Charlemagne Prize Academy Annual Report – on the Future of the Union

Charlemagne Prize
ACADEMY

Charlemagne Prize Academy Annual Report – on the Future of the Union
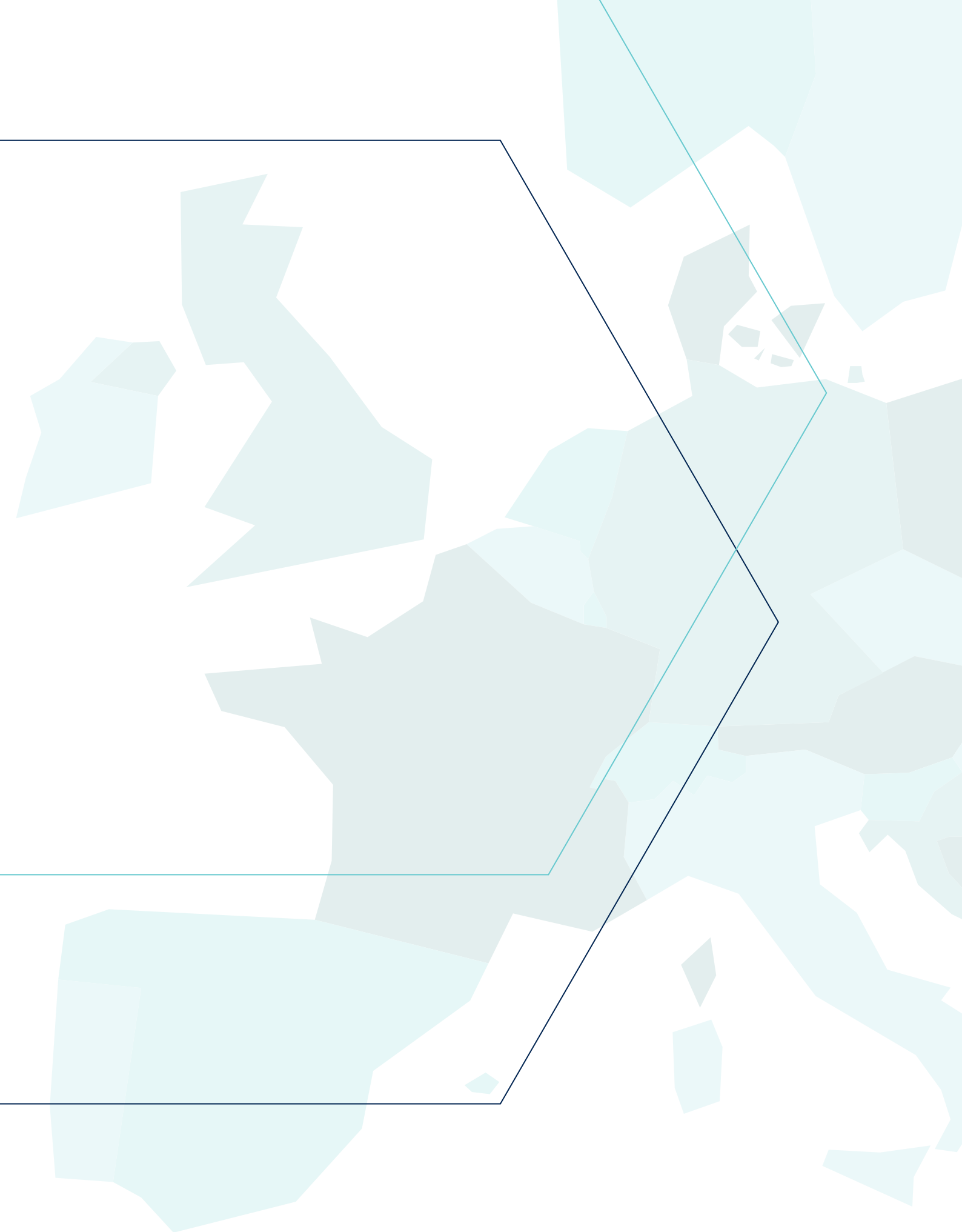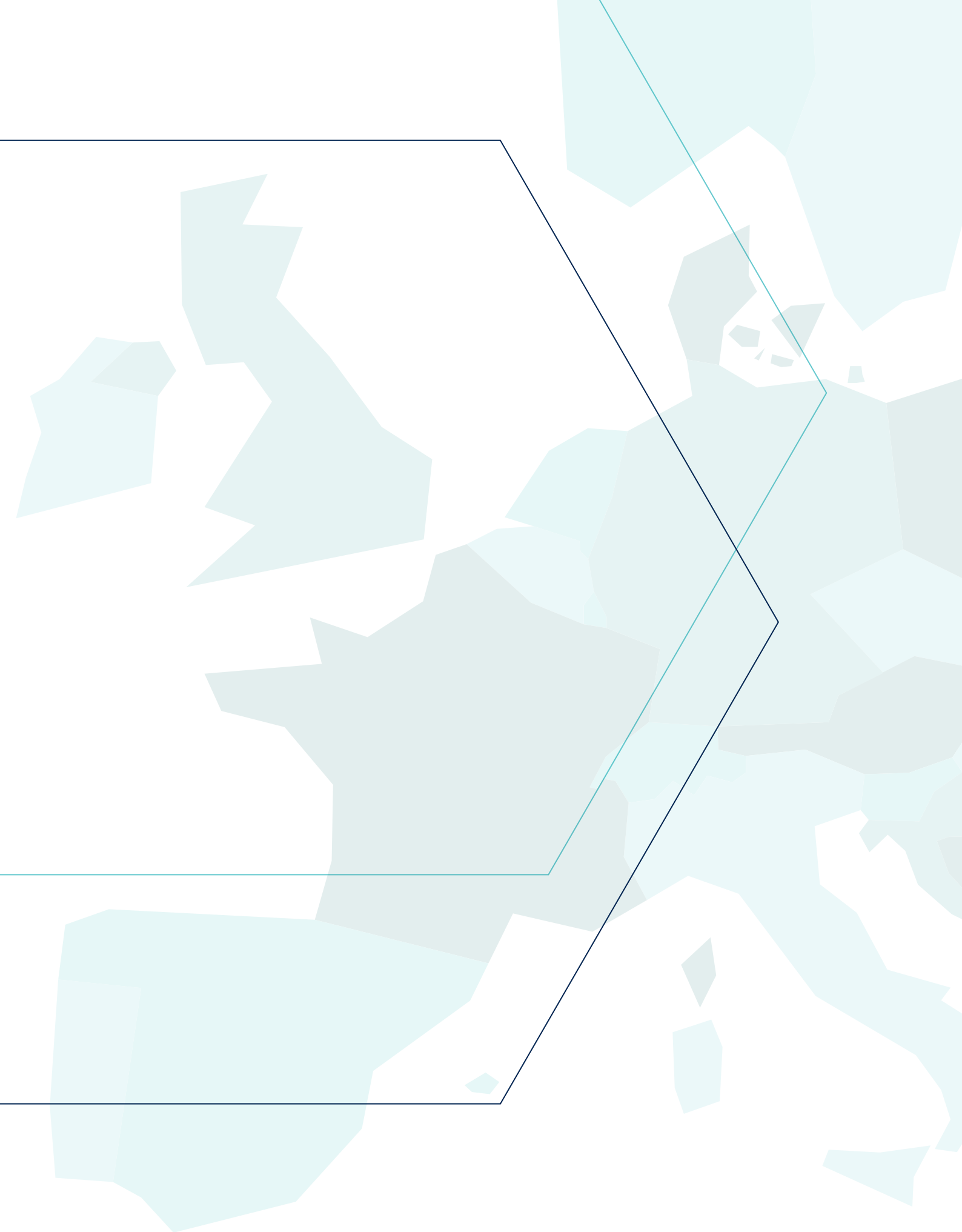
Table of Content

Greeting by the Minister President of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, Armin Laschet

November 2019 saw the launch of the Charlemagne Prize Academy and with it five research projects by young scientists and scholars working in various disciplines all over Europe. As diverse as the questions posed in these projects may be, they all have one thing in common: they are searching for answers and solutions to the urgent future issues and problems faced by a united Europe.

And they are doing so at a time when not only Europe but the entire world is confronted with what is probably the greatest challenge in post-war history, something we would have thought unlikely, almost inconceivable just a year ago. The coronavirus pandemic has once again made it clear that we are all part of a globalised world. This means that national initiatives and closed borders cannot protect us against viruses and are in fact part of the problem rather than the solution. We are only strong together – and that is especially the case when it comes to global threats. A united Europe can master even the greatest of challenges if it stands and acts together in solidarity and community. This too is an important lesson from the coronavirus pandemic, which has hit Europe with full force.

The peaceful and social Europe we know today should not be taken for granted. We must all constantly forge Europe's future by contributing clever ideas and innovative impulses. The Charlemagne Prize Academy and the researchers it sponsors have a special part to play here. Under the heading **Europe's Role Tomorrow – Responsibilities in Global Progress**, the researchers in the first cohort last year examined various perspectives in their projects. They covered an enormous spectrum, ranging from aspects of institutional development in the European Union to European asylum policy, from how to deal with fake news during the coronavirus pandemic to the European Union's enlargement policy with regard to the western Balkan States. These are issues that could not be more topical, with research results that provide plenty of food for thought.

I would like to thank the researchers who are presenting their findings to readers in this publication. And I wish all those who will be doing research this coming year on the general theme of **Europe's Future at the Crossroads – New Perspectives of Solidarity** every success. Their work benefits us all.

Armin Laschet

Introduction: The Academy – A Cornerstone for the Future

Dr. Jürgen Linden, Chairman of the Charlemagne Prize Board of Directors

The idea of a politically united Europe is still great and undisputed. Europe is a bulwark of peace, freedom, democracy, and stability – in many European countries also of prosperity.

But some illusions have vanished in recent years. Wars, crises, and political challenges have become more threatening and citizens more sceptical, some even disapproving. Often, they cannot understand the EU's strategies for the future, cannot relate to its decisions, or simply perceive the EU as divided or weak.

> What is crucial in this respect is that Europe overcomes its deficits on its own initiative. Citizens must get the sense back that the EU is characterized by strengths, not weaknesses.

The International Charlemagne Prize aims to contribute to this cause. Through events and public relations work, its goal is to dedicate itself to the extensive range of challenges Europe is facing: reform and democratization, preserving the principle of subsidiarity, securing the heart of democratic and rule-of-law institutions, significantly strengthening the assertiveness in key areas of common interests, and finally, a common understanding of the Unions scope of competences.

The year 2020 marks the 70th anniversary not only of the Schuman Declaration, which laid the foundation for the process of European integration but also of the Charlemagne Prize, which - awarded for the first time in 1950 - has ever since distinguished the visionaries, pioneers, and institutions of this project and therefore closely accompanied the European integration process. The fact that these anniversaries coincide with such a great challenge for the Union is telling since times of crises have always played a considerable role in the progress of European integration.

Over the past decades, the Charlemagne Prize itself has adapted to the conditions and visions of the re-spective times and evolved accordingly. This has led to the establishment of a public, politically and culturally oriented side-programme lasting several weeks in the run-up to the award ceremony, a euro-political discussion forum, and, since 2008, the European Charlemagne Youth Prize.

Beyond that, the recently founded European Charlemagne Prize Academy can inspire new momentum for the European idea. The Academy involves two segments: the European Charlemagne Prize Fellowship and the Charlemagne Prize Summit.

The Academy's mission is to define important future issues for the European Union and to generate possible solutions. It is aimed at young people, students, and scientists as well as at employees in think tanks or university institutes inside and outside the EU. The goal is to elaborate on innovative future questions

in the manner of a socio-political examination, for which the academy provides a one-year scholarship. Fictitious examples of such topics would be the role of the European Union in international progress, the creation of a public European media space, the definition of European citizenship, the shifts in social coherence and connectivity within the EU, the new forms of work in an increasingly digital world or - to take up just one issue of globalization - Europe's reaction to the "Silk Road" project. Prospective projects will - additionally - think outside the box. They may provide approaches and solutions for challenges, which are yet to come.

Fellowships are to be awarded to up to six young scholars every year. The funding decision is based on a professional selection process. Throughout the drafting process of their scientific works, the fellows are supported by scientists as well as Charlemagne Prize laureates. The findings and results of the individual projects are then presented at the annual Academy Summit and published in the annual report.

Therewith, the purpose is to promote the political discussion between thought leaders and decision-makers and thus, to influence European politics, to open up the debate and exchange possible solutions to European challenges, and finally to provoke a new dynamic to the ideas of the EU.

The start was successful.

The central task of the Charlemagne Prize remains undoubtedly the awarding ceremony and with it the underlying political message and appeal for the progress of the European integration process. Yet, those responsible for the Charlemagne Prize also know that a single award ceremony can only be one component in the overall process of European integration. The Charlemagne Prize Academy is another.

Europe's Role Tomorrow –
Responsibilities in Global Progress

Timothy Garton Ash
Charlemagne Prize Laureate 2017

The beginning of the 2020s has the potential to be a critical turning point in the entire history of the European project since 1945. If the EU can seize the chance of the COVID-crisis, as it has started to do with the impressively ambitious European recovery plan, then future historians could see this as an upward turn to more integration, freedom and prosperity. If, however, it fails to deliver on the reality of its Green New Deal, on a common foreign and security policy vis-a-vis countries such as Russia and China, on defending the rule of law inside all its member states, and on other strategic priorities, then this may be seen as a turning point at which history failed to turn.

Which way it goes will of course depend on the current generation of leaders, both in Brussels and in national capitals, and on their electorates. But in the long run, it cannot succeed without the support of the next generation of Europeans – those that I call the post-1989ers. That is why I have initiated a research project at Oxford University which, through interviews, focus groups and specially targeted opinion polling, is working to establish what younger Europeans want the EU to do – and to be – in 2030. Some priorities emerge very clearly: combating climate change (a majority in one of our polls wants Europe to be carbon neutral by 2030 rather than 2050), defending freedom of movement, creating jobs and ensuring social security in economic times that were already tough for many young Europeans ('gig economy') even before the COVID pandemic.

But there are also worrying findings, not least in relation to democracy. For example, 53% of young Europeans in our poll of 27 EU member states and the UK say they think authoritarian states are better equipped than democracies to tackle the climate crisis. Much other research and survey evidence confirms this eroding confidence in democracy among a younger generation. When one digs deeper into why, it seems not that they have particular admiration for authoritarian states such as Russia or China, but that they doubt - if not despair of - the capacity of democracies to deliver the necessary, radical change.

If the EU can seize the chance of the COVID-crisis, as it has started to do with the impressively ambitious European recovery plan, then future historians could see this as an upward turn to more integration, freedom and prosperity.

It is up to the democracies that make up the EU, and the EU as a whole, to prove them wrong.

In this connection, one interesting issue is the relative significance of the institutional design of the EU as compared with its capacity to deliver on Europeans' key priorities. As we approach the new Conference on the Future of Europe, how important to most Europeans are the institutional arrangements, and the question of how democratically representative these institutions are? We are looking into this at the moment, but my own working hypothesis is that what, in the jargon of political science, is called performance legitimacy, or output legitimacy, is more important in this case than procedural legitimacy, also known as input (and - in the sophisticated analysis of Vivien Schmidt – throughput) legitimacy. In plain English, I think an EU that delivers on combating climate change, providing jobs and social security, helping to combat a pandemic, regulating the giant internet platforms, countering disinformation by foreign powers, and so on, is the key to securing the support of the next generation of Europeans. This is especially true since one way or another the key decisions in Brussels are made by democratically elected representatives (in both Parliament and Council). But that is only a working hypothesis, and of course this is not a simple either-or proposition.

Having all this in mind, I warmly welcome the initiative of the Charlemagne Prize Academy in encouraging Charlemagne Prize Fellows to explore all aspects of a European future that will in large and growing measure depend on them and their generation.

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Europe's Role Tomorrow –
Responsibilities in Global Progress

Martin Schulz
Charlemagne Prize Laureate 2015

The zeitgeist of the Charlemagne Prize is more topical than ever. Especially in times of pandemic and global-political processes, the idea of European unification offers the key to strengthening Europe. The fundamental prerequisite for this is the national willingness to dismantle barriers and beyond that, to mutually empower one another.

Europe is not just an association of states, but the idea of a community of shared values based on respect, tolerance, diversity, and dignity. With these fundamental values, the founders of the European Community such as Konrad Adenauer, Alcide De Gasperi, Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, and Paul-Henri Spaak advocated for a Europe that should overcome national borders in a continuous process of integration. Through these commu-

nity-building values, they laid the foundation for the political, economic, and cultural cooperation that we draw from today. Yet, it is we who are solely responsible for their preservation, by continuously protecting and further expanding them. In view of the current challenges, the European Union is facing, transnational cooperation is more important than ever.

Due to the measures taken against the spread of the COVID-19 global pandemic, borders were closed, even though cross-border relief would have been necessary. In times when national borders are becoming visible again, it is important to reinforce European unity. Only together can we overcome global challenges and protect the Europe that has brought us peace and prosperity to this day forth. In light of an expanding China, the European market must position itself united in order

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to sustain its role in economic progress in the future. Due to the political leadership under President Donald Trump, the US has given up its claim to be the leading force in the Western democratic community. Also bearing in mind the authoritarian structures in Russia, Europe must respond to these diplomatic shifts. Thus, inner unity is of vital importance to come forth strengthened on the outside. Only in this way can Europe remain in the global process.

Another focus lies on the approach to the ongoing refugee crisis, for which a uniform European answer has yet to be agreed on. The challenge lies in a common strategy for the EU's external borders that would relieve those countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea while, at the same time guarantee the support of the other countries.

Unity is based on the trust of the citizens in a common Europe. As I already emphasized in my speech during the Charlemagne Prize Award Ceremony 2015, fewer and fewer people associate the European idea with the European Union. This shows us that the EU must be constructed in a more comprehensive and potent way. If we see ourselves as a community of solidarity, we can regain the trust that has been lost and remain a force in the future. The idea of the European Union is to overcome what divides our nations through cooperation. In various areas, it is currently proven that peoples work together and stand up for each other in respect and willingness to stand by one another. However, we must seize this momentum and transport it into the European integration process. A united Europe is what the individual needs in this current phase just like a nation or a state.

We must have the courage to drive Europe forward. This also requires protecting the democratic system against nationalist movements that invoke renationalization. We must preserve and expand the European Union as a community of val-

ues against the denial of ecological, economic, and individual fundamental rights and political systems that try to cripple Europe. During my term of office as President of the European Parliament, I campaigned for European democracy and, in particular, for the strengthening of the EU's democratic legitimacy. In doing so, we must also think of the next generations, who should live to see the freedom of movement in Europe just as we have, and which is based on our fundamental values of democracy and the rule of law. Nationalisms and national interests not only weaken the European idea, but they also jeopardize future generations. To counter this, it is necessary to convey the importance of a united Europe and to promote dialogue, which is also the central fundament of the Charlemagne Prize.

The unifying principles represented by the Charlemagne Prize are also what Europe will need in the future. In that respect, the Charlemagne Prize Academy makes an important contribution by giving young scientists the opportunity to address future issues in a European setting. This form of young commitment is a necessity for the continued existence and further development of the European idea. The additional exchange between young researchers and European personalities creates a dialogue that offers unique opportunities to conduct interdisciplinary and, above all, intergenerational discourses that are so relevant to the future of Europe. With this targeted funding, the Charlemagne Prize embodies the transnational cooperation that we need today. It appreciates the European unification process and thus overcomes nationalisms to articulate community-building elements for Europe. This general idea should continue to play a central role in the future, as it is in greater demand than ever today. At the same time, it supports the dismantling of idealistic and actual barriers and brings to mind the freedom of movement and borderless exchange as central accomplishments of the European Union.

Overcoming European Discrepancies

Klaus Iohannis, President of Romania
Designated Charlemagne Prize Laureate 2020

The crisis caused by the COVID-19 outbreak not only puts us in an exceptional situation but has also exposed several health, social and economic weaknesses. It demonstrates the fact that we can always be faced with unpredictable and worrying situations that will even put the European architecture and functioning of the European Union to the test.

Is the Union able to respond appropriately to the challenges? Are we better off together than as individual Member States in order to correct development disparities between us and at the same time preserve the diversity and wealth of our societies? From a Romanian point of view, I strongly support a pro-European approach and a positive answer to these questions.

In the 70 years since the Schuman Declaration, the European Union has repeatedly proven that it is and will remain a solid and sustainable project. In light of the present situation, which is characterized by multiple challenges, it becomes clear, however, that adapting to the new circumstances of the European and global context requires an extensive reflection process on the role of the EU. This process must also consider the lessons learned from overcoming the current health crisis.

Last year, on the occasion of the EU summit, which I had the honour of hosting on May 9, 2019, in Sibiu/Hermannstadt, the European leaders reaffirmed their determination to act together for the well-being of the European citizens, and to continue this project - a single Europe, East to West, North to South, united in a city with an impressive historical and cultural heritage that symbolizes the diversity of this Union, where the "spirit of Sibiu" was born, which is based on unity, and focused on the commitment to a strong, united Union that defends our way of life, democracy, the rule of law, and that works for the benefit of our citizens. This vision of the future of Europe must lead us on, also in the debates that will follow within the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

In the case of Romania, joining the European Union has demonstrated its transformative power. It was a historic step that allowed us to work together, and to reduce disparities between the Member States and within our societies. Romania's economic and social progress as well as democratic developments are a distinct evidence to this.

For us, the European project is a societal project that has encouraged and strengthened our modernization processes at all levels. At the same time, we are also making an important

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contribution to further building up of the European edifice. The support of the European project, the avoidance of divisions, and the inclusive approach in the European decision-making process are essential dimensions of the Romanian profile at the EU level.

We dedicated our first term as Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2019 to the overarching goal of European cohesion. We are "by ourselves" an example that a stronger and more united Europe benefits everyone, more than a Europe that focuses on concentric circles or different speeds of development and integration. And it is precisely the Union's response to the current crisis that confirms the legitimacy of the approach Romania has always supported, and which relies on unity and convergence at European level.

In the face of the current challenges, we have learned that we must overcome our differences. The European Union has achieved progress through the commitment and economic, social, and cultural contribution of each Member State. The vision for the future of the European architecture must originate in the idea of unity, solidarity, and cohesion, based on the democratic values and principles that constitute the foundation of the Union. European values must be brought back to the fore of our joint action. And these values that unite us must overcome the differences between us.

An adequate response to a crisis of this magnitude with such complex and branched out implications - from health and pro-

curement to matters of free movement - can only be a mutual and coordinated European one. Romania has contributed to this solidarity approach in the current crisis and has shown once again that it is a reliable partner. Teams of Romanian doctors and nurses travelled to Italy and the Republic of Moldova to support efforts to combat the epidemic. Moreover, our country, just like Germany, is one of the Member States that managed the establishment of RescEU - a strategic supply of medical equipment for the entire Union.

The European Union, its Member States, and European citizens are all facing changes that will have significant implications for future generations. The pandemic and its after-effects, technological developments, and the handling of the climate crisis are just a few of the issues we need to reflect upon in these difficult times. The success of the European project was founded on and will continue to rest on the ways in which the various dimensions of integration - economic, social, and political - complement and improve one another. If we refer to the recent history of the European Union, there have been - in my view - two moments characterized as great crises, namely, the economic crisis that started in 2008 and the migration crisis in 2014 and 2015. Both have led to new solutions and new approaches. From this perspective, the current crisis must also be considered as an opportunity. An opportunity to find mutual tools to tackle current problems and future challenges. An opportunity to fill the gaps in a variety of areas in order to stay one step ahead of new emerging crises. We must there-

European values must be brought back to the fore of our joint action. And these values that unite us must overcome the differences between us.

fore strengthen the European health system, invest in research and innovation, ensure robust economic growth along with a manageable budgetary debt, build social security systems to protect disadvantaged social groups, strengthen cybersecurity and assess the risks of artificial intelligence, combat the effects of climate change and reinforce the EU's role as a global actor.

Overcoming the health crisis must mean overcoming its medium and long-term economic and social repercussions. The political agreement reached by the European Council in July this year on the implementation of a Recovery Plan for Europe is a remarkable, and a historic milestone. The agreement marks a turning point in the mutual commitment of joint measures at a European level and, for the first time, facilitates the use of a fundraising mechanism on the financial markets, supported by the Union's own resource system. In doing so, the European Union has provided the Member States with common tools and mechanisms to support efforts to reduce the economic and social effects of the pandemic. At the same time, the emphasis on the digital component and environmental dimension of technological and industrial development in the Recovery Plan for Europe will, without any doubt, support the objective of a sustainable economic recovery. The transformative potential of these two trends is indisputable. The impacts of the pandemic have asymmetrically affected the Member States and will continue to do so in the future. In order not to further deepen already existing inequalities between states, the measures and decisions at the European level must continuously be subordinated to the principles of cohesion.

Meanwhile, we must adapt to technological changes. The pandemic forced us to resort to online activities. Consequently, the labour market has to adapt to new requirements. Some proceedings can be carried out partially or exclusively through virtual platforms, while others cannot. This brings us to the root of the matter: How can we best manage the economic and social effects of the pandemic and technological advancement, for us to adapt to new realities, protect the most vulnerable groups of our societies, and avoid deepening social differences? We must continue to act together on these issues at a European level.

As regards the Union's external agenda, the current global context, which is marked by several challenges, from the decline of multilateralism to the wave of political instability and conflicts in its neighbourhood, the European Union needs to consolidate its role as a strong global actor. We must all commit equally to strengthening the European Union - a strong, efficient, and trustworthy Union, a Europe of democratic principles and values, a Europe of solidarity and a donor of humanitarian aid, a Europe that ensures multilateralism. For Romania, this is an essential foreign policy goal. We actively support multilateralism and a rule-based international order, or what we call "the rule of law at the international level". The multilateral approach, based on common values and principles, solidarity, and European and international cooperation, is how we can face common challenges.

The model of the European Union, its democratic history, the high standards in many areas, and the substantial financial and material contributions to the global action of international organizations confirm that we can provide international leadership through which we can significantly influence the reform and revitalization of the multilateral system. Internal

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measures must be supported by a two-tracked external action. On the one hand, we need to consider reducing reliance on global actors who do not share the same values. On the other hand, it is necessary to reinforce relations within the European Union and NATO, as well as with actors outside them whose objectives are compatible with ours.

For this reason, the transatlantic partnership is of fundamental importance. Romania is committed to this cause. The USA was and still is a natural partner of the Union with whom we share a common system of democratic values as well as common security objectives. Strengthening our relationships with other global actors is of vital importance, wherefore foreign policy must be closely aligned with trade, industrial, research, and development policies, equivalent to reinforcing a rule-based multilateral system and without harming the system of European principles and values. How the Union will support neighbouring countries in dealing with the negative outcomes of the coronavirus pandemic will be decisive on how these countries and their citizens will prospectively feel about Europe. Romania

took a stand and acted for solidarity, illustrative in this sense being the support that was offered to the neighbouring states of the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership, such as the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

The current crisis has also underscored the importance of building resilience. At state level, we need to invest in our institutions, economy, and society so that they can withstand and overcome disturbances, be it economic, social, or health related. Finally, yet importantly, we need to remember that increased resilience also implies the ability to combat misinformation and hostile hybrid actions, which have multiplied worryingly since the beginning of this crisis.

More than ever, the time we are in requires unity among the Member States, consensus and overcoming inequalities at European level. In this way, we can strengthen the European project and ensure that European citizens live in prosperity and security and continue to benefit from the achievements of the European Union.

Towards the Conference on the Future of Europe:

Reforming the EU to Relaunch Integration

Prof. Dr. Federico Fabbrini

Position: Full Professor of European Law, Principal of the DCU Brexit Institute
Institution: Dublin City University
Year of Birth: 1985
Citizenship: Italy
Field of Research: Institutional Reforms
Research Question: 'The Conference on the Future of Europe: A New Model to Reform the EU?'
Academic Mentor: Prof. Dr. Giuliano Amato, Former Prime Minister of Italy, Judge of the Constitutional Court of Italy, former Vize President of the European Convention

Introduction: The EU after Brexit

Seventy years after the Schuman Declaration, which launched the project of European integration, the European Union (EU) is navigating rough waters. On 31 January 2020, the United Kingdom (UK) formally left the EU – in the first-ever case of disintegration within the EU.[1] Moreover, during the past decade, besides Brexit, the EU and its member states have weathered a torrent of seemingly uninterrupted crises, which have put the integrity of the EU to the test: if the euro-crisis challenged the functioning of the EU's Economic & Monetary Union (EMU), the migration crisis tested the sustainability of the Schengen area, and the rule of law crisis called into question foundational values of the EU constitutional order. What's more, the outbreak of the COVID-19 global pandemic – with its catastrophic death toll and dramatic socio-economic impact – poses an unprecedented challenge to the EU.

While each of these crises is distinctive, the EU's difficulties in successfully dealing with them can be explained by pointing to several structural weaknesses of the EU system of governance.[2] On the one hand, from an institutional point of view, intergovernmental methods have in recent years become increasingly dominant in the decision-making process of the EU – to the detriment of the community method. Nonetheless, intergovernmentalism suffers from intrinsic problems: in particular, as institutions like the European Council work on the basis of consensus, it is difficult to reach rapid decisions. On the other hand, from a substantive point of view, the EU still lacks key powers, adequate enforcement mechanisms, and proper resources to fully sustain its actions in practice. For all these reasons, a strong case can be made in favor of reforming the EU: renewing the EU constitutional system is indeed essential to relaunch European integration beyond crisis management.[3]

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[1] See further Federico Fabbrini (ed), The Law & Politics of Brexit. Volume II: The Withdrawal Agreement (Oxford University Press 2020).
[2] See further Federico Fabbrini, "The Institutional Origins of Europe's Constitutional Crises", in Tom Ginsburg et al (eds.), Constitutions in Times of Financial Crises (Cambridge University Press 2019), 204.
[3] See also Sergio Fabbrini, Europe's Future: Decoupling and Reforming (Cambridge University Press 2019).

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> EU – and its ability to carry on – is
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Beyond complacency

Yet, the EU also suffers from a complacency problem. Even though the case for reforming the EU's constitutional architecture is strong, an equally powerful "business as usual" mentality is present throughout the EU policy-making circles. Indeed, it is often argued that path-dependency is a defining feature of the EU.[4] As a consequence, leading voices in politics as well as in academia have dismissed the scenario of grand EU reform as idealistic, arguing rather that the EU ultimately always muddles through one crisis to the next – and that, right or wrong, this is its natural way of doing business.[5] It is often heard that "if the EU ain't entirely broken, why fix it"? Admittedly, there are policy areas where the EU is delivering within the frame of its current governance system, for instance in the field of international trade, which could be an argument against reform. Still, these areas are limited, and themselves subject to developments occurring in the overall EU regime. Moreover, the functioning of the EU – and its ability to carry on – is increasingly being tested to the extreme, challenging the sustainability of the status quo.[6]

Brexit represents an excellent example of the argument put forward here. As it has been noticed, the EU and its remaining member states have been united in their dealings with the UK. Contrary to the expectations of some, the EU27 remained consistently united during the Brexit negotiations, delegating all talks to the ad hoc European Commission Article 50 Task Force, and backing the work of the Chief Negotiator Michel Barnier.[7] Yet, Brexit was in many ways an exceptional process – and facing a member state determined to leave the EU, all other members felt compelled to join forces together, also to protect the interest of its weaker partners.[8] The performance of the EU during the Brexit process therefore cannot be taken as a benchmark for other policies. If Brexit has revealed anything, it is that the ability of the EU to muddle through has limits. Even discounting the UK's idiosyncratic approach to European integration,[9] there is no doubt that its withdrawal from the EU sounds a warning bell.[10] After all, exit becomes an option when voice is limited.[11] Reforming the EU system of governance therefore is necessary to reduce centrifugal pulls, and secure the long-term survival of the EU itself.

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[4] See Paul Pierson, "The Path to European Integration: A Historical Institutional Analysis" (1996) 29 Comparative Political Studies 123.
[5] See Andy Moravcsik, "Europe's Ugly Future: Muddling Through Austerity" (2016) 95 Foreign Affairs 139.
[6] See Ronan McCrea, "Forward or Back: The Future of European Integration and the Impossibility of the Status Quo" (2017) 23 European Law Journal 66.
[7] See European Council Conclusions, 25 November 2018, EUCO XT 20015/18, para. 3.
[8] Irish Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, "Thank you to the People of Europe", Op-Ed, Irish Times, 31 January 2020.
[9] See Catherine De Vries, Euroskepticism and the Future of European Integration (Oxford University Press 2018).
[10] See Hannes Hoffmeiser (ed), The End of the Ever Closer Union? (Nomos 2018).
[11] See Albert O. Hirschman, Exit, Voice, Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States (Harvard University Press 1970).

The potentials of the Conference on the Future of Europe

Given the shortcomings of the EU's current system of governance, it seems inevitable for the EU to reconsider in depth its institutional setup and allocation of powers.[12] While this is undoubtedly challenging, this was precisely the idea behind the initiative to establish a Conference on the Future of Europe. Initially envisioned by French President Emmanuel Macron,[13] the Conference on the Future of Europe was conceived as a way to renew the EU and relaunch the project of integration – right after Brexit.[14] After in November 2019, France and Germany put forward a common position on the scope and structure of the Conference,[15] in January 2020 the European Commission[16] and the European Parliament[17] openly endorsed the initiative, with the latter explicitly identifying it as an opportunity to profoundly reform the EU, including through treaty changes. Moreover, while the Council of the EU adopted a more cautious position on the initiative,[18] it eventually supported its launch,[19] following the guidance of the European Council.[20]

Yet, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has delayed the original time-frame for the Conference's start.[21] Moreover, it remains to be seen how the Conference will be precisely structured, and what exactly its mandate will be. While the European Parliament and several member states have pushed for the Conference to have an ambitious remit with a clear role to revise the EU treaties and institutions along the model of the 2002-2003 Brussels Convention on the Future of Europe, which drafted the Constitutional Treaty, other institutions and member states are more skeptical, and would rather prefer the process to serve as a repeat of the citizens' dialogues, which the EU organized in 2017-2019.[22] Needless to say, tensions regarding the institutional organization and constitutional mandate of the Conference reflect the competing visions for the future of Europe. This is why elsewhere I recommended that to overcome state vetoes that could doom the whole project, the Conference should resolve to draft a new treaty – a Political Compact – and submit it to a new ratification rule, which replaces the unanimity requirement of Article 48 TEU with a super-majority vote.[23] While the success of this initiative cannot be assured, it is clear however that the EU faces the challenges of a defining moment.

Conclusion: Europe's Moment

Whilst presenting the European Commission's proposal for an EU post-pandemic recovery plan on 27 May 2020, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen emphatically stated that this is Europe's moment.[24] "Next Generation EU" – by

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[12] See Federico Fabbrini, Brexit and the Future of the European Union: The Case for Constitutional Reforms (Oxford University Press 2020).

[13] See French President Emmanuel Macron, Letter, 4 March 2019, available at: https://www.elysee.fr/es/emmanuel-macron/2019/03/04/pour-une-renaissance-europeenne.fr.

[14] But see also French President Emmanuel Macron, speech at the award of the Prix Charlemagne, Aachen, 11 May 2018.

[15] See Franco-German non-paper on "Key questions and guidelines: Conference on the Future of Europe", 25 November 2019.

[16] See European Commission Communication "Shaping the Conference on the Future of Europe", 22 January 2020, COM(2020)27 final.

[17] See European Parliament resolution of 15 January 2020 on the European Parliament's position on the Conference on the Future of Europe, P9_TA(2020)0010.

[18] Council of the EU, 3 February 2020.

[19] Council of the EU, 24 June 2020, Doc. 9102/20.

[20] European Council Conclusions, 12 December 2019, EUCO 28/19.

[21] See European Parliament resolution of 18 June 2020 on the European Parliament's position on the Conference on the Future of Europe, P9_TA(2020)0153.

[22] European Commission, "Citizens' Dialogues and Citizens' Consultations: Key Conclusions", 30 April 2019.

[23] See Federico Fabbrini, "Possible Avenues for Further Political Integration in Europe: A Political Compact for a More Democratic and Effective Union?", a study commissioned by the European Parliament Constitutional Affairs Committee, June 2020.

[24] See European Commission Communication "Europe's Moment: Repair and Prepare for the Next Generation", 27 May 2020, COM(2020) 456 final.

> The Conference on the Future of
> Europe could be the ideal framework to
> address these constitutional questions
> and make the EU more effective and
> legitimate.

creating a new €750bn recovery instrument, to be disbursed in 2/3 as grants and 1/3 as loans to member states affected by COVID-19, and to be financed through the issuing of common bonds on the financial markets, which will be repaid after 2028 and before 2058 by raising new EU own resources – represents a quantum leap forward in the process of European integration. After all, the five days of summitry which were needed for the European Council in July 2020 to reach an agreement on the Commission's proposal is a testament to the importance of the recovery plan for the future of the EU.[25] Yet, if important negotiations still lie ahead before "Next Generation EU" can enter into force,[26] there is little doubt that the recovery plan further stresses the need for EU constitutional reforms.

The unprecedented transfer of taxing and spending powers to the EU level tackles the original initial asymmetry of EMU,[27] but also exposes the democratic and institutional short-comings of the current EU system of governance: How can the EU manage the most sizable economic stimulus program in Europe since the Marshall Plan, if the European Parliament does not (yet) have a voice on tax matters,[28] or if the Council (still) has to approve tax legislation by unanimity?[29] The Conference on the Future of Europe could be the ideal framework to address these constitutional questions and make the EU more effective and legitimate. By currently holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU, Germany has the historic opportunity to both seal the agreement on "Next Generation EU", and to kick-start the Conference on the Future of Europe putting the question of EU reforms squarely at the center of its remit.[30] Thirty years after unification, this may be Germany's greatest contribution to Europe's future.

Cooperation with the DCU Brexit Institute will also remain after the Fellowship

[25] See European Council Conclusions, 17-18-19-20-21 July 2020, EUCO 10/20.
[26] See European Parliament resolution of 23 July 2020 on the conclusions of the extraordinary European Council meeting of 17-21 July 2020, P9_TA(2020)0206.
[27] See also Federico Fabbrini, "A Fiscal Capacity for the Eurozone", a study commissioned by the European Parliament Constitutional Affairs Committee, February 2019.
[28] See Article 311 TFEU.
[29] See Article 113 TFEU.
[30] See also Federico Fabbrini, "The German Presidency of the Council of the EU: A Decisive Moment for the Future of Europe", in Matteo Scotto et al (eds), La Presidenza tedesca del Consiglio dell' Unione Europea 2020, Villa Vigoni Papers 5/2020.

Europe's Economy post-COVID: A Crisis of Solidarity?

Christos Staikouras, Greek Minister of Finance

Europe is facing an unprecedented, multidimensional crisis, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A crisis which is continuously rekindled and characterized by a great deal of uncertainty, and which has led the European economy and the national economies to a very deep recession – the deepest since World War II – and to a rise in unemployment. Europe had to tackle this severe crisis and its social and economic consequences rapidly, methodically, and in a spirit of solidarity.

Was the need for solidarity fulfilled? Thankfully, as far as the creation of new instruments and the activation or/and enhancement of pre-existing ones to respond to the circumstances are concerned, the answer is positive.

Europe has taken important decisions, activating both fiscal and liquidity boosting measures. Just to pick up some of them, fiscal rules, targets, and requirements were lifted, the framework for state aid and public procurement became more flexible, the ECB has introduced a €750 billion Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme (PEPP) and has adopted a package of temporary collateral easing measures. Europe also activated a "safety net" for states, employees, and businesses through the ESM Pandemic Crisis Support, the European instrument for temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE) to subsidize employment, and the Pan-European EIB Guarantee Fund to strengthen business liquidity; additionally, Next Generation EU, with its major pillars such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RFF), the REACT-EU, and the Just Transition Fund, were added to our "armoury".

If we add the total amount available through the above-mentioned "safety net" and Next Generation EU, a huge total firearm of 1.3 trillion euro – more than the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the period 2021-2027 – is available to support our economies and to lead to a strong and resilient recovery, while the MFF itself also offers us a vast amount of funds to kick-start our national economies and to implement policies and structural reforms that will form the basis for strong, sustainable, clever, and inclusive growth.

What is now important, is to proceed from design to execution, to demonstrate solidarity in action. Going forward, Europe's next steps must include the following: First, the fastest possible disbursement of funds from the Next Generation EU initiative, and mainly the proper and efficient use of grants from the Recovery and Resilience Facility in a swift, growth-friendly and socially cohesive way; second, the continuation of fiscal relaxation in 2021 and the necessary preparation for a soft landing from fiscal relaxation to the gradual and careful return to rules, targets and requirements that will serve fiscal prudence, while sustaining economic activity and protecting employment. This return has to take place in due time, because, according to the European Commission, it will take at least two years until the European economy comes close to regaining its pre-pandemic level; third, successfully tackling poverty and inequality, in order to prevent further strain on social cohesion.

I will elaborate more on the best and fastest possible use of Next Generation EU, which is a cornerstone for the recovery of our economies and their sustainable and inclusive growth. The political agreement reached between the German EU Council

> What is now important, is to proceed from design to execution, to demonstrate solidarity in action.

Presidency and the European Parliament's negotiators regarding the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) on November 10, 2020, was an extremely important step towards facing the challenges that still lie ahead. We all must cooperate on the proper and efficient use of these instruments and funds, both on the European and the national level.

In the case of Greece, our Government has completed its National Recovery and Resilience Plan and will submit it to the European Commission in the coming days, by the end of November 2020.

A high-level Task Force has been formed in the Secretary of the Government to coordinate the proposals submitted by every Ministry, to align the proposals of the Strategic Growth Plan to the policy priorities of the Government, and to monitor the implementation of this Plan and the utilization of these funds. Furthermore, a special unit for the Recovery Fund has been created in the Ministry of Finance.

The big task in front of us is to achieve high and sustainable growth and to improve its composition. To this purpose, we are laying the groundwork for making the best use of the available funds, in order to implement policies based on the objectives set by our National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

This plan is based on pillars such as green, digital, private investment, economic transformation, employment skills, and social cohesion, which reflect horizontal European priorities as well as Greek economic priorities consistent with country- specific recommendations provided to Greece in the context of the European semester in 2019 and 2020. Each pillar includes components consisting of relevant reforms and investments. Some of the main objectives of the plan are the following: the implementation of a prudent fiscal policy with the gradual reduction of tax rates and, most importantly, social security contributions, the continuation of the privatizations program, as well as the exploitation of public property, the digital transformation of the Public Sector, the simplification of the licensing procedures, and the reduction of bureaucratic burden. Beyond that, structural reforms need to be implemented, concerning the regulatory framework for businesses, faster delivery of justice, the management of public investment, the realization of private investment, employment, agricultural policy, etc. On top of that, public and private investments must be promoted, specifically, private

investment initiatives of high added value; the development of infrastructure should be emphasized as a priority in digital technologies, waste management, and transport so as to strengthen the Greek ports as a gateway for goods to Europe and to facilitate the export of goods from the country; upgrading our infrastructure also relates to incoming tourism, and green growth. Transforming the energy sector can engender complete independence from lignite by 2028. This involves the gradual transition to gas and renewable energy sources, the enhancement of electricity, the renewal of the current car fleet, and the energy upgrade of buildings. Relevant reforms and investments also involve industry stimulation, reducing production costs mainly through accelerated tax depreciation for investment in equipment and the reduction of energy costs, and also utilizing the achievements of the 4th Industrial Revolution, stimulating endogenous sources of development, such as education, research, and innovation, using high-quality human resources of the country.

Harnessing all the reform and investment proposals mentioned above, we will have the opportunity, not only to recover but to enter a strong and sustainable upward trajectory, which will attract important investments and create new, high-quality jobs. An opportunity that we are decided to seize in order to restructure the economy, to enhance its productivity, and to improve its competitiveness.

I am convinced that all my European colleagues and the European Governments are willing to cooperate in a sense of urgency, to achieve a fast crisis recovery and Europe's emerging as a power of peace, democracy, growth, and social cohesion – a power which was created step by step, based on solidarity. As Robert Schuman, the "architect" of European integration had stated in his declaration 70 years ago, "Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity". In these turbulent times, it is our duty to remain united vis-à-vis the invisible enemy of the Coronavirus and to tackle its social and economic consequences by demonstrating solidarity in action.

It is up to us to overcome the current crisis and its consequences and to ensure a bright and promising future for our children. It is our duty.

And we can make it!

Integration

A Code of Connectivity for the Western Balkans: Fostering EU Enlargement

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In October 2019 and in the face of the European Council's decision to launch accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia, discussions concerning the EU's enlargement strategy were intensifying (Figure 1). They eventually became quite heated, especially when the European Council decided to withhold the accession negotiations. It was not the first time that the EU was not opening the accession negotiations for the two countries based on the argument that they have not made the necessary reforms, which the EU was addressing in the Annual Reports of the two countries. As a result, France was raising concerns regarding the effectiveness of the EU's enlargement approach and urging the EU to redesign its enlargement method. In February 2020, the EU adopted the "New EU Enlargement Methodology" for the accession negotiations and granted Albania and North Macedonia the status of a "candidate country".

The geographical proximity of the EU and the Western Balkans and the opening of accession negotiations for Albania and North Macedonia constitute the two primary reasons for focusing on the EU- Western Balkan relation. The geographical proximity of the Western Balkans with the EU enables a stronger interaction between them. The Western Balkans is geographically surrounded by EU member states. Despite the fact that the geographical proximity could give a false sense of overall proximity, it should not be taken for granted. However, there is no doubt that geographical proximity enables and facilitates connectivity. Moreover, it seems that a future EU enlargement will move towards the Western Balkans, and more specifically, it will include Albania and North Macedonia. The two countries seem to have the potential to become the next EU member states following the New EU Enlargement Methodology.
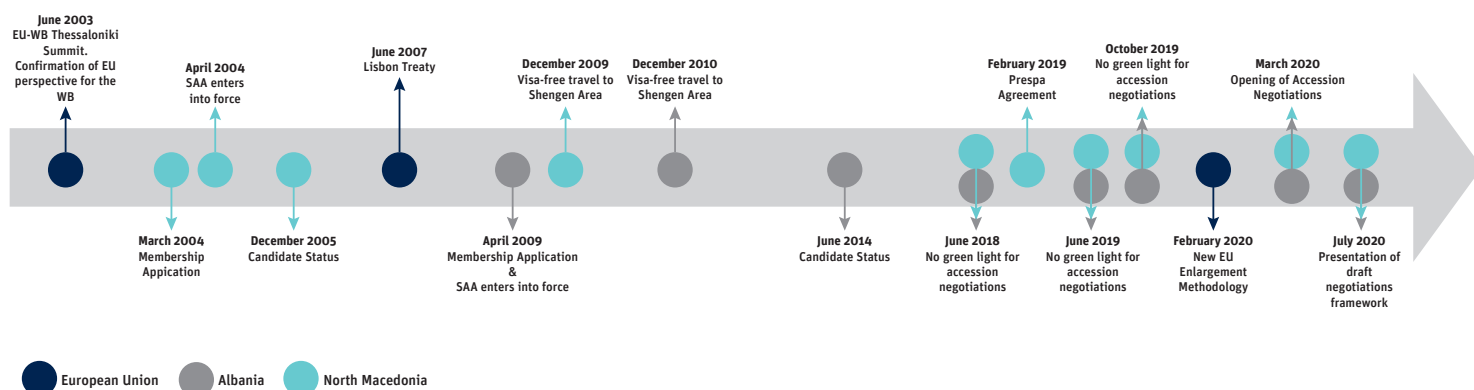
June 2003
EU-WB Thessaloniki Summit. Confirmation of EU perspective for the WB

April 2004
SAA enters into force

June 2007
Lisbon Treaty

December 2009
Visa-free travel to Shengen Area

December 2010
Visa-free travel to Shengen Area

February 2019
Prespa Agreement

October 2019
No green light for accession negotiations

March 2020
Opening of Accession Negotiations

March 2004
Membership Appication

December 2005
Candidate Status

April 2009
Membership Application & SAA enters into force

June 2014
Candidate Status

June 2018
No green light for accession negotiations

June 2019
No green light for accession negotiations

February 2020
New EU Enlargement Methodology

July 2020
Presentation of draft negotiations framework

● European Union   ● Albania   ● North Macedonia

Figure 1: Timeline of the accession process of Albania and North Macedonia

This raises the broader issue of EU connectivity policy. While the EU does have connectivity policies in place for specific areas, they only partially cover what is needed for a candidate country to successfully integrate into the EU. The EU Connectivity Agenda for the Western Balkans - for instance - mostly focuses on energy and transport whilst neglecting other dimensions of connectivity such as digital, economic, and human connectivity. In that sense, the EU's connectivity strategies are incomplete. Taking into account that the New EU Enlargement Methodology sets the priorities and facilitates the negotiations that establish the needed structure Albania and North Macedonia need to follow, a Code of Connectivity could sort the clusters and priorities in a way that supplements the enlargement process.

The Code of Connectivity proposed in this report is the result of the Charlemagne Prize Academy Fellowship and could serve as a suggestion to the EU for developing a comprehensive EU-Western Balkans Connectivity Agenda. In other words, the Code of Connectivity and connectivity itself could become a constituent of EU foreign policy and function as an enlargement tool. The main goal of the Code of Connectivity is to create an outcome with real-life meaning and purpose not only for the EU as an organization but as an instrument to benefit the respective regions and its people. Based on the EU's definition of connectivity and the structure of the new EU enlargement methodology, it can be stated that the people-to-people, institutional, infrastructural, digital, and regional connectivity are different but interconnected dimensions of connectivity. Following this reasoning, it can be said that education, research, or transports, for example, represent the elements of connectivity.

Defining the Code of Connectivity

Connectivity is the driving force of the network between the EU and the Western Balkans so that they can operate effectively. It is therefore a tool for designing and implementing policies for the benefit of the European Community and potentially for global stability. The Code of Connectivity can be interpreted as a structural suggestion for the EU's Western Balkans Agenda in the framework of connectivity. The EU has already made remarkable progress on connectivity in the Westerns Balkans since 2015 as presented in the Connectivity Agenda for the Western Balkans of 2019, which predominantly focuses on energy and transport projects. The Code of Connectivity aims to build on this progress by providing policy recommendations to the EU and the Western Balkans in a more general framework of connectivity. It, therefore, includes four core dimensions of connectivity: People to People, Institutional, Infrastructural, and Regional Connectivity (Figure 2). Each dimension consists of various elements, which increases the effectiveness of the dimensions and therefore connectivity. By framing the policies in the context of these four dimensions, the vision for a comprehensive EU-Western Balkan connectivity could be achieved, while accounting for various elements of connectivity and strengthening the effectiveness of these dimensions.

In addition, strong linkages between the four dimensions allow for a higher rate of overall progress "suggesting that a balanced connectivity profile along all dimensions of connectivity is more important than a large increase in one channel only".[1] In that sense, connectivity is a valuable tool for policymakers to frame future policies and comprises an overview of the challenges, strengths, and trade-offs that the network needs to implement for further development. Thus, instead of focusing only on the separate policies for each challenge without taking into consideration their interconnections between policies and their potential impacts on other dimensions, it would be more fruitful for all parties involved to develop a strategy that builds on the overall enhancement of connectivity

With Albania and North Macedonia now having secured the status of candidate countries, it would be beneficial for the EU and the Western Balkans to have a solid connectivity strategy. An overall connectivity strategy will therefore make the EU's goals explicit, establish its priorities, and highlight the areas in which decisive action is needed. The current lack of an overall EU connectivity strategy not only overlooks interconnection and connectivity as policy tools but also reduces the possibilities of identifying further connectivity priorities of the EU.

Dimensions of Connectivity

Infrastructural Connectivity

Infrastructural connectivity is a dimension that enables the flow of goods, people, capital, and information. The EU has - in close cooperation with the Western Balkan states - already introduced various projects in the region and follows a more
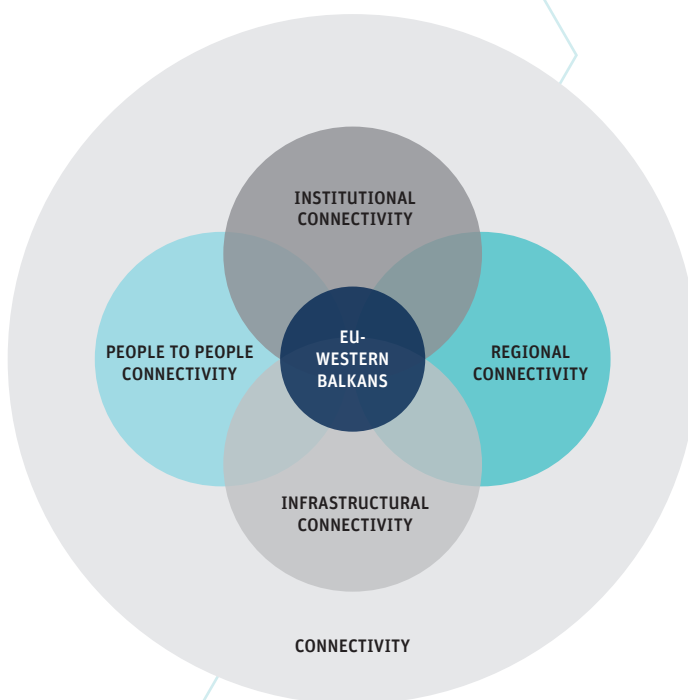

Figure 2: Dimentions of Connectivity

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[1] Gould, David, Dror Y. Kenett, and Georgi Panterov. 2018. Multidimensional Connectivity: Benefits, Risks, and Policy Implications for Europe and Central Asia. Policy Research Working Papers. The World Bank.

concrete strategy for the infrastructural dimension based on the Connectivity Agenda for the Western Balkans 2019.[2] However, according to the European Commission, the energy sector in the Western Balkans "still suffers from outdated infrastructure, low energy efficiency, and fragmented markets with limited cross-border trade operations."[3] Therefore, a concrete and even more precise evaluation of the current energy projects is required. This is a recommendation, which goes beyond the current Connectivity Agenda and refers to the need to identify and delineate those areas where immediate action involving the initiation of new energy projects will minimize the disadvantages of outdated infrastructure.

Concerning the current transport connectivity, although rails and roads are generally considered domestic infrastructure, their functionality and practicality influence the competitiveness of businesses on a European and global market. In addition, rail and road infrastructure are closely related to ports given that they are part of the supply chain. In that sense, the Western Balkan countries should develop their rail and road projects, while taking advantage of the geographical proximity with Greece, which is not only a member state of the EU but also has a strong maritime global presence. As a result, the Western Balkan states will not only give additional value to their European perspective but also enhance the infrastructural connectivity further.

Also related to infrastructural connectivity, digital connectivity enhances the effectiveness of the other dimensions by enabling cooperation, development, and immediate action on reforms. Therefore, in addition to the EU's Digital Strategy released in February 2020, it would also be beneficial for the member states and the candidate countries to share their digital knowledge at the European level in order to increase the digitalization of the public sector.

People to People Connectivity

The commitment to reinforcing the capacities of each country on research and innovation was outlined in "The Thessaloniki Agenda for the Western Balkans: Moving towards European Integration". The Steering Platform on Research and Innovation was launched in 2006 and still serves its purpose through annual meetings maintaining the progress achieved under the EU-Western Balkan Action Plan of 2006.[4] In this context, webinars and video conferences are increasingly being seen as an innovative form of education and research. A more digitalized research and education environment could be beneficial for all stakeholders by increasing continuities and positive connectivity effects for the network. This has the potential to make European higher education more inclusive, accessible, attractive, and competitive. Moreover, the harmful effects of "brain drain" to economies could partially lessen if people were able to work and study remotely without the need to leave their home countries. Currently, a critical mass, which could participate in the economy, is integrated into other European countries creating a discontinuity in the network and an imbalance among the member states' standards within the EU. Therefore, brain drain remains a significant issue requiring the attention not only of individual governments but of the EU as a whole.

People to People connectivity in the framework of the EU enlargement could create a broad spectrum of effects both for the countries but also for the European Union itself. Strengthening the People to People connectivity would intensify the interconnection and interdependence of the EU and the Western Balkans. An enhanced People to People connectivity has the potential to benefit the societies of the member states and the candidate countries alike.

Institutional Connectivity

The New EU Enlargement Methodology and more specifically its "Fundamentals Chapter" can be conceived as the core element of Institutional Connectivity. "The institutional connectivity is most probably the most complex dimension of connectivity as it includes political connectivity, and therefore, (national) political interests of decision-makers."[5]

Taking into consideration this chapter of the New EU Enlargement Methodology, the following outline of policies is recommended. The implementation of all necessary reforms sug-

[2] European Commission. 2019b. "EU Connectivity Agenda for the Western Balkans."
[3] European Commission. 2019b. "EU Connectivity Agenda for the Western Balkans", 30.
[4] WBC-RTI. 2020. "Steering Platform on Research and Innovation for Western Balkans." WBC-RTI.Info. 2020.
[5] Petropoulou, Georgia, "Mapping Connectivity in the Western Balkans, Charlemagne Prize Academy, 2020" p. 8.

gested by the European Commission and the Annual Reports consider being a prerequisite for integration. However, the simplification and efficiency of the public sector will contribute to the enhancement of institutional connectivity. Successful simplification and efficiency could be achieved by the extensive use of e-government. Moreover, transparency, communication, cooperation, and effective oversight and accountability mechanisms to ensure the implementation of the suggested reforms are followed not only by the governments but also by the people.

As a result, enhanced institutional connectivity could have positive effects on national and local communities by facilitating their daily lives, and by extension, increase the willingness to engage in reforms. Careful implementation of the reforms has the potential to create an environment where the state could operate more effectively. With an increased level of trust in the institutions, citizens would be more willing to participate in and follow closer the implemented reforms. Carrying out reform is of paramount importance for increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of public institutions; however, this is not enough to ensure sufficient institutional connectivity. Governments and citizens should also ensure that the reforms are actively undertaken.

Regional Connectivity

Solid and enhanced Regional Connectivity is necessary to strengthen the overall success of the network. Despite obstacles and disagreements visible throughout the years, the Balkan states should try to minimize difficulties and strive to benefit from their cooperation. The Berlin Process [6] for enlargement of the EU and the fact that for Albania and North Mace-

donia, accession negotiations have now opened are tangible indications of closer cooperation among the Balkan states and the EU. However, regional connectivity is not a substitute for integration.

Therefore, further measures can be taken to improve the overall connectivity; first, sustaining good neighbouring relations constitutes the foundation for developing a safe and peaceful regional cooperation. Combining Regional Connectivity with People to People connectivity, the acceptance of the "other" will be increased because "it fosters intercultural understanding and tolerance." [7] Regional cooperation should not be taken for granted; therefore, the second recommendation is to maintain the floor open for dialogue so that vital regional issues can be dealt with commonly. As a result, the parties involved will avoid miscommunication, tension, and divergent approaches on how issues affecting the whole region should be dealt with. [8] Such issues may involve border controls, trafficking, security matters, and even a pandemic. Finally, building upon the Accession Progress Reports of 2019, enhanced regional cooperation would increase the exchange of ideas and effective practices for resolving common issues like regulatory matters, fight against corruption, and parliamentary collaboration.

Conclusion: Implementation of the EU-WB Connectivity

For the EU and Western Balkans connectivity agenda to be implemented, clear priorities need to be decided carefully as they have the potential to create a solid foundation for the enhancement of connectivity. Connectivity includes an array of possibilities and paths. Therefore, a common decision regarding core priorities is essential at this stage. These priorities should follow the presented here. However, given the fact that the EU

> Enhanced institutional connectivity could have positive effects on national and local communities by facilitating their daily lives, and by extension, increase the willingness to engage in reforms.

[6] The Berlin Process – Information and Resource Centre.
[7] Rüland, Jürgen. n.d. "Peoples-to-Peoples Connectivity in the Asia–Europe Meeting".
[8] Petropoulou, Georgia, "Mapping Connectivity in the Western Balkans, Charlemagne Prize Academy, 2020"

Given the fact that the EU Connectivity Agenda
for the Western Balkans of 2019 focuses more
on infrastructural Connectivity, the EU should
decide and set the priorities regarding the
regional, institutional, and people to
people connectivity.

Connectivity Agenda for the Western Balkans of 2019 focuses more on infrastructural Connectivity, the EU should decide and set the priorities regarding the regional, institutional, and people to people connectivity.

It is also essential to focus on the desirable outcome, which is the development and strengthening of the EU-Western Balkans network. The enhancement of each dimension separately will ensure that any challenging aspects of the connectivity can be addressed. Besides, the interconnection of the dimensions means that the strengthening of any one dimension can enable a "weaker" dimension to be enhanced. A solid plan and timeline for the implementation of each connectivity dimension, revised according to the developments, will limit possible uncertainty for future steps. Projects or EU Seminars for each element of connectivity should be implemented.

Therefore, decisive leadership is of paramount importance for decision-making processes and for the implementation of the proposed policies. It is also essential to monitor and evaluate the connectivity practices during the EU-Western Balkans annual summit.

Finally, a European Connectivity Summit will be beneficial for the EU, the candidate countries, and its partners. Within a coherent framework of discussions, the above suggestions could be further narrowed down based on the specific needs of each country, while, keeping the focus on common European benefit.

Responsibility

Perceptions of Migration in Europe – Time for a Restart?

Manfred Profazi, Chief of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Germany

We are in the midst of profound global transformations, which affect migration and displacement around the world. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the movement restrictions enacted in its wake, migration and mobility will continue to be a defining feature of the landscape in Europe and the world in the foreseeable future. The challenges and opportunities of international migration must therefore unite rather than divide us if we are to collectively achieve safe, orderly and regular migration across the entire migration cycle.

Against this backdrop, the Member States of the European Union must reach common ground on a number of issues, which will define the future viability and resilience of EU migration policy for years to come. As we confront the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic with an eye on recovery, the European Union should seize the opportunity to reach beyond a crisis-oriented focus on managing irregular arrivals to Europe towards a longer-term view that also addresses post-pandemic recovery, climate change, and demographic shifts.

Agreement on the Pact on Migration and Asylum, presented by the European Commission in September 2020, will play a crucial part in this endeavour. The reform initiative, which is aimed at overcoming the standstill of negotiations among EU Member States on the future of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), clearly recognizes that no one country can address migration and mobility alone or in isolation. Migration and mobility can be manageable under a comprehensive, rights-based, whole-of-route approach grounded in partnerships and cooperation.

The Pact offers an opportunity to benefit European societies and improve cooperation with partner countries by reimagining the future of human mobility as safe, orderly, inclusive, and human rights centred. This comprehensive approach recognizes that migration is a human reality to be managed towards mutually beneficial ends. People on the move can be part of the solution.

It will be important for the EU and its Member States to agree on longer-term policy that is truly coherent in its internal and external aspects, rooted in genuine partnerships, grounded in

As we confront the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic with an eye on recovery, the European Union should seize the opportunity to reach beyond a crisis-oriented focus on managing irregular arrivals to Europe towards a longer-term view that also addresses post-pandemic recovery, climate change, and demographic shifts.

> It will be important for the EU and its Member States to agree on longer-term policy that is truly coherent in its internal and external aspects, rooted in genuine partnerships, grounded in human rights and aligned with existing international frameworks and agreements.

human rights and aligned with existing international frameworks and agreements. Dignified, rights-based return migration is an indispensable part of balanced and comprehensive migration governance. But the EU will have to strive for balance between priorities such as returns and readmission, and issues that go to the heart of other states' perspectives such as enhanced mobility and legal migration channels.

It should be clear that balance is key: progress on borders, returns and tackling irregular migration can only be achieved with equal attention to legal pathways, migrants' rights, protection of those on the move, integration and building cohesive communities. We are only safe when everyone is safe and are thus able "to build back better".

As we think about the future of mobility in Europe and across the world, it will be central to have an in-depth, inclusive dialogue on a safe reopening of borders. Health proofing needs to be introduced structurally into border systems. This will require investments in health, border controls and digital infrastructure. Multilateral cooperation will be key to ensure that, whilst the impact of the pandemic on migratory movements has been asymmetric, the recovery will be balanced.

We must avoid a two or three tier system that, due to a lack of resources, leaves some countries out of mobility bubbles and reinforces global inequalities and jeopardizes the health of people on the move. The EU and its Member States are well-placed to convene such a dialogue given its expertise on free movement and an institutionalized, coordinated approach based on commonly agreed principles.

IOM therefore looks forward to continued cooperation with the EU in the shared interest of better governing migration for the benefit of all.

Responsibility

Less policing, more policies.

A 'fresh' design for the EU's asylum system

Marie Walter-Franke

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Citizenship:	France
Research Field:	European Asylum Policy
Research Question:	'How can EU asylum policy be restructured to overcome current political fractures while upholding fundamental rights?'
Academic Mentors:	Dr. Nicole Koenig, Deputy Director at the Jacques Delors Centre, Berlin

Coordinated action by the EU is needed to meet challenges arising from migration flows. However, the interests, priorities, and capacities of EU member states differ profoundly. In addition, asylum has become deeply and prominently intertwined with identity politics which, in many countries, polarises the electorate and the political class. Despite the pressure to provide European answers to the common challenges at hand, reforming the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) has grown both arduous and politically risky for European institutions. How can polarization and politicization be overcome to frame a European asylum system fairer to refugees and member states? I argue that structural problems in EU asylum policy could be addressed effectively by revisiting the policy's design. Building on promising reform approaches from research and practice, I developed a 'redeployment model' with two main dimensions. EU asylum policy should be redeployed horizontally, across EU policies and institutions, and vertically, among levels of governance. Altering the policy design could help reframe the debates, undermine the politicization of asylum and optimize the use of EU resources to deliver adequate protection standards while multiplying the forms of solidarity and cooperation availlable to actors from the local to the EU level. This 'redeployment model' is a versatile approach that can be adapted to its political context. It could and should inspire European policy-makers as they proceed with the negotiation of the proposals unveiled on 23 September 2020 by the European Commission under the "New Pact on Immigration and Asylum",[1] and for further initiatives still to come.

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[1] European Commission, "New Pact on Migration and Asylum, A fresh start on migration in Europe", 23 September 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/migration-and-asylum-package-new-pact-migration-and-asylum-documents-adopted-23-september-2020_en
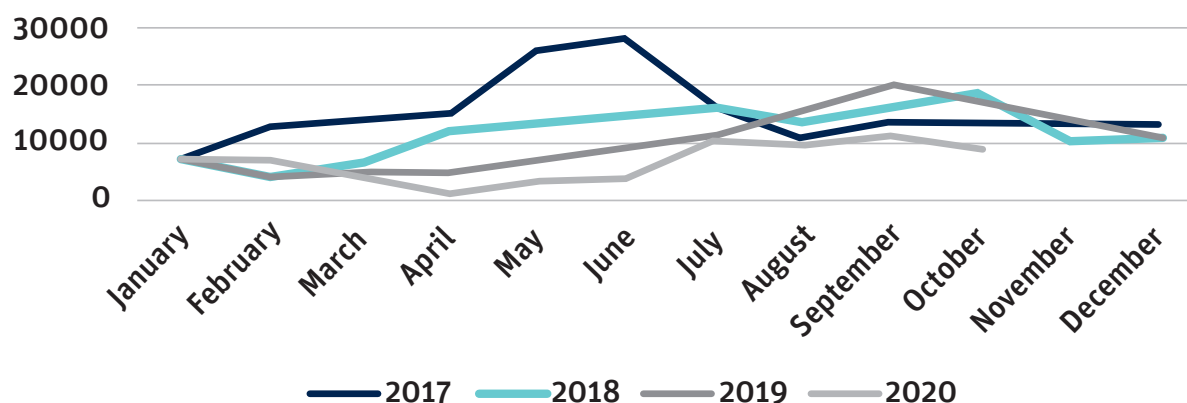
Source: UNHCR data, last updated on 19 October 2020. Arrivals include sea arrivals to Italy, Cyprus, and Malta, and both sea and land arrivals to Greece and Spain.

Chart 1: Monthly sea and land arrivals in the Mediterranean region, 2017-2020

Structural problems in European asylum policy

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit Europe, the spotlight turned away temporarily from the unresolved issues of the EU's asylum policy. Mória, Europe's largest refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos, had to burn to the ground on 8 September 2020 for this to change.[2] The declining number of arrivals in the context of the pandemic made this six-month eclipse of the asylum policy debate possible. As the 2020 curve shows in Chart 1, the lockdowns slowed migration flows in the Mediterranean. Towards the summer months, numbers climbed again as mobility resumed. This is hardly surprising: the causes of flight endure in refugee-sending countries. In addition, the few states that host 80% of the world 33 million refugees and asylum-seekers[3] face their own structural issues and are destabilized by the economic recession. This only increases the EU's global responsibility and the need for a functioning and humane asylum system.

In search of alternative solutions to achieve a 'fresh start' for EU asylum policy,[4] I focussed on changes that could be made at the level of policy design – that is, the way asylum policy is developed, negotiated, and implemented in the EU and its member states. Two problems stand out.

The first is what I call 'home bias'.[5] Historically, the ministers of the interior of member states resorted to asylum cooperation to tackle challenges arising from the realisation of free movement within the Schengen area. As a result, asylum policies, notably the Dublin system, have been framed in terms of domestic security.[6] Until today, asylum and migration policies are part of the Home Affairs portfolio in the European Commission, alongside border management and crime. Since the early days, much has changed in policy design. The European Parliament plays a much stronger role, actors from other resorts within the European Commission are involved in framing

[2] Helena Smith, "Lesbos refugee camp fire forces thousands to evacuate", (9 September 2020), The Guardian.

[3] UNHCR estimates that 79,5 million persons are currently displaced, 45,7 of whom are displaced within their country of origin. Source: UNHCR's figures at a glance, last updated on 18 June 2020.

[4] This 'fresh start' was one of Ursula von der Leyen's commitments for her Commission in her political agenda, see: "A Union that strives for more, my agenda for Europe", 2019, p. 15.

[5] Marie Walter-Franke, "Redeploying EU asylum policy: A way out of the governance quagmire", Jacques Delors Centre, (June 2020), p. 5.

[6] William Walters, "Secure borders, safe haven, domopolitics", Citizenship Studies 8, no. 3 (2004); Sandra Lavenex, "Shifting up and out: The foreign policy of European immigration control", West European Politics 29, no. 2 (2006); Andrew Geddes and Peter Scholten, The politics of migration & immigration in Europe (Los Angeles: Sage, 2016), p. 238.

[7] Ursula von der Leyen, Statement at Kastenies Press Conference, 3 March 2020.

asylum policies, and the voices of civil society organisations and activists are growing louder. Nonetheless, 'home bias' remains predominant. A prime example is Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's praise of Greece as the 'European shield' for closing its borders to migrants and refugees during the crisis with Turkey in March 2020.[7] Home bias bolsters the politicization of CEAS reform, reproducing the framing of asylum and migration policies as part of security and identity politics.[8] The results are unfair both to the refugees and to the main receiving member states.

The second issue are the collective action problems hindering EU response when disembarking a search and rescue vessel or dealing with a humanitarian emergency like the one unfolding on Lesbos. Member states disagree fundamentally on models of solidarity. Any discussion on asylum offers opportunities for national politicians to score points with their electorates by dragging their feet in Brussels. Displays of discord harm the EU's credibility, and EU action is slow and costly. In the last reform cycle following the 2016 reform proposals, the Commission, the Parliament and successive Council presidencies con-

fronted veto players by building up political pressure: blocking one piece of the puzzle would make the whole CEAS reform fail.[9] This backfired: for Hungary, Austria, or Poland, the political gains of blocking CEAS reform were higher than the reputational costs. With the New Pact, the preferences of these actors are integrated within a new flexible model of solidarity, with the possibility to opt between relocating asylum applicants or taking over the responsibility to return applicants. However, the question remains: will member states cooperate effectively within such a system?

A new design for EU asylum policy

Home bias, collective action problems, and vulnerability to politicization are largely responsible for the slow progress of the CEAS reform effort since 2016. These problems are structural, but they can be tackled step by step. To do so, the way policy is designed as well as the set of actors involved in the decision-making process should evolve. This is where the idea of redeployment comes in. The design of EU asylum policy processes should be reconsidered along two axes, horizontal and vertical in a "redeployment" model as illustrated in Figure 1.

Horizontal redeployment

› Break-up asylum package
› Cross-cutting mainstreaming approach
› Redistribute competencies within EU institutions

Vertical redeployment

› Optimize implementation
› Redistribute competencies and resources
› Strengthen EU agencies
› Include and support sub-national actors

EU institutions

EU executive agencies

National governments

National checks and balances (judiciaries, ombudspersons etc.)

Regional and local actors

Figure 1: Redeployment model. Source: Marie Walter-Franke, 2020

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[8] Jef Huysmans, "The European Union and the Securitization of Migration", Journal of Common Market Studies 38, no. 5 (2000).
[9] Marie Walter-Franke, "Redeploying EU asylum policy: A way out of the governance quagmire", Jacques Delors Centre, (June 2020), p. 2.

Horizontal redeployment

Firstly, we need to acknowledge the cross-cutting nature of asylum policy. Receiving applicants, processing their claims, and eventually hosting refugees involve policy fields such as education, justice, employment, social affairs, law enforcement, foreign policy to name the most important. This fact should inspire policy design. Therefore, I propose horizontal redeployment which involves (i) disentangling the reform package, (ii) proceeding with a mainstreaming strategy, and (iii) reallocating elements of asylum policy outside the sphere of Home Affairs. With "mainstreaming strategy", I mean that every relevant resort within EU institutions should integrate the concern for the right to asylum and refugees' rights into their work, as was successfully done in other areas of fundamental rights.[10] Mainstreaming refugees' rights could help lift the home bias's restrictive influence on socio-economic and procedural rights.

Where mainstreaming is insufficient, competencies could be reallocated within EU institutions. Developing complementary tools in distinct forums could help address the CEAS's loopholes and weaknesses. For example, the last four years have shown that Home Affairs as a policy area is ill-suited to tackling migration-related emergencies with a tangible display of solidarity and sufficient respect for fundamental rights. Elsewhere[11] I suggested that a relevant structure to handle challenges such as large-scale arrivals, disembarkation, or evacuations could be rescEU, the EU civil protection reserve, which is getting a major budget increase in the corona recovery package.[12] By enhancing this structure, the EU could mobilize its own resources in support of member states facing large-scale arrivals and related challenges such as providing emergency care and appropriate shelter, counselling, and interpreting. A further area that should be handled in a separate forum, even if it remains part of Home Affairs, is reception. To that end, I proposed a dedicated "reception, integration and inclusion agenda". In that connection, the decision by the Commission to develop an "Action Plan on integration and inclusion"[13] is a positive step. In my view, its scope should also include the reception of asylum-seekers.

Vertical redeployment

Vertical redeployment is of equal importance. In question here is how to distribute responsibilities and resources to improve the ability of actors at each level of national and EU governance to help make the CEAS work. One of the most significant lessons learned from the last five years is the needs to acknowledge the contribution of local and regional actors in implementing EU asylum policy and to bestow them a stronger voice when it comes to policy development. As the main actors of reception and inclusion, local and regional stakeholders have a perspective on asylum that often differs fundamentally from the position taken by their respective governments. Where national governments are reluctant to redistribute EU resources or co-fund projects, direct EU funding can help local actors sustain crucial programs and infrastructure and put required measures in place.[14] The question of local and regional authorities' direct access to funding from the future Migration and Asylum Fund,[15] as well as from the European Social Fund and other structural sources of funding, has been embraced by the Commission's proposals for the next Multiannual Financial Framework. A majority in the European Parliament supports this evolution, but some member states are reluctant to lose control. On the other hand, direct funding to municipalities might ensure that structural funds available are actually disbursed. This argument might help convince member states currently struggling to use their allocated funding.

Vertical redeployment would also mean adjusting the contribution of the EU's executive agencies active in the field of asylum and protection, and their respective mandates, resources, and ability to monitor EU and national actors. Particularly, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) should be strengthened. Their capacities are not sufficient to fulfil their mandates, as they have grown slowly compared to the capacity of Frontex (the European

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[10] Children's rights, gender equality and inclusivity for persons living with disabilities. See Alexander Wolffhardt, "Sustaining mainstreaming of immigrant integration: Discussion Brief" (2018).

[11] Marie Walter-Franke, "Europe to the rescEU: The missing piece in EU migration management is civil protection", Policy Briefs (Jacques Delors Center, Hertie School, 2020).

[12] European Council Conclusions, Brussels, 21 July 2020, EUCO 10/20, p. 5.

[13] European Commission, "Integration of migrants: Commission launches a public consultation and call for an expert group on the views of migrants", Press Release, 22 July 2020.

[14] Petra Bendel et al., A Local Turn for European Refugee Politics: Recommendations for Strengthening Municipalities and Local Communities in refugee and asylum policy of the EU (Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung e.V., 2019).

[15] Proposed as replacement of the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

Border and Coast Guard). Meanwhile, the increasing power of EU agencies makes it imperative to develop appropriate mechanisms of accountability and transparency.

A versatile model

The redeployment strategy that I propose could encounter practical limitations. First, the distribution of competence lacks flexibility, especially in the European Council. Second, a deeper reallocation of competences horizontally and vertically would potentially require revising Article 78 TFEU and its legal basis. Due to the current lack of cohesion, there is a consensus that treaty change is not on the cards. This limits the scope of redeployment efforts. However, horizontal mainstreaming can be implemented in the short term: it does not require a reshuffle of formal competences. To address the negative impact of home bias, the redeployment approach can inspire the way collegiality[16] plays out in the Commission, how consultations are conducted in the elaboration of policy programs and legislative proposals, and how the Commission cooperates with subnational actors. When a situation of applicants and refugees intersects with policies outside the CEAS, the EU can try and exploit the full extent of flexibility under the current legal setup to include them in appropriate programs and legislation.

Another practical issue is of budgetary nature. Deep cuts in spending were announced by EU heads of state and governments compared to the migration budget proposed by the European Commission for the next multiannual financial framework (MFF).[17] If confirmed, such cuts will affect asylum policy as well. However, limiting the migration budget is not necessarily a drawback. Complementary solutions in overlapping policy areas such as civil protection, anti-discrimination, integration or employment could fill the gap, less encumbered by home bias. If sufficient flexibility can be secured, the recovery budget, structural funds and further resources will be available to support projects at all levels of EU governance, potentially with a positive impact on refugees.[18]

EU asylum policy at a turning point: redeployment can play a role.

There is now considerable momentum for reform. The "New Pact on Migration and Asylum" put forward a compromise to overcome member states' entrenched divisions. It relies on unprecedented efforts by Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson and Vice President Margaritis Schinas to consult all sitting governments and conciliate their interests and priorities. The key proposals of the Pact are to replace the current Dublin Regulation with a revamped responsibility-sharing system and to reorganise access to Europe and asylum processing on the external borders. Further initiatives shall follow within the next year on integration, returns, migrant smuggling, and legal migration.[19] The New Pact raised mixed reactions but if member states come together, things may move fast.[20]

My redeployment model provides a set of useful tools for the new reform cycle. The Pact is built like an umbrella. It covers a wide range of initiatives at varying stages of development. All aspects pertaining to integration and inclusion, long-term residency and legal migration channels are yet to come. As Vice President Margaritis Schinas stated, "legal migration [...] deserves its own narrative, divorced from discussion on irregular migration".[21] This is a decisively positive step, which provides the political space to implement horizontal and vertical redeployment on these issues.

For proposals already tabled, thinking in terms of vertical redeployment would help to focus the debate on feasibility and maximising EU added-value. There is a genuine risk that a political agreement might be reached on border processing and flexible solidarity, but then prove impracticable. One of the Pact's main proposals is the pre-screening of applicants at processing centres on the EU's external borders.[22] Applicants with good chances to obtain protection or benefit from family reunification could be relocated to other member states. All other applicants would remain in the border facilities for the whole asylum procedure;

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[16] Collegiality is a working method in the European Commission according to which decisions involve mutual consultation among Commission organs, and the college of commissioners – the EU's Council of Ministers – approves policy initiatives as a whole.

[17] European Council, Conclusions, Brussels, 21 July 2020, EUCO 10/20, p. 48.

[18] In this connection, the adoption of the Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve (SEAR), with a €1.2 million budget, is a very positive development.

[19] European Commission, "Roadmap to implement the New Pact on Migration and Asylum", Brussels, 23.9.2020, COM(2020) 609 final.

[20] The German Presidency of the Council of ministers set itself the ambitious goal of reaching a political agreement in Council by the last meeting of the JHA Council on 4 December 2020.

[21] Margaritis Schinas, "Speech by Vice-President Schinas on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum", 23 September 2020.

[22] Commission, Proposal for a Regulation introducing a screening of third country nationals at the external borders, COM(2020) 612 final.

and should the result be negative, until they are returned. Confinement in border processing centres resulting from EU policy is likely to replicate the grave deficiency in reception conditions displayed currently in the overcrowded hotspots. For any such facility to be safe for applicants and sustainable, local, and regional actors as well as civil society organisations should be involved in the planning from the conceptual phase. The same applies to the envisaged relocation system, which should capitalize on municipal and civil society activism in potential host states.

Further, the envisaged fast-track border procedures are likely to undermine the fairness of asylum procedures.[23] Here, the design of future cooperation between national authorities, EASO, Frontex, and other EU agencies as well as local and international NGOs should incorporate well-documented lessons learned. EU agencies should effectively support and unburden asylum administrations. NGOs should not have to compete for funding and access to the facilities. Effective coordination among governmental, non-governmental and international actors is essential. The European Commission is proposing to establish a human rights monitoring system. Here, part of the resource development of the EU agency should focus on mechanisms of accountability and transparency to put an end to a structural deficit in human rights protection under EU asylum and migration policies. [24]

Finally, the story does not end within the confines of the New Pact. To increase returns, the Pact foresees a holistic approach involving all relevant resorts from trade to development aid and security cooperation to improve the EU's cooperation with third countries. In my opinion, this thinking should also be applied to the internal dimension. Under a redeployment perspective, all relevant EU resources can and should be mobilised to work towards a more effective and human Common European Asylum System, in particular, to improve reception conditions and capacities and first response to

pressure, and to better protect fundamental rights of applicants and beneficiaries of international protection.

Conclusion

Finding effective means of dealing with asylum-seekers is of major importance for the future of the Union. The EU's credibility as a leader and mediator among member states is at stake. Progressing on asylum reforms is also crucial to the EU's internal cohesion: Mechanisms of solidarity are needed to prevent future governance crises. Beyond the internal dimension, the EU's global responsibility is at stake. Internal discord undermines the EU's relevance as a global player in multilateral migration governance.[25] EU policies also have substantial ripple effects on a global scale. Influenced by aid conditionality and processes of policy diffusion and imitation, many countries replicate EU practices that undermine liberty and access to protection. The EU should acknowledge its international responsibility as a shaper of norms and act in accordance with its constitutional values. Overall, the Union needs positive outcomes so it can defuse the volatile character of asylum policy. The adoption of reforms of non-controversial aspects of the CEAS, displays of tangible solidarity, the diversification of policy-making forums, and complementary solutions can deliver the positive experiences needed to move forward on responsibility-sharing and the further harmonization of asylum norms and procedures.

[23] Commission, Asylum Procedures Regulation, COM(2020) 611 final. https://www.delorscentre.eu/en/publications/detail/publication/border-procedures-in-the-pact-on-asylum-migration-clear-fair-and-fast

[24] See detailed analysis of issues of accountabilities with EU agencies in Jürgen Bast, Frederik von Harbou and Jana Wessels, Human Rights Challenges to European Migration Policy (REMAP study), first edition, 27 October 2020, p. 81-96.

[25] See Sergio Carrera e Roberto Cortinovis, "The EU's Role in Implementing the UN Global Compact on Refugees: Contained Mobility vs. International Protection", CEPS Paper in Liberty and Security in Europe 2019-04 (CEPS, Brussels, 2019).

Green Deal & Europe's New Sovereignty –

The current crisis as an accelerator for progress?

Virginijus Sinkevičius, European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries

At a moment when the European Green Deal is approaching its first anniversary, there is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has hit us hard, and unexpectedly, and that its effects for our society and the economy are extremely serious. Over the last eight months, the crisis has thrown a sharp light on our vulnerabilities.

But like all crisis, the pandemic also provides opportunities that we cannot afford to miss. This troubling, unwanted experience takes us way out of our comfort zone. There is no going back – this is where the opportunity lies.

President von der Leyen repeatedly stressed that in challenging times, political leaders have to look wide and far ahead. The COVID-19 crisis has made clear that Europe needs to enhance its resilience – which is the ability not only to withstand and cope with challenges but also to undergo transitions in a sustainable, fair and democratic manner. The crisis reaffirmed the need to make sure that policies are evidence-based, future-proof, centred on resilience, and serve both the current needs and longer-term aspirations of European citizens and our society as a whole.

While there is no going back, looking back and learning from history is at the heart of the European project. Charlemagne, often presented as a grandfather of the European Union, could only achieve the formation of a European Empire through his outstanding awareness about the connection between politics, power and science, following his motto "Right action is better than knowledge; but in order to do what is right, we must know what is right."

Scientific evidence is unequivocal: climate change, terrestrial and marine biodiversity loss, excessive use of resources and pollution on land and at sea are existential and global emergencies. Tackling the challenge of climate change and environmental degradation is this generation's defining task. The full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Climate Agreement, and internationally agreed biodiversity goals are crucial to equip the world for future systemic shocks.

Europe's response is the EU Recovery Plan that is underpinned by the European Green Deal, our new growth strategy and our plan to build a more sustainable, smart, resilient and future-proof economy by proposing solutions for the long term while leaving no one behind. It is driven by scientific evidence and economic logic.

Tackling the current existential environmental crisis requires systemic solutions.

In a matter of months since the beginning of the political mandate, this Commission has taken action on several fronts. The actions it has initiated will ensure that resource use is decoupled from economic growth by promoting the transition to a circular economy, biodiversity loss is halted and reversed, support is available to the development of key technologies that are needed to achieve a carbon-neutral and digital society, to promote climate proof buildings, smart mobility solutions and a sustainable food system. Protecting and restoring natural ecosystems, both terrestrial and marine, and reducing the pollution of our air, land, water and oceans are key to boosting our resilience, and again, in the interest of our health and well-being. The EU has also reiterated its commitment to its 2050 climate neutrality objective and challenges anyone to beat it so the whole of humanity wins.

The European Green Deal also guides the EU financial package for the economic recovery, which is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to deliver a green economic recovery. The Next Generation EU, including the new Recovery and Resilience Facility will finance the bulk of the recovery measures with €750 billion raised on the financial markets for 2021-2024. It will provide large-scale financial support to reforms and investments in Member States in order to mitigate the economic and

Public money can only provide part of the enormous investments needs required to meet the European Green Deal's objectives.

social impacts of the pandemic and make the EU economies more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for future challenges,

In her State of the Union speech of 16 September 2020, President von der Leyen announced that 37% of the Next Generation EU budget would go directly to the European Green Deal objectives. However, public money can only provide part of the enormous investments needs required to meet the European Green Deal's objectives: €240bn additional annual investment to meet the current 2030 climate and energy targets; €100bn per year to deliver on Europe's transport infrastructure; €130bn per year for other environmental objectives.

Let's take investments in the circular economy as an example: They will not only help reduce the overall environmental and climate footprints of our production and consumption systems, but will also generate significant costs savings for EU businesses. Today, in Europe, only 12% of materials we use are reused or recycled. Though the EU does slightly better than the global average, it is not enough. Additional efforts will be necessary and will also contribute to reducing the EU's dependence on third countries for critical raw materials, which has been highlighted by the crisis. Or investments in nature-based solutions: restoring the flood protection capacity of our river systems, restoring drained peatlands or greening cities will not only help mitigating the effects of climate change and benefit citizens' health, but will also generate important opportunities for businesses and job creation.

Digitalisation is another driving force of the EU economy. It can become a powerful enabler for the green transition. At the same time, if left unchecked, the digital sector can also accelerate unsustainable patterns of consumption and its footprint could increase to 14% of global emissions. The EU is committed to building a digital sector that puts sustainability at its heart.

Investments in sustainable solutions will provide significant long-term competitive advantages. The EU's industry has now an opportunity to become leaders in innovative technologies, front-runners in sustainable and green products, and designers of a new economic model. The European Green Deal offers businesses a coherent vision for sustainable and resilient business models, which are biodiversity-friendly, low-carbon and circular. Still too many companies focus on short-term financial performance compared to long-term resilience.

In 2021, the Commission will present a renewed sustainable finance strategy to provide a roadmap with new actions to increase private investment in sustainable projects and activities to support the different actions set out in the European Green Deal and to manage and integrate climate and environmental risks into our financial system.

The recently adopted plan to increase climate targets to at least 55% shows all sectors have to decarbonise. As long as carbon capture technologies are not ready to be deployed at large scale, photosynthesis remains our best ally. For this, we need to protect and restore our ecosystems, including through reforestation and afforestation that respects ecological principles: climate and biodiversity action must go hand in hand. Scaling up and stepping up the implementation of nature-based solutions delivering multiple benefits is key.

The challenges we face are unprecedented. They are closely connected, and we are still surrounded by a process of rapid, dynamic change. The threats are systemic, and mostly linked to our behaviour, to mankind interfering with nature, and pushing the planet beyond its natural boundaries. This is new territory and business as usual will not help because such systemic issues cannot be solved with ad hoc, sectoral, short term interventions. The crosscutting approach taken by the Charlemagne Prize Academy and its ambition to combine practical knowledge with scientific approaches reflects this vision and your fellowship programme is a welcome contribution in this regard.

The Charlemagne Prize Academy rightly insists that none of these objectives can be achieved without solidarity between and within European countries. Indeed, the commitment of the public and of all stakeholders is crucial to the success of the European Green Deal. The pandemic has deepened inequalities, increased demographic imbalances and poverty, accelerated automation, and had a disproportionate impact on service sector jobs. People are concerned about jobs, heating their homes and making ends meet. Recent political events show that game-changing policies only work if citizens are fully involved in designing them. At a time, when the European Union is facing what is probably the greatest challenge in its history, citizens are and should remain a driving force of the transition. They are and will remain at the heart of our European unification project, which the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen celebrates each year.

News consumption and misperceptions about the COVID-19 Crisis:

What can we learn to strenghten resilience in the EU?

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Tackling misinformation in the EU

Misinformation is seen as one of the major challenges faced by global democracies, due to its potential effects on political attitudes and voting behavior.[1] This article explores what can be done to prevent misinformation effects in the European Union by studying how people informed themselves about the COVID-19, and which were the most common misperceptions, in two countries: Spain and the UK. The past few years, both countries have been experiencing political crises interfered with several kinds of misinformation.[2] Now, the COVID-19 pandemic has unveiled the weaknesses of the more polarized liberal democracies. But this crisis also offers an unprecedented opportunity to learn how to build resilience to misinformation, to protect the EU and the other global democracies.

Europe has long been a referent of democracy and freedom, and its responsibility is to tackle misinformation without resorting to censorship strategies that violate democratic rights. While the discussion about regulation of news media, digital platforms, and political advertising is ongoing, there is a broad agreement about the need to generate democratic resilience by promoting civic education, and media and digital literacy to

[1] See Bayer, J., Bitiukova, N., Bard, P., Szakács, J., Alemanno, A., & Uszkiewicz, E. (2019). Disinformation and Propaganda – Impact on the Functioning of the Rule of Law in the EU and its Member States.

[2] See EUvsDisinfo (2019). Information manipulation in elections and referenda: Pro-Kremlin disinformation in figures. Retrieved September 10, 2020, from https://euvsdisinfo.eu/information-manipexamples-of-pro-kremlin-disinformation-in-figures/

protect citizens from misinformation exposure.[3] Since 2016, the European Commission has undertaken several initiatives to foster media and digital literacy.[4] However, understanding the drivers of misinformation is still necessary to design appropriate and effective educational programs for each of the Member States.

Democratic resilience to misinformation in Spain and the UK

The Catalan independence process and Brexit have polarized public opinion and fostered several forms of populism, nationalism and extremism, in Spain and the UK. The more polarized countries and their media systems are, the more the citizens engage in selective media exposure, which means that they are more likely to consume only pro-attitudinal content.[5] Also, populist attitudes lead to the consumption of partisan news sites and the use of social media platforms for accessing and sharing pro-attitudinal content.[6] The rise of populism is accompanied by a rise of distrust in democratic institutions and established media.[7] These trends intensify the diffusion and consumption of misinformation, which is driven by psychological mechanisms leading people to believe information that confirms their worldviews.[8] These mechanisms, together with partisan media coverage, generate misperceptions: beliefs that are false or contradict the best available evidence.

Spain and the UK have two different media systems that determine partisanship in news consumption, distrust in legacy news media outlets, and the subsequent misperceptions, to varying degrees. Traditionally, literature has stated that the polarized pluralist system, present in some Southern European countries, is marked by higher levels of ideological alignment between news outlets and political tendencies, and by higher audience polarization.[9] Another difference between the polarized pluralist system in Spain and the liberal in the UK has to do with Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs). While the UK has BBC, a strong PSB that is widely used, trusted, and well-funded, the one in Spain (RTVE) have a low audience reach and trust because it is characterized by significant government intervention. Exposure to counter-attitudinal news and more pluralist views is supposed to be more likely in a media system with a strong PSB, because the quantity and quality of the news are higher and more balanced, presenting diverging perspectives.[10]

Some authors point out that Southern European countries may be less resilient to misinformation mainly due to the aforementioned characteristics of their media systems, and to the higher levels of populism, distrust, and social media use.[11] However, the same authors and other studies suggest that misinformation could become a greater threat to other European countries and global democracies, where there are also polarized debates and high levels of news audience polarization such as the UK.[12] This article analyses the extent to which online news users from Spain and the UK were resilient to misinformation about COVID-19 by studying how news media consumption trends affected misperceptions during the first two months of the crisis. The analysis is based on a novel dataset that contains web-tracking data and a two-wave survey, combining observed patterns of news consumption on mobile and desktop devices, and self-reported data of the same individuals. The sample consists of more than 700 users in Spain and 600 in the UK, covering the period of lockdown in each country, from mid-March to mid-May 2020. The data was collected and provided by two commercial market research companies: Netquest (Spain) and YouGov (UK).

[3] See European Commission (2018). A multi-dimensional approach to disinformation. Report of the independent High level Group on fake news and online disinformation.

[4] See European Commission (2018). Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach. Retrieved September 15, 2020, from https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/communication-tackling-online-disinformation-european-approach

[5] See Stroud, N. J. (2010). Polarization and Partisan Selective Exposure. 60, 556–576.

[6] See Stier, S., Kirkizh, N., Froio, C., & Schroeder, R. (2020). Populist Attitudes and Selective Exposure to Online News: A Cross-Country Analysis Combining Web Tracking and Surveys. The International Journal of Press/Politics, 25(3), 426–446; and Hameleers, M., Bos, L., & de Vreese, C. H. (2017). The Appeal of Media Populism: The Media Preferences of Citizens with Populist Attitudes. Mass Communication and Society, 20(4), 481–504.

[7] See Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Kalogeropoulos, A., & Nielsen, R. K. (2019). Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2019.

[8] See Shane, T. (2020). The psychology of misinformation: Why we're vulnerable. Retrieved from https://firstdraftnews.org/latest/the-psychology-of-misinformation-why-were-vulnerable/

[9] See Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2017). Ten Years After Comparing Media Systems: What Have We Learned? Political Communication, 34(2), 155–171.

[10] See Castro-Herrero, L., Nir, L., & Skovsgaard, M. (2018). Bridging Gaps in Cross-Cutting Media Exposure: The Role of Public Service Broadcasting. Political Communication, 35(4), 542–565.

[11] See Humprecht, E., Esser, F., & Van Aelst, P. (2020). Resilience to Online Disinformation: A Framework for Cross-National Comparative Research. International Journal of Press/Politics.

[12] See Fletcher, R., Cornia, A., & Nielsen, R. K. (2020). How Polarized Are Online and Offline News Audiences? A Comparative Analysis of Twelve Countries. International Journal of Press/Politics, 25(2), 169–195. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161219892768

News consumption patterns during the lockdown

During the first months of the crisis, news consumption increased in Spain and the UK, and users accessed online news mainly through mobile devices, going directly to a news site or app.[13] The tracking of online news consumption patterns in Spain and the UK reveals that users mainly relied on established news media outlets to inform themselves during the two first months of the COVID-19 crisis (Figures 1 and 2). Digital editions of newspapers and broadcasters received most visits. In Spain, digital-born outlets were also among the most important news brands (El Confidencial, Eldiario.es, OkDiario). In the UK, BBC had the greatest leadership and was far more visited than RTVE in Spain and CCMA in Catalonia.

Both online news media markets in the UK and Spain were perceived by our sample as highly polarized (Figures 1 and 2). The most visited online sites in Spain and the UK had at least some level of right-left perceived skew. Even though, most of them were closer to the center than the majority of digital native outlets, which were perceived as more skewed and received fewer visits. In the UK, among the most visited legacy outlets there were brands perceived as even more biased than in Spain. Online sites of PSBs in both countries were also perceived as slightly skewed to the respective government's political leaning: RTVE and TV3 to the left, and the BBC to the right. Especially remarkable is the BBC case because its audience is mostly left-leaning.[14] This perceived lack of political independence of most news outlets is associated with distrust that decreased during recent years in both countries and was already low when the COVID-19 crisis started.[15] At the end of the lockdown in May, trust in almost all information sources decreased again, and political institutions and news media outlets were the less trusted.[16] In the UK, BBC was an exception, because more than half of users trusted it, but jointly with the UK Government lost

Perceived left-right bias of the most visited online news outlets Spain
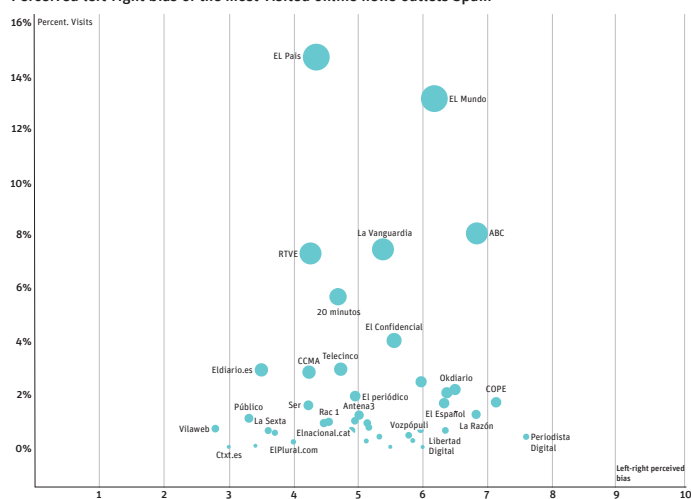
Figure 1:
Left- right bias of the online news media outlets accessed from mid-March to mid-May 2020 in Spain. Source: Own analysis.

Perceived left-right bias of the most visited online news outlets in the UK
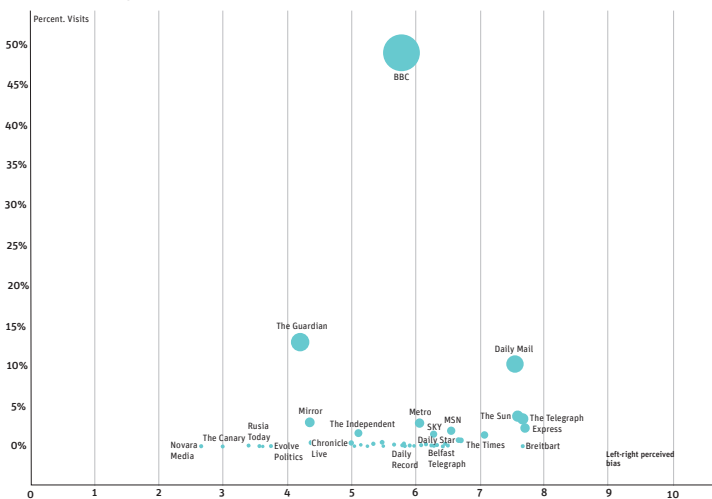
Figure 2:
Left-right bias of the online news media outlets accessed from mid-March to mid-May 2020 in the UK. Source: Own analysis.

[13] See further in Victoria-Mas, M. (2020a). News consumption patterns, misinformation perceptions and trust during the COVID-19 crisis in Spain. Retrieved from https://www.charlemagneprizeacademy.com/en/publications/factsheet-news-consumption-patterns-and-misinformation-perceptions-during-the-covid-19-crisis-in-spain; and Victoria-Mas, M. (2020b). News consumption patterns, misinformation perceptions and trust during the covid-19 crisis in the UK. Retrieved from https://www.charlemagneprizeacademy.com/en/publications/factsheet-news-consumption-patterns-and-misinformation-perceptions-during-the-covid-19-crisis-in-the-uk

[14] See Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Kalogeropoulos, A., Levy, D. a. L., & Nielsen, R. (2017). Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 1–108.

[15] See Newman, N., Richard Fletcher, W., Schulz, A., Andı, S., & Kleis Nielsen, R. (2020). Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2020.

[16] See further in Victoria-Mas, M. (2020a). News consumption patterns, misinformation perceptions and trust during the COVID-19 crisis in Spain. Retrieved from https://www.charlemagneprizeacademy.com/en/publications/factsheet-news-consumption-patterns-and-misinformation-perceptions-during-the-covid-19-crisis-in-spain; and Victoria-Mas, M. (2020b). News consumption patterns, misinformation perceptions and trust during the covid-19 crisis in the UK. Retrieved from https://www.charlemagneprizeacademy.com/en/publications/factsheet-news-consumption-patterns-and-misinformation-perceptions-during-the-covid-19-crisis-in-the-uk

Side doors to online news outlets in Spain and the UK

■ Spain **■ UK**

Google	Spain 56.8% / UK 73.4%
WhatsApp	Spain 16.4% / UK 0.1%
Facebook	Spain 11.3% / UK 4.3%
Youtube	Spain 5.7% / UK 1.5%
Twitter	Spain 5.3% / UK 1.4%
Instagram	Spain 1.8% / UK 1.1%
Bing	Spain 0.7% / UK 4.8%
Telegram	Spain 0.4% / UK 0.0%
Yahoo	Spain 0.3% / UK 0.2%
Facebook messenger	Spain 0.0% / UK 0.1%
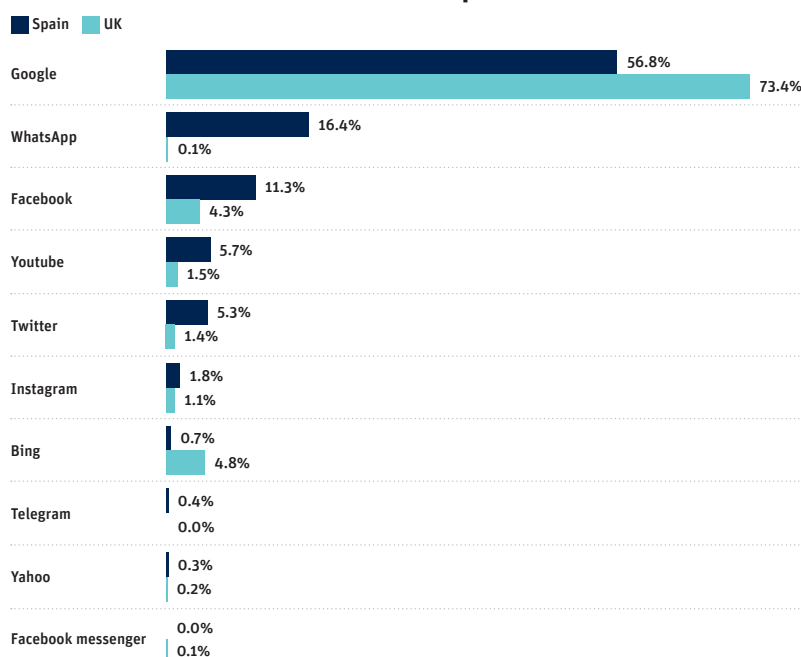
Figure 3:
Side-doors to online news in Spain and the UK during the two first months of the COVID-19 crisis. Source: Own analysis.

credibility for more people than other sources.[17] Most users in both countries blamed governments and politicians for spreading disinformation, but average levels of trust in governments and news organizations are almost identical, perhaps reflecting the way that many media organizations focused on amplifying government messages. [18]

Distrust in democratic and media institutions is concerning when it leads to access information mainly through alternative online platforms and news sites, where most bottom-up and partisan misinformation is shared.[19] During the two first

months of the crisis, social media platforms were the second main access door to the news.[20] However, while in Spain they were almost as important as news media sites or apps, in the UK they were a secondary option. Digital tracking of news consumption shows the great relevance of social media and, also notably, of messaging apps such as WhatsApp, as side doors to the news in Spain in contrast with the UK (Figure 3).

Misperceptions about the new coronavirus
The surveyed users were asked how certain they were about the truthfulness of some claims and conspiracy theories spread

[17] See further in Victoria-Mas, M. (2020b). News consumption patterns, misinformation perceptions and trust during the covid-19 crisis in the UK. Retrieved from https://www.charlemagneprizeacademy.com/en/publications/factsheet-news-consumption-patterns-and-misinformation-perceptions-during-the-covid-19-crisis-in-the-uk

[18] See Newman, N., Richard Fletcher, W., Schulz, A., Andı, S., & Kleis Nielsen, R. (2020). Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2020.

[19] See Brennen, A. J. S., Simon, F. M., Howard, P. N., & Nielsen, R. K. (2020). Types, Sources, and Claims of COVID-19 Misinformation. Retrieved April 15, 2020, from https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/types-sources-and-claims-covid-19-misinformation

[20] See further in Victoria-Mas, M. (2020a). News consumption patterns, misinformation perceptions and trust during the COVID-19 crisis in Spain. Retrieved from https://www.charlemagneprizeacademy.com/en/publications/factsheet-news-consumption-patterns-and-misinformation-percep-tions-during-the-covid-19-crisis-in-spain; and Victoria-Mas, M. (2020b). News consumption patterns, misinformation perceptions and trust during the covid-19 crisis in the UK. Retrieved from https://www.charlemagneprizeacademy.com/en/publications/factsheet-news-consumption-patterns-and-mi-sinformation-perceptions-during-the-covid-19-crisis-in-the-uk

in each country, or internationally, and debunked by several fact-checking services and news media outlets.[21] Most of them were not credible. Users in both countries demonstrated to be aware of the best evidence on the origin of the new coronavirus and its remedies after the first two months of the lockdown. However, some false claims gained credibility for remarkable percentages of users (Tables 1 and 2). Political propaganda was the kind of misinformation that gathered credibility for higher percentages of people in both countries. This kind of misinformation is composed of false claims spread by political or unknown sources, but with some apparent partisan intention.[22]

In the UK, the left-wing and the apparently anti-Brexit false claims were considered the most credible, although a claim from the conservative government also earned some credibility. The claim believed by a great majority (60.6%) was the one made by Keir Starmer (leader of the Labour Party), about the rise of deaths in care homes.[23] Another false claim against the UK Government widely shared on Facebook and Twitter was the most credible: 30.5% believed and 33.1% were not sure about the fact that Boris Johnson refused 50,000 ventilators offered by the EU.[24] Also remarkable is the false statement made by the UK Health Secretary, Matt Hancock, who stated that the

Most common misperceptions in the UK

Type of Misinformation	Claim	Source	Platform	Partisanship	Credibility in the UK
Propaganda	Death in care homes are rising	Politician	News outlets	Left-wing	60.6%
Misleading claim	Ibuprofen can agravate the infection	Politician	Facebook and Twitter	None	39.9%
Propaganda	Johnson refuses ventilatos from the EU	Unknown	Whats App and Twitter	Unknown	30.5%
Propaganda	Governmen hits its pledges about number of tests	Politician	News outlets	Right-wing	22.8%

Table 1:
Most common misperceptions about the Covid-19 in the UK during the two first months of the Covid-19 crisis. Source: Own analysis/ Poynter/ IFCN/ Chequeado.

Most common misperceptions in Spain

Type of Misinformation	Claim	Source	Platform	Partisanship	Credibility in Spain
Propaganda	Spain is the country with most deaths	Politicians	Social media and news outlets	Right-wing	33.5%
Propaganda	WhatsApp censors messages	Unknown	WhatsApp	Unknown	27.0%
Conspiracy theory	Coronavirus is a bioweapon	Unknown	Facebook and WhatsApp	Unknown	23.3%
Misleading claim	Ibuprofen can agravate the infection	Politician	Facebook and Twitter	None	22.9%

Table 2:
Most common misperceptions about the Covid-19 in Spain during the two first months of the Covid-19 crisis. Source: Own analysis/ Poynter/ IFCN/ Chequeado.

[21] See further in Victoria-Mas, M. (2020a). News consumption patterns, misinformation perceptions and trust during the COVID-19 crisis in Spain. Retrieved from https://www.charlemagneprizeacademy.com/en/publications/factsheet-news-consumption-patterns-and-misinformation-perceptions-during-the-covid-19-crisis-in-spain; and Victoria-Mas, M. (2020b). News consumption patterns, misinformation perceptions and trust during the covid-19 crisis in the UK. Retrieved from https://www.charlemagneprizeacademy.com/en/publications/factsheet-news-consumption-patterns-and-misinformation-perceptions-during-the-covid-19-crisis-in-the-uk

[22] See Kleis Nielsen, R., & Graves, L. (2017). "News you don't believe": Audience perspectives on fake news. (Accessed June 2020) https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/news-you-dont-believe-audience-perspectives-fake-news

[23] See Full Fact (2020) "Covid-19 deaths in care homes have started to fall" (Accessed May 2020) https://fullfact.org/health/care-homes-starmer-johnson/

[24] See Full Fact (2020) "No, the UK didn't turn down 50,000 ventilators offered by the EU" (Accessed May 2020) https://fullfact.org/online/50-thousand-ventilators/

Government was achieving its target of COVID-19 tests: 22.8% believed that was true and 15.4% were not sure. [25]

In Spain, right-wing and apparently populist propaganda was considered the most credible: 33.5% believed that Spain was the country with the most deaths by the number of inhabitants in the world, a misleading claim spread by right-wing Spanish politicians[26]; 27% believed that WhatsApp was censoring critical messages against the Spanish Government.[27] This late malicious hoax was spread via social platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp by unknown sources.[28] But its implicit sense of distrust in political institutions and the establishment, leads to believe that populist movements may have had a key role in its creation or distribution.

Some other misleading claims and conspiracy theories spread internationally, mainly through social media platforms, were credible for remarkable percentages of the sample. The Ibuprofen's potential harmful effect on the infection spread by the French Health Minister gathered credibility for considerable percentages of people in both countries (22.9% in Spain and 39.9% in the UK). This viral misinformation, spread mostly on Twitter and Facebook, had a massive impact mainly because it was propagated by a credible source (the French Health Minister), and thereby also replicated by news media outlets.[29] Also, the intentional creation of the virus as a bioweapon gained credibility for a significant percentage of users in Spain (23.3% were certain or very certain), in contrast with the UK (9.1%). This theory was fed by multiple viral claims distributed mainly through Facebook and WhatsApp. [30]

Generating democratic resilience to misinformation by empowering citizens

During the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic in Spain and the UK, misinformation did not have an overall penetration. However, propaganda and some other kind of misinformation caused misperceptions in notable numbers of users from both countries. News consumption levels increased and users mainly relied on established news media brands to inform themselves about the pandemic, but misleading statements from politicians were also amplified by these news media outlets. Additionally, social media platforms were the second main access door to news and the main channel through which most credible partisan malicious hoaxes were spread. Especially in Spain, they were almost as important as the news media sites, most people shared and discussed news through WhatsApp, and the conspiracy theory about the intentional creation of the virus gathered some credibility.

This article explored some of the drivers of misinformation in order to propose measures to prevent misinformation effects and strengthen resilience in the EU. The analysis shows that, although most users were well-informed, some of them were more vulnerable to misinformation. As previous research has shown, usually the less educated were the ones that spent less time in news consumption during the first months of the pandemic.[31] Additionally, if users hold partisan or populist attitudes, they are more likely to believe information that confirms their own worldviews, regardless of the platform or news outlet from which they access news.

This analysis indicates that the measures undertaken by the European Commission to promote media and digital education, aiming to increase democratic resilience, need to remain a priority. But specifically, the supported initiatives should focus on promoting not only an instrumental digital competence among users, so they know how to fact-check contents, but more importantly, critical thinking skills to know when they need to do it. If they are aware of the different political ideologies and their persuasion strategies, in each of the Member States, but also of their own cognitive biases, they will be less vulnerable to partisan and populist misleading messages even from credible and official sources. In that way, media literacy should include civic education contents to foster a well-informed citizenry, balanced in news consumption, and able to build their opinion far from the most polarized extremes in their countries.

[25] See Full Fact (2020) "Government misses one of its Covid-19 test targets" (Accessed May 2020) https://fullfact.org/health/coronavirus-test-targets/

[26] See Newtral (2020) "Pablo Casado: «[España tiene] la peor cifra de muertos por habitante del mundo»" (Accessed June 2020) https://www.newtral.es/pablo-casado-muertos-habitante-coronavirus/20200613/

[27] Maldita.es (2020) "No hay nadie controlando, revisando o censurando el contenido de tus mensajes de WhatsApp" (Accessed May 2020) https://maldita.es/malditobulo/2020/04/14/censura-whatsapp-control-whatsapp-gobierno-maldita/

[28] See Chequeado (2020). "Información chequeada sobre el Coronavirus" in: https://chequeado.com/latamcoronavirus/

[29] See Xaudiera, S., & Cardenal, A. S. (2020). "Ibuprofen Narratives in Five European Countries During the COVID-19 Pandemic". Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review (Accesssed June 2020) https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/ibuprofen-narratives-in-five-european-countries-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/

[30] See Poynter (2020) "The CoronaVirusFacts/DatosCoronaVirus Alliance Database" (Accessed September 2020) https://www.poynter.org/ifcn-covid-19-misinformation/

[31] See Fletcher, R., Kalogeropoulos, A., Simon, F. M., & Nielsen, R. K. (2020). Information inequality in the UK coronavirus communications crisis. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-07/Fletcher_et_al_Information_Inequality_FINAL.pdf

Insights from the research year 2019/20

## 14th November 2019: Kick-Off Summit in Aachen

"Let us debate EU issues in an open and differentiated manner – including **pros and cons**. It has to be clear to citizens, what they would miss, if the EU were gone."

Prof. Dr. Christine Neuhold, Professor of EU Democratic Governance, Maastricht University

"We need to understand better that we're a Union of **continental scale**. We need to stop approaching overarching issues as the individual problems of single member states."

Klaus Welle, Secretary-General of the European Parliament
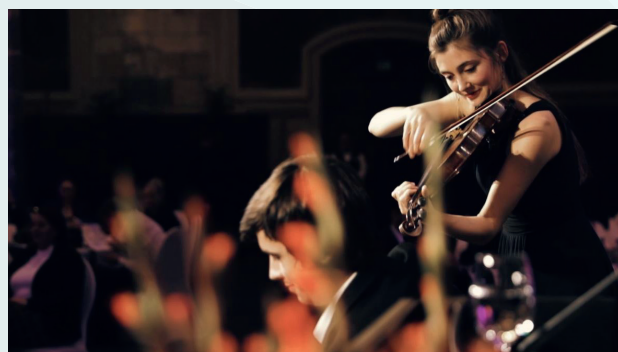
"I encourage everyone to ask for **efficiency** in decision-making - in the digital economy, in social protection in a globalized world and in environmental policies. This, as well as an increased knowledge on the decision-making process, would serve the legitimacy of the EU institutions and the response to intra-European challenges."

Juan Pablo García-Berdoy, Ambassador Permanent Representative of Spain to the European Union

"The European states can only make their voices heard - even with a total of 500 million inhabitants - if they also speak with a **common voice** on foreign and security policy. Otherwise we will all - individually - loose our influence in global politics."

General Egon Ramms, Former Commander of NATO's Joint Force Command in Brunssum

February 2020: Charlemagne Prize Breakfast at the Munich Security Conference

"We are in need of one thing: we need our governments to feel like formal stake-holders in a company called EU. We need good governance, civil society, stable institutions and we need to do things the European way."

Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President of the European Commission

November 2020: handover to five new projects

How can the development of an EU democratic acquis foster transnational solidarity after the COVID-19 crisis?

Sophie Pornschlegel (DE/FR)
Senior Policy Analyst and Project Lead "Connecting Europe, European Policy Center (EPC) Brussels

How to achieve the EU's strategic autonomy in security and defense while upholding the transatlantic alliance?

Dr. Iulian Romanyshyn (UA)
Researcher, Center for Advanced Security, Strategic and Integration Studies (CASSIS), University of Bonn

What would solidarity-based approaches mean for the creation of common European data spaces?

Dr. Photini Vrikki (CY)
Lecturer in Digital Media and Culture, King's College London

How can shorter supply chains protect EU jobs, businesses and strengthen Europe's economy?

Radu George Dumitrescu (RO)
PhD Candidate, University of Bucharest

How has movement shaped solidarity within the European Union? How does the inability to move alter perceptions of European solidarity?

Hannah Pool (DE)
Researcher, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne

Insights from the virtual Karlspreis Europa Summit

13.11.2020

Europe's Economy Post-COVID: A Crisis of European Solidarity?

"In the first half of 2020, the pandemic led to the worst economic slump in decades - it is a turning point in many respects. However, compared to the financial market crisis, we should take into account the different starting situations: Corona is an external shock that first hits companies. It was not caused by banks. Today, European banks are **part of the solution** to overcome this crisis".

Marija Kolak, President of the National Association of German Cooperative Banks (BVR)

"We are facing a crisis of a magnitude that we've never experienced in a period of peace before. This calls for solidarity as well as solidity. If the entrepreneurs do not want to invest at the moment, this is because we do not have a proper perspective in contrast to a wide range of uncertainty. And it is because we do not see **leadership**. We will need new leadership and a vision of where we are going. And I, as a businessman, say that we need a fiscal Europe and a social Europe across all states. Someone must have the courage to change something - and while crises are always times of change, there will be winners and losers. Solidarity also implies giving."

Chevalier Yves Noël
Chairman of the Board of Directors at NMC S.A.

"Solidarity can only be described as such, if it is not forced. In my understanding, solidarity is always just a complement to one's own efforts but not a substitute for them. We often have to deal with an understanding of solidarity that seeks to shift the burden and efforts onto others. Sometimes it turns out that money seems to be the only cement that holds the EU together today, while the importance of common values is dwindling. If we have to negotiate and enforce something like the rule of law - a basic prerequisite for EU membership - and even that is sometimes not successful, then with each new question it will boil down to making even more money available. Thus, if money is the only cement and if we fail to regain a common spirit, common will and common values and so the real ability to act together - then the question comes up whether such an EU is worth all that money."

Rolf-Dieter Krause
German Television Journalist

"To overcome the crisis, a 750-billion-euro fund has now been set up and a reasonable EU budget has been agreed on. However, I would prefer this money to be collected on the capital markets - from savers - who would like to buy government securities in the wake of their surplus savings. But this is currently impossible, as these securities are supposed to be sold essentially to the ECB. Europe is therefore ultimately doing what systems have always done in the past: If you have access to the printing press, you print the money to finance the corresponding expenditure. This happened on a huge scale during the euro crisis and is happening again in course of the corona crisis. With the programmes that have already been agreed, by summer next year the European Central Bank's money supply will have increased six-fold compared to 2008, and that for a European economy that was not much bigger back then than it is now."

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Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Hans-Werner Sinn
German Economist, Former President of the Institute for Economic Research (ifo)

How can we overcome European discrepancies?

"When things go wrong, you realise that they can only be solved together - economic crisis, migration crisis and now the pandemic. That's why crisis has always been **a chance for European development,** because at that moment everybody realized that one cannot do it alone, we have to pull ourselves together to find a common solution. I hope that after the pandemic it will not collapse again, but that we have all understood that common problems cannot be solved by closing borders. Just as these problems are boundless, they require a boundless response."

Viviane Reding
Former EU Commissioner and MEP

"What we have seen this spring is a great sign of solidarity that has gone far beyond the previous competences. It was not so much about having a strong Brussels as about helping each other. This means that in this crisis, people - in Western and Northern Europe - are experiencing that the EU is not just a currency and a market, but also a bloc in the world and a community of values."

Prof. Dr. Luuk van Middelaar
Dutch Historian and Political Philosopher, Member of the Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs

Outlook for 2021

Prof. Dr. Thomas Prefi, Chairman of the Charlemagne Prize Foundation

In 2020, Europe has faced distinctive, unpredictable, and generational challenges.

While technological development is moving ever faster, and the global impact of crises and obstacles is perceptible for every individual, European unity is of paramount importance, as it has implications for tackling the effects of the current pandemic on all economic and social sectors, but also sets the course for positioning Europe within global progress in the years to come.

In this report we have focused on three key areas within this frame of progress: Carrying responsibility as a European Community, the integration of commonly shared European values, and the consolidation of European institutions. Through these pillars of understanding Europe, various aspects can be identified and further explored. Within the framework of the Charlemagne Prize Academy, we aim to filter out and highlight precisely these aspects, propose possible solutions to current and future challenges, before and while they appear in public discourse, and create an information base for the topics of today and tomorrow.

The themes selected in 2019 were influenced by very different events in 2020 - and this to an entirely unexpected extent. Previous work and priorities have had to be adapted, and the attention in Europe and around the world has shifted. Yet, the topics presented in this report are even increased in their importance. They build on the aspects that were cast aside in order to react to the global pandemic.

They will however soon become more prominent again in order to deal with the effects post-COVID. This will certainly be further promoted by the forthcoming decisions to establish the Conference on the Future of Europe and in that regard the ideas on how to make the EU institutions more responsive and effective. Since major changes are often associated with crises, the current situation may present an opportunity to make the EU more accessible at its core to the European public and its individual capacities, using the momentum of highly necessary actions.

The decisions on a reformed and uniform EU asylum policy have been repeatedly suppressed and blocked. However, this will not be possible to the same extent in the future if Europe wants to act as a common actor and be able to solve problems in unity. Migration flows as a major subject matter will not disappear in the years ahead. Asylum policy as a constant bone of contention between member states will, however, weaken the EU in the long run, whereas in the current situation it rather needs strengthening.

The debate on the future enlargement of the EU is also heated and will not subside in the coming years. As new countries are granted candidate status, it will be important to consider integration, enlargement, and connectivity from all possible angles and dimensions. People and leaders in Europe have become more cautious about the rapid pace of enlargement. And yet it is still necessary to find methods and strategies to empower Europe as a unit.

In this report we have focused on three key areas within this frame of progress: Carrying responsibility as a European Community, the integration of commonly shared European values, and the consolidation of European institutions.

In this context, the role of the European public and its satisfaction as well as information about the benefits and actions of the EU should not be forgotten. Especially in light of this year's crisis, it has become clear how quickly scepticism can turn into anger, mistrust, or even denial and how these feelings may be expressed. It is of course not a new insight that the manner in which information is communicated and spread - whether correct or incorrect - has become much more important in recent times. Nonetheless, the questions concerning the EU's response and that of its Member States to widespread misinformation and mistrust, especially in terms of democratic resilience, remain.

will cover solidarity approaches within European Data Spaces to advance citizen data literacy and strengthen wider support to the data economy. Last but not least, a crucial future issue, especially following the German EU Council Presidency and the US elections by the end of 2020, will be Europe's relationship with its international partners, in stark contrast to the independent efforts to establish a European security and defense strategy.

Alliances and routines, which seemed sound and practically imperturbable for many years have been broken up just recent-

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Alliances and routines, which seemed sound and practically imperturbable for many years have been broken up just recently.

All these topics that have been worked on in 2019/2020 will therefore also assert themselves as topics for the future and are essential for further discourses. In the coming research year, these topics will of course be – influenced by the presence of current developments, but additionally, complemented by questions on solidarity and the decisions that will picture Europe at the crossroads.

This, for instance, includes the question of how the development of an EU's democratic acquis could foster transnational solidarity post-COVID. While the focus will certainly be on the wide range of effects of the crisis and its impact on the public perception of unity and solidarity, we will also dive deeper into looking at the implications of border closings and a changed appearance of movement within the EU. In addition to the social and institutional aspects, the question of how to strengthen the European economy sustainably and from within will also be addressed, in particular, by examining the benefits of shorter supply chains for European companies. EU sovereignty and independence will also be reflected in another issue, which

ly. The growing pressure on multilateralism and the changing balance of power in the world - bound on respective leaders, as well as on new challenges - shows more and more why it remains important to work on Europe politically, institutionally, economically, socially and in terms of Europe's role in global progress. While the crucial decisions and issues for the coming year are difficult to predict at this stage, by supporting young scientists and their research projects on the above-mentioned priorities, we hope to contribute to providing information and experts for the forthcoming debates and to identify issues that could serve unity in Europe long-term.

With this first edition of the annual Report and the establishment of the Academy in late 2019, we take the plunge for rapidly changing priorities in a time of change.

Thus, it is important to help shape this change.

Acknowledgements

The Foundation of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen and the Society for the Conferring of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen would like to thank their sponsors and supporters.

The International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen

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The Charlemagne Prize Academy is supported by

Robert Bosch Stiftung

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