both income-related and even more for skills-related factors.

WiFi4EU: A fast track action?

Against this background, the European Commission has recently announced a series of initiatives aimed at leading Europe towards the “Gigabit society”, with new connectivity targets to be achieved by 2025. In this context, the Commission proposed to subsidise

WiFi connectivity in public places in 6,000-8,000 cities through a new programme termed WiFi4EU, which earmarks 120 million euros from the Connecting Europe Facility. Funds will be administered locally through dedicated vouchers, which will be made available on a first-come, first-serve basis (although the Commission should ensure some degree of geographic balance). WiFi4EU was presented as a fast track action, unaccompanied by any impact assessment: this makes it hard to grasp the rationale that inspired it. It was later announced by President Juncker during the 2016 State of the Union address and finally approved by the Council last December. Its contours remain mysterious. First, the amount of available resources seems unlikely to provide a meaningful contribution. Second, funding per city is likely to prove limited (approx. 15,000 euros). Third, the funds seem to cover installation of WiFi connectivity only, and not ongoing maintenance, which remains the responsibility of the recipients. Fourth, the governance of the scheme is unlikely to enable a distinction between highly deserving projects and cases in which taxpayers’ money simply crowds out private investment.

Even more importantly, WiFi4EU seems to respond to neither of the two major determinants of the digital divide. The lack of adequate geographic coverage is only partly addressed, since WiFi connectivity needs adequate fixed-line broadband and spectrum at high frequencies. As concerns the digital literacy problem, well, WiFi4EU raises a disturbing question: would the value for money

of these 120 million euros have been greater if the Commission had earmarked them for digital skills, rather than free WiFi?

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> ABOUT

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▮ The slow pace of fiscal harmonisation is a sore point for Europe.

EUROPE'S FISCAL BALANCING ACT

by Josep Borrell

The European Union's lack of fiscal harmonisation is one of its Achilles' heels and close to a tragedy for Europe's economy and businesses.

of capital without prior fiscal harmonisation, when the governments of Mitterand in France and González in Spain ceded to the demands of the other member countries spearheaded by the United Kingdom and Luxembourg. I felt it again in the European Convention drafted by the non-nata Constitution. We were not able to get rid of the unanimity rule on fiscal-related decisions, although it might be more appropriate to use the term taxation because of the confusion caused the word fiscal's implication in English going far beyond purely tax-related issues.

This failure has since meant that mutual concessions between Member States in order to achieve unanimity have given rise to a proliferation of exceptions and derogations that are extremely difficult to eliminate in indirect taxation. It is also clear that Member States face difficulties when it comes to combatting cross-border tax fraud and evasion without the appropriate systems for exchanging information and administrative cooperation.

The second point of confusion relates to the limits of Europe-wide action on tax-related issues. Throughout the taxation system can be observed a wide variety of business models: the Swiss model, for example, with its high fiscal pressure, is distinctly different from that of conservative Britain and Spain.

Given that there is no theoretical "European model" to aim towards, it should be clear that fiscal decisions, or rather decisions on taxation, that are to be adopted by a qualified majority are not likely to change the commercial models that each

country decides upon through its own political decisions. How many times will the Commission have to repeat that this is not a case of fixing the tax rates applicable to businesses, and even less so to individuals, at a European level?

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The EU's Achilles' heel of the EU

Despite certain non-negligible advances applied at a snail's pace, it is clear that the European Union's lack of fiscal harmonisation is one of its Achilles' heels and close to a tragedy for Europe's economy and businesses. Europe continues to be the area that boasts the highest level of fiscal competition between its countries.

This competition is characterised by a general decrease in corporate tax, which has fallen by almost 40% since the mid-1990s: on average, it sat at a rate of around 36-37% and now sits at around

21-22%. Capital gains tax has also fallen, with consumption and labour taxes rising instead.

Public opinion, above all in these times of cuts and crises, is turning sour and the people are indignant at the revelation of the processes large multinationals employ to place their profits where they will be subject to the most favourable tax regimes and avoid, entirely legally of course, paying taxes in the countries where they operate. In addition, a proposed tax on financial transactions has never seen the light of day despite its introduction having been announced several times. On the contrary, its scope is being increasingly diminished, steadily making it devoid of content.

 Read the entire article online at www.progressivepost.eu

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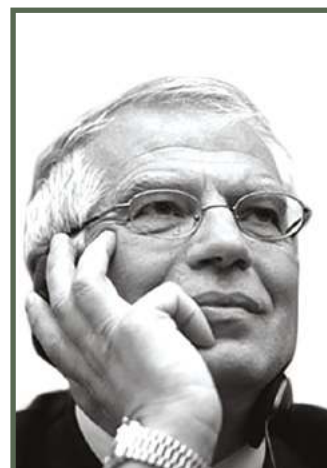


Europe continues to be the geographical area that boasts the highest level of fiscal competition between its countries: competition characterised by a general decrease in corporation tax, which has fallen by almost 40% since the mid-1990s. Capital gains tax has also fallen, with consumption and labour taxes rising.

For me, fiscal harmonisation in Europe is an old acquaintance. During the early 80s, as Spanish Secretary of State for Finance, I was placed in charge of a working group on the topic. Now, looking back at the slim progress made over the last 30 years, I cannot help but feel a certain sense of frustration.

A long battle

I felt frustration when it was decided to free-up the movement



> ABOUT

Josep Borrell was president of the European Parliament from 2004 until 2007.



Greater tax integration could be the key to European unification.

TAXATION: THE KEY TO EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND SPANISH COHABITATION

by Juan Moscoso del Prado

The economic and social crisis has weakened the European project because of a failure to palliate its consequences with any clear compensatory political or fiscal action. Europe and its supranational institutions have remained indelibly linked to the origins of the crisis and the poor management of its consequences, and in no way to the search for specific solutions that could minimise its social impact.

The narrative according to which the crisis would have been far worse without Europe lacks the sufficient strength to compensate for the ravages that have given way to a dominant ne-

gative feeling around the European project. The process of European integration is clearly undergoing a difficult phase. Numerous proposals have been put forward on how to overcome this difficulty, ranging from Brexit's renationalisation of

politics and return to an intergovernmental focus in the European Union, to a push for federalism that demands new treaties and profound political debate which would most likely be difficult to manage and complicated to

ratify. From a clearly federalist position, however, in these times of political apathy and citizen alienation it is essential to seek immediate results, and quickly, while the launch of the endlessly long and far-off process of treaty reform is considered in the background. Europe needs to respond with clear, transparent policies and proposals that get direct results in areas our put-out citizens are sensitive to, spaces in which European action proves imperative to obtaining results.

Lack of belief in the EU project

The reality is that Europeans no longer look to the European Union for solutions to issues such as economic and social security, or even terrorism, and have forgotten the circumstances which a decade ago made Europe such a successful collaborative project. A growing percentage of Europeans have given up believing in progress, in the idea that things are bound to improve with time whether true or not, and no longer trust in the power of public policy to solve their problems and do away with, or at the very best mitigate, sources of insecurity. The economic and social crisis has weakened the European project because the first-hand, physical reality of its brutal consequences have not been met with any clear compensatory political action. Europe and its supranational institutions have remained indelibly linked to the origins of the crisis and the poor management of its consequences, and in no way to the search for precise

solutions that prioritise the minimisation of its social impact. The narrative according to which the crisis would have been far worse without Europe lacks sufficient strength to compensate, even minimally, for the ravages that have given way to a reigning and dominant negative feeling around the European project.

It is true that not all Europeans who distrust Europe do so for the same reasons: for some, it is the refugee crisis in these times of increasing nationalism and xenophobia, for example, or indeed the consequences of the crisis for a South confronting a North which, rightly or wrongly, feels like it alone bears the financial burden of its Mediterranean neighbours. However, all share certain concerns that also happen to be the principle reclamations of populism. This is where work needs to be carried out, in the common ground. The European Union needs to find another way to advance towards greater political integration. It is possible to make progress in specific areas that would quickly create visible results for citizens, such as taxation. Without a doubt, taxation is one of the areas that citizens are most greatly concerned about, in the north as in the south and across the entire social spectrum of Europe's complex society.

The fiscal debate


Traditionally, the fiscal debate in Europe has focused on public expenditure and control of public accounts. However, there are tax-related elements of the debate that urgently demand a European focus. The harmonisation of rates

and taxes is necessary to put an end to the entirely justified indignation felt at the evasive tactics of businesses and even individuals within the European Union, as within the Euro zone, in order to avoid their tax obligations. In this respect, the fight against fraud and evasion (or avoidance) is unapproachable from within the scope of the nation state.

The same can be said of the fight against tax havens, which demands coordinated measures from the standpoint of the strength and solvency granted by concerted action outside the limits of the European Union in the general context of globalisation, digitalisation and continuous financial and judicial innovation. There are no words to justify the existence of tax havens within the Union itself, comparable national practices, or indeed States or genuinely European "enclaves" within our borders or under the sovereignty of certain Member States that are.

Taxation tackled in a practical, robust way can offer quick and perhaps even spectacular results. For example, the European Commission calculates that tax fraud and evasion across the Union equates to an annual loss of one billion euros in fiscal revenue, a quantity equivalent to the GDP of Spain or the entire amount spent on healthcare between all Member States. In terms of public debt, the eradication of tax evasion in the European Union would allow for Europe's debt to be paid off in nine years. The public sentiment that tax fraud and evasion are going unpunished is weakening the democratic system and eating

away at confidence in institutions, as they not only erode national tax bases, thus damaging public finances and suffocating fiscal consolidation efforts, but also contribute to the unjust distribution of the fiscal burden and a reduction in the ability of public spending to invest in and provide public services and social benefits. These are precisely the consequences of the crisis that have caused the greatest political disaffection and distancing from Europe. That is something all Europeans can agree on.

 Read the entire article online at www.progressivepost.eu

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> ABOUT

Juan Moscoso del Prado is currently the head of the International Relations department of the Spanish Economic and Social Council.



REYKJAVÍK, ICELAND - Digital democracy could lead to reduced citizen control.

UPGRADING DEMOCRACY: THE DANGER OF PRIVATISATION

by Róbert Viðar Bjarnason & Gunnar Grímsson

Democracy finds itself at a crossroads. Our formal, official democracy is still operating in much the same way as it has done for hundreds of years. For most of that time our society changed slowly, but that is no longer the case. In the last few decades, our world has changed so drastically and so quickly that there are no historical precedents. We live in unique times and therefore face unique challenges.

Our democracy has not kept up with recent changes and, although it should not adapt too drastically or too rapidly, we cannot allow it to continue to exist in the rigid form moulded by society 100 years ago. Voting every four years made sense in 1917, with transportation and communication being the way they were at the time. Today, however, this is not enough – as demonstrated by declining trust in democracy in many countries. Of course, we must have continuity – we do not want a new government every week – but as citizens we should definitely have a formal and active means of taking part in the decisions and policymaking that influence and control our lives. A big part of the necessary changes will be online, as our democracy must reflect our reality in order to function properly.

Upgrading democracy

In the last decade, a range of experiments with new forms of democracy have been carried out, many processes have been tested and a myriad of online

software has been developed. Democracy is slowly being upgraded, mostly by grassroots civic hackers working on a local government level whose best results are obtained when successfully collaborating with official public authorities.

We do not lack good options for upgrading democracy – be they processes or software – but there is now a danger that that our democratic processes will be privatised. As the new field of electronic democracy has gained a foothold, commercial companies have realised that profits can be made from it. To be sure, the corporate world is a part of our society and it should have an influence on decisions and policies. Arguably, however, they already have too much influence. Corporations must not be allowed to control our democracy as they represent their shareholders, not citizens.

The power of social media

It is not only the Facebook filter bubble that is the problem – the issue is more serious than that. There are probably more people using Facebook than participating formally in democracy worldwide and a big majority of our political discussions take place there. Facebook's secret algorithms control what each citizen sees of other people's opinions and the same applies to Google's search engine. Those who can pay Facebook or Google can reach a much bigger audience, but they mostly reach the people that agree with their worldview – to maximise our

budgets we use adverts that work well and that a big percentage of viewers will click on. This is the real digital divide, a huge problem that has already split opinion the world over. The past decade has witnessed the birth of a new movement of civic hackers promoting bottom up democracy, designed and operated by the people. The key element of this movement is open source software, where democratic innovators make their designs and software open for anybody to use or modify according to their needs. Cities like Reykjavik, Madrid, Barcelona and many others have taken a firm stand through open source public democratic innovation.

Trust is a key factor in democracy; without trust it does not work. Auditable, open, public code and servers are a critical element in ensuring transparency and fairness, the basic requirements for trust. If our democracy is to be hosted on closed and secret e-voting platforms which are owned, operated and controlled by corporations like Microsoft, Google or Facebook, we are moving into a world of privatised democracy that will always have the interests of its owners at heart. As democracy moves online, we must make sure that we can trust both the software and the processes and that control is in the hands of the people and their elected representatives.

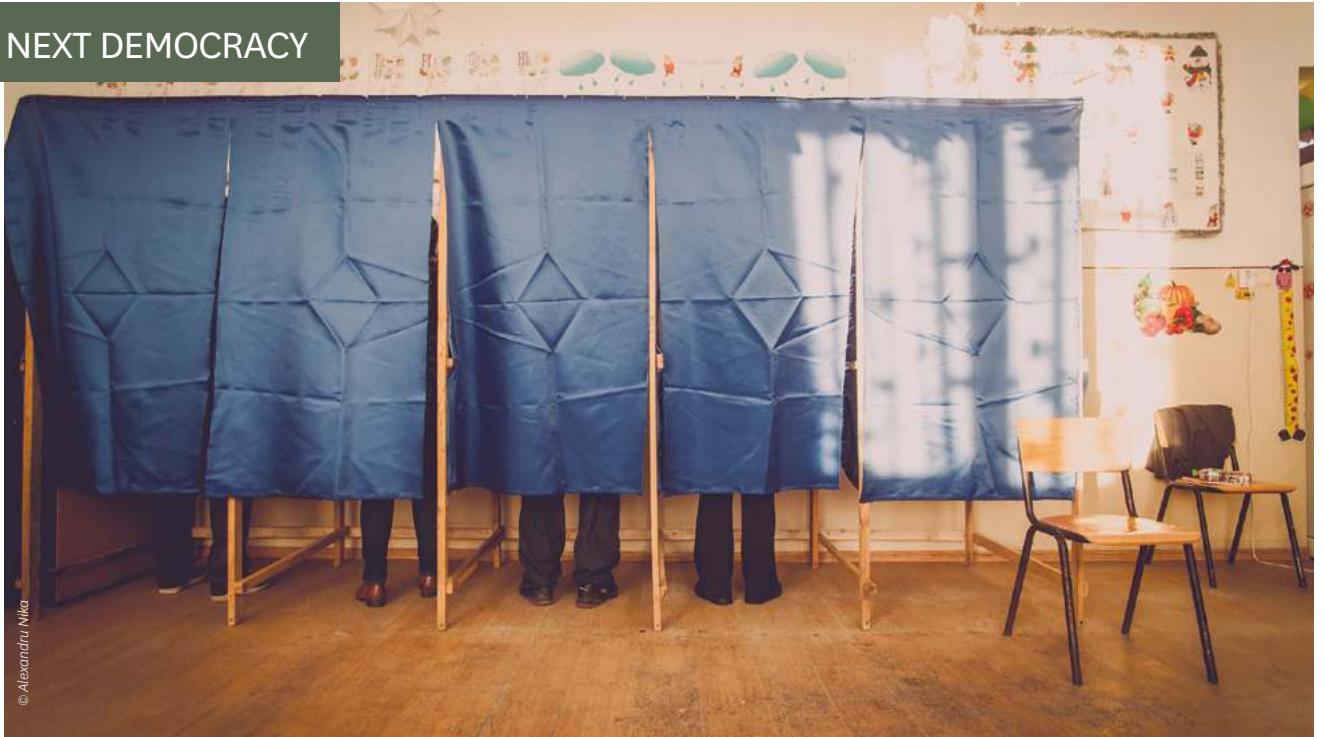


> ABOUT

Róbert Viðar Bjarnason is the CEO of Citizens Foundation. Róbert has extensive experience in both software development and entrepreneurship. He developed his first software company at the age of twelve and founded Iceland's first ISP company, Centrum.is, in 1993 and in Denmark in 1995.

> ABOUT

Gunnar Grímsson is a Consultant at Citizens Foundation. Since 1992 he has been working with web design, interface design and teaching at universities, companies and institutions. As an activist he campaigns against war, exploitation and whaling and for the protection of democracy and human rights.



BUCHAREST, ROMANIA - Voters stick with traditional booths.

EUROPE IS NOT READY FOR ELECTRONIC VOTING

by Harri Hursti

When discussing electronic voting, it is very important that we look back on history. We should be very cautious when we introduce new technology and remember why laws have been established in certain ways.

When it comes to electronic voting, the weak links are everywhere. I have been hacking every single aspect, which are all weak in their own way.

First of all, if you look at the phase involving optical scanners – the machines where paper ballots are

scanned – I have shown how it is possible to falsify the machine's records, which means that they produce incorrect results when people vote. Then there are the touch screen or physical electronic pen machines, where the same problem can be observed: I can modify the machine so it

shows the wrong results. And since there are no audit trails, you cannot audit the results. Then we have the essential tabulation phase where, again, the results are easily falsifiable. Examples of weaknesses are everywhere. Last but not least, we stumble upon the horrible

idea of internet voting. We simply do not have the technology for it today. Internet voting is possible only if you have no secret ballot or accept that the voting is un-auditable and therefore do not know what the results are. We are decades away from finding a suitable encryption method for secure internet voting.

Yet another problem is that a great deal of legislation, for example in Germany, stipulates that election methods have to be auditable and understandable by common citizen, with no extra tools or knowledge. So, until we inhabit a Star Trek-like world where teenagers casually talk about quantum physics, I do not think we will see a situation in which the common man or woman can understand homomorphic encryption, especially when we take into account that there are currently less than 500 people in the world who currently understand these concepts.

The Estonian internet vote

As a part of the team that supervised Estonian internet voting, I can confirm that this system is at the level of a high-school project. If you wanted to organise a high-school presidential election with such a system, it might be acceptable. However, this approach should not be used for anything more serious. They have not even tried to make it more secure: the whole system lacks fundamental basic principles which any secure system should have.

A digital electronic voting system is not feasible in Europe during our lifetime. I think electronic and

digital systems may have a role to play in elections; in some countries, the voting is so complex that computers are useful. But you always need to rely on the paper ballot and always need a process to audit the results.

I fully support the idea of using technology in elections in a responsible way. But I do not consider it conceivable to introduce a trustworthy digital voting system that will solve all of our problems. The required technology simply does not exist. Even if there were perfectly programmed systems, it would not work because there would be a gazillion other mistakes.

When it comes to the paper vote we still have a lot of problems: it is easy to argue that it is not perfect. But we also have hundreds of years of practice and experience using this system. Today, we have no alternative system that is better or more secure than paper ballots.

Not a way to fight abstention

Young people do not vote online. The reason for this is very simple. Everybody who has grown up during the internet era, playing World of Warcraft or had their accounts hacked or stolen understands how the electronic world works. Young people know better than the older generation how unsafe this world is. If they choose to vote they want their vote to count, and that is why they choose to vote on paper.

This is not just an opinion: it has been shown in results both in Norway and Estonia. Only retired citizens can be counted among a growing group of electronic

voters. But since this is also a group that is already actively voting, it does not have an effect on abstention. The claim often made by politicians and populist groups according to which electronic voting will encourage young people to vote has been proved wrong by every single result of every electronic vote every carried out.


My recommendation for secure voting is very simple: stick to paper ballots, but make voting accessible by allowing people to vote, in person, at a convenient location of their choice with the possibility of voting during an extended pre-vote period.

Flexibility and accessibility

In Finland, we have an 'early voting' system whereby you can vote in any post office and your vote will be counted as if you were in the polling station on polling day. We live increasingly hectic lives, so people should be given more options. I do not believe in home voting: a vote needs to be cast in secret in a secret booth, where no one can influence you or know how you voted.

It is also very important to provide information and historical background. The problem is that whether you are in Brussels, Helsinki or Berlin, you may forget that a lot of people in Europe live in small rural communities. There are a lot of people in Europe who simply do not feel comfortable voting: for them, elections are neither secret nor accessible. Europe is divided into different groups and it is very easy

for highly educated people, and young people who are familiar with technology, to forget the realities lived by other societies. Democracy only really works when people can vote and have the confidence to vote in whatever way they want. Finally, what is really important is to keep in mind that everything we say about the problems in voting systems can potentially provoke apathy. And apathy is equally as dangerous for democracy as getting the wrong results. Even if you do not trust the system right now, it is not an excuse to stop voting.

 Read the entire article online at www.progressivepost.eu



> ABOUT

Harri Hursti is one of the world's foremost experts on the topic of electronic voting security, having served in all aspects of the industry sector. He is an authority on uncovering critical problems in electronic voting systems worldwide, including in the US, Finland, Estonia, and Argentina.



AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS - Consumer goods worth billions are wasted each year.

TURNING SURPLUS INTO A SOCIAL BENEFIT

by Juliane Kronen

Consumer goods waste is worth billions of euros every year. However, current tax legislation in many countries makes donation more expensive than disposal.

Every day, consumers can choose from a wide range of products when shopping for their personal daily needs, kitting out their households with appliances and

buying other long-lasting consumer goods. Food waste has been at the centre of public attention for a while now, but little is known about the flipside of the choice we enjoy: that consumer goods worth billions of euros are thrown away every

year in Europe. There are many reasons why consumer goods are not sold as planned: slight imperfections such as off-colouring, mislabelling, or damaged cartons and pallets, but also the end of seasonal and promotional lines,

product relaunches, the closing down of factories or outlets and plain, old, ordinary surpluses. In Germany alone, it is estimated that consumer goods worth over seven billion euros are disposed of every year – ending up in landfills or incineration plants. About one third of these products – worth two billion euros – is perfectly safe for consumer use and needed by charities for their daily work.

“
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”

Avoiding waste by distributing donations to charities

Taking surplus products as donations from companies and distributing them to charities is an innovative way to avoid waste and turn affluence into social benefit. This work is carried out by product-redistributing charities in several European countries. In Germany, Innatura is the only platform building the bridge between companies who want to give, but do not know to whom, and cha-

rities. This “charity-to-charity” model offers companies an alternative to disposing, while at the same time improving their environmental footprint and creating social benefits. A wide range of products such as toys, tools, appliances, personal hygiene products and educational material are distributed to over 2,000 charities. Receiving charities, in turn, work with a broad range of beneficiaries such as children, families, homeless people and refugees. They are vetted rigorously and contribute a small handling fee – typically between five and 20% of the products’ market price – to the platform’s operating cost.

An international network fostering product philanthropy

In Kind Direct in the UK, one of the Prince’s Charities founded in 1997, has launched the In Kind Direct International network. Together with Innatura in Germany and Dons Solidaires in France, these three charities are promoting the idea of product philanthropy and have collectively convinced over 1,300 donor companies to entrust them with the distribution of donated products worth over 300 million euros to over 8,000 charities. Together, more than 25,000 tonnes of goods have been diverted from landfill. Members collaborate to share donations, best practices, general policies and processes to enable goods to be distributed in the most effective way, thus maximizing benefit for people in need and the charities which serve them.

A call to action

Donating products for social causes has a direct impact on avoiding waste – in many cases, product waste causes more harm through disposal than food waste. The donated products contribute directly to donor companies measuring their waste and working on improving their resource management. At the same time, the work of charities can be supported by allowing them a larger mileage with their budget, mostly to expand their core activities.

In order to increase both the environmental and social impact, several incentives are necessary:

- Consumer goods companies need to become aware of the possibility of safely donating their surplus goods to charities, with one reliable partner for distribution and the assurance that their brands will be protected.
- Charities need to realise that they can achieve much more with their budgets when they procure in-kind donations – what they need, when they need it, and in the necessary quantities – for a small handling fee, rather than buying on the market.
- Taxation of in-kind donations creates unnecessary waste by making donating more expensive than disposal. In some countries, for example Germany, a donation has to be valued and accounted for as sales revenues. The VAT the donor has to pay is only partially offset by donation receipts. Food donations can be written off in most countries now, but donating non-food products can imply costs many times greater than disposal.

Governments have to find a way to make donating products less expensive than disposing of them. As VAT is a European issue, the European Parliament can play a crucial role in promoting product philanthropy across its member states and thus avoid unnecessary waste.

- “Charity-to-charity” models are excluded from almost all funding – because they do not work directly with the needy. These models, however, dramatically increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the charity sector and improve the leverage of tax money and donations. Public and private funders should therefore make charity-to-charity models eligible for funding.



> ABOUT

Dr. Juliane Kronen is the founder and CEO of Innatura, a sustainable alternative for the usage of brand-new products which would otherwise be disposed of.



! Your leftovers have a larger political impact than you might think.

THE GLOBAL FOOD WASTE SCANDAL AND HOW DONALD TRUMP IS GOING TO FIX IT

by Joris Lohman

Over the last couple of years, the debate about the global food waste scandal has exploded. While a large part of the world's population remains chronically undernourished, one third of all food is produced for the trash can.

Decades of policy efforts aiming to ensure we enjoy 'food security' have resulted in more food, for sure. At the same time,

however, the food security regime has produced an unprecedented amount of food waste. Staple foods, vegetables and animal products that need land, water, natural resources and labour to produce never reach the consumer.

Starting from around 2009, the debate about this global food waste scandal started to gain momentum. Stirred up by activists like Tristram Stuart, who decided to organise large public events called 'Feeding the 5000' aimed at raising awareness about food waste by feeding large amounts of people (more than 5000) with food that would otherwise have gone to waste, and the Slow Food Youth Network, an international network of food activists that has organised so-called 'Disco Soup' events (live DJ'ing while participants cut and cook vegetables that would have otherwise gone to waste) in hundreds of cities around the world, from Berlin to Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Seoul, Sydney, New York and Nairobi. These kinds of events caught the attention of governments and policy makers at national and international level and since then many more initiatives, alliances, campaigns and 'platforms' for tackling food waste have been launched.

The outcome of over consumption

Whilst all of these initiatives have good intentions, the chances of making a notable difference, let alone 'tackling' the issue of food waste, amount to zero. Food waste is not so much an unintended side-effect of food production, but the expected and natural outcome of over-production in the food system. We will not achieve less food waste if we continue to produce food the way most industrialised countries do today. The reason for this is straightforward. The food system that

was created after World War II was designed to meet one objective and one objective only: to produce as many calories as possible for the lowest feasible price. Industrialisation, mechanisation, and Europe's Common Agricultural Policy are designed to meet this objective. Policymakers, businesses, and especially farmers that are caught up in this system have only one button to push: producing more food.

Clearly, this over-producing, wasteful system is broken. Whilst business, governments, and farmers' organisations have been advocating the productionist paradigm by pointing out the need for 'food security' (meaning that every person must have access to nutritious food), the limits and failures of this approach are becoming increasingly clear – in fact, decades of policy aimed at food security have not created a food secure world. Where to go from here? Well, food for thought seems to be coming from an unexpected direction.

As a reaction to the productionist paradigm, grassroots social movements have introduced a new concept: that of 'food sovereignty'. The abridged version of food sovereignty is, as Berkeley scholar Raj Patel notes, the "right of peoples to define their own food, agriculture, livestock and fisheries systems".

Although the concept of food sovereignty is still being developed, the movement and the concept are clearly broadening and leaving their 'alternative' mark on the debate on the future of food. The call for more locally oriented food systems has echoed in policy debates around Europe.

Two possible pathways

Future food scenarios roughly define two possible pathways in which future food systems can develop: the 'high-tech scenario', in which multinational companies will play an even bigger role in the food system, using efficient and high-tech systems to produce and procure our food; and the 'self-organisation scenario', in which more locally (regionally) organised communities take responsibility for their food procurement.

Until a few months ago, I would have bet my money on the first scenario. Technological development is accelerating, and with talks about ever more open food markets and TTIP on the way, the scenario of 'self-organisation' and food sovereignty seemed unrealistic, even romantic. The election of Donald Trump and the rise of populism in Europe has reset the deck. In order for the high-tech, productionist paradigm to thrive, open markets, neo-liberalism and trade agreements are a necessity. However, building walls and "America First" turn the food economy on its head. I myself have felt uneasy about the apparent resemblances between the rhetoric of the 'go-local food movement' which I feel close to and the blatant nationalism and protectionist rhetoric of the new president of the United States and his European populist counterparts. What is the difference between "America First and support American workers" and "buy Dutch cheese in order to support your local farmer"?

Of course, the differences are greater than the resemblances:

striving for food sovereignty is about more, rather than less, democracy. Still, part of the underlying sentiment is more closely connected than progressive food movement enthusiasts would like to believe. Both farmers and workers voting for populist parties can be considered the 'losers' of the globalised market economy. Only time will tell what the breakdown of neo-liberalism unfolding before our very eyes will mean for our food system. Locally organised, short-chain, farmer-consumer cooperative models of food production and consumption could start to flourish as a response to the breaking down of free trade agreements. As a result, it might turn out that Donald Trump will play a big role in "tackling the global food waste scandal".



> ABOUT

Joris Lohman is co-founder of Food Hub, a social enterprise that aims to accelerate the transition to a food system that is just, clean and fair. He is also a member of the Executive Committee of Slow Food International.



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BRUSSELS, BELGIUM - The EU needs to rethink its food waste strategy.

FIGHTING THE ABSURDITY OF FOOD WASTE A MORAL OBLIGATION

by Vytenis Andriukaitis

Some numbers simply speak for themselves: it is estimated that almost 90 million tonnes of food waste are generated every year in the EU with related costs estimated at 143 billion euros.

As European Commissioner in charge of Health and Food safety, I find this simply unacceptable when at the same time 55 million people in the EU cannot afford a decent quality meal every second day and 800 million people in the world go

to bed hungry each night. Food waste also puts unnecessary pressure on the environment: if food waste were a country, it would be the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases (surpassed only by China and the United States)! This is why the fight against food waste is now high on the agenda of the European Commission. It is singled out as a priority area in the

Commission's Circular Economy Package adopted in late 2015 to stimulate Europe's transition towards a circular economy which will boost global competitiveness, foster sustainable growth and generate new jobs. This package also reaffirms the EU's commitment to reach the global Sustainable Development Goal "12.3" to halve food waste by 2030.

In recent months, a string of measures and actions have been launched in order to make progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. And measurement is at the heart of food waste prevention: we need to understand where we lose food resources, how much we lose and why, in order to build effective food waste prevention programmes.

Measurement as a prerequisite

Today, EU data on food waste levels is insufficient. The Commission's waste legislation proposal attempts to address this gap by requiring Member States to reduce food waste all along the food value chain, monitor levels and report back on progress made. In order to support these efforts, the Commission will elaborate a methodology for measuring food waste consistently at each stage of the food value chain, in cooperation with Member States and actors in the food value chain. In a nutshell, measurement is a prerequisite for effective and targeted action.

In order to accelerate the EU's progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, the European Commission has established a unique multi-stakeholder *Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste*, bringing together key players from 70 organisations representing Member States governments, industry, consumer associations, food banks and other NGOs, as well as international organisations. The Platform – created last summer and kicked off in November 2016 – aims to support all actors in taking effective action to fight food waste. My objective as Commissioner is very clear: I want the EU to become a global reference by leading efforts to fight food waste. For this reason, at the first meeting of the Platform, I challenged all members to implement national food waste prevention programmes by the end of 2019. In addition to the methodology and Platform, we can also take

action at EU level. In this respect, the Commission will act in line with the food hierarchy approach: first working on the prevention of food waste, second on the donation of edible food and finally on its reuse as feed. In line with this approach, we are analysing how to promote a better understanding and a more effective use of date marking on food. We will also develop EU guidelines to facilitate food donation and the safe use of food not suited for human consumption for production of animal feed, an area in which the EU is greatly dependent on third countries' imports (and which has an additional environmental and economic impact).

The Danish example

In this endeavour we are not starting from scratch. Some Member States have been quite active in recent years, adopting measures which could be inspiring for other countries. Take Denmark for instance, where a number of food waste prevention initiatives have been launched at consumer, retail and food services levels (i.e. "Stop Wasting Food", or "Nulskrald AVV", a municipal initiative targeted at consumers to prevent food waste and promote waste recycling in general). Public authorities such as the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration support food waste prevention, for instance by providing practical guidelines and tools to help food businesses assess whether and under which conditions foods about which they are uncertain may be sold or used again in the business. Consumer information campaigns include guidance on

the meaning of "use by" and "best before" dates found on food labels. According to figures published by the Danish trade magazine *Dansk Handelsblad* and the *Danish Agriculture and Food Council*, food waste has been reduced in Denmark by 25% since 2010.

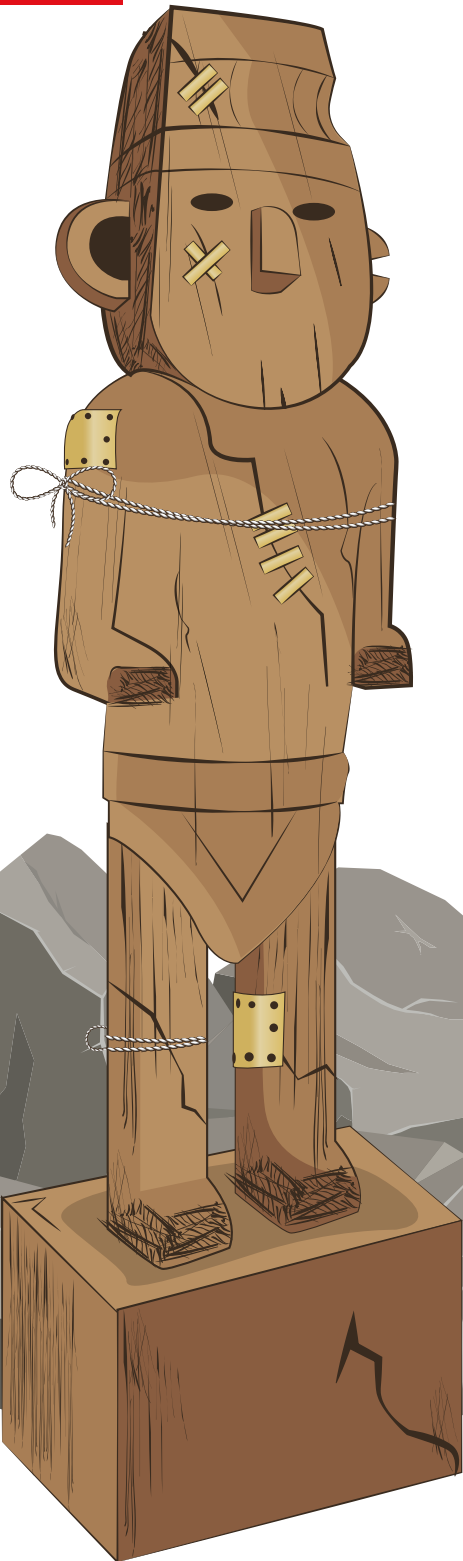
The example of the United Kingdom is also interesting, as it has one of the most extensive estimates of country-level food waste in the world. The UK achieved a 15% reduction in household food waste between 2007 and 2012 and recently launched a new voluntary agreement, the "Courtauld Commitment 2025", to reduce food waste by a further 20% across the whole food supply chain. France has equally been very active on this front and, in 2016, adopted measures to prevent supermarkets from throwing away or destroying unsold food and instead donate it – under certain conditions – to food banks or, when not suited for human consumption, valorising these food resources for production of animal feed. The measures are part of a national food waste prevention programme that aims to halve the amount of food waste by 2025. Some supermarket chains have launched their own initiatives to prevent food waste, for instance by encouraging consumers to buy imperfect fruit and vegetables, or by using apps to offer products nearing expiry at discounted prices to their customers. In Italy, a series of national measures, including further promotion of food redistribution, were adopted last year as part of a new law aiming to reduce the country's total annual food wastage by one million tonnes. As we can see, food waste reduction is a growing concern in the EU,

but its prevention requires action at all levels: global, EU, national, regional, local, and even more in your own house where most of the food waste happens! I therefore challenge all key actors in the food chain to change their habits and practices in order to save precious food resources. Rethinking our food systems might seem a daunting task requiring a significant amount of effort, but it is our moral obligation to meet this commitment with creativity and co-operation. I hope that we can spread the sense of urgency that tackling food waste so clearly demands. If we all learn how to appreciate and value the food we eat once again, I am sure that we can take great strides in the fight against food waste in the EU. Let us all become food waste heroes to rescue food for the people, protect our planet and fight for progress.



> ABOUT

Vytenis Andriukaitis is the EU commissioner for Health & Food Safety.



THERE ARE ONLY ANACHRONISMS IN TODAY'S WORLD

Interview with the philosopher Michel Serres, by Alain Bloëdt, Editor-in-chief of the Progressive Post.

| Ancient Chimú culture talisman from North Peru, the inspiration behind Hergé's Arumbaya fetish.

— A common criticism of the European technocrats is that they live in their own bubble. During recent political campaigns (the US elections, Brexit), the dichotomy between the predictions of the intelligentsia and the ultimate outcome demonstrated that bubbles also exist outside of Brussels. How can this problem be solved?

MICHEL SERRES: My response to that question is how I feel about Donald Trump and populists in general: I find that the media, in its efforts to combat such adversaries, actually increases the amount of publicity they receive.

— But surely we have to speak about this, try to explain it, denounce it?

MS: False. I want you to fight tirelessly against me, against my books – you would be giving me more press. When we fight against something, we must not forget the adage: Talk about me, praise me, defame me, I don't care, what matters above all else is that you talk about me. There you have the first of your bubbles: the fight itself! Perhaps a more effective strategy would be to stop talking about them altogether.

— It is a strategy that has become more complicated now that Trump has been elected...

MS: When I read articles about Trump, he only ever gets negative press. It would be easy to forget that he has been elected. And yet, I lived in the United States for 45 years (Editor's note: Professor at Stanford University) and there is no doubt about it: Trump represents the real America. On that note, Bush Junior was a sort of pre-incarnation of Trump.

— What other bubbles can you identify?

MS: Managers, journalists, politicians—all of these people have, since childhood, been educated exclusively in the humanities; in sociology, psychology, law or management. What turns the modern world on its axis and makes it unique as a historical period? The hard sciences: the climate, or in other words chemistry; life expectancy, that is to say biochemistry and medicine; new technologies, etc... fields of study that they know nothing about! Consequently, they all believe themselves to maintain some kind of relationship with the world because they talk about it, but they don't really see it because they don't have the necessary training.

— Would you say there is a bubble of ignorance?

MS: Yes, because they continue to repeat what they know, in what they believe to be astute observation, but the world is

not changing in the way they describe. It feels like we have gone back to the Renaissance in full swing, when the Scholastic doctors of the Medieval were first confronted with Montaigne, Rabelais and *his thousand and one ways to wipe your ass*.

— Following in that vein, does the discourse surrounding post-truth seem new to you?

MS: I think that in journalism's very beginnings, Honoré de Balzac wrote a novel called *The Illustrious Gaudissart* which claimed that newspapers spat out information. There have always been two observers of the modern world: one who is caught up in the moment and the other who, taking a step back, sees how things are developing. I think that the latter has a better chance of capturing the evolution of the modern world. Under the pressure of the American giants, states' prerogatives shrink away; this is the true fight, not knowing who will win the next election.

— How is it that societies which have never been better informed still manage to be deceived?

MS: Let's look at the state of affairs first of all. Putin in Russia, Erdogan in Turkey, the British voting for Brexit, the Americans for Trump. I actually feel as though the Islamic State and its predecessors, such as Bin Laden, were created in order to fight against the Arab Spring. They did not want it to happen. We arrive at quite a nice synthesis

with this list and the feeling that the entire world is turning to the most reactionary form of conservatism. Trump and Daesh are, in a certain way, fighting the same fight.

— Why are they coming to the fore?

MS: My hypothesis is that one of the greatest achievements of the modern world - and one that I benefit from personally - has been an exponential increase in life expectancy due to huge progress made in chemistry, medicine, algorithms... we have a tendency to forget that Julius Cesar and Alexander ruled between the ages of 25 and 30. Today, we have a bunch of old grouches in power! Today, a man of 60 has not even left his inheritance. The world's fortune is therefore accumulating in the hands of a population that does not give a damn but whose wealth continues to increase regardless while the kids no longer have anything. If you follow the same logic for power, you're going to see the same result! The old grouches have taken a hold on power thanks to increased life expectancy and they're scared stiff by the modern world.

— I am 40 years old and my generation has lived through the same inertia, but it seems passive nonetheless...

MS: It is not the commitment that is lacking, but the means! Without any money and absent from positions of power, the most dynamic among us are deprived of the means to act. It's generational inequality.

— Why is it that, despite regular catastrophic predictions, conflict between generations has not taken place?

MS: There is indeed a certain stability in generational conflict, but we must be aware that there are things happening now which have never before taken place. For example, when I was born in the 1930s, there were less than two billion people on the planet. We are now more than seven billion. New technologies have brought a new pattern of work, a new pattern of human relations, a way of conceiving space and time that are totally without precedent. The old grouches are scared of all these new developments.

— How can the new generation get a hold on power?

MS: They bring new things, including societal transformations, but objectively the cost of money is important. I am 82, my oldest daughter is 62 and has not yet inherited from me. Financial investment is increasingly immobilised by this situation and power follows suit.

— How can we transfer this power? Through institutions?

MS: We were close to the example of feminism's progression but there is sort of blockage. Institutional methods will always be rather futile because our institutions were created in a world that no longer exists. And I'm referring to all of our institutions: schools, politics, hospitals, etc...

even money and work are now obsolete to a certain extent.

— Why?

MS: There are only anachronisms in today's world. Ultimately, Trump bears witness to our inertia. People are not quite aware of the unique and novel character of our era. But we also tend to forget for one simple reason: to live in peace is to forget, to experience war is to remember.

— The European Union was revolutionary in geopolitical terms. Is that still the case 60 years after the Treaty of Rome?

MS: For me, Europe is one of our most precious institutions as it brought peace to a region where there had been none since before the Trojan War. 70 years of peace is a colossal result!

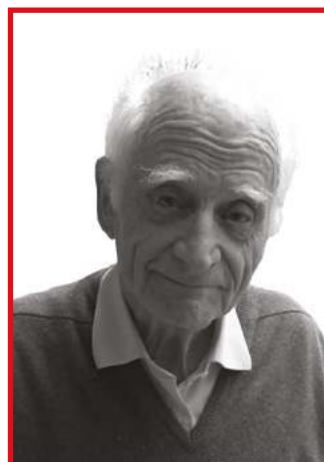
— How can we make it evolve?

MS: I have this idea that a living organism - be it fauna, flora or a human being - is not a system. The elements that make up our bodies have not all experienced Darwin-style evolutionary advances at the same pace. For example, one part of our brains was formed during the Palaeozoic era, other parts with the arrival of the Homo Sapiens. We are not a system. We are formed through a sort of DIY. That is why the more a state can be considered perfect, the more it horrifies me. A perfect state is Stalin. A perfect state is the talisman of the Aru-mbaya (Editor's note: re-read The

Broken Ear from The Adventures of Tintin by Hergé). So, Europe is badly constructed, full of nails, but that is the way I like it. The less efficiently it works, the more I'm happy with it. Perfect institutions, throughout history, have always demanded that we sacrifice our lives for them. Europe will never ask anyone to sacrifice their life in its defence.

— If we accept Europe as it is, does that not imply repairing it time and time again?

Of course, it's Jeannot's knife. Jeannot has this knife, but he has had it for so long that he has to repair the handle. Then the blade gets worn out, so he replaces the blade. Does Jeannot still have the same knife? Yes and no.



> **ABOUT**
Michel Serres is a French philosopher and author.



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| Former European Commissioner Pascal Lamy shares his views on Europe and the Union.

EUROPE'S DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT IS ANTHROPOLITICAL

Interview with Pascal Lamy, President Emeritus of the Jacques Delors Institute
By Alain Bloëdt, Editor-in-chief of the Progressive Post

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— Will increasing the competencies of the European institutions, such as the Commission, or indeed the creation of new bodies, for example a euro zone parliament, strengthen European democracy?

PASCAL LAMY: I don't think so. If the EU went to see an "Institutional Doctor", he or she wouldn't be able to diagnose a great deal and wouldn't understand why things aren't working. She would probably note that we have a quasi-government, a house of elected representatives, and a court of justice. In fact, she might be more inclined to send us to see a psychiatrist!

— The worryingly low turn-out for European elections is definitely real however...

PL: There is a democratic deficit, but it has almost nothing to do with the institutions or processes. As Elie Barnavi used to say, *Europe's problem is that it's politically frigid*. There is nothing there to suggest emotional involvement or a sense of belonging that gets peoples' imaginations running.

— So, how would you define the deficit?

PL: It is "anthropolitical". It's more of an anthropological problem than an institutional or judicial one. Indeed, the most important question is not about working out the next institutional reform, but rather: how can we get peoples' imaginations running through the

use of narratives? What European mythologies would be capable of juxtaposing national ones without replacing them?

— How can we get to that point?

PL: To my knowledge, there is only one country in Europe, in the Balkans, where the national celebration is evocative of a defeat – everywhere else the story is always about a victory. More generally speaking, our national systems are the product of an organised, even invented, memory, such as in France for example, with Saint-Louis, Clovis, or the battle of Poitiers. This frigid space must be filled with an emotional capacity that is narrative in nature, capable of mobilising minds.

— So, there is no unifying European myth?

PL: At the moment, Europe is a counter-myth as it's based on the rejection of war. This mythology is not a dream but a nightmare. Its galvanising effect is therefore slim.

— What about the European passport, the European flag, the European anthem?

PL: It's putting the cart before the horse: an anthropological error that I take some responsibility for, as I was amongst those who thought they were in the spirit of a "citizens' Europe", as we used to say at the time. It is the myth that creates the hymn, the flag, the passport, not the other way around! We lack the underlying narrative foundation needed to get peoples' imaginations running:

that is where the democratic deficit lies. We must understand why the rather alchemistic reasoning of the founding fathers – that the cornerstone of economic integration will transform into political gold – does not work!

— Following the example of the euro, does economic integration not lead to political integration?

PL: That is true and we can plainly see that situations involving leaving the euro create political problems. But look at the euro note – it's cold and anonymous.

— Does the absence of myths benefit the populists?

PL: We have backtracked on the cultural side. In reality, populism has two sources of origin: social security and cultural security. On the left, we are far too concerned with reinventing the welfare state and shifting the boundaries of tradition. As far as cultural insecurity is concerned, the right and the extreme-right have an enormous comparative advantage as they advocate a return to tradition. Yet, returning to the past is an extreme form of conservatism.

— Given the immediate lack of a unifying myth, have there not been some interesting democratic advances such as the *Spitzenkandidaten*?

PL: Of course, democratic advances continue to be put in place and are very useful, but this is not an institutional question. The *Spitzenkandidaten* do not need to change the institutions. Another

development that involves the socialists is direct membership of the Party of European Socialists, something that has been refused by the national socialist parties. Now there is a serious institutional hurdle that reveals the dichotomy between the European and national spaces, considering we are the first to make the case for continuity! There's no need to change the institutions to fix that!

— **Is an increase in the Commission's competencies necessary?**

PL: The burning questions concerns whether or not we remain attached to a classic parliamentary model, with majority and opposition, or a Swiss - style federal system. Beyond that, I have noted that many of our diplomats - starting with the French and the English - still refuse to accept that the Commission is a government. They continue to see it as the secretariat of the Council which, for them, is the true government.

— **The current European Parliament works on the majority of ideas. Could the classic parliamentary model be officially imposed?**

PL: We are far from that point, as it would imply that the Commission is made up of elected individuals or a coalition negotiated with a majority in the European Parliament. However, and this is how I understand the institutions, we already exist within a parliamentary system. The Commission is a quasi-government, the Council is the senate of the Member States, and the Parliament is a house of

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representatives. Moreover, the Parliament can pass a vote of no confidence against the Commission. This has happened once, even if the Commission had retired the night before.

— **Is your understanding reinforced by your experience as Commissioner for Trade?**

PL: Without a doubt. As trade is a federal competency, I had to work with the Council and Parliament. I was also involved with the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

— **Would you then welcome the reorganisation of the College, orchestrated by Jean-Claude Juncker, to make the Commission more political?**

PL: It is true that the excessive number of commissioners, a product of mediocre diplomatic compromise, limits the Commission's political character. Thus, Juncker's reform, albeit a little heavy-handed, does allow for the agenda and action to be made more political.

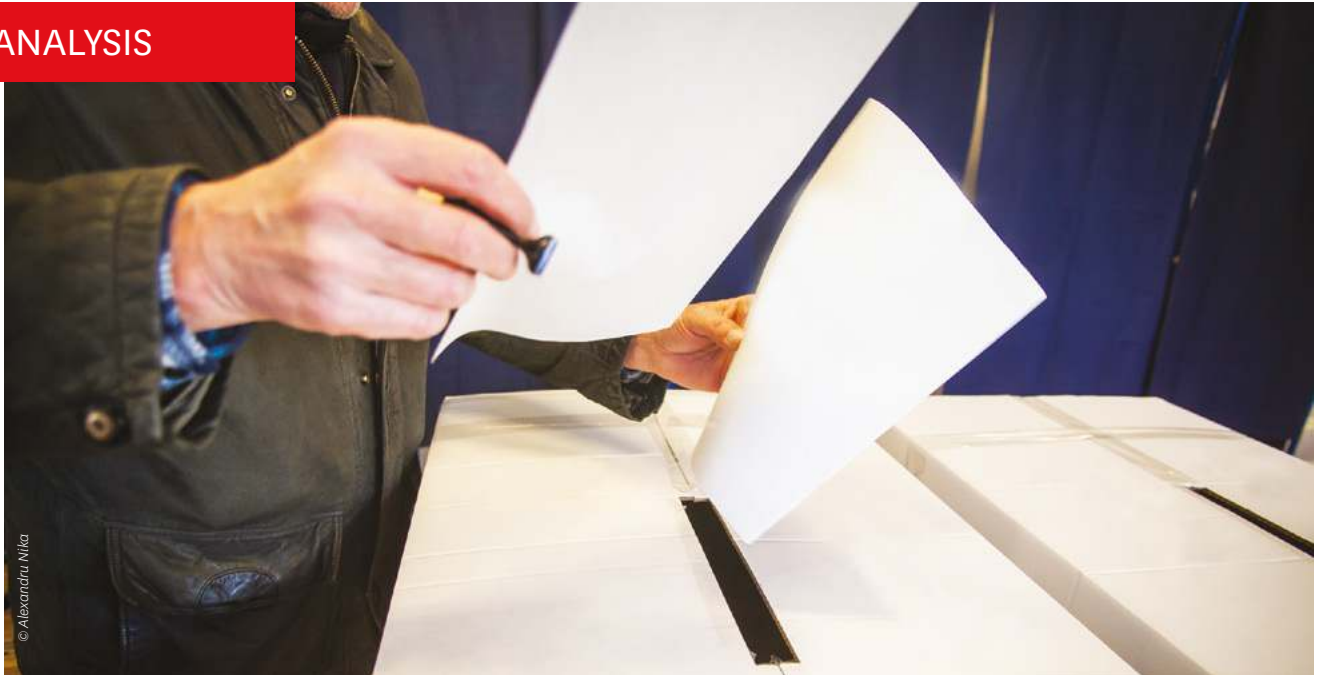
— **What do you think of the election of a European president through universal suffrage?**

PL: The idea that the election of a president through universal suffrage would compensate for the European democratic deficit is misguided. One only has to look to the state of democracy in France to realise as such. Besides, if it did happen, he or she would always be German!



> **ABOUT**

Pascal Lamy is President Emeritus of the Jacques Delors Institute, former Director-General of the World Trade Organisation, a former European Commissioner and Vice-President of FEPS.



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| BUCHAREST, ROMANIA - Transnational lists could increase voter turnout.

POLITICISING EUROPE: TRANSNATIONAL LISTS AS A MEANS OF MOVING THE DEBATE FROM “IF” TO “WHICH”

by Dr Ania Skrzypek

The 2014 European elections were undoubtedly ground-breaking. Their historical character was determined by the fact that all of the “traditional” European political families decided to diligently implement the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty.

These enabled their European federations, the so-called euro-parties, to engage in the cam-

paigns and also prompted them to elect top candidates. In the event of their respective euro-party’s victory, these candidates would become a nominee for the position of President of the European Commission. Whilst this could seem like a straightforward set

of rules, their interpretation was heavily questioned. Initial debate on the topic inside of the European Parliament was rather instructive, since it pointed out that the aforementioned ‘victory’ may be seen either as a party’s having achieved the largest number of MEPs in the

group or as its ability to create the largest alliance backing the potential candidate. At that point the idea was considered more abstract, whereas today, after this year’s crack in the grand coalition, that old debate may reopen and matter. But whilst the discussion

inside of the European Parliament was settled promptly, the struggle to get other institutions – especially the Council – to recognise this reading of the provisions and therefore accept Jean Claude Juncker as President-elect continued for a while longer. Ultimately it concluded with the Heads of States giving in: a historical achievement for the European Parliament and indirectly one for the euro-parties as well.

A “one-time concession”

One might think that this set a precedent, however ongoing discussions provide evidence to the contrary. It would seem that some members of the Council consider 2014 and the way it played out as a sort of “one-time concession”. It being mid-term and with eyes turning to 2019, these members wish to make a U-turn and would rather return to the olden days when positions were allocated behind closed doors. This would be undesirable, as it would constitute a retreat from the path that has and could continue to make the European decision-making process more transparent and hence more democratic. This is why the commitment of the European Parliament, as expressed in a vote on the report of Jo Leinen and Danuta Hübner in October 2015, to continue and pursue further reforms of European Electoral law(s) is so relevant. The adopted text makes a clear point: that the experiment with the top candidate was a beneficial one, raising political awareness and contributing to the mobilisation of citizens during the campaign. It is true that turnout has not yet substantially

increased, but at least the 30 year long trend of decline from election to election was brought to a halt. Besides recommending continuity in 2019, the report sheds light on some other feasible proposals that could strengthen democracy in Europe. Among them is the idea of creating so called ‘transnational lists’ to be presented to citizens during European Parliament elections.

Closing loopholes

Even though this idea has not yet gained momentum, it is worth serious consideration for a number of reasons. First of all, it would close certain loopholes that were discovered when the idea of euro-parties running with top candidates was put into practice. The most serious among them was that the legitimacy of the potential president-elect would remain indirect, since he or she would only feature as a votable candidate in one out of 28 Member States. On a similar note, there were also some states where citizens could not support their desired top candidate, since not all of the euro-parties have members in every respective Member State. Hence, a transnational list would be a way to improve and enable all voters to directly support a nominee of their choice to run for the European Commission in the future. Secondly, while much has been said about the positive developments that the campaign and European elections brought in 2014, it is important not to forget about certain other worrying trends. The current European Parliament, as it stood after elections, is the most fragmented in history and features

the largest number of anti-European and euro-sceptic MEPs ever. They have been elected in line with the reigning mood of European rejection, whereby people exhausted with the crisis and the measures taken in its aftermath (including austerity) grew resentful of the European project as it is currently presented. Given that, two and a half years later, the EU continues to battle the same draining problems – with internal imbalances and divisions continuing to grow, alongside an increasing inability to face challenges – we could be led to think that circumstances in 2019 may be even less favourable for the pro-European parties to make their case.

The tool for a new trajectory

In this context, transnational lists could become a tool capable of setting a new trajectory in the European debate. At this point, it continues to divide the electorate along the lines of a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to Europe, whilst it should focus more on ‘what kind of Europe’ we want instead. It also divides voters along the boundaries of the national Member States, within which they remain focused on what Europe can offer them and not what future Europe should be heading towards in order to ensure prosperity and social progress for all. Hence, the top candidate together with a representation of candidates from different countries united on the same list would constitute a team, a symbolic representation of the consolidation of national parties who share an ideological standpoint on pro-

posals for the future of Europe. Together they could change the terms of the campaign, elevating it from its rejectionist and nationalistic corner. Without a doubt, the progressives should be the ones who pave the way and do their utmost to realise the establishment of the proposed transnational lists. 67 years ago, Paul Henri Spaak agreed to run for president of the predecessor of today’s European Parliament on the condition that every socialist and social-democrat from all the national delegations supported him. They did, and his election boosted the creation of the political groups within which MEPs now work. This, if nothing else, should give us the courage to believe that yes we can make history happen again.



> ABOUT

Ania Skrzypek is a Senior Research Fellow at the Foundation for European Progressive Studies.



PARIS, FRANCE - Primary elections. Could a similar election system be introduced at an EU-level?

SHOULD PRIMARIES BE ADOPTED AT EU-LEVEL?

by Luciano Bardi

Europe celebrates its 60th anniversary in March 2017. Addressing the issue of how to eliminate its democratic deficit is a good way to honour the event.

Establishing a virtuous legitimising cycle between the elections of the European Parliament and the election of the President of the European Union's Commission could be a decisive step towards EU democracy. In

view of the rise of populist and anti-EU movements and parties across Europe, democratic EU institutions more capable of responding to the legitimate but often unheeded demands of EU citizens are needed for the enhancement of EU democracy. As the argument went, this could create a focus for the construction of more effective European parties as well as of a competitive euro-party system, both being believed to be necessary elements in the development of a working democracy at EU level. The designation of the *Spitzenkandidaten* was an initiative the European parties took, bypassing the Treaties and other pertinent EU regulations. Thus, it did not result in a formal election of the President of the Commission, as many thought would be ideal or even necessary. Nevertheless, the initiative resulted in the choice of Jean-Claude Juncker as President of the Commission, marking a much more democratic outcome than any in the past.

The need for notoriety

More can and must be done to build on this undoubtedly important success. One of the sore points of EU-level democracy is the lack of popularity of potential candidates. The difficulty for citizens to trust politicians who are not known to them is one of the crucial aspects of the EU's democratic deficit. Even if national leaders are well known as such, even beyond their national borders, Europe-wide leaders that should represent EU citizens supranationally need a different type of notoriety. The visibility of the *Spitzenkandidaten*

in the course of the campaign was not comparable to that of national party leaders. Their individual popularity in countries other than their own increased only marginally, also considering the low levels of viewership attained by the televised debates. This would probably change if the designation of the *Spitzenkandidaten* was formalised and the choice of next President of the Commission as the one designated by the European party obtaining the most votes in European Parliament elections was made binding. In any event, provisions to attract high profile politicians and also ensure adequate gender, geographical, and age representation within the pool of potential candidates appear to be desirable.

Although formalised at party congresses, the systems adopted in 2014 (designation by the top hierarchy of the party or through unopposed competition) only responded to the first of these concerns. There is no doubt that the *Spitzenkandidaten* selected in 2014 were generally as high profile as could be expected in an EU-level context, but the selection process lacked transparency and openness to candidates exhibiting different backgrounds and characteristics. The adoption of primaries at EU-level is one of the innovations that are being advocated to address these shortcomings as well as to promote the European nature of elections and candidatures.

The benefits of primaries

The main arguments in favour of the introduction of primaries are:

1. They draw transnational attention on and increase the popularity of candidates;
2. They improve the transparency of the selection process;
3. They favour the identification of platforms and programmes of individual candidates, as competing against internal adversaries prevents them from simply adopting party manifestos;
4. They strengthen the legitimacy of the *Spitzenkandidaten*, and make the eventual winner of the 2019 European Parliament elections a more independent and possibly politicised President of the EU Commission.

Most of these positive features have to do with the increased visibility that primary campaigning and competition afford to candidates and the potential incentives the system offers to citizens' participation. On the other hand, no system can ensure that desirable gender and age balances of candidates enter into the competition. At best, incentives can be created for candidates to participate. One could consider a regulated use of party media that would give time to gender and age groups rather than to individual candidates. In any event, primaries should be relatively open in terms of the eligibility of voters and In any event, primaries should be relatively open in terms of the eligibility of voters and, even more importantly, inclusive in terms of the candidates' selectorate. Of the various possible options - self-appointment; sponsored appointment with a minimum number of signatures from eligible voters or party

members; and party selectorate, such as party congress, party executive or specific ad hoc body - sponsored appointment appears to be the only one capable of permitting the participation of a wide variety of candidates while at the same time avoiding the danger of their becoming excessive number. Finally, the modality of election of the *Spitzenkandidat* through a vote count with digressive proportional weighting might be sufficient to attract candidates from less populated Member States and thus allow for a better balanced geographical roster of candidates.



> ABOUT

Luciano Bardi (PhD, Johns Hopkins University) is Professor of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Pisa and co-director of the Observatory on Political Parties and Representation of the European University Institute's Schuman Centre.



STRASBOURG, FRANCE - Gianni Pittella on how to build the left of the future.

THE NEW ERA OF THE LEFT

by Gianni Pittella

For a long time, the left voluntarily exiled itself from dominant culture and political thought in Europe. Such a loss was not the result of a tactical withdrawal, but the culmination of a double process which concerned the West as a whole.

Firstly, 20 year long cultural submission to market ideology, its doctrines and its practices, as if history itself has ended. Secondly, an increase in defensive tactics in an attempt to resist the populist barbarity of the last 10 years. The first process reshaped progressive reformist thought. If nothing could

be done to change the status quo, given that the triumph of the market would inevitably lead to the best outcome for all, then the left had to content itself to mitigating the harsher characteristics of the market, regulating competition to the best of its ability and redefining a state that provides arbitration and guarantees the protection of rights. The animalistic impetus to

concentrate wealth into the hands of the few, coupled with the most extreme financial deregulation in history, found in socialism a weak and frightened voice, if not an unconscious ally. The second process, namely the coming together of the forces of “civilization” against a renascent anti-establishment populism, found in the European Parliament a space for trial and error since emulated in some Member States. It even produced some significant results.

Competitive cooperation

The alliance of conservatives and socialists in Strasbourg sprang up as an extraordinary answer to the problem of governability in an assembly in deadlock due to the increasing presence of nationalist forces within the Parliament. Thanks to this spirit of competitive cooperation between pro-Europe forces, and particularly the strength of the positions and negotiations forced onto the table by the socialists, Juncker’s Commission loosened the stranglehold of austerity by launching an admittedly insufficient investments plan, reviewing the interpretation of budgetary rules, and proposing a common migratory policy, even if this ended up on the Council’s plate. In sum, it put politics back at the centre of proceedings and ousted the technocratic rigidities of European bureaucracy. However, with the passing of time this approach proved increasingly limited. Economic stagnation, increasing social inequality, overwhelming waves of migrants, sudden changes in the geopolitical context: all of these

elements now demand new solutions and fresh approaches for a Europe in the process of rethinking its institutions and its conservative economic doctrine.

In the absence of a global rethink of our political path, old-hack nationalism and populism that proposes simple solutions, reliant on fear of the other, will arise time and time again in times of difficulty. These ideologies are based on the refusal of integration, the concentration of executive power, and a regressive culture. They play a game of their own and beating them is not easy. In our western democracy, the seed of potentially authoritarian politics is starting to germinate, requiring each and every one of us to consider a change of tact. That is exactly why the end of the European Parliament’s great coalition is part of a long-term reflection. For the first time in a great number of years, Parliament has opened itself to truly competitive democracy. We will continue on this road, both inside the Parliament and beyond.

A breath of fresh air for socialism

A return to the natural discussion between the left and the right, complemented by debate with ecologists and the far-left, is a chance for socialists to take a breath of fresh air and establish a strategic horizon. The time has come for socialists to establish a political project and a vision for the European Union, a clear alternative to neo-liberalism and austerity, looking to our roots for inspiration. The history of social democracy is

about the progressive achievement of human equality and freedom through sustainable economic growth and the fair distribution of wealth. Invigorated by history, we can build up a wide progressive alliance in the Parliament, capable of leaving a mark on the future. Such an alliance cannot be limited to mere collaboration between Parliament’s political high-flyers. What we need now above all else it is to work on our culture. It is not enough to reappropriate the meanings of left and right: we have to reinvent them for the modern era. In other words, we need to promote an ambitious restructuring programme, deconstructing what is in place and building it anew. We need to make room to build the left of the future and devise an assembly capable of producing tangible proposals for regulation, in discussion not only with the socialists, ecologists and the far-left, but also with civil society, Catholic democrats and liberal-democratic culture. These proposals could include:

- Harmonising tax systems in order to enhance redistribution and reduce inequality.
- Introducing a financial transaction tax and common tax reliefs for companies who invest in innovation and research.
- Achieving strong public investments for environmental sustainability and infrastructure.
- Rethinking our development model to enhance sustainability. We have lot of work in order to make public life more transparent, evaluations clearer and the inner life of political parties and trade unions definitively more democratic. We also have work to do in order to ensure that the European economy enjoys both

increased freedom and greater justice, as well as to enhance and modernise the individual rights of European citizens.

Progressives and conservatives share neither the same conception of society nor the same solutions to the troubles of the present. They are different and alternative. It is because we acknowledge our differences that cooperation on certain issues is even possible, thus allowing Europe to move forward. But compromise must be a choice, not a duty: a destination, not a point of departure.

We can and we must succeed. The new era of the left is not a matter for party-politics. It is about the emancipation of a large part of our society which globalisation has not succeeded in relieving from economic exclusion and political irrelevance.



> ABOUT

Gianni Pittella is an Italian member of the European Parliament and the president of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats.

THE GATEKEEPERS OF DEMOCRACY

by Ruairí Quinn, Aleksander Glogowski, Rhonda Donaghey.

Activism has long been the backbone of political change in Europe and can serve as a direct manifestation of the will of the people on a vast gambit of social issues. As upstart populists across the continent claim to represent the true voice of Europe, the Progressive Post has decided to shine a spotlight on the relevance and importance of real, grass-roots activism and its ardent proponents.

Ruairí Quinn

The Party of European Socialists is a party of activists. This is one of our great strengths. The concept of a Europe-wide political party is not a new one. It has been around since political union in Europe was itself just an idea. But just as the European Union has developed to maturity only gradually over the past few decades, so the role of political parties in the EU has developed and is still developing. In a successful democracy, parties have many roles. One of the most important is to provide a way for ordinary people who share particular political views and aspirations to unite to amplify their voices and make a difference to the society in which they live. Europe-wide political parties like the Party of European Socialists face a challenge here. Our activists are first and foremost members of their own national political parties, each fi-

ghting their own local and national battles. At the same time, progressives across Europe have a great deal in common. They fight for the same causes: fairness, justice, equality. They stand against the same opponents: populists, conservatives, those who prefer unfettered markets dominated by big corporations. And they are motivated by the same goals: improving social justice, building solidarity, strengthening individual and collective rights. In short, we know that political activism is fundamentally collaborative, and we want our party to empower its grassroots members.

But PES activism is not just a way to amplify the voices of individual party members. It's also a way to enable them to talk to each other. This, too, is vital in a continent-wide union of 500 million citizens. We work to enable our activists to connect, to travel, to meet each other, to share ideas and enthusiasm, and – just as important – to socialise.

It is not just that our activists all fight for the same causes, or stand against the same opponents. Our family ties are deeper than that – and this is something that sets us apart from our political rivals. A fundamental fact about our political movement is that we are internationalist by our very nature. Progressive socialism cannot possibly be inward-looking or isolationist, because international solidarity is one of our core values – it is part of our DNA.

Aleksander Glogowski

Do we have to look back 10 years to discover the roots of PES activism in France? We could dig deeper, for example to the Brussels Congress of 2004 when Poul Nyrup Rasmussen was elected PES President and Philip Cordery took charge of the General Secretariat. The most symbolic and easily identifiable point, however, is definitely 9 May 2006. On that day, the PES

presidency decided to open up its regular meetings – such as those of the council, conference and congress – to grass-roots activists. Looking back, it is hard to figure out why all previous meetings had been held behind closed doors.

The first public appearance of French activists was at the PES Porto Congress in December 2006, when the Socialist Party's Paris Federation sent more than 10 comrades in addition to the official party delegation. That was when something really weird happened: they made their own amendments to the Congress Resolution. Numbers grew rapidly and it is now very rare not to see at least some French activists at PES events.

As party members, we had to campaign twice for a more united Europe through referenda in 1993 and 2005. Most Socialist Party members got used to arguing against nationalists and populists in public debates. This has strengthened our commitment towards European unification.

Now, with the ability to make amendments to official drafts at every PES congress or council, this commitment has increased even further. A clear demonstration of this has been the introduction of a modification to the designation of the PES *Spitzenkandidat* within the Socialist Party statutes. Thus, French Socialist Party members will take full part in the designation through their vote in 2018-19. Now that they have their say in proceedings, engagement in the electoral campaign will rise accordingly. This will have two very interesting results: accountability and visibility for those who will put themselves forward. This is a very specific case, but could easily be reproduced amongst PES party members. The election of a candidate is inseparable from another process: the drafting of the manifesto. In 2008, with a view to the upcoming European elections, the PES leader asked activists to take an active part in brainstorming on the manifesto. Workshops, plenary discussions and the adoption process were all stimulated by grass-roots and intermediary members. In 2013-14, the process was completed by “knock the vote” training for canvassers. In other words, the PES is now fully equipped to successfully manage a truly European campaign in 2018-19.


Rhonda Donaghey

As with any growing organisation like PES activists, while we recognise it is not possible to homogenise our ideals into what one activist believes, what we can say is that we share not

just a European sense of identity but crucially common values. This shared identity is part of our approach to safeguarding democracy. We want a strong Europe with a vision that includes a youth plan strategically worked out between PES activists, Young European Socialists, and our Socialist common candidate. This would also encompass a child guarantee. We want social and economic progress, which offers a country by country minimum wage, collective bargaining, and the protection and promotion of trade union rights. This can be achieved by adding a social progress protocol clearly stating that a competitive social market economy must also serve the welfare of EU citizens, leading to robust checks on the exploitation of mobile workers and ending social dumping. This

protocol should include a clause protecting the autonomy of social partners, progressive sustainable structural reforms, and robust tax systems. As we look to celebrating the 60th anniversary of Europe as a political union, it behoves us to keep our focus on equality, be it gender, LGBTI, sexual and reproductive or refugee rights. We should be unashamedly proud of our record on equality, and we should continue to be a strong presence in the European Parliament as rights defenders. As political activists, we are the gatekeepers of democracy. We are aware of those who would tear down the society we strive for to mop it up with greed and avarice: theirs was never a history of equality, but rather of silence, imprisonment, or worse for our fundamental beliefs. Populism and nationalism offer no

alternative, no transparency. On 16 June 2016, the European Plan for Youth was adopted and launched by the PES. This is an important first step in overcoming our fears of promoting the next generation. The plan must also be aided and abetted by making resources available for specialised training and by applying positive discrimination where necessary. This step is particularly important to young women or people coming from countries where socialist parties are in the minority, and few positive mentors exist. Through direct contact with activists, they themselves can reach an understanding of why going forward with a common candidate who shares our vision is the most empowering option.

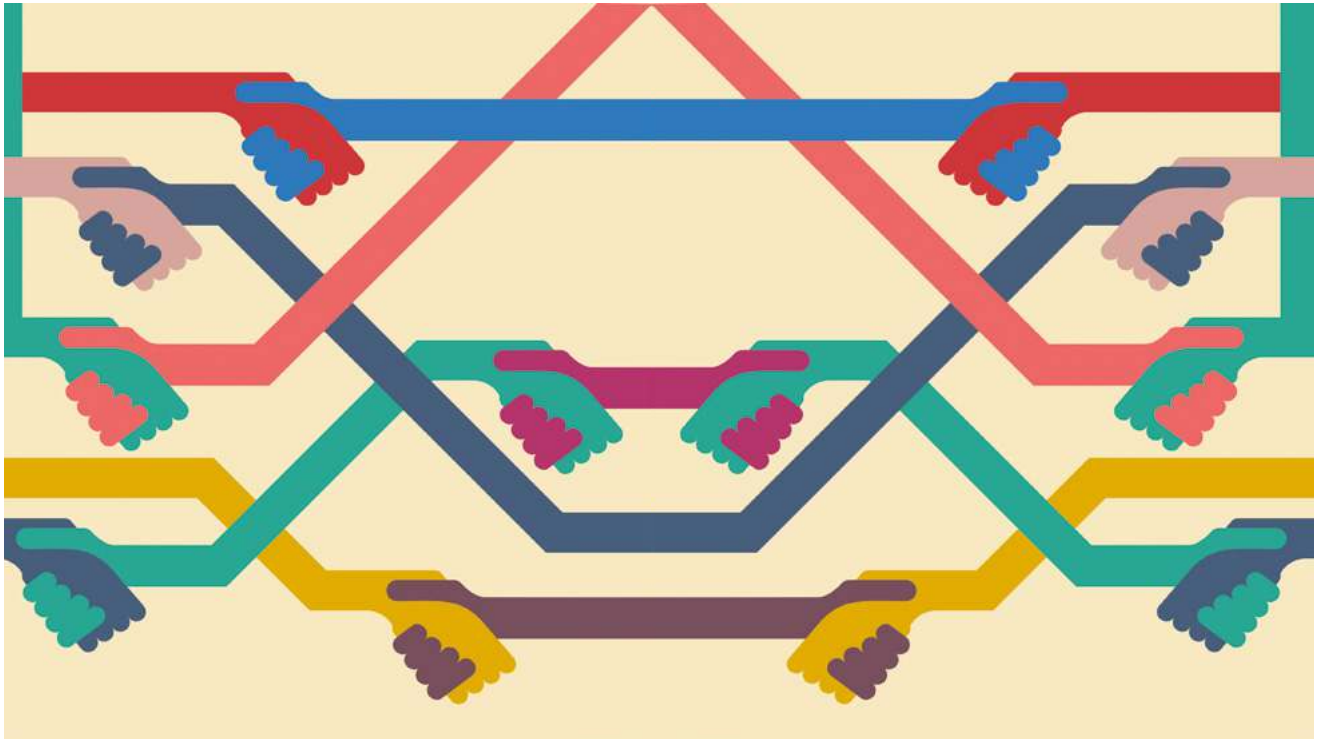
 Read the entire articles online at www.progressivepost.eu



> ABOUT
Ruairí Quinn is the Chairman of the Institute of International and European Affairs, as well as the Vice-President and Treasurer of the Party of European Socialists.

> ABOUT
Aleksander Glogowski was a PES Activists national coordinator in France 2014 and a Socialist Party candidate for the European elections in 2014.

> ABOUT
Rhonda Donaghey is a trade union official, long time PES activist, a member of the Irish Labour Party & a member of Labour Women.



SOURCE THE CROWD, DON'T ROUSE THE RABBLE: CROWDSOURCING AS A MODEST RESPONSE TO POPULISM

by Christopher Lord

Many political actors have experimented with 'crowdsourcing', or in other words, the testing and gathering of policy ideas online. Public authorities have conducted online consultations on such matters as road building.

Candidates in elections have used the internet to crowdsource ideas for manifestos. The Dutch MEP Marietje Schaake has even crowdsourced ideas for a European Parliament report. But can crowdsourcing really contribute to public participation and debate? Can it even help answer and defeat populism? Populism is, above all, a criticism of representative democracy. No one, populists tell us, can represent the authentic views of the people. Certainly not a professional, elite class of representatives, made unrepresentative precisely by the detachment from the people that follows from making a profession out of representation.

Representing complex societies

Yet there is no obvious (democratic) alternative to representation. The political scientist Robert Dahl famously demonstrated that any group of more than 60 people would struggle to apply even the most basic democratic standards – such as voting and a minimum of discussion – to all its decisions without relying to some degree on representatives.

Still, populists may have a point. Representative democracy is in trouble. Society has become complex and hard to represent. The relationship between representatives and the represented was always one of trust. Yet, it is no longer trusted. The need to fund elections means that, in

some systems, representation is easily bought.

Although representation is supposed to be the main way of doing politics, it often seems depoliticised and technocratic. Representatives, it is complained, offer little choice in competing for the people's vote. Globalisation and Europeanisation seem to make things worse. As more problems need to be managed internationally, "representative government" seems little more than an opportunity to be represented in only semi-visible forms of intergovernmental bargaining or in technical forms of policy co-ordination between states. These are huge problems and crowdsourcing can only be a tiny response to them. Indeed, crowdsourcing could make things worse. Representation is supposed to represent each person equally. It must avoid forms of consultation that create unequal opportunities for those with strong opinions. Like Shakespeare's joke about alcohol, the internet has been a "great equivocator". It has "provoked the desire" for more public debate. Yet it has "taken away the performance". It has encouraged more people to debate with strangers. It has also fragmented public debate into so many echo-chambers of those with self-confirming views.

Crowdsourcing as the answer

Still, got right, crowdsourcing could help. Crowdsourcing is a form of recognition. It recognises that citizens are not just passive objects of representation whose views are only consulted on the

one day every four or five years they are able to vote. Here, crowdsourcing can respond to a difficult challenge. Representation needs to be a continuous interaction between representatives and the represented. Yet that cannot be at the expense of debate between representatives. So, representatives need to form – and justify – their views both in debate with one another and in interaction with the represented. Crowdsourcing can help form that triangle, informing the represented of where their representatives stand in the debate between them, as much as up-dating representatives with the changing views of the represented. Indeed, crowdsourcing can deepen knowledge of the public and its problems. In a world of fluid, complex and conflicting opinions, representatives cannot easily know what to represent. Yet, the solution is not in populists' claims that there are authentic views of the people discoverable independently of any process of representation. That claim is itself a shameless bid for domination. It licenses those making it to claim public views are whatever they say they are. In contrast to the wholly unsubstantiated claims of populists to know the authentic will of the people, crowdsourcing can leave a trail of evidence of how views have been formed by debate. It can visibly nail the lie that representatives impose limited policy choices on the public without consultation. More prosaically, crowdsourcing is suited to building knowledge of problems and of opinions through trial, error and experimentation. Political parties, unsure of reactions to their proposals, and anxious to proof them against populist mis-

representation, might be tempted to use online debates to test policy ideas. As much of this suggests, crowdsourcing can help deliver the idea of democracy as trial by debate. John Stuart Mill wrote of the importance of testing all opinions in 'adverse controversy' with all others. John Dewey later added that, for sure, majorities represented should get their way. However, they should get their way with difficulty. First, they should be expected to make their case to others: to hear the other side and provide reasons for opinions. Structured and moderated by such norms of public debate, crowdsourcing may have a small but significant contribution to make to a further standard that populists can neither abide nor provide: respect.



> ABOUT

Christopher Lord is Professor at ARENA, Centre for European Studies, at the University of Oslo. He has written several books and articles on democracy, legitimacy and the European Union.

BREXIT : AND AFTER ?



| The future after a 'Hard Brexit' remains uncertain.

PUTTING CITIZENS FIRST: ATTRIBUTING THE 73 UK SEATS AT THE 2019 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

by Friedrich Pukelsheim

Brexit, unfortunate as it is, may nevertheless give rise to some fortunate opportunities for the European project. In the 2014–2019 period, the United Kingdom held 73 seats in the European Parliament. The question is what to do with these seats in the upcoming 2019–2024 legislative period.

Leave the 73 UK seats vacant? Distribute them between the remaining Member States? Keep them separate from the Member States' seat contingents and instead fill them via new paneuropean lists? The composition of the European Parliament – the distribution of seats between the Member States – is currently determined by a system which cannot truly be called a system. It is no more than a political fix, and one that is consistently unstable. In the past, the golden rule was “adjustment by enlargement”. Negotiations had to ensure that every existing Member State finished with at least as many seats as it held previously. New Member States were equipped with new, additional seats as deemed agreeable.

Striking a balance

The Treaty of Lisbon put an end to the good old times of an ever-enlarging Parliament. Since Lisbon, the house size of the European Parliament is capped at 751 seats. The inevitable population shifts between Member States can no longer be accommodated by creating new seats. There is no way to respond to population dynamics other than transferring seats from some Member States to other Member States. The existing 751 seats must suffice to strike a balance.

It would be a nightmare for all concerned if future allocations of the 751 seats between the Member States still had to be accomplished through negotiations. What is needed is a systematic method that is responsive to population changes

and that qualifies as objective, fair and sustainable. A fortunate effect of Brexit is the possibility of using some of the UK seats to soften the transition from negotiated seat allocations to an allocation resulting from a principled method. According to my calculations, 46 of the 73 UK seats would suffice to achieve a composition that is sound from the viewpoints of primary and secondary Union law, while at the same time enabling all Member States to maintain at least their current seat contingents. The envisioned composition may be paraphrased as follows: “Every Member State is assigned four base seats, plus one seat per 32,380 adjusted population units, where the adjusted units are obtained by raising the 2016 population figures to the power of 0.818.”

Proportionality seats

The seat contingents are assembled in two stages. The first stage relies on “base seats”, thus honouring the citizens of a Member State as a whole. The second stage calculates “proportionality seats”, thereby referring to citizens as individuals. There are other proposals also worth contemplating. They all share a focus on the representative aim of putting citizens first. What to do with the remaining 27 UK seats, then? I envisage two options.

The first option is to fill them via paneuropean lists. Political parties at European level would have to gain visibility in order to compete in a single European constituency. This task would relieve the European political parties from always playing second fiddle to the domestic political parties. Thus,

the single European constituency would be separated out completely from the many domestic constituencies. The element of competition between the two may be accepted as a natural and necessary consequence in a parliament that claims to represent all Union citizens through its Members.

“
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”

However, the distribution of the 27 seats between the Member States would be in the hands of the electorate. Staunch democrats may welcome the increasing power of the electorate. The incumbent Parliament, considering its tradition and past debates, may be less enthusiastic when seats are adjoined whose Member State provenance is unpredictable. The second option is more modest

and leaves the remaining 27 seats vacant. By no means would this hinder the introduction of paneuropean lists. There are computational methods to fill the seats of paneuropean lists in a way that safeguards Parliament's composition. In Switzerland, these methods are referred to as “double proportionality”. For the purposes of the European Parliament, the term “compositional proportionality” might be more relevant. At any rate, the introduction of any kind of paneuropean list will take longer to establish itself and may have to wait until after Brexit.



> ABOUT

Friedrich Pukelsheim is Professor Emeritus at the Institute for Mathematics, University of Augsburg. He is an expert in the mathematical analysis of proportional representation systems and since 2000 he has authored and co-authored numerous articles in journals specialised in mathematics, constitutional law, statistics, and political science.

THE NATURE OF CONSUMPTION OR THE CONSUMPTION OF NATURE?

Chronic overconsumption in the West, and in increasing measure the East, has a devastating impact on the environment worldwide. This selection of photos puts the spotlight on our disproportionate use of the world's resources. Documenting the contrasts between waste and want, between the unfettered course of nature and the demands we make of her, the Progressive Post invites the viewer to reflect on the morality of modern consumer culture in the face of endemic global inequality.

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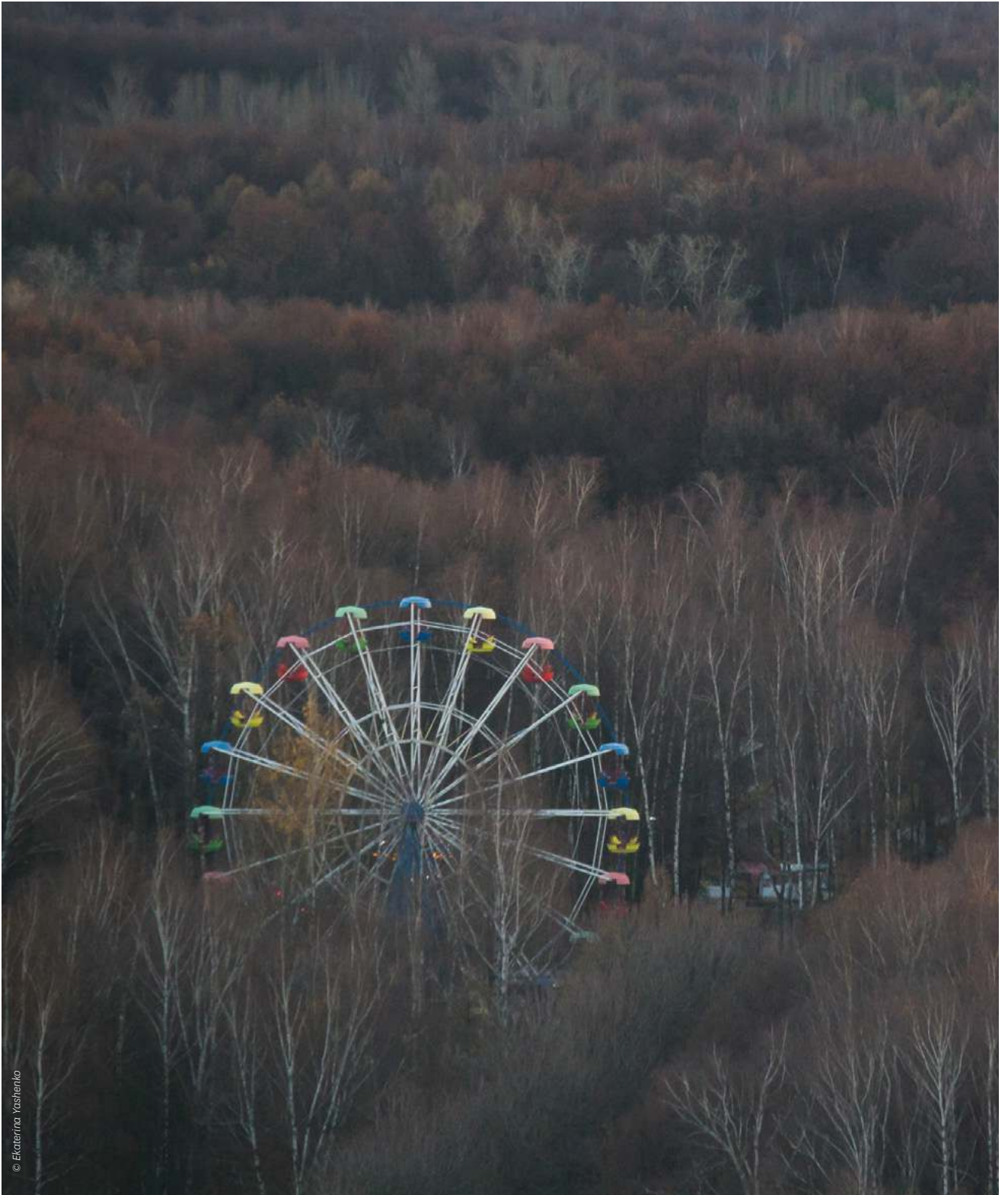
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THE FRENCH FAR RIGHT REFUSES TO REPAY 340000€ TO THE PARLIAMENT



BIDU

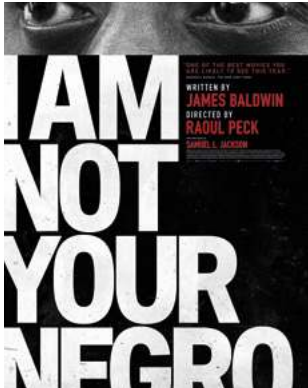
© Olivier Descombes

Bidu – or Olivier – is a French cartoonist. Passionate about comics since childhood, he started drawing satire at the age of 15 to make fun of pretty much everything, especially political and religious extremists.

TO WATCH

I AM NOT YOUR NEGRO

2017
Raoul Beck
USA



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BEFORE THE FLOOD

2016
Fischer Stevens
USA



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Received to ferocious critical acclaim across the pond, 'I Am Not Your Negro' is master filmmaker Raoul Beck's visionary reconstruction of author and Civil Rights activist James Baldwin's unfinished masterpiece 'Remember This House'. Beck combines Baldwin's words with archive material to create a hard-hitting snap-shot of race relations in 21st Century America. Tracing a line from the Civil Rights movement through to #BlackLivesMatter, 'I Am Not Your Negro' demands that we rethink the status of equality in a nation whose very essence is considered to be the freedom of opportunity for all. Nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature, 'I Am Not Your Negro' is a must-see for anyone interested in understanding American society's disenchantment with the much-venerated Civil Rights era or indeed its echoes on the European continent.

Before the flood is not the first film to show alarming images of the effects of climate change. And it will probably not be the last. However, following 2016, the Earth's warmest year since record-keeping began, it is an important documentary on the human impact on the climate. For three years, Leonardo Di Caprio and the director Fischer Stevens travelled across the globe to discuss the extent of the damage we have done with world leaders and environmentalists, and what we can actually do to stop it.

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TO READ

***Economics Rules:
Why Economics Works,
When It Fails, and How
To Tell The Difference***

by Dani Rodrik,
Oxford University Press, 2015

Although lesser known to the general public than Joseph Stiglitz or Paul Krugman, Dani Rodrik is one of the most prominent professors of political economy in the United States. His interventions on the evolution of the international economy are authoritative. In “Economics Rules”, Rodrik takes a break from commenting on global trends and changes in order to question the meaning of his chosen profession and discipline. This publication aims to elucidate the apparent versatility of economic science, which, according to current popular opinion, contributes to as many successes as it does failures when it is applied to the way in which countries are run. At the top of Rodrik’s list of successes is the construction of a new international order, within the context of the Bretton Woods Conference and in less than one month, which would go on to last for more than 30 years, emerging from the collaboration between John Maynard Keynes and the head of the American Treasury, Harry Dexter White. He also cites the decisive contribution in 1997 of the economist and Vice-minister for Finance of Mexico, Santiago Levy, to the renewal of programmes for combatting poverty. The success of these programmes was a source of inspiration not only for

Levy’s Central and South American colleagues, but also for the Mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg. In recognising these two instances of rapprochement between professional economists and political powers as major successes, Rodrik places himself firmly on progressive ground. It does not mean that he considers economic debate to be limited to the affirmation of essential truths through the discovery of timeless laws. For Rodrik, if economics is a science, it is not one that postulates dogmas that would facilitate social and political polarisation. Economics arises from the elaboration and testing of models; the evaluation of these models’ efficiency depends in large part on the expectations of their users. The economist is an engineer, not a theologian nor even a physicist to whom the laws of nature are progressively revealed. In other words, not even the current intensification of the use of mathematics by economic science can be used to justify any claim to the absolute truth of its findings. “Economics Rules” is therefore not simply an exercise in modesty from one of the discipline’s greatest practitioners; it is also a reminder to political powers and citizens alike that they are responsible for their own future.

***A Culture of Growth
The Origins of the
Modern Economy***

by Joel Mokyr,
Princeton University Press

“A Culture of Growth” is an insightful quest into the economic history of the last five centuries. Mokyr’s historical laboratory is early modern Europe, when a small mass of highly skilled artisans, entrepreneurs, financiers and merchants laid the roots of what was to become the Industrial Revolution. While institutions and technology are some of the most widely accepted ingredients of economic progress in modern economics, Mokyr’s focus on “culture” allows his readers to zoom-out and contemplate a much longer time perspective. Firstly, culture is a slow-moving institution when looked at through the lens of economic history. Culture helps certain institutions emerge, but does not guarantee the outcomes. While culture determines the quality of institutions, causality is not a one-way street. Cultural change can be the result of incentives provided by the institutional environment itself, as seen in its ruling elites, their politics and rivalry, etc. Secondly, culture affects technology, and the most direct link runs through religion. If manipulating and controlling nature invoke a sense of fear, then technological creativity will be restricted. Mokyr takes a strong view on cultural change as one of the main fac-

tors explaining why the Industrial Revolution happened in Europe, but not in China. In the politically fragmented Europe of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a great number of thinkers could move more or less freely across countries to spread ideas and their curiosity, sometimes in defiance of the ruling elites. Despite being at a similar stage of technological evolution, economic development in China remained under the influence of the ruling elite. The prevalence of Chinese conservatism was not able to generate the same kind of tradition-shattering innovation that Europe experienced after the sixteenth century. One can agree or disagree with these statements, but Mokyr provides such a fascinating story and arguments that readers might find him hard to ignore.

TO THINK



Social Progress Watch 2016 - A guideline to a rights-based approach for the European Pillar of Social Rights

SOLIDAR Members

This report presents the main findings and general recommendations of the 2016 SOLIDAR Social Progress Watch regarding the 'modernisation' of social protection systems and access to services in the EU.

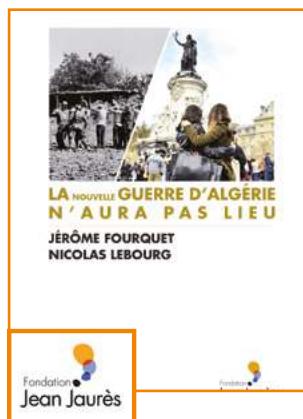
The objective of the recommendations is to close the gaps in the current proposal for the European Pillar of Social Rights, in order to ensure upward social convergence in the EU as enshrined in Article 9 TFEU and in the international commitments of Member States in the field of social protection. The report concludes that national social protection systems do not ensure decent living standards. Access to high quality social services is not guaranteed for all and is particularly limited for vulnerable people. SOLIDAR therefore calls for a rights-based approach that enforces uniform, high-level social standards accessible to everyone.



Hungarian Politics in 2016

Gábor Györi, András
Bíró-Nagy, Zoltán Pogátsa

"Hungarian Politics in 2016" is a comprehensive overview of recent developments, events and trends in Hungary in 2016. The yearbook focuses on five broad areas. The first section reviews the year from the perspective of the Hungarian government. In the second section the authors look at the opposition parties, their state and prospects. The third section focuses on foreign affairs, in particular Orbán's vision of Europe. The fourth section takes a detailed look at how Fidesz's policies have shaped the economy. Finally, some key aspects of Hungarian society – media, anti-government protests, corruption – are discussed. The sections conclude with a brief analysis of issues which may come to the fore in 2017.



There will be no second war in Algeria

Jérôme Fourquet,
Nicolas Lebourg

7 January 1957 marks the beginning of the battle of Algiers, whilst on 7 January 2015 the editorial office of *Charlie Office* was decimated. Is France at war? This question crops up time and time again. The terrorist attacks of 2015 and 2016 plunged the country into a test the likes of which it had not experienced for 50 years, raising the spectre of the Algerian War. The return of the Algerian War, in the form of confrontations between communities, is a fear which has spread throughout French society; it is a phenomenon which must be analysed if we are to avoid confusing historical challenges with the fight against terrorism.



Italianieuropei issue n. 5/6

Various authors

In this issue of *Italianieuropei*, analysis will focus on left wing political parties and movements in Europe and on Islamic fundamentalism. In particular, the articles of the first section propose that the left wing will contain the growing wave of anti-establishment feeling, returning to its key role as the force capable of reducing inequalities, fighting against poverty and ensuring the dignity of work. In the second section, the focus shifts to the presence of Islam in Europe, the rise of Muslims in the public sphere and the emergence of religious symbols and practices in different sectors of society that force the EU's public dimension to reconsider a shared plan for secularisation.



Mondoperaio

Various authors

Mondoperaio is a monthly publication founded by Pietro Nenni in 1948. The magazine is currently directed by Mr Luigi Covatta. *Mondoperaio* focuses on features and contributions from academics, scholars and political leaders in the liberal and center-leftist political area. The magazine led a campaign promoting membership of the Democratic Party to the PES. The January issue proposes papers on the debate on Merits and Needs, Milan, 26 November, focused on a possible programmatic basis for the socialist reform to be built on in our time.



“Income inequality and wealth concentration in the recent crisis”, *Development and Change*, 2017

Goda, T., Onaran, Ö., Stockhammer, E.

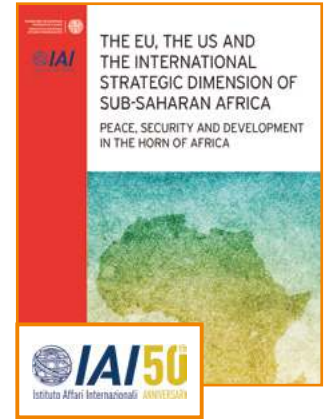
This article shows that the increase of income inequality and global wealth concentration was an important driver for the financial and Eurozone crisis. The high levels of income inequality resulted in balance of payment imbalances and growing debt levels. Rising wealth concentration contributed to the crisis because the increasing asset demand from the rich played a key role in the growth of the structured credit market and enabled poor and middle-income households to accumulate increasing amounts of debt. This analysis thereby puts both income and wealth inequality to the epicentre of the recent crisis, and is crucial for social scientists analysing the causes of the crisis. Our findings suggest that the policy response to the crisis must not be limited to financial regulation but has to involve policies to address inequality by increasing the bargaining power of labour as well as redistributive tax policies.



Denmark on the path of poverty

The Economic Council of The Labour Movement (ECLM)

Inequality in Denmark is one of the lowest in the world. Even so, the gap between the rich and poor has been growing rapidly in recent years. While the income of the richest Danes has increased remarkably, the number of people living in poverty is on the rise too. Today, the richest 10% of Danes now hold the same share of income as the poorest 40% put together. The rising inequality in Denmark is partly due to the growing income gap, however, the Danish tax system has also become less redistributive in recent years.



The EU, the US and the international strategic dimension of Sub-Saharan Africa: Peace, Security and development in the Horn of Africa

Bernardo Venturi, Nicoletta Pirozzi

The strategic significance of sub-Saharan Africa has increased considerably in recent decades, with various international actors establishing diversified yet increasingly important levels of engagement in the region. Countries such as Brazil, China, the Gulf states and Turkey have a significant presence in Africa, and some of them have well-established historical ties to the region as well. This edited publication aims at identifying the role of key external powers in promoting peace, security and development in sub-Saharan Africa. The analysis pays attention to how African countries build their own capacities to deal with multiple partners and the new position in which they find themselves. In addition, a concrete and region-specific analysis is dedicated to the Horn of Africa (HoA) and to Somalia in particular.

Get inspired by these traditional Easter recipes from around Europe.

EASTER

EUROPEAN

DELIGHTS

Finland

PULLA — BRAIDED CARDAMOM BREAD

This sweet bread, spiced with cardamom and sprinkled with sugar and almonds, is traditionally served with coffee or tea during Easter in Finland.

- 1 1/3 cups of heated milk
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 4 tsp. cardamom
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten
- 6 1/2 cups flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 5 tbsp. butter
- 1 tbsp. heavy cream
- 2 packages active dry yeast
- 1 egg yolk
- Crushed lump sugar & Sliced almonds for garnish



Netherlands

ADVOCAAT THE DUTCH EGGNOG

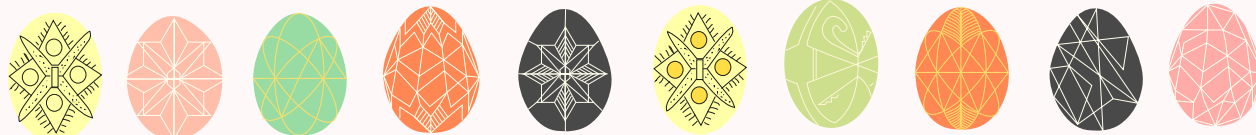
Eggs can also be used for drinks. This traditional Dutch liquor is made with egg yolks.

- 10 egg yolks
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 1/3 cups sugar
- 1 1/2 cups brandy or cognac (replace with milk for an alcohol free version)
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- Top with whipped cream and a bit of cocoa powder



DECORATED EGGS

Colourful eggs are traditional in most European countries. In Ukraine, Easter eggs decorated with traditional folk designs using a wax resist method are called Pysanky.



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