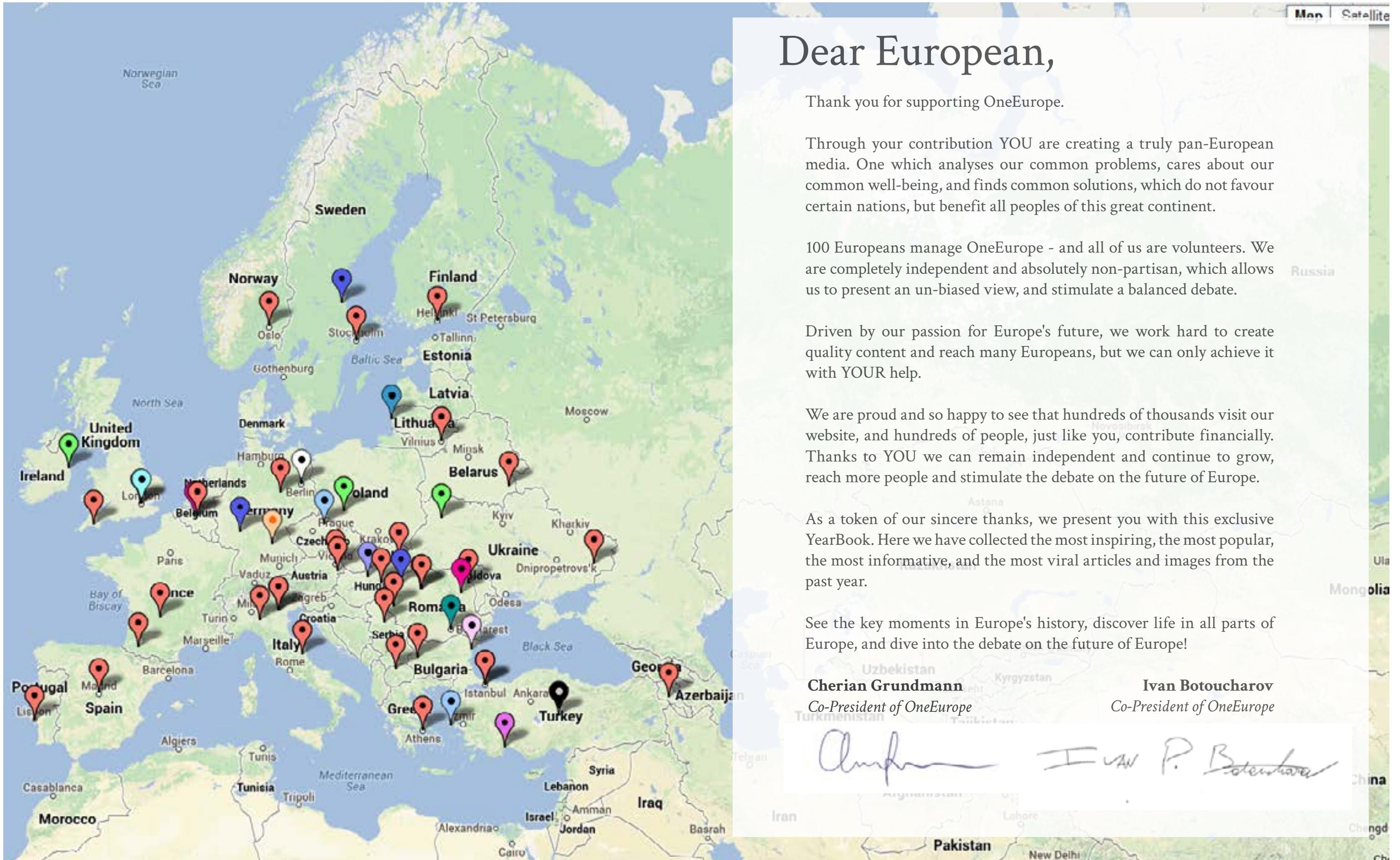


Yearbook 2013





Dear European,

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Driven by our passion for Europe's future, we work hard to create quality content and reach many Europeans, but we can only achieve it with YOUR help.

We are proud and so happy to see that hundreds of thousands visit our website, and hundreds of people, just like you, contribute financially. Thanks to YOU we can remain independent and continue to grow, reach more people and stimulate the debate on the future of Europe.

As a token of our sincere thanks, we present you with this exclusive YearBook. Here we have collected the most inspiring, the most popular, the most informative, and the most viral articles and images from the past year.

See the key moments in Europe's history, discover life in all parts of Europe, and dive into the debate on the future of Europe!

Cherian Grundmann

Co-President of OneEurope

Ivan Botoucharov

Co-President of OneEurope



Editor's Note

Throughout 2013, OneEurope has sought to **raise the debate on the future of Europe**, focusing on an impressive array of topics that have influenced the European sphere. Through this YearBook we aim to provide you a comprehensive picture on Europe, in its social, political, economic and cultural dimensions, including the best articles, infographics, and initiatives of 2013, that had a significant impact on Europe and will continue to contour and influence the European agenda in 2014.

The YearBook opens with a collection of articles dedicated to the **social dynamics of Europe**, providing a detailed overview of the challenges and opportunities that have been encountered by Europeans in the preceding year. The Yearbook continues with the **key debates on Europe**, where you can find answers to the questions about Europe's expansion, integration, or progression.

Alongside the collection of articles that emphasize the key moments of 2013, the YearBook comprise a special section on the **Future of Europe in 2014**. In this section you can read about the most important thing to watch in 2014, nominated unanimously by our writers.

We thank all the contributors for their dedication in realizing this project. We are inspired by their commitment and enthusiasm, and we are grateful to all of them.

We would also like to thank you for allowing us to develop **and raise the debate on the future of Europe!**

Ana Postolache
Chief Editor of OneEurope
Ana Postolache

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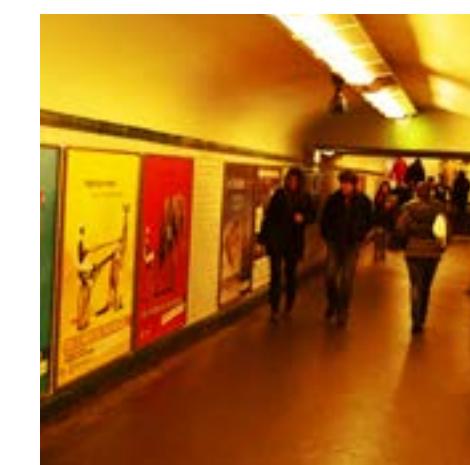
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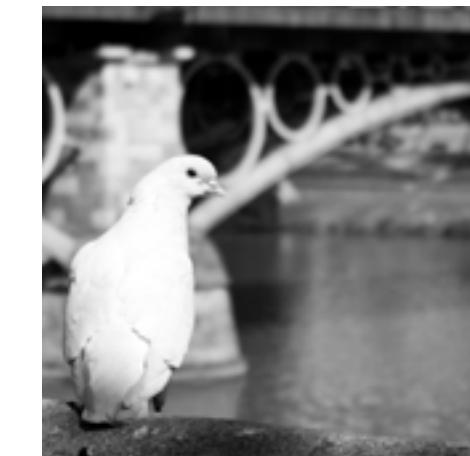
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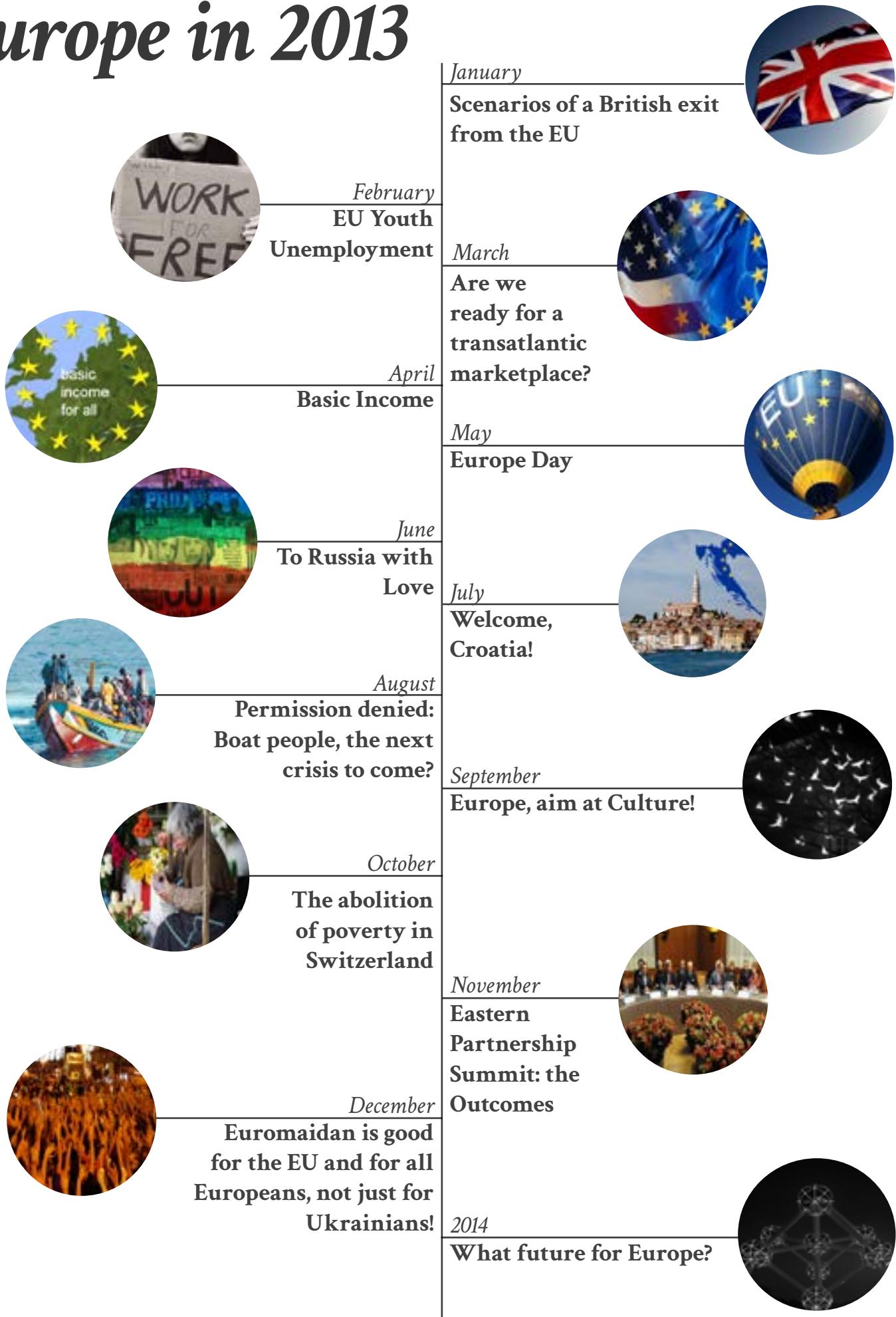
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Europe in 2013



SOCIAL EUROPE

"The European social model can and must survive the crisis"

Anthony Giddens





WHAT MAKES EUROPE SO UNIQUE?

by Anabela Ventura

The differences in Europe should not be seen as a threat - but as a chance for creative problem solving.

In a time where there is a huge debate in the European media whether the United Kingdom will leave the European Union or not and the effect it might have on both sides, it is interesting to look at what makes *Europe as a whole so unique*.

As a born European living abroad, I have recently discovered myself in a position where I can finally look at European issues from a detached perspective. While living in Europe, I always had the feeling that the differences were too wide to bridge, both economic and cultural factors were frequently present, creating an “us” versus “them” or a “rich” versus “poor” dualistic way of viewing things. Now that I look from afar, that is not what I see anymore.

What makes Europe so unique is the diversity of cultures, languages and systems that contribute to a wholesome society, a place where education and progressive thinking are still encouraged in spite of economical hurdles.

In Canada, where I live, speaking other languages besides English is extremely valued. Although it is officially a bilingual country, French or other languages are not taught regularly in secondary school - something that doesn't happen so often in Europe. Europeans tend to understand more than their own language - out of pure necessity or by commuting to a neighbour country to work, or simply to enjoy a

more fulfilling experience while they are on vacation. That is helpful not only for debates and negotiations but also because it opens up space for more understanding and tolerance. *This would not be possible if all these varied cultures weren't living “under the same roof”.*

It is from confronting with other perspectives and ways of thinking that development can erupt. It is no surprise that the act of brainstorming is usually behind innovative projects because a certain divergence of opinions can bring along a clarification of paths and goals. *And this is what I see from where I'm standing; an enormous potential for a creative resolution of problems of the economical or any other kind.*

European communities could do well by embracing their differences: coming together, collaborating to resolve maybe not just their problems but those of others too by forming clusters of people that identify themselves with each other, regardless of the country they are from.

A place where diversity is neither feared nor unwelcome, but is instead appreciated and encouraged, where differences are lived in a united and collaborative space, where people work together creatively with social justice to overcome the collective difficulties: This is what Europe should be about.



Dual Citizenship in Eastern Europe in the era of European Identity

by Borika Pentek

In Europe, the topic of multiple citizenship was taboo until way after World War II. The attitude towards the subject can be easily illustrated by a statement of the League of Nations: "all persons are entitled to possess one nationality, but one nationality only". Based on this affirmation, the rule was that anyone who gains a second citizenship has to give up the original one, mostly in order to preserve the one person, one vote principle. The spread of globalization somehow eased these rules, as more professionals had to deal with the issue. The EU lets its members decide by themselves whether they allow multiple citizenship or not.

In Western Europe, double citizenship law tends to focus on the process of integration of new (European or not) residents in the European society, as for example in the case of the Algerian minority in France, or the Turkish minority in Germany.

Therefore, the rules are constantly loosened because the global trend requires it: migration is much more widespread, boundaries are slowly vanishing and a "European identity" is increasingly developing - as a

consequence, it is difficult to restrain plural citizenship. An eloquent example is Germany's position: the country was strictly committed to single citizenship, but now gradually begins to relax the rules. However, this is only applied for obtaining a second citizenship by a German citizen - it is still difficult to obtain German citizenship.

In Eastern Europe, on the other hand, the issue of dual citizenship was tackled from a completely different perspective. The post-1989 split and emerging

nationalisms have developed a sort of resistance to the case. New nation states wanted recognition, but at the same time, ethnic minorities were trying to fit in and preserve their residence - but not at the expense of their ethnicity. Something had to be done. Some countries moved on and changed their policy according to the new situation on the continent, but it seems that Eastern

Europe is not moving with the trend. Many countries, such as Slovakia or Ukraine, are still not flexible enough to handle this problem.

After the split of Czechoslovakia, the two newborn countries needed special naturalization requirements for Slovaks who wanted to gain Czech citizenship: they need to have 2 years residence and 5 years of clean criminal record. And how is Slovakia handling the minority issues? It does not permit the acquisition of a new citizenship by its citizens. The latest problem with this law was the Hungarian citizenship issue for the 500,000 ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia.

In the summer of 2010, right after the elections and changes in government, when the FIDESZ right-wing party got into power, they immediately passed a law according to which ethnic Hungarians living in annexed territories could claim back their citizenship by naturalization. (This draft bill was rejected by Hungarians in 2004 in a referendum, because of the participation rate was too low (37%) to validate it. Left-wing parties had encouraged the public to reject the idea of giving citizenship to Hungarians

abroad, leading them to think that millions will come from abroad to take away the jobs from the mainlanders). The issue is delicate because different generations of Hungarians want to get citizenship for different reasons.

New nation states wanted recognition, but at the same time, ethnic minorities were trying to fit in and preserve their residence - but not at the expense of their ethnicity.

For elderly people, it was labor of love, because they had lived in Hungary before Trianon. Getting back their old citizenship meant strengthening their national sentiments and reinforcing their ethnic identity. The youth understand and live in this spirit, but many of them claim to be European or global citizens, so they also apply for advantages such as the two passports. I find it disappointing that these people, closely linked to Hungary (or others, for example Czechs, Ukrainians in Slovakia) are denied to obtain their second citizenship.

Perhaps Ukraine has the most negative attitude towards the issue: the first decision after the dissolution of the Soviet Union was that they only accept dual citizenship with countries with whom they signed an agreement contract, and Russia was not part of these - so much for the two million Ukrainians living there. Later, in 1996, dual citizenship was completely banned. Because of this law, the five million Ukrainians working abroad and ethnic minorities like Hungarians and Russians found themselves in a very difficult position.

Poland handles the situation in a more sophisticated way. The country does not legally accept dual citizenship: authorities only recognize the Polish one even if a person has more. Therefore, holding another

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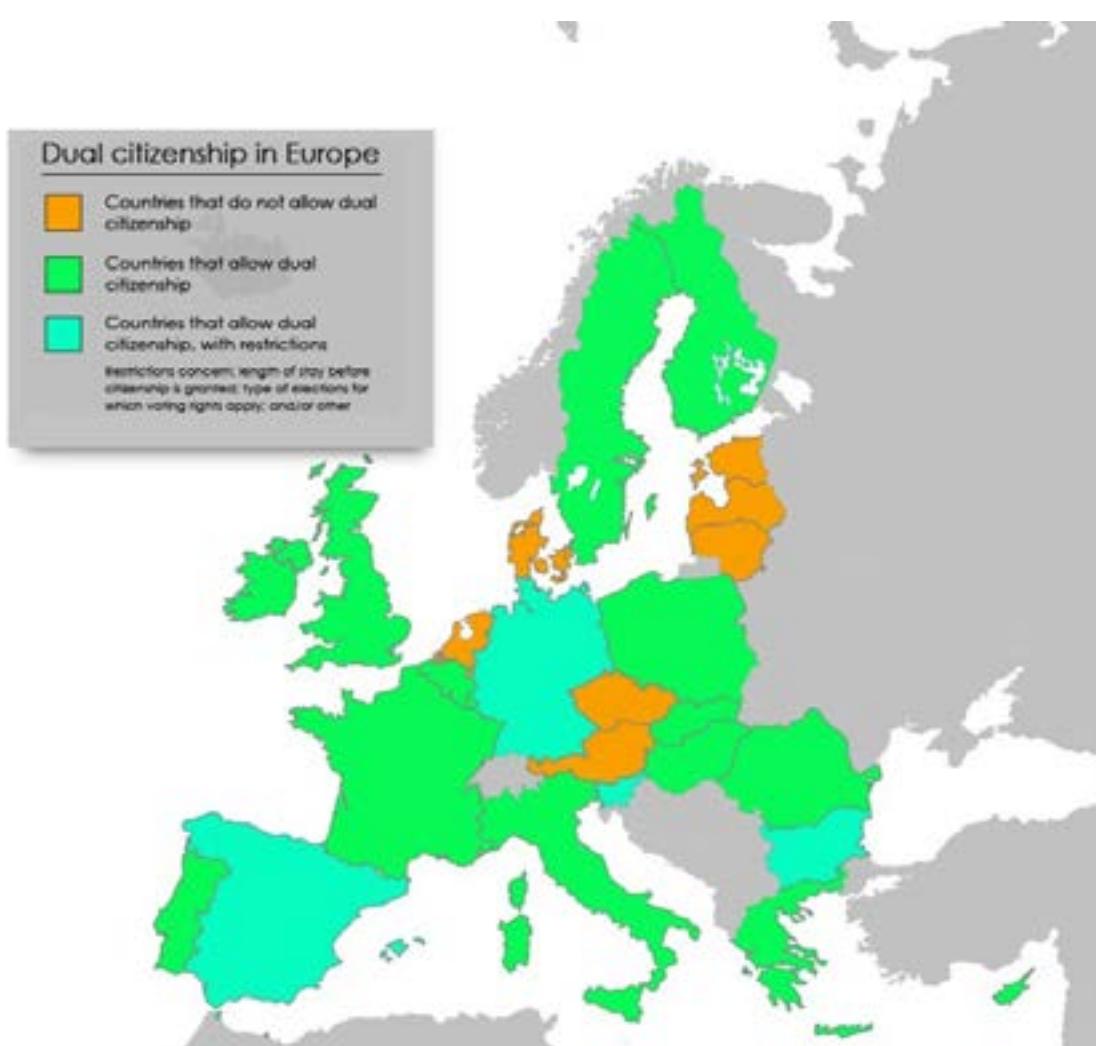
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citizenship is not punishable in itself, but it cannot be used for identification in Poland. It is also prohibited for a Polish citizen to serve in a foreign army.

In this way, ethnic minorities were deprived of the citizenship of their place of residence and sometimes forced to abandon it.

Those living in former Yugoslavia had two citizenships, one for the Yugoslav Republic and one for each member state. After the breakup, people lost their member state citizenship if they failed to prove their nationality. In this way, ethnic minorities were deprived of the citizenship of their place of residence and

sometimes forced to abandon it. Most of the problems arose from them trying to keep their residence but also stay in touch with the motherland.

Since very recently, in

Bosnia Herzegovina, citizens are allowed to take on another citizenship, mostly because until 2012 more than 50,000 people were forced to discard their citizenship to obtain another. Forced, because, according to the 2001 statistics, the unemployment rate in Bosnia

is more than 40%. The political elite feared that prohibition would cause resistance. For similar reasons, Slovenia now also allows the dual citizenship.

Croatia approaches the situation in a more interesting and delicate way: in theory, the country does not accept dual citizenship but in practice they are aware of it and tolerate it. In some cases, with slow bureaucracy, one can even obtain Croatian citizenship.

Romania is more open-minded in the issue: it grants Romanian citizenship to a massive amount of people in Moldova, and accepts the dual citizenship of the more than two million Hungarians living in Romania, of whom more than 500,000 have obtained it recently. Bulgaria also tolerates and accepts it.

To Vote or Not To Vote?

Whether or not we should interfere with the politics of a country of which we are not residents is a very interesting question. I assume that those who migrate to another country will connect to it more, to a certain extent, than to the long lost homeland. Those who were born in one country but

have cultural and historical ties with another one usually find more important the politics of the country they are living in at present.

It is a very controversial issue, on which there are many different perspectives. Many people do feel that policies of the other country affect them enough to go to the polls, while others seem to find in their vote an opportunity to thank a party for the citizenship they received from it. There are a lot of people who are well-informed enough to feel comfortable voting in both countries.

In Eastern Europe, the issue of dual citizenship can easily be converted into a political game but it is also an opportunity for ethnic minorities to gain closer ties with the homeland - which I find absolutely necessary. It is also very useful for the integration of immigrants.

However, sometimes people are too afraid of people from across their borders to accept them, and sometimes governments cannot understand how important cultural ties are. For those with dual citizenship, it is essential to be open-minded but also well informed when deciding whether or not to vote and in one or both countries.

Scenarios of a British exit from the EU

By Christos Mouzeviris



What consequences might occur if the UK decided to leave the European Union?

“ During the past few months certain debates have gained momentum in Europe: Catalonia seceding from Spain, Scotland from the UK and the UK leaving the EU altogether. ”

THE UNITED KINGDOM has had an uneasy relationship with Europe ever since the creation of the European Community. To the UK, Europe should never proceed to a full political union, it prefers to keep things as they are and to keep the EU just as a large market.

I guess the interests of the leading political and economic elites are better served if things remain as such. Britain outside the EU could do well, in fact if any member state decided to leave it would not be the end of the world for it. *But are the interests of the citizens best served within the EU or outside?*

Britain always wanted to safeguard the interests of the City of London and its financial services sector. They have invested hugely in creating the sector that dominates their economy. Allowing it to be subdued to any interference from outside could prove costly.

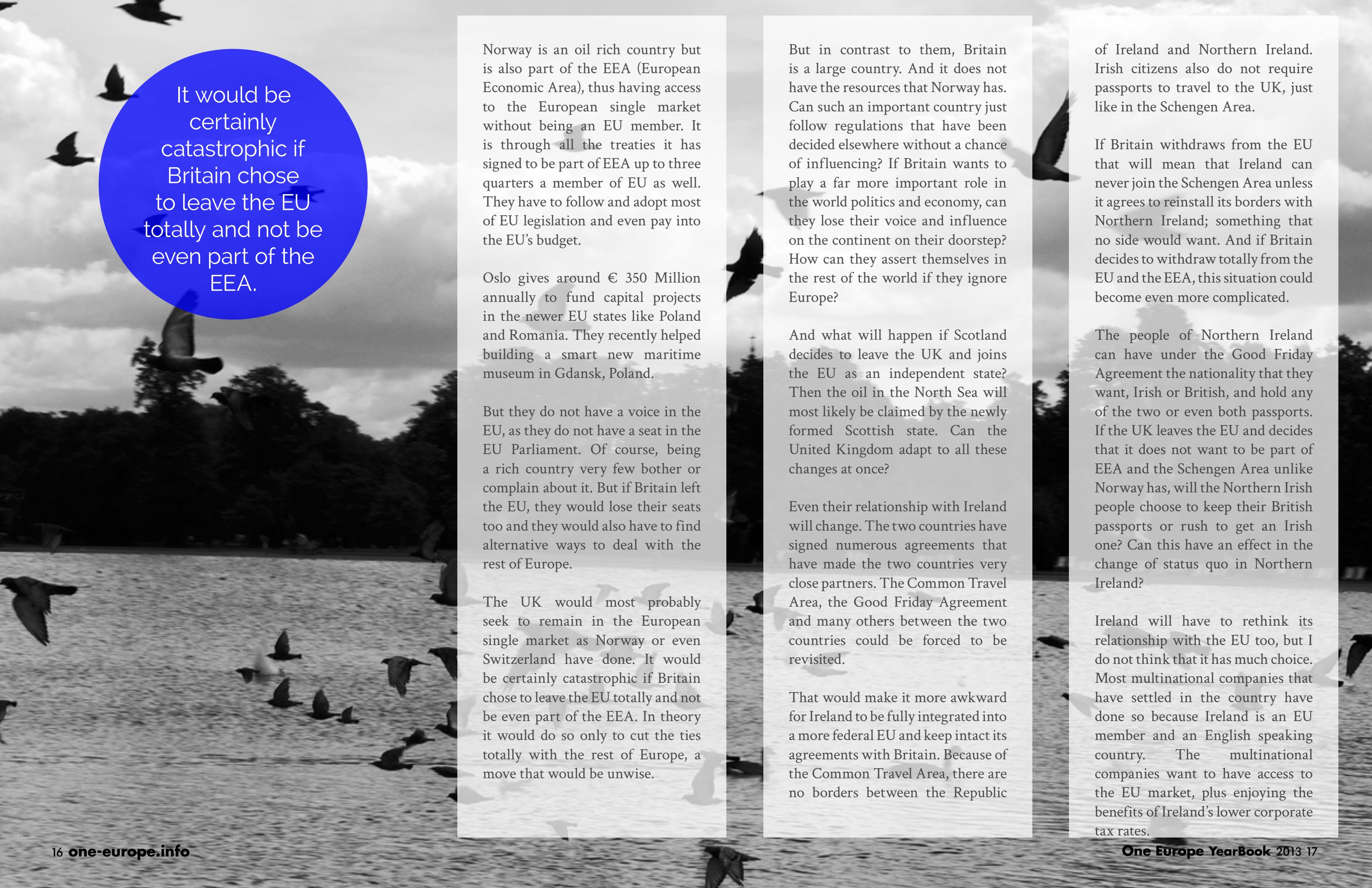
But they did reform their economy in the past to the detriment of the ordinary workers and their unions. It happened during the “Thatcherite” years when Britain’s financial sector was established and the country’s economy shifted dramatically.

Then the ordinary workers suffered and the country went through some

very difficult years both socially and financially. So why can’t they do it again? Is it because the rights or interests of the workers are not as important as those of the bankers? Is protecting the banks and ensuring the favor of the markets far more important than having access to the European single market and influencing European affairs?

Of course it is not about only protecting the financial sector of the City of London. It is also a reflection of different mentalities or a cultural issue. The British elite and the press always believed that Britain should remain outside a European “superstate” and pursue a more global economic, political and cultural influence or even dominion through their cooperation with the US and its position within the Commonwealth. That is why the majority of the British press was not very friendly to the European project for many years now.

The question is, will the other Commonwealth countries be willing to always be part of this “British” club? India for example has grand aspirations of its own. And what about the other aspirations of the British “euro-sceptics” for their country, that want to be just like Norway and Switzerland?



It would be certainly catastrophic if Britain chose to leave the EU totally and not be even part of the EEA.

Norway is an oil rich country but is also part of the EEA (European Economic Area), thus having access to the European single market without being an EU member. It is through all the treaties it has signed to be part of EEA up to three quarters a member of EU as well. They have to follow and adopt most of EU legislation and even pay into the EU's budget.

Oslo gives around € 350 Million annually to fund capital projects in the newer EU states like Poland and Romania. They recently helped building a smart new maritime museum in Gdansk, Poland.

But they do not have a voice in the EU, as they do not have a seat in the EU Parliament. Of course, being a rich country very few bother or complain about it. But if Britain left the EU, they would lose their seats too and they would also have to find alternative ways to deal with the rest of Europe.

The UK would most probably seek to remain in the European single market as Norway or even Switzerland have done. It would be certainly catastrophic if Britain chose to leave the EU totally and not be even part of the EEA. In theory it would do so only to cut the ties totally with the rest of Europe, a move that would be unwise.

But in contrast to them, Britain is a large country. And it does not have the resources that Norway has. Can such an important country just follow regulations that have been decided elsewhere without a chance of influencing? If Britain wants to play a far more important role in the world politics and economy, can they lose their voice and influence on the continent on their doorstep? How can they assert themselves in the rest of the world if they ignore Europe?

And what will happen if Scotland decides to leave the UK and joins the EU as an independent state? Then the oil in the North Sea will most likely be claimed by the newly formed Scottish state. Can the United Kingdom adapt to all these changes at once?

Even their relationship with Ireland will change. The two countries have signed numerous agreements that have made the two countries very close partners. The Common Travel Area, the Good Friday Agreement and many others between the two countries could be forced to be revisited.

That would make it more awkward for Ireland to be fully integrated into a more federal EU and keep intact its agreements with Britain. Because of the Common Travel Area, there are no borders between the Republic

of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Irish citizens also do not require passports to travel to the UK, just like in the Schengen Area.

If Britain withdraws from the EU that will mean that Ireland can never join the Schengen Area unless it agrees to reinstall its borders with Northern Ireland; something that no side would want. And if Britain decides to withdraw totally from the EU and the EEA, this situation could become even more complicated.

The people of Northern Ireland can have under the Good Friday Agreement the nationality that they want, Irish or British, and hold any of the two or even both passports. If the UK leaves the EU and decides that it does not want to be part of EEA and the Schengen Area unlike Norway has, will the Northern Irish people choose to keep their British passports or rush to get an Irish one? Can this have an effect in the change of status quo in Northern Ireland?

Ireland will have to rethink its relationship with the EU too, but I do not think that it has much choice. Most multinational companies that have settled in the country have done so because Ireland is an EU member and an English speaking country. The multinational companies want to have access to the EU market, plus enjoying the benefits of Ireland's lower corporate tax rates.



Should Ireland be forced to leave the EU too after the UK, it won't have the above advantages.

Britain is one of the most important business partners of Ireland. Britain is Ireland's biggest export market, while Ireland is Britain's 5th biggest export market. Most British retail companies have also branches in the Republic of Ireland and vice versa. A complete British withdrawal from the single market would be awkward for both sides.

So the UK has two options, either to join EEA or stay in the EU for good. By staying in the EEA without staying in the EU they will choose

By staying in the EEA without staying in the EU they will choose their influence in Europe and they will allow France and Germany to fulfill their vision for the continent.

their influence in Europe and they will allow France and Germany to fulfill their vision for the continent. The British will still have to abide to 3/4 of EU law but they will have no voice or no influence on it. This situation in my opinion is not ideal if you wish to have a greater say and influence in the world. You still have to follow EU law that was decided by any other country in Europe, but not yours.

Preferably I would like the UK to stay in but become more active, committed and leading member of EU. The British can achieve far more if they share the lead of the Union than being increasingly isolated in Europe. If only they

could understand that and see that instead of always being the awkward member, they have more to gain if they became an active one.

Europe needs Britain too and perhaps might eventually make it easier for them to feel more comfortable in the Union; a bit more cherry picking like the Swiss are doing and they will be happier. The truth is that neither Switzerland nor the EU are happy with their bilateral relations and both seek a revision. The EU is looking to corner Switzerland and pull it closer, while the Swiss are not happy with the lack of representation of their interests.

They always rely on Britain in representing their interests in the EU, as they both have a large financial services industry. If Britain also leaves, will this alliance last and who will represent those two countries then?

How can we build a functioning union if every state picks only what suits them and opts out from what it doesn't? There will be no "union" if this happens, we will have to revert back to the EEA or EFTA. Many "eurosceptics" of course will be delighted for this, but not me. I want to have a vote on what is being decided for me on a European level, I do not want to end up being like a Norwegian or an Icelander.

And if the UK is allowed to get all the opt outs and still remains in the union, then why

doesn't every country do the same and only accepts laws that do not interfere with their sovereignty? But if you want to keep your sovereignty then why join a union in the first place? I do not want a free trade agreement only because then there will be no European Parliament and the laws of the single market will be decided for me without me.

In the end of the day you cannot keep them in by force, and it can become annoying for everyone to have one country constantly complaining and moaning about everything.

Perhaps we should let them be out for a while. Sometimes when we wish for something for too long and we eventually get it, we realize it was not what we wanted in the first place!

How can we build a functioning union if every state picks only what suits them and opts out from what it doesn't?





Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogogoch is a large village on the island of Anglesey in Wales and, as you can see, it has the longest place name in Europe and one of the longest place names in the world. The word consists of 58 letters.

Though death is something sad in most cultures, in Northern Romania people have a different perspective: Welcome to the Merry Cemetery of Sapanta! It is famous for its colourful tombstones with naive paintings describing, in an original and poetic manner, the persons that are buried there as well as scenes from their lives.

Europe is the home to the oldest volcanos in the world, Etna and Vezuvius being the most famous.



10 amazing things about Europe

Europe, the heart of human civilization, has thousands of places worth writing about. But then, who would take the time to read about all of them? So, we have tried to pick up a little bit of everything, and make a “spicy” list of 10 things you might find interesting about our old homeland.

Istanbul is the largest city in Europe, with a population of nearly 14 million people. It's a transcontinental city, straddling the Bosphorus — one of the world's busiest waterways — in northwestern Turkey, between the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea. Napoleon Bonaparte once said: "If the Earth was a single state, Istanbul would be its capital."

The biggest Empire of the world is also European. The British Empire, in its days of glory, used to cover a quarter of world.

The name "Europa" comes from the ancient Greek mythology. Europa was a Phoenician princess whom Zeus abducted after assuming the form of a dazzling white bull and took her to Crete.

The Statue of Liberty was built in France; the famous symbol was designed by Frederic Bartholdi and given as a gift to USA. The prominent French architect and engineer, Alexandre-Gustav Eiffel, was responsible for the internal structural elements.

The Mediterranean Sea was a Desert. Recent research show that indeed, the beautiful sea, was long ago completely dry.

The migration period, which marked the transition from Antiquity to Middle Ages though one of the most decisive in shaping our culture and civilization, is still one of the least known periods in our history.

Both the smallest and the largest countries in the world are European: Vatican and Russia.



Integration through separation: Catalonia and Scotland

by Hallvard Barbogen



Nationalism is no longer what it used to be. Modern separatists are showing that new political communities can be built upon other principles than ethnicity.

A curious fact about some of the most prominent secession movements in Western Europe today is how open they are towards the world around them. When Catalans by the millions demonstrate for independence, their goal is not isolation. When Scottish people voice their separatist claims through the legislative system, they are not working towards seclusion. These protesters oppose the nation-states they are part of, but embrace their European identity – and the European Union.

This is a profound testament to the strength of European integration: not simply the integration of markets, legislation, or political power, but the much more fundamental integration of mindsets.

The EU would do well to acknowledge and act upon these dynamics, instead of continuing to dismiss them in much the same way the Commission has been doing so far.

This article will not discuss the legal matters surrounding EU membership for any potentially new separatist states. These are already the topic of a lengthy discussion elsewhere. Neither will it discuss the likelihood of success of any of these movements' aspirations to independence. Instead, the core point of the article is the spirit of integrational separationism (or separational integrationism), and **how this new political trend combining nationalist demands with a strong emphasis on EU membership can prove to be advantageous for Europe as a whole.**

Integrational separationism

The leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP), Alex Salmond, recently stated that an independent Scotland could have a stronger voice in the EU. Promoting the EU has been considered a fundamental component of the Scottish campaign for independence. The SNP is seeking independence for Scotland partly to get closer to the EU, which other types of nationalists might perhaps consider ironic.

In Catalonia, polls show that the support for independence plummets in case the separation from Spain entails seceding from the EU.

In the end, Catalonia is not Spain; Scotland is not England; but everyone wants to be European.

The European Commission, however, has responded dismissively to the separatists'

embrace of Europe – especially Catalonia's case. Joaquín Almunia, the Commission's Vice-President, stated that 'If one part of a territory of a member state decides to separate, the separated part isn't a member of the European Union.' He further added that his colleagues in the EU are not happy about the secession movement in Catalonia, and that they are "*looking for ways to straighten this out*".

That a growing European identity, spreading even to separatists, is met with such an attitude is unfortunate. Here are the reasons why it should be reverted.

The virtues of a new nationalism

Just a few decades ago, integrational separationism would have been unlikely, at best. Traditionally, nationalist movements are simply about a certain group of people wanting to separate themselves from another group that they have been a part of. Or, as George Orwell put it, nationalism is "*the habit of identifying oneself with a single nation or other unit, placing it beyond good and evil and recognising no other duty than that of advancing its interests*".

The UK Independence Party (UKIP) is a classic, contemporary example. Front National in France is another. Currently, they are both gaining political leverage. Withdrawal from "the scary world out there" is an essential ingredient in their discourses, usually brought about as a reaction to uncertain times – for instance a financial crisis in the Eurozone. As a political community of "people like you", a

nation-state is thus perceived as a safe haven. This kind of nationalism may often escalate and become both sectarian and dangerous.

The nationalism in Catalonia and Scotland, however, show only little resemblance to this tradition. These separatist movements are not only concerned with ethnic self-rule, but also with political reforms and European integration. And even though their independence would obviously lead to the creation of two new nation-states, this added spirit of integration should act as a safeguard against sectarianism. Instead of only "*identifying oneself with a single nation*", **they may be acting as pioneers of a new, more open-minded nationalism.**

Regardless of whether or not these independence movements succeed, their integrational spirit should, therefore, be supported.

Political, not ethnic communities

With such separatist claims within the EU, there is a potential to slowly shift the structures of power, so that decision-making becomes increasingly separated from ethnicity: moving it up to a European level, and down to a local level.

European's as a marker of identity for individuals and groups has, for all intents and purposes, grown unprecedentedly strong during the last

decades. We are here, of course, met with the danger of falling into Jean-Jacques Rousseau's trap, in wanting to abolish the European nation-states by creating an even larger, single European nation-state. But we also have the opportunity – regardless of the Eurozone's future economic perspectives and success – to build political communities along certain lines other than the traditional ethnic reasoning behind the nation-state: political communities built upon political principles.

This opportunity should be embraced.

And it is here that the cases **The final outcome of these separatist campaigns is still uncertain, but that they need to be "straightened out" is hardly the case. Hopefully, the European Commission will come to see what a sign of strength it is for Europe that its separatists are also integrationists.**

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To Russia with Love

by Anna Gkiouleka

A symbolic dialogue between the Russian law against “gay propaganda” and the arrests of transgender individuals for “improving the image of the cities” in Greece.

Reading the newly introduced law prohibiting “**gay propaganda**”, the first thought that crossed my mind is that the discrimination of ideologies and behaviours follows the same strategies everywhere.

Presenting the Other as an “enemy” or a “threat” is one of the oldest and probably the most popular and effective way to justify and spread discriminatory attitudes. Those who have the power to shape public discourse are always fond of the polarization between “us” and “them” - and when they say “us” they always mean “the good, the useful, the respectable “us” and when they say “them” they always mean “the bad, the weird, the dangerous others”. This polarization, in order to be successful, needs to seem justifiable and for this has to be constant and subtle. Those who know about discourse analysis have the tools to easily see what is written or said between the lines but any of us can understand a lot if we pay attention to the words that are used to “present” a social issue to the public.

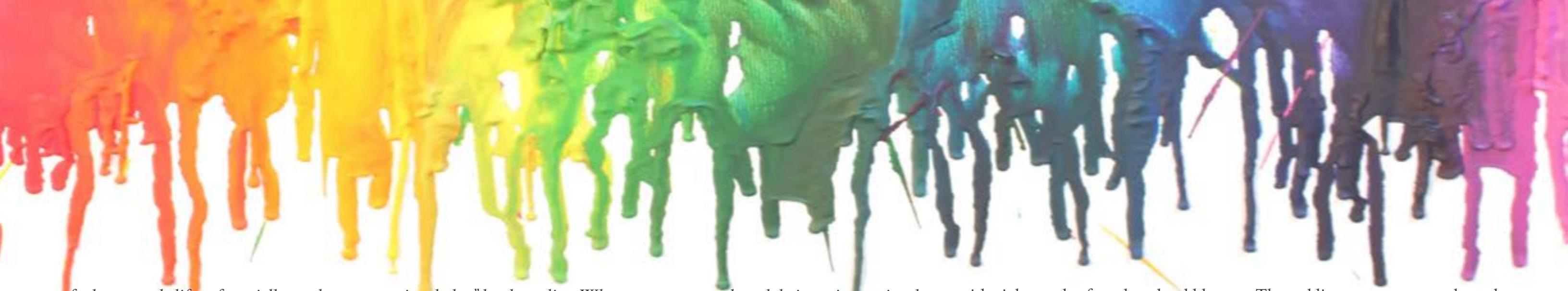
Starting from the Russian law against “**gay propaganda**” I ask you to think of the word **propaganda**. What does it mean? Most of the dictionaries agree on the following: it is a form of communication which aims to influence the attitudes of a community towards a specific direction. **Propaganda** statements do not focus on providing information but on shaping opinions and on influencing behaviours. They include fragments of truth “clothed” with lies and they never present more than one side of the argument, the side in favor of the individual or group who is spreading the **propaganda**. As a word and a notion it has a strongly negative connotation;

propaganda is associated with repetition, brain-washing and historically with the Nazis. Don’t forget that Goebbels is considered the “father” of **propaganda**, nor the role of the Communist Soviet Union in the Second World War.

After re-considering the meaning of **propaganda**, we can understand that this word was not selected by chance from the Russian communication consultants. Talking about “**gay propaganda**”: what is the message that has to be passed? Is it probably that gay people – they – are trying to influence us – the public. THEY don’t make real statements but spread lies. THEY are everywhere and THEY keep repeating what THEY say because THEY want to brain wash US and influence OUR behaviour for THEIR own interests. THEY have the power to mislead and manipulate US, THEY are strong and dangerous like the Nazis. WE have to protect OURSELVES from THEM, WE have to ban each of their actions because otherwise THEY will destroy US...

One could argue that I exaggerate, but to this I would answer they following: would the same law gain equal support if promoted as law “against equal rights for all” or law “against antidiscrimination” or even just as law “against gay campaigns”?

Let us now shift to the Greek case. It has been almost two months that Greek police, under the orders of the Minister of Citizen’s Protection, has been conducting a Special Operational Action in Thessaloniki, the biggest city of North Greece, with, according to the governmental public statement, the aim to “tackle, among others, prostitution and the exploitation



of the sexual life of socially and economically vulnerable individuals, to enhance citizens' feeling of safety, and to improve the image of specific areas". Surprisingly, this operational plan is in reality the harassment and undue arrests of transgender women and sex workers that have been taking place almost everyday since the end of May. Transgender women have been systematically subjected to arbitrary ID checks, arrests and detentions for even three or four days without legal justification. European media and [LGBT organizations](#) have reported extensively on the state of affairs, so I will not focus on the situation itself but on the way it has been presented to the public by governmental representatives.

First of all - the name of the relevant ministry. "Ministry of Citizen's Protection" implies at least that the Greek citizen is threatened and needs protection.

Reading the governmental statement, one also learns about a "special

"Ministry of Citizen's Protection" implies at least that the Greek citizen is threatened and needs protection.

operational plan" by the police. What can we make from that? Why is the world "special" used? If anything, it means that this is not a usual situation, but an operation with specific characteristics. One does not have a clue, however, as to what these specific characteristics are referring to. Is it a "special operation" because it is taking place in unique circumstances or because it is using a singular method or maybe because it affects only a specific social group?

Continuing the reading of the statement, one gets an idea about the aims of this operation. Among others – that remain unknown - the operation aims to tackle prostitution and exploitation of the sexual life of socially and economically vulnerable

individuals, to enhance citizens' feeling of safety". It is important here to note the differentiation of the concepts of "individuals" and "citizens". It seems that the two categories are not referring to the

same people and their use is associated with different connotations. The "vulnerable individuals" get exploited and prostituted; they are socially and economically weak, while "citizens" are threatened. Still, there is no reference to who is exploiting the individuals and who is threatening the citizens. One can fill in this gap with anything... Also, it is important to note that the "vulnerable" are not described as "citizens". "Citizen" implies a member of a state, a member of a group – a whole, a person with political and civil rights. On the other hand, "individual" is much less strong a word. It implies a random unit with no association with rights. The combination of words also reveals something else. On the one hand, the word "individuals" is used in the same phrase as the words "vulnerable", "tackle", "prostitution" and "exploitation", which all have a negative meaning. On the other hand, the word "citizens" goes together with words with a positive meaning, "enhance" and "safety". Directly, a clear contradiction is formed: On the one side, we have the good citizens,

with rights and safety that should be enhanced and on the other side, we have the less good, the "weak", who are involved in bad situations and problems that police have to "solve". There is no reference to how it happened and why these individuals are vulnerable both socially and economically. This is taken for granted and since there is no justification, it is considered as their "natural characteristic". They are vulnerable, true...but were they born like this?

Going on with the statement, we gain more interesting information. This operation aims to "improve the image of the city". Who is spoiling the "image of the city"? The answer can be found earlier in the text. It is the prostitutes and the exploited that spoil the image of the city. And who are they? The "vulnerable individuals".

The public statement stops here, but reality goes on and is summarized in the unjustifiable arrests of transgender women and sex workers.

The public statement stops here, but reality goes on and is summarized in the unjustifiable arrests of transgender women and sex workers. Police's special operation is concentrated on these specific actions. What

does one conclude in the end? That transgender women and sex workers form a lower social group which differs from the citizens, and constitute a problem that should

be tackled, threaten citizen's safety and spoil the image of the city...? The governmental representative would want us to feel "yes"...

Discrimination is imposed explicitly by the authorities in both examples. Before we start to think of the consequences of discrimination, understanding the way that it is cultivated is equally important. After all, ***words always matter...***

EU Youth Unemployment

Massive Youth Unemployment has been devastating our continent for years (many say since before the Eurocrisis), creating an economic catastrophe and at the same time a lost generation.

To battle it, national and EU institutions have launched various (mostly futile) initiatives, ranging from encouraging entrepreneurship, to investing in culture (which can create sustainable jobs), and to releasing **6 Billion Euro** specifically aimed to get young people into work.

While many argue the Financial Crisis (and therefore the Eurocrisis) is defeated, how can we win on the more difficult, and perhaps more important front - Youth Unemployment?

YOUNG, EDUCATED AND UNEMPLOYED

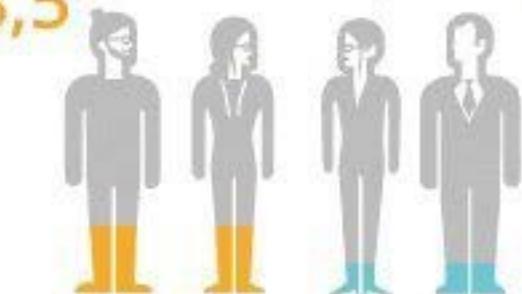
EU 27 YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT
2013



YOUTH vs EVERYONE

Average youth unemployment between 15-24

23,5

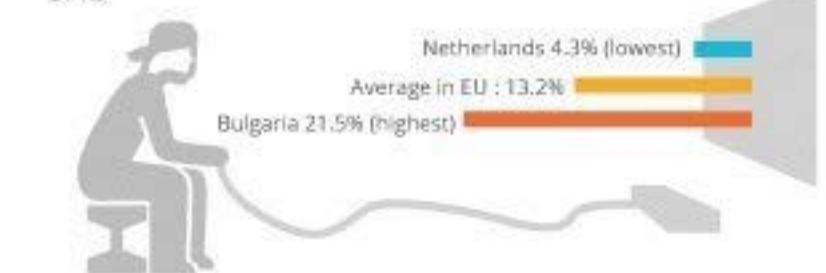


Average overall unemployment

10,9

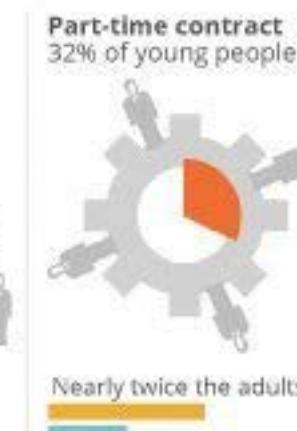
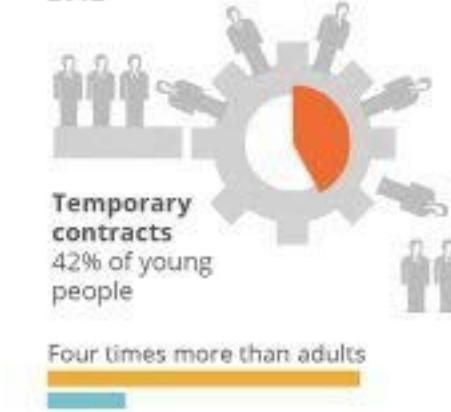
HOW MANY NEETS?

Neither in Employment nor Education or Training
2012



WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE DO FIND WORK

2012





To all Interns in Brussels, to all Interns!

By Virág Gulyás



Being a fresh graduate or unemployed was never and never will be easy. Especially not today. Therefore, it is not such a newborn problem, yet a serious one. There have been uncountable papers, news and articles on the unbearable level of youth unemployment. For several years already, the solution to help the young manpower was laid down in the apprentice and internship programs.

These programs seemed to be the best solutions to tackle the gap between the supply of this rising number of blue-collar fresh minds and the demand on the other side. Internship programs were created to give the platform to enhance one's employability, to boost all those practical skills that are not received during the theoretical university studies.

Indeed! Most of the fresh graduates (today it means age between 22-27) are facing serious challenges at their first working place. Nevertheless, it is somehow understandable; since the objectives of the universities are not (yet) to give first hand practical experience. Therefore, companies started to offer internship programs to help the new generations to cope with the mounting pressure and

competition put on them. They offer shorter or longer programs, with a structured and well-planned mission and vision, they pay the legal stipend, offer the interns tasks with responsibilities, mentor them, aid them to adjust to the organization's culture, treat them as part of their company and lead them to their first employment contract.

Brussels and the excess demand

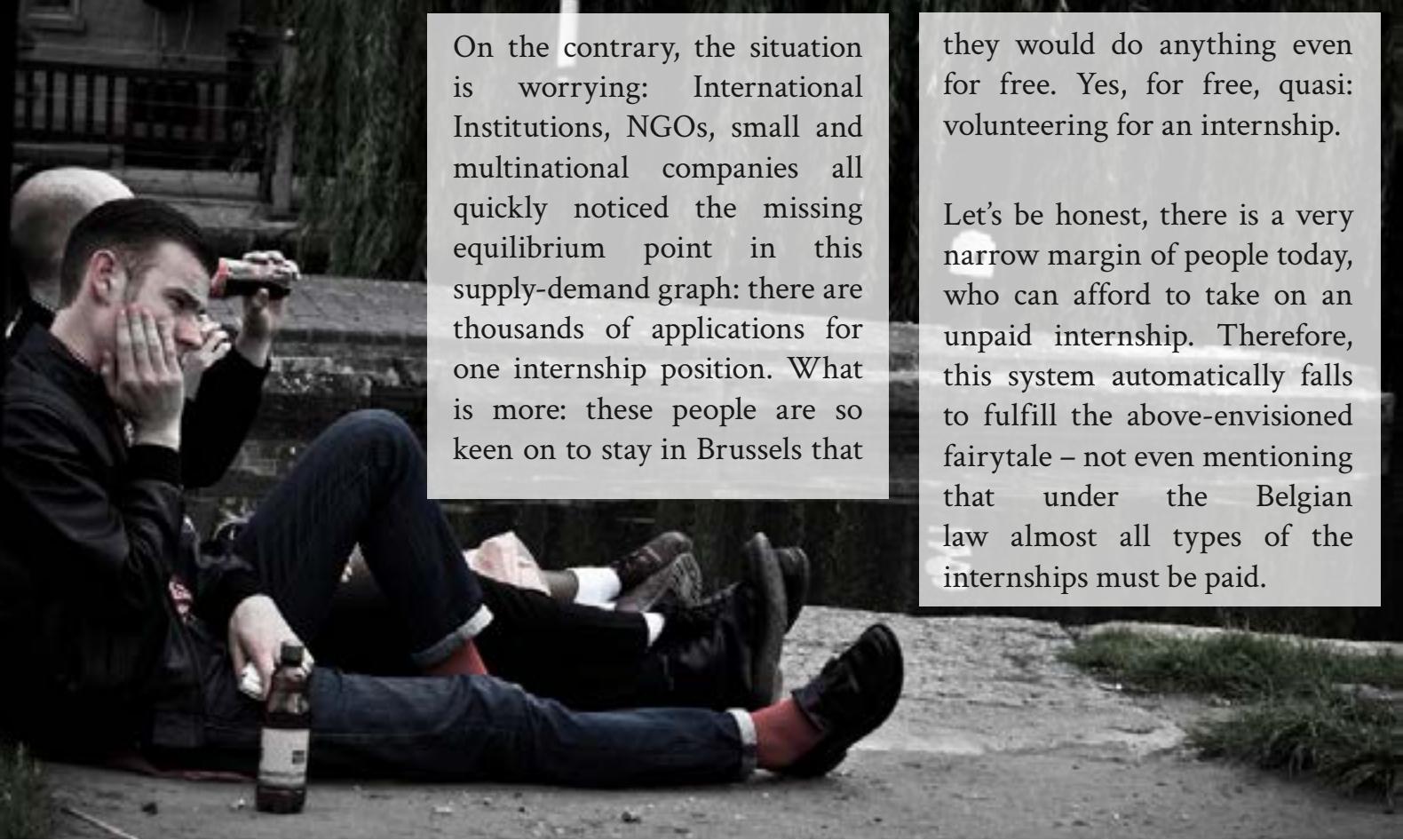
Yes. This was the aim! But today it all sounds as a fairytale - at least, in the capital of internships, namely in Brussels.

It seems that Brussels could not cope with the outstanding demand of the youth job seeking activity, whose primary desire is to be located in the heart of Europe. The city has several charms, we all know that.

One of them is seeing ourselves as a well-paid and important Eurocrat, wearing the EU starred badge in our neck proudly. However, the way to achieve this dream is not a nicely laid yellow brick valley to all. Most of the young people move to Brussels with hope, but without an actual job and financial resources to stay for long.

Hence, they start the search for the stepping-stone: the first internship. They were all told that they need to gain some experience to boost their CV and it will assure them a good job.

It might have been true a few years ago, but it does not hold up today.



On the contrary, the situation is worrying: International Institutions, NGOs, small and multinational companies all quickly noticed the missing equilibrium point in this supply-demand graph: there are thousands of applications for one internship position. What is more: these people are so keen on to stay in Brussels that

they would do anything even for free. Yes, for free, quasi: volunteering for an internship.

Let's be honest, there is a very narrow margin of people today, who can afford to take on an unpaid internship. Therefore, this system automatically falls to fulfill the above-envisioned fairytale – not even mentioning that under the Belgian law almost all types of the internships must be paid.

Piling up internships – or being intern for a lifetime – an actual "first world problem"

Another problem is that one single internship is simply not enough. These motivated young people take on one and then another and another one and...yes another internship until they can sign their first real employment contract – which by this point many times is not the dreamed EU Institution paper with the proudly worn badge but 'just give me a proper job' kind of solution.

However, this latter case is the least problematic side effect,

since not everybody can/should work in the European Parliament or Commission.

The Internship question became a real problem. Not because of its existence – the main idea has its positive effects - but rather how it is executed today by many. There are harsh words out there describing the situation: 'exploitation', 'unethical', 'out-law' and so on.

These were not unheard: there have been forums and discussion and initiatives to attempt to regulate the

There are harsh words out there describing the situation: 'exploitation', 'unethical', 'out-law' and so on. internship programs and give them a legal basis (see: Quality internship), however, as the situation demonstrates, there is still a way to go.

The last few weeks, something has moved and the issue received more

attention than before – there was a demonstration of more than 100 Interns under the 'Sandwich protest' on 17th July and the initiative of the Internship Black List became vividly alive, both are aiming to raise awareness and make actions!

Will it end the endless 'internship'? Will it encourage companies to comply with the legal bases for their internships? Will it eliminate the unpaid internships?

.....
Time and reactions will tell.
.....

However, one thing should not be forgotten: just because you are an intern you are not necessarily exploited, just because you are an intern you are not necessarily working unethically and just because you are an intern you are not necessarily wasting your time.

Internships are precious

And let me tell you why:

9am - you open your laptop and in seconds Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, your local and national news platforms all pump up saying: 'critical situation', 'XY company sends away 1500 people', 'unemployment rate above 10%'. A thought comes to you immediately - Should I go on? We probably all have faced similar 'good morning' messages. Still, we cannot help but face the truth – **we do not have a job!**

Our social networking activities and the first sip of our morning coffee accomplished, we automatically start typing: www.euroact... and prepare our CV to be sent for application to any position that does not contain the word 'Intern'. On a good day, let us say we find 4 or 5 positions, send our CV and get ready to go out to Pluxing or Chatelaine to meet our friends. Yet another day has passed without us having acquired new skills, challenged ourselves or laid down any potential bricks for our future dreams... Unless we have at least refreshed our CV to match

the applied position (which, well, is rarely the case).

No blame! Being without a job is tough – even more than tough: it is exhausting both mentally and financially; we are losing confidence, questioning the education we have fought for; still, life goes on....

**Message
Nr. 2**

Take your life and put things into perspective

You cannot find your dream job? You are in the midst of your 3rd internship and still remain without a job? Please remember: I am only talking about paid and fair internships – what about the rest? The choice is yours: in a non-paid internship, you are accepting to “undervalue yourself”.

As I wrote previously, today's 'fresh graduates' are aged somewhere between 22 and 27. Everybody experiences the same situation: the early 20's



have just obtained their BA degree and have no experience at all, while the elders have two Master degrees (or even a PhD) but little or no career experience. However, we cannot neglect the fact that

most of us want to be managers on the day after our graduation ceremony: we have learned enough, fought enough, we are ready! Sadly, this is not the case.

I am not saying to stop dreaming! – *If Your Dreams Do Not Scare You, They Are Not Big Enough (E. Johnson)*' - but in a given situation, and an era full of complications, go and get the maximum out of it.

You are *in* a company: make yourself worthy, needed and irreplaceable! Regardless of the seemingly scary situation, most of the companies are still looking for talent, commitment and great working morale. They have, after all, let you in their company, shared a very important part of their life with you, along with their business and know-how. Use it! I know there might be internships that do not offer too much. Turn it around! You are not getting a training? Make a training program and show them. They have no proper marketing plan? Make one and show them...and the list goes on until you can reach.

You do not like the company you landed in? Come up with ideas to make it better! You do not like the internship tasks? Come up with ideas how to make it better! Each and every position hides the opportunity to enjoy it, you can trust me on that.

..... Why? For you to gain the most out of it (even if you know, for instance, you never ever want to do sales again), for you to show yourself that you are able to uphold any expectations, that you are committed to what you took on, to show your company that you're ready to be employed!

Invest in yourself

Another internship is still better than breaking down your young spirit, losing your thirst for new skills and the desire to be better and better every day. Here is a case study:

You receive an internship offer. Congratulations! Dress up for work as if you were the manager. Why? To feel that

you have achieved something! Go into your office and start feeling comfortable in your chair. This time, have your first sip of **Turn it around!** coffee with a feeling of achievement. And now, start working. Many interns expect continuous mentoring, coaching and guidance. They are still waiting for the

'professor' to come to the room and give them the daily tasks. If you happen to receive it, great! If not, it is also great! You have everything set up for you to look, absorb and learn! It is only up to you whether you leave an internship being the same person or one step above the previous you.

Put on the hat of your manager: better, brighter, The Dream. A Would I want to hire few months later, the myself? Be honest! Many young interns do not **want to hire** wait until the end of their terms – they enter the company and start looking for a job from the very first day. Somewhere else, something else, something better. They get another internship that looks

Do not get me wrong. It is OK not to know what exactly you want, it is OK to look around, it is OK to try new things – BUT it is not OK to give up after a few weeks, it is not OK to sit back and wait for the training to come to you, it is not OK not to use the platform given to you and it is not OK to complain when you have a place to work at!

As an Intern, you are responsible for your future



My message to you

Put yourself in the company's shoes one more time: Would you want to hire someone who is not able/willing/committed to go through an internship from the beginning till the end, or starts job-hunting on his first day at your company? I guess not. Instead, you would look for someone who makes him/herself unnoticeable and comes each day with an attitude that signals only one thing: hire me!

Today it might be harder and take longer to start your real career, but the rules are the same as they were for our parents and grandparents: 'work hard and

life will reward you!'. Therefore, to all of you, my message is the following in this difficult period:

- If you cannot be happy with your internship, you will not be happy with any of your jobs;

- If you cannot get the best out of yourself as an intern, you will not do your best as an employee either.

....and they know this! The big guys behind their desk know it! (most of them still use their internship programs as

a checking phase and entering door, even if they say the opposite). And if you did all you could, and still your 2nd internship leads 'only' to a 3rd internship – face it: life is not easy, sometimes even unfair! Yet, stick to your values, stick to your attitude, stick to your dreams! 'Whatever you do, do it with full heart', otherwise you are just going further and further from your ultimate aim: to get a job.

Here is my message to you, and I hope to see you fulfilling your dreams!

PS: If after an honest self-evaluation you still confidently believe that you did all that you could as an intern and it led 'nowhere', write me your story and I will send you a further message.



EUROPEAN
INITIATIVE
FOR MEDIA
PLURALISM

Media for all, not the few!

The European Citizens' Initiative for Media Pluralism calls for regulation at the European level to protect media pluralism in the European Union, therefore guaranteeing the independence of the media from political and economical interests.

The European Citizens' Initiative for Media Pluralism brings together nearly one hundred different organizations, professional bodies and media. Its initiators are [European Alternatives](#) and the [l'Alliance Internationale de Journalistes](#) (International Alliance of Journalists).

This ECI states that the situation of media freedom and pluralism in the European Union is worsening, specifically referring to the examples of the [United Kingdom](#), [Hungary](#) and [Italy](#). Citizens cannot hold power accountable without access to free, independent and pluralistic media. The initiative supports the idea that European institutions should safeguard the right to independent and pluralistic information.

Support this ECI on Media Pluralism at

[www.mediainitiative.eu!](http://www.mediainitiative.eu/)



The aim of this initiative is to protect media pluralism through partial harmonisation of national rules on **media ownership** and **transparency, conflicts of interest with political office** and **independence of media supervisory bodies**. Its initiators demand the following regulations:

1. Legislation to avoid concentration of ownership in the media and advertising sectors;
2. Guaranteed independence of national supervisory bodies from political power and influence;
3. A definition of conflict of interests with media ownership to prevent abuse of media power for special interests;
4. Rules enforcing transparency to identify the ultimate beneficial owners of media outlets, and monitoring systems to regularly gauge the independence of the media in member states.

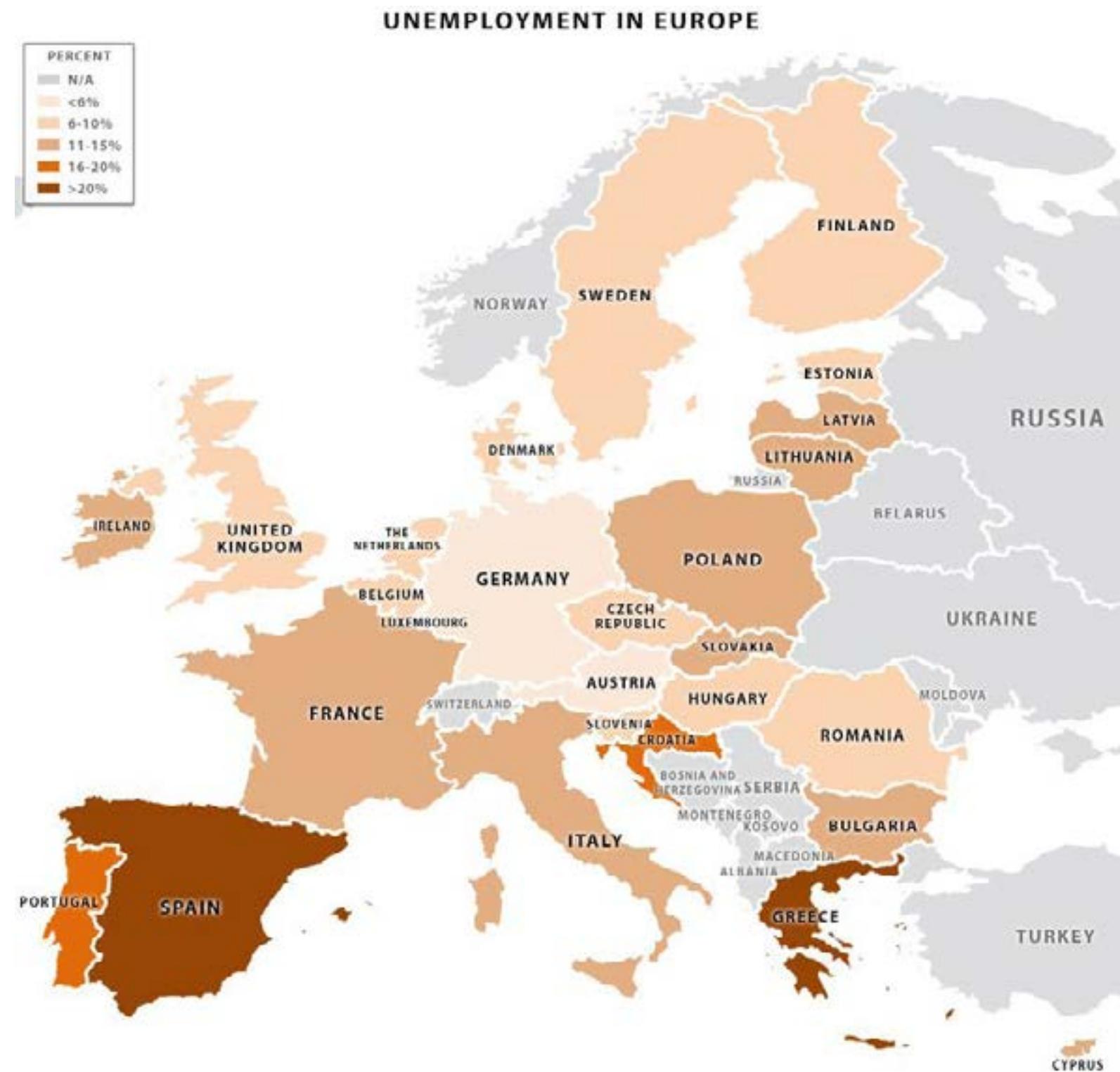
Harmonisation of national legislation on media pluralism will contribute to the correct functioning of the internal market as well as a pluralist democratic debate through a free exchange of ideas and information in the European Union. The initiative calls for this harmonisation through amendments to the Audiovisual Media Services Directive or through the enactment of a new EU Directive.

European Unemployment

Unemployment is one of the major problems of united Europe. Difficult economic conditions in the south and the east of Europe led to the flow of working force to the countries with more stable labour market.

The map reflects the level of unemployment in the European Union. Do you agree with this data? Is there something new or surprising? What is the situation on the labour market in your country? In which spheres is the unemployment especially high?

What would be the most effective way to reduce the unemployment in the European Union?



THE ARTS NATION

What awaits Bulgaria?

by Yuliya Kosharevska

In the last week tens of thousands of Bulgarians have gathered in the streets and protest. Nothing unusual these days but this one is different.



The Bulgarians are an arts nation – while the politicians put on theatre and circus performances, the people dance!

In the last week tens of thousands of Bulgarians gather on the streets and protest. Having in mind that the people in Turkey, Brazil and Greece are doing the same, you might wonder why this is so significant – riots, violence, people fighting for their survival in their own countries. Well, the Bulgarians dance! And paint! They give away colorful balloons and respect the policemen that are taking care of the protests.

It might sound naive, but this way of protesting might appear to be much more effective.

In order for a dramatic change in a country to take place, the most important precondition is the readiness of the nation. The Bulgarians keep telling that they are in transition since 1989 and it was never clear when it will be over. Surely, a nation which is in transition is not matured enough for a real democracy.

But if you happen to walk around Sofia these days and you see the protests, you are likely to think that the transition is coming to its long expected end. Whole families with their kids and dogs are there, the people are carrying positive posters and they insist on change, instead of just waiting for it to happen as a miracle.

Who are those 20 000 people on the streets in Bulgaria?

They are young and well-educated; they have their jobs; they pay taxes; they take care

after their families and they don't want to be quiet any more. They weren't expected, as the blogger Dimitar Nikolov commented. The politicians seem to have forgotten about them and they apparently have failed to understand the power of the social media.

This failure is obvious in the unsuccessful attempts of the party ATAKA to incorporate provocateurs in the protests. Several groups of young men that wanted to cause disorders were spotted, but the real protestors have reacted immediately: they have circled them and have shouted "Provocateurs!", so that the police could check their documents – it appeared that some of them were with criminal record and some didn't have any documents at all.

Talking about the police

One of the things that make the Bulgarian protests different from those in the other countries is that the protesters understand that the policemen are just doing their job. Outside their working hours they are just normal people, facing the same problems as everyone else. That is why bottles of mineral water and hugs were given to the policemen. In return, the syndicate of the police came up with a letter in which they clearly show that they don't want to protect "psychically unstable politicians."

At no point does the letter cite the name of any politician, but it is rather obvious that it is referring to Volen Siderov – the leader of



WANTED: DEMOCRACY

One of the common things between the protests that currently take place around the world is that they are a strain for democracy. In Bulgaria the democracy was breached days before the media magnate Peevski was appointed for head of the State Agency for National Security.

In order for his application to be successful, the legislation was changed and the requirements for work experience were reduced. Furthermore, the Agency was made responsible not only for the internal and external security of the country, but also for dealing with organized crime. Concentrating more power in less people is indeed not one of the characteristics of democracy.

ATAKA. Today the National Security Council was forced to stop its meeting, because of the behavior of Mr. Siderov – instead of thinking what are the possible solutions of the current political situation, which indeed was the aim of the gathering, Mr. Siderov started provoking the other participants.

Earlier this week, a video, in which Mr. Siderov avoids questions from journalists and instead assaults them and the former Prime Minister Boyko Borisov, circled the internet. The ordinary protesters don't assault the politicians. They just want their resignation. They want new people on the political stage and this can happen only after the electoral legislation has been changed.

After the pressure from the protests, the Prime Minister Oresharski has stepped back from his decision to appoint Mr. Peevski for the position. However, before the actual appointment Mr. Peevski was a MP and enjoyed a parliamentary immunity. Had the appointment went without being noticed, he wouldn't have been responsible for any criminal offence he has committed, according to the amended legislation that was introduced beforehand. That is why Mr. Oresharski is talking about an abolishment of the decision. An abolishment is legally not

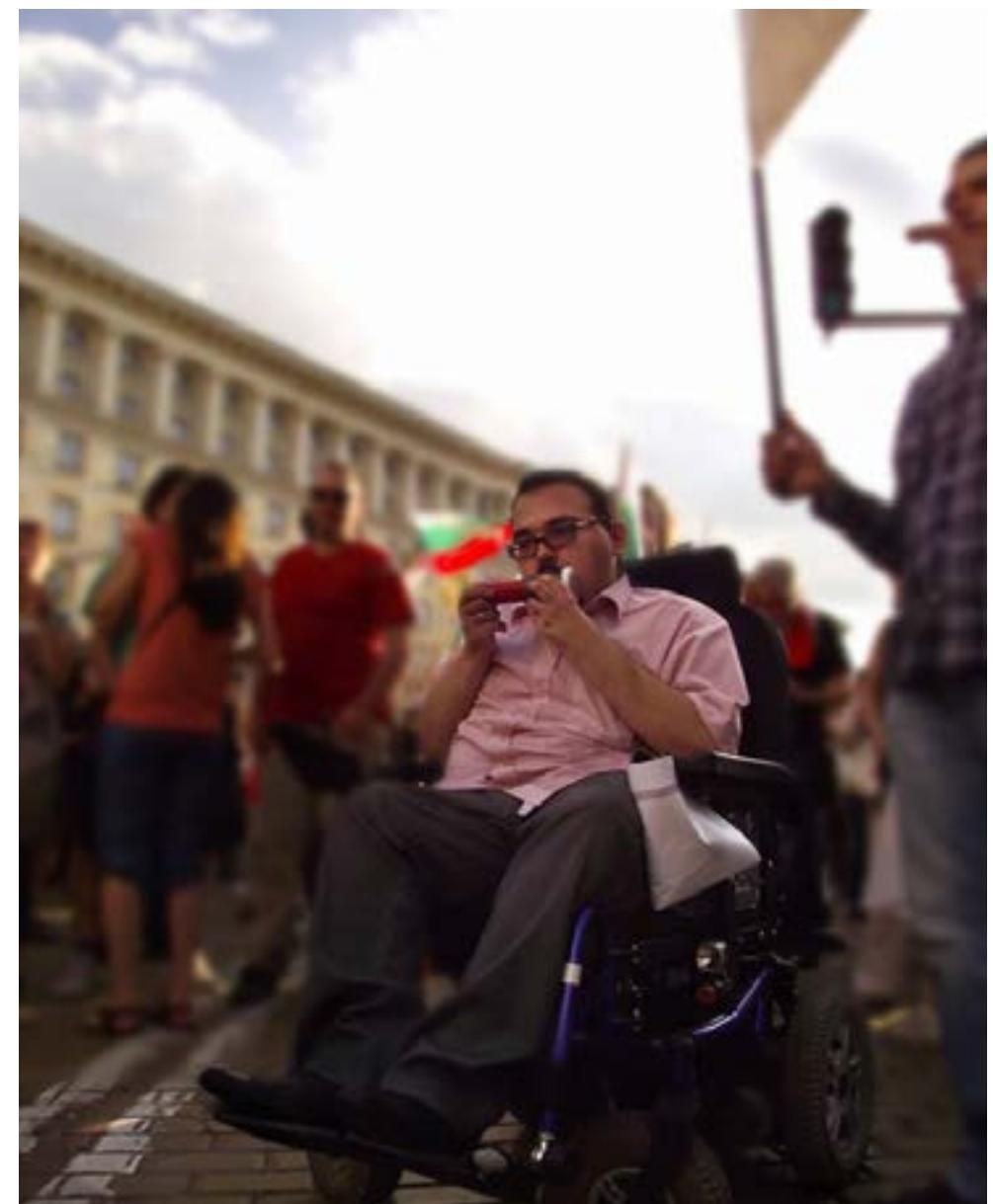
possible, once the position was accepted by Mr. Peevski. The only legal possibility is for him to be dismissed, as the lawyer Mr. Grozev commented for Dnevnik.

Where should this colorful protests lead to?



unrepresented. In order for this to change and more new faces to enter the parliament, the electoral code should be changed.

And if the bright protests have a happy end, the next government will be much more colorful, as well – for the first time in 24 years the people won't be voting for the smallest “devil”, but for their ideas, their dreams and their new leaders.





Boat people, the next crisis to come?

by Michel Anderlini

After an exceptionally harsh journey on a sinking rubber boat, 102 migrants were rescued by a Liberian-flagged oil tanker on Maltese territorial waters, at the end of July 2013. However, the Maltese Interior Ministry denied them permission to disembark on the tiny island, thus leaving a five-month-old baby and four pregnant women in very precarious conditions.

The decision of the Maltese authorities sparked outrage at the European level. Cecilia Malmström, the European Union Home Affairs Commissioner, warned Malta that it would be breaching international law

The report clearly asserts that

"when asylum seekers manage to arrive in Europe, they often face further criminal sanctions – criminal charges in respect of the manner of their arrival, prohibition on employment and criminalization of unauthorized employment when there is no functioning reception system which will permit asylum seekers to eat and have shelter".

if it did not accept the refugees into its territory. According to Malmström it is the "*humanitarian duty of the Maltese authorities to allow these persons to disembark*". On the other hand, Joseph Muscat, the Maltese Prime Minister, claimed that the captain of the Liberian-flagged ship had ignored its orders to turn back and disembark the migrants in the nearest harbor, situated in Libya.

On Wednesday August 8th, the Maltese government announced that it had reached an agreement with Italian authorities who authorized the ship to dock in Syracuse, Sicily,

allowing for a solution to this potential humanitarian crisis.

The fate of migrants in Southern Europe

The story is regrettably not unusual. In February 2010, the Council of Europe issued a report pointing out a growing tendency for mistreating and criminalizing migrants, particularly prominent in southern European states. The report clearly asserts that "*when asylum seekers manage to arrive in Europe, they often face further criminal sanctions – criminal charges in respect of the manner of their arrival, prohibition*

on employment and criminalization of unauthorized employment when there is no functioning reception system which will permit asylum seekers to eat and have shelter".

Malta has often faced criticism over the conditions immigrants experience following their arrival on Maltese shores: routine jailing upon arrival, long detentions periods (even for minors), usually stretching up to 18 months, in addition to the poor hygiene and safety standards registered on detention centers.

Syrians in Greece face economic and societal challenges when settling down, as recently reported by an article in The Atlantic. Most refugees do not receive the government-issued pink card, their permit to stay legally in the country. Without it, many are thrown into detentions centers where they are "*given little food, no clean clothing, or bed linen. They have no soap to wash themselves, no opportunity to call family or friends. They are beaten*". Furthermore, the recent rise of the right-wing extremist party Golden Dawn has led to routine assaults on immigrants throughout the streets of Greece.

A lack of solidarity?

Malta, Greece and Italy have often pressed EU member states to share the cost of receiving and settling refugees. Southern European leaders claim that the Arab Spring has

increased the number of refugees arriving on their shores – even Malmström admits that in the first half of 2011, 75 per cent of all asylum applications were registered in only six EU member states.

In response to these concerns, and following 14 years of troublesome negotiations, the EU has reformed its asylum procedures. For instance, officials will have to answer to every asylum claim within 6 months (instead of the previous 24 months). European Union member states will have to assure minimum standards of housing for asylum-seekers, who will also be eligible for the same benefits as EU citizens, such as health care.

But the so-called "Dublin III" rule on point of entry has remained untouched, maintaining that asylum-seekers must submit a request for asylum at their first point of entry to the European Union. They remain limited to their first member state, and are transferred back if they travel to another EU state. The new regulations only precise that the applicants may take legal action to prevent them from being relocated (for example, from Sweden to Greece) and that they do not have to return automatically to their member state of entry if it is overburdened with asylum-seekers or unable to provide humane conditions of living.



Nevertheless, there is strong evidence that the new system will not solve the weaknesses of the Dublin regulations. A report by the German NGO Pro Asyl confirms that a “disproportionate burden has been placed on EU member states located closest to EU borders”. EU leaders have been hitherto incapable of displaying more solidarity towards building a common asylum policy, as they have shown reluctance to accept further transfers of sovereignty in matters relating to migration policies. Hugo Brady, from the Centre for

European Reform, concludes that “EU countries have little interest in the Commission’s other ideas to facilitate more legal immigration”, as they are facing harsh economic conditions as well as political upheavals stemming from upcoming elections and the growing mobilization by right-wing parties.

However, asylum-seekers continue to arrive at the EU’s southern shores, pushing its leaders towards the need to solve the weaknesses of the current EU asylum

regulations. Will refugees be “the next EU crisis”, as Charlemagne, *The Economist’s* online column (dedicated to European politics), contends? In the meantime, the fate of thousands of individuals, risking their lives in perilous journeys to Europe, remains uncertain.

THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT





Geopolitics, Security and the Eastern Partnership

by André P. DeBattista

One of the priorities of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union will be to strengthen the EU's relationship with its Eastern neighbours. This objective has been formalised into a process referred to as the Eastern Partnership (EaP). The EaP was launched in May 2009 and aims to foster political cooperation and deeper economic integration between the 28 EU states and their six partner countries in Eastern Europe: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and the Ukraine. In view of the meeting scheduled for the 28 and 29 of November in Vilnius, this essay aims to highlight some geopolitical aspects of the EaP.

The Eastern Partnership: An Overview

The EaP operates within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper (2004) summarises its aims: ensure that stability, security and prosperity are sustained at the new borders of the European Union. The arrangement does not necessarily encourage or discourage EU membership; although with gradual economic and political integration, the question of membership will be debated and considered.

The Euro-Med Partnership and the subsequent Union for the Mediterranean provided a framework for cooperation between the EU and its Mediterranean partners. The Eastern Partnership hopes to achieve a similar result. It is a "*contractual framework governing relations between the European Union and each of the partner countries.*" (Delcour, 2012)

Moscow's Challenge

The partner countries are all former republics of the USSR. Russia is a key player in this area and seeks to deepen its influence. Its political interest in the region is cemented by geographical proximity and historical ties.

Moscow's attempts to set up regional institutions have often been dogged by a weak institutional set-up and the lack of political will. The Eurasian Customs Union, however, is the first initiative which seems to be challenging the EU's engagement in the region. Although its economic rationale has been described as "weak", the Eurasian Customs Union boasts of a robust institutional structure: "It functions as a rule-based body, consistent with the World Trade Organization (WTO) regime and modern international norms"

(Dragneva&Wolczuk, 2012). The Eurasian Customs Union is modelled on the EU. Russia seems to be succeeding in articulating this organisation as a viable regional alternative which will offer economic benefits underpinned by a strong and well-designed institutional setup. Two Eastern Partners have already signed up to the ECU: Belarus as a member, and Armenia as candidate.

This initiative has attracted considerable criticism. Its most vocal critic is former US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, who has decried the process as sovietisation: "*let's make no mistake about it. We know what the goal is and we are trying to figure out effective ways to slow down or prevent it.*" Other

Moscow's attempts to set up regional institutions have often been dogged by a weak institutional set-up and the lack of political will.

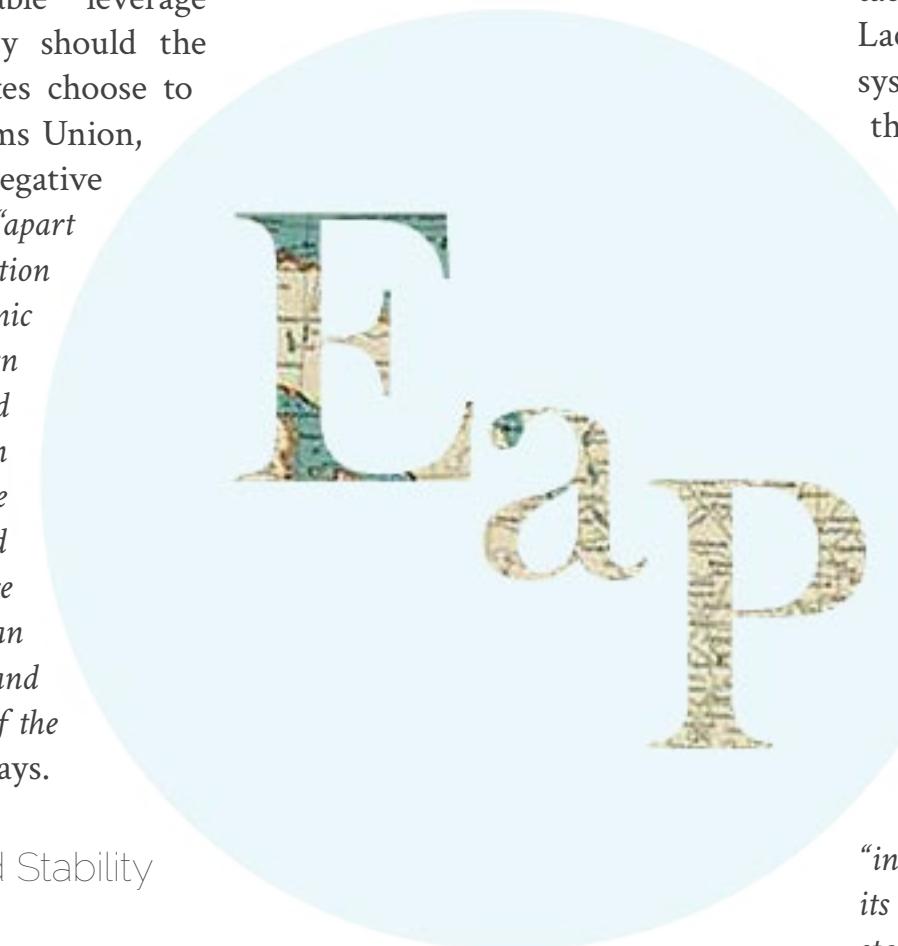
analysts have been equally scathing: “*the Eurasian Customs Union is marked by authoritarian politics, oligarch-dominated business and unhealthy alliance between economy and politics.*” (Kasciunas, 2012)

Kasciunas also points out that Russia would gain considerable leverage in regional trade policy should the Eastern Partnership states choose to join the Eurasian Customs Union, and this could have negative security implications: “*apart from preventing the promotion of political and economic reform in the EU’s Eastern neighbourhood, this would also keep the Eastern Partnership countries on the path of development marked by an unhealthy alliance between authoritarian politics, economy and business – characteristics of the post-Soviet countries.*” - he says.

The Rule of Law and Stability

The Post-Soviet period was one of uncertainty and pressure to reform, which was particularly tough on the former constituent republics. The challenge for reformers was to create effective institutions to replace arbitrary and authoritarian systems. In addition, the socialist planned economy needed to be transformed into a dynamic market economy. The outcomes have not always been positive. Strengthening of the rule of law, democracy and good governance

are priorities listed in the Eastern Partnership roadmap. It aims to “*foster approximation to EU standards through dialogue and exchange of best practice.*” It covers areas such as electoral standards, freedom of press, the strengthening of the office of the ombudsman, public administration reform and the



administrative capacities of regional and local authorities.

These initiatives may indeed contribute to strengthen the rule of law and provide much needed stability. However, they strongly depend on the political will of each government. Dialogue is a two-way process and some governments, in particular those of Belarus and Azerbaijan, may not be forthcoming on this front.

Crime and Justice

Cross-border crime across has wide-ranging implications on the security of the Eastern Partnership states and the EU as a whole. The effectiveness of criminal organisations is due to stealth tactics and wide-spread corruption. Lacklustre border controls and visa systems may further exacerbate the situation. The EU supports Integrated Border Management, and is to provide tangible help through training of border guards and custom officers, supplemented by information sharing and institution-building exercises aimed at tackling issues of asylum, migration, and human or drug trafficking.

The functioning of the Justice system is another area with potential for collaboration.

The Eastern Partnership will encourage the sharing of experiences “*in reforming the judiciary and adjusting its action to European/international standards*” (EC, 2012). This extends to law-enforcement agencies, particularly in their fight against corruption and cybercrime.

Energy Security

A reliable and uninterrupted source of energy is now considered to be a matter of national security. The Eastern Partnership thus seeks to “*contribute to the establishment of a transparent and*

stable regulatory” framework which can “*attract investment, increase competitiveness and enhance the security of supply*” (EC, 2012). The Eastern Partnership hopes to contribute to the establishment of a “*regulatory and legislative framework which promotes energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy*.” It seeks to enhance nuclear safety by encouraging a strong nuclear safety culture and “*establishing a solid, legally binding framework, in line with international treaties and conventions*” (EC, 2012).

A reliable and uninterrupted source of energy is now considered to be a matter of national security.

to be weak and corruption is still widespread. Azerbaijan and Belarus are still dominated by an autocratic neo-Soviet style of governance. Very little has been achieved in terms of human rights. These issues are further compounded by Russian influence in the region. Moscow’s participation in the territorial disputes and its attempt to establish an economic and political union should be closely monitored.

The European Union can (and should) lead by best practice in the areas where it has been successful. However, the European External Action Service (EEAS) is still in its infancy and it needs to develop institutional capabilities to deal with such complex issues. The Eastern Partnership can be a useful framework serving to consolidate what has been achieved and to lay the groundwork for further action. However, it should be guided by realistic aims and avoid the overly formal and burdensome structure which sometimes characterises EU policy making.

Realistic aims coupled with an equally realistic institutional framework will be determinant of the success of this partnership.

Confronting the Emerging Eurasia Union

by Matthew Heywood-Cunliffe

In recent weeks, a great deal of attention has been placed on the Kremlin's attempts to pressure the former Soviet states of the Ukraine, Moldova, and Armenia into its new customs union by threatening their economic and political stability. Whereas these countries are members of the EU's Eastern Partnership and have repeatedly stated they favour integration with Brussels over Moscow, does the EU have an obligation to protect them from Russian advances?

The Kremlin's announcement in 2011 that Russia, along with Belarus and Kazakhstan, intends to counter EU influence in central Asia via the creation of a Eurasian Union by 2015 was scoffed

by many national leaders and international news outlets — however, the news earlier this month that Armenian President Serzgh Sargsyan now intends to join this Russian customs union rather than the planned EU free trade agreement has shocked the European Commission and forced the bloc to reassess the international importance of Russia's desire to create the Eurasian Union.

Should the EU develop a 'Monroe Doctrine' to counter Russia's forced influence?

Russian government recently supplied Azerbaijan with more than \$1 billion in tanks, artillery, and rocket launchers while actively threatening to terminate protection of Armenia if it signs onto the EU trade deal in Vilnius in November. Because Armenia relies almost entirely on Russia for security, for Putin's government to side with Azerbaijan and deny Armenia protection puts the small Caucus nation in a

Following the Soviet breakup, Azerbaijan and Armenia have engaged in an armed dispute over the Nagorno-Karabakh territory. Taking advantage of this conflict for its personal gain, the



vulnerable position. Lacking any real security agreement with another outside power, President Sargsyan was easily pressured into Russia's invitation to join its customs union (and soon to be political union) in order to ensure its regional security.

As the 2015 goal for the formation of the Eurasian Union nears closer and only two other states on board, the lengths that the Russian go-

vernment will go through to increase its influence appears to be growing public and more severe. In a bold move, Putin's government has very openly threatened to damage the economy and national unity of two nations very close to the European Union — the Ukraine and Moldova — should they agree to the EU free trade deal.

Seeking to pull the Ukraine back into the Russian sphere of influence, Putin's

government has threatened to "take protective measures" against the Ukraine should it enter into agreements with the EU in Vilnius — a threat interpreted by Brussels and Kiev to mean a Russian embargo on Ukrainian goods. To show this is not an empty threat, the Russian government recently blocked Ukrainian goods from entering its borders for one week in August, causing worry and confusion in the Ukrainian capital — however,

despite Russian threats and pressure tests, the Ukraine announced it still favours the agreement with the EU over integration with an increasingly colonialist Russia.

Threats have likely been the most extreme for the small Eastern European nation of Moldova, whose government internal political security, economic security, and even the livelihood of Moldovan citizens is being held at ransom by the Kremlin.

Following the Soviet collapse, Moldova has battled to keep the secessionist territory of Transnistria united with its government in Chișinău — a battle that Russia has provided a great sum of money, material, and man power for on the side of Moldova. Knowing

Chișinău dependence on Russia in this internal conflict, Putin is using such assistance as leverage by threatening to withdraw all aid in the breakaway region and recognizing Transnistria as a sovereign nation should Moldova sign the EU trade deal in November.

But like the Ukraine, the Moldovan government in Chișinău has maintained its stance that it favours greater integration with the European Union than with Russia and the former Soviet republics. In response, the Kremlin pledged to both block trade with Moldova and, according to Russian Deputy

Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, "cut off Moldova's gas in the winter" if it does not change its position. Again, Russia does not produce empty threats. To

demonstrate its dedication to placing Moldova under its influence, the Russian government has banned the entry of Moldovan wine and spirits into its market, and Russia's intentional disruption of gas flow

to the Eastern EU states in the dead of winter just a few years back is still fresh in the minds of many Eastern Europeans.

Armenia, the Ukraine, and Moldova have all freely and voluntarily chosen to engage in greater economic integration with the European Union than Russia. They were neither pressured nor threatened to do so by Brussels. For many leaders in these Eastern Partnership members, the projected 12% growth in national GDP that allegedly comes as a result of free trade with the EU was enough to influence their decisions. However, their national right to

self determination is now being actively attacked by the Russian government in the hopes that doing

so will bring them back under the Russian influence. Whereas these countries have made integration with the EU their goal via entry into the EU's Eastern Partnership, is it the responsibility of the European Union to protect them?

Legally the EU has no obligation to react. However, were the Union truly dedicated to its principles and the promises made in the Eastern Partnership Agreement to promote peace,

justice, democracy, and rule of law in the signatory states, it would develop a regional policy that asserts Brussels' willingness to take protective action in the event that the independence of Eastern Partnership members is threatened by any outside power. Were the EU truly dedicated to protecting the rights of all Europeans, it would adopt a policy similar to the Monroe Doctrine in the United States.

Created by U.S. President Monroe and his Secretary of State John Quincy Adams in 1823 following

Central and South American independence from the Spanish and Portuguese Empires, the Monroe Doctrine states that any further efforts by European nations to colonize land or interfere with states in North or South America would be viewed as acts of aggression requiring U.S. intervention. This policy was made in response to the Holy Alliances affirmation that it supported military incursion to re-establish Bourbon rule over Spain and its colonies—colonies which had recently sought alignment with the US for protective reasons and based their governments on the American presidential system.

Were the EU truly dedicated to protecting the rights of all Europeans, it would adopt a policy similar to the Monroe Doctrine in the United States.

The Monroe Doctrine has been used as the basis of military actions in the Americas by the United States many times since its adoption, most notably along the US-Mexico border following the French invasion of Mexico in 1862

(delayed by the US Civil War), off the coast of Greenland prior to US entry into WWII as a belligerent, and during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

In all of these situations the independence of nations in the Americas were threatened by European powers (specifically France, Germany, and the Soviet Union) and the US intervened to either protect their independence or to protect personal trade interests. In the case of Russian threats to Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, the independence and security of these countries is similarly being threatened by an increasingly colonialist Russia, and the EU should intervene.

While I do not suggest that the EU develop a Monroe Doctrine style policy solely to protect its



colonialist in practice to Moscow's threats to the region.

That is why the EU should declare and vow to protect these states' independence and right to self-determination void of threats to their safety. Should these countries freely choose to join the proposed Eurasian Union, so be it. In the case of Belarus and Kazakhstan, roots run deeper with Moscow than with Brussels. However, in the case of the Ukraine, Moldova, and Armenia, alignment has, and continues to be, with the European Union, and their right to seek economic alignment with Brussels should be protected by Brussels.

Statements to Moscow by EU Neighbourhood Commissioner Štefan Füle that simply label the situation at-hand as 'unacceptable' are not enough. We know from experience that the Russian government does not deliver empty threats, that it far too often overlooks human rights, and that it is both actively and publicly threatening

these states with possible economic and political ruin if they refuse to break their ties with the EU and align with Russia. If the EU truly believes it exists to protect peace, justice, democracy, and the preservation of human rights and the rule of law in Europe, it should be actively willing to defend these European nations from Russian aggression.

Should Russia continue with its advances in the former Soviet states and should the EU decide to react, what would be the most effective method of intervention? Considering the European Union is currently the largest economy in the world — even larger than the United States — while Russia has dropped significantly to tenth largest, threatening Russia with a full embargo appears to be the most influential method of intervention for the EU. Whereas trade sanctions are a common EU response to 'rogue' nations, the Kremlin would know this is not an empty threat. Further, this has been Russia's threat to the Ukraine

and Moldova, so the threat of and embargo on Russia would not overly exceed threats already made by the Kremlin.

There is no question that Moscow's global influence has decreased significantly since the Soviet collapse. Russia's economy is no longer one of the world's largest, the Warsaw Pact has opted for EU and NATO membership, and the jewel of Soviet productivity — the Ukraine — strides to align more with the EU than its former Soviet big brother. In a world where soft power increasingly out-weights hard power, the Kremlin is attempting to regain some of its former Cold War glory via the creation of a Russo-centric union encompassing the vast majority of the former USSR. Former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton referred to the creation of such a union like so: *"It is not going to be called that [U.S.S.R.]. It's going to be called 'customs union,' it will be called 'Eurasian Union' and all that. But let's make no mistake about it. We know what the goal is."*

We know what this goal is and we know what tactics the Russian government will use to achieve it. Under the EU's principles, the Kremlin has no right to use colonialist tactics to involuntarily force these Eastern Partnerships countries into its sphere of influence. To protect peace, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in Europe, the EU must develop a Monroe Doctrine policy to assert its dedication to the protection of these rights in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus and be willing to use its greatest strength — its soft power — to ensure their independence and right to self-determination.



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Eastern Partnership Summit: the Outcomes

The long expected **Eastern Partnership Summit** took place on a very dynamic and exciting background: *mass protests in the Ukraine, the change of political power in Georgia, the intentions of Romania to unite with Moldova*. All these events are big steps towards the creation of

a united Europe and the integration of the former Soviet countries to the European community.

The infographic above shows the **key achievements** of the 3rd Eastern Partnership Summit.

Do you think that the declarations and agreements signed in Vilnius will accelerate the integration processes? Will they affect the relations of the Eastern Partnership countries with Russia?

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP BEYOND VILNIUS

Unique kind of relationship. To support reforms and promote closer political association and economic integration with the EU

- Finalized Association Agreements, including DCFTA
Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia

- Initializing Association Agreement, including its DCFTA part with Georgia and Moldova

- Strengthening democracy
Human rights, rule of law

Achievements >>>

- Advancing visa facilitation and liberalization
- Multilateral Cooperation
Agriculture, Environment, Trade, Migration, CSDP
- Sectorial Cooperation
JHA, Transport Ministers
- Social Dialogue
CORLEAP, Business Forum, Youth Forum
- Flagship Initiatives
SME, Integrated Border Management, Energy, EU support for higher education: Erasmus Mundus and Tempus
- Shaping European perspective



- <http://www.greater-europe.com/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/GreaterEurope>
- [@GreaterEurope](http://instagram.com/greatereurope#)

In their own words:
“Despite profound cultural ties and serious common challenges proving that effective cooperation and dialogue between countries of the European Union and countries of the CIS are essential, people from both regions are not connected enough and have a stereotyped vision of each other which hinders good cooperation.”

The Youth Association for a Greater Europe, was spontaneously created by youth from all over the world, at a conference. The initiative was quickly endorsed by the Council of Europe, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French European Youth Parliament, among many others.

Their aim is to encourage active interaction between youth from the entire continent, from Iceland to the Ural Mountain, in order to change the stereotyped vision and historical baggage between nations, and to ultimately make the youth aware of the common heritage and shared values in all European countries, so we are able to fruitfully cooperate in order to build our future.

In order to achieve their aims, the Youth Association for a Greater Europe, are building a Think Tank, as well as an International Youth Forum in Strasbourg, which aim to provide opportunities for youth from all European countries, from Iceland to Russia to build their common future in the frame of an extended Europe, with easier business and cultural exchanges.

Euromaidan is good for the EU and for all Europeans, not just for the Ukrainians

by Ivan Botoucharov

The internet is flooded with articles about Euromaidan, its causes, aims and progress.

I do not want to make more noise and compete with some of the most respected journalists in the world, so I will not write yet another piece analyzing these protests.

What I will do is note Euromaidan's significance and BENEFIT to the EU.

I must say, I am very passionate about solidarity, democracy and human rights, and I believe the Ukrainians are Europeans, which are reasons enough to support Euromaidan. I have been [Tweeting](#), [Facebooking](#) and even [Pinteresting](#) about all the twists and turns of events for the past couple of weeks.

However, solidarity is not enough for everyone. I've even spoken to Europeans which do not support Euromaidan, because

for them signing a Trade Agreement is the same as entering the EU. Euromaidan will NOT make Ukraine a Member State of the EU (unfortunately for me, fortunately for some) - there is a long process and many requirements from the EU for that to happen. Euromaidan is about signing a Trade Agreement, and thus choosing a path, which will be very beneficial to both Ukraine AND to the EU.

The Best Debate we've had

Euromaidan stimulates the debate on Europe, and reminds us why it is still relevant.

I have been raised and live in the UK. So I see Europe from a very interesting point of view

Last year when the European Union won the Nobel Peace Prize, this was scarcely mentioned in the media in the UK. In addition, most media that did shortly mention it, focused on

why the EU does not deserve it, as it has "caused a financial crisis", as it is "not democratic", and etc. The British media (the part that paid any attention at all to this) was surprised and critical of the EU receiving the Peace Prize.

In contrast, in the past two weeks Euromaidan has been extensively covered by all media here, and even in the prime time - the evening news on the major TV stations.

Furthermore, all of the coverage is about how the EU provides stability, values and prosperity.

This may be the first time the British media is positive about the EU, and is talking about it so extensively!

I follow the "continental" media actively as well, and it appears the message most European broadcasters and publishers are sending is the same throughout.

Thanks to Euromaidan, The Ukrainians are reminding us of the importance of the EU, of the peace, stability, and democracy it ensures - which we often take for granted.

In addition, Euromaidan is stimulating the debate on Europe at all levels of society (not only in civil society, and the usual "Euro-geeks"), and leading it in a very positive direction.

Financial Benefits to the EU

This sub-topic sounds very direct and crude, but unfortunately most people are looking exactly for this - consciously, or sub-consciously.

Many people associate the "Association Agreement" and "Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement" with entering the EU. This is NOT the case. A Trade agreement does NOT mean Ukraine will become a member state of the EU. Relax.

The Trade Agreement is not a "give-away", or a donation either. This is the other myth spreading in minds of less-well-informed Europeans.

The Trade Agreement would have enormous financial benefits to the EU.

The very reason the Ukrainians went out on the streets, is Yanukovych's last-minute refusal to go ahead with the Trade Agreement, after promising it for years (not to make Ukraine a member of the EU, as some believe).

In Conclusion

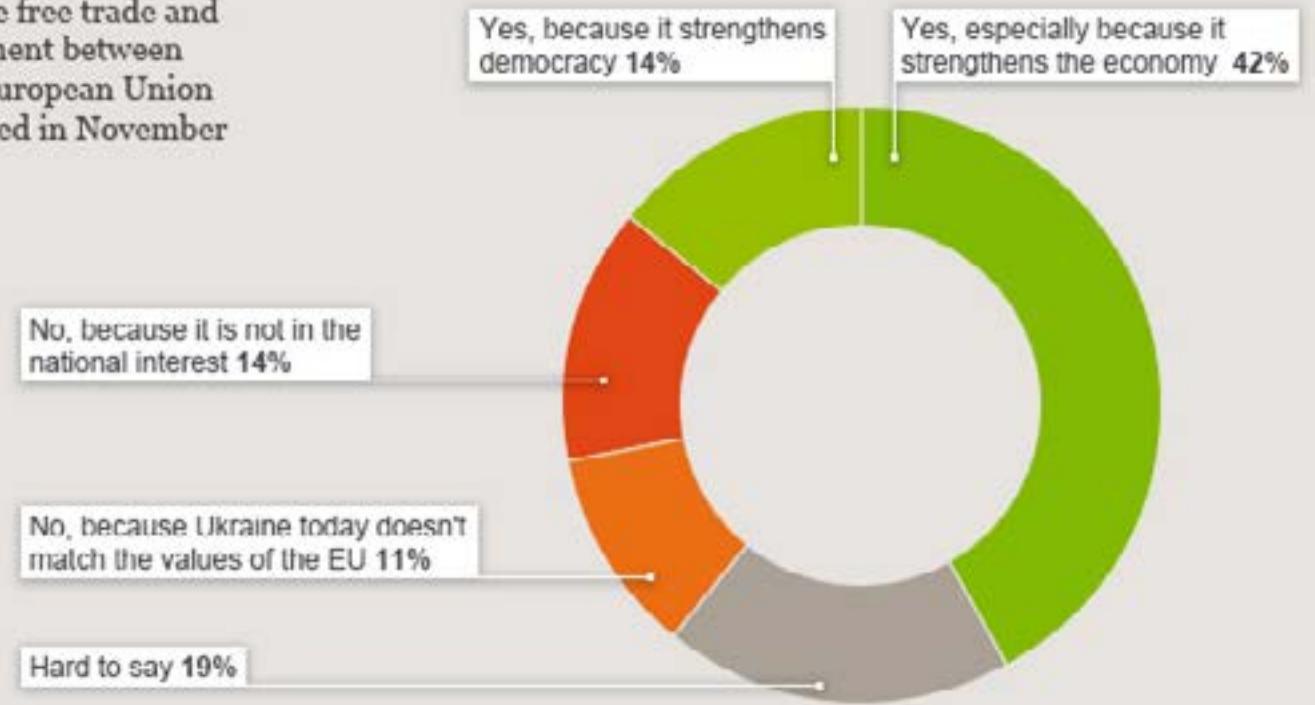
Euromaidan benefits not only Ukraine's progress to democracy, but also the European Idea and the European Union.

By risking their lives under the batons and the tear gas, and in the extreme cold of Ukraine's winter, the Ukrainians are showing us how much it is worth fighting for something which we, in the EU, take for granted, and which many EU citizens have lost faith in.

By making a very positive case about it, the Ukrainians are massively fueling the debate on Europe.

By organizing the "largest pro-EU demonstration" (Verhofstadt), they are fighting

Do you support the free trade and association agreement between Ukraine and the European Union which is to be signed in November this year?



Source: IFAK Ukraine, 06/2013

© DW

for a Trade Agreement, which will have enormous financial benefits to the EU as well.

So whether you support Euromaidan out of solidarity, or because you are glad to see a real debate on the EU, or just because you want to have more money, **here are some of the bigger Euromaidan Social Media platforms which you can “like”, share and support:**

Facebook

The “official” EuroMaidan Facebook Page gathered 150,000 likes in a couple weeks.

More recently, a number of EU Civil Society organizations, also [created a Facebook Page](#) to support and show solidarity with the Ukrainians.

There are hundreds (perhaps thousands - they are impossible to count) of other Euromaidan Pages, Groups and Events. You can even search for “Euromaidan” and your city, or country and find the “local” initiative.

Twitter

The biggest Twitter account is [@euromaidan](#). The most popular hashtags are: #Euromaidan / #Evromaidan / #Євромайдан / #Евромайдан As with Facebook, there are hundreds of other accounts, for every European language and region.

Please support Euromaidan, the Ukrainians and the European Idea, by joining the above social media channels, or by sharing this article.

CROATIA IN THE EU

- challenges and opportunities



WELCOME, CROATIA!

by Casper Ravnsted-Larsen



Today is celebration day. In Zagreb, and in Brussels. Flags, receptions, cakes, speeches, applauses, and the occasional playback of Beethoven's ninth symphony.

Today Croatia joins the European Union as the 28th country. OneEurope welcomes Croatia by offering an overview of the facts and consequences of the accession of Croatia with its troubled past and tourist-friendly citizens.

Back to the beginning

After the Yugoslavian civil war of the 90s, Croatia was a new country in a state of shock, imbalance, corruption and war criminals on the loose.

From the distance, Croatia could witness the process towards the enlargement agreement in Copenhagen in 2002, and the subsequent accession of a number of Eastern European countries. For Croatia it seemed clear that the application for EU membership was the straight road towards becoming a democratic and well-functioning European state.

This was the way back into the European community. A community that they had been thrown out of in the beginning of the 90s, along with their fellow former Yugoslavian equals – popularly symbolised by Yugoslavia's exclusion from the European football championships in 1992.

66%

voted in favour
of joining
the EU

In 2003, they therefore handed in their application to the EU, and were granted candidate status by summer 2004, after which negotiations of Croatian entry to the EU could begin.

Obstacles along the way

During these negotiations however, it seemed that the Balkan conflict had not totally ended. One of the biggest hurdles was the issue of the border shared with Slovenia that was already an EU member, and thus able to block the Croatian accession process.

More particularly they disagreed on where the border in the Gulf of Piran should be. Slovenia finally went so far as to freeze the negotiations by blocking the Croatian accession from late 2008 and ten months ahead.

Another issue was the demand from the European Council that Croatia would

extradite citizens guilty of war crimes to the ICTY (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia).

This issue was somewhat resolved when in 2005 the Croatian government cooperated with Spanish authorities in arresting former general and fugitive Ante Gotovina in Tenerife. The EU member states hereafter perceived Croatia as fully cooperating with the ICTY.

On 22 January 2012 Croatia held a referendum on the EU accession. 66 percent of participants voted in favour of joining the EU.

What happens in Brussels
But how does this enlargement work in practical terms?

If we begin with looking at the European Parliament, the European Commission has proposed a change in the distribution of seats that welcomes 12 Croatian members today. At the 2014 EP elections, these seats will be taken away from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria,

**The European Commission
welcomes 12 Croatian
members today.**

the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia, Portugal and Romania, who all lose one seat each. Germany will lose three. And to bring the number to the maximum of 751 members set out by the Lisbon Treaty, Croatia will lose one of their 12 members.



As for their representation in the Council of the European Union, the Croatians will get seven votes, which is the same number as Denmark, Slovakia, Finland, Ireland and Lithuania.

In the European Commission, Croatia will get the new position as Commissioner for Consumer Protection, which will be filled by the now former deputy minister for Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Neven Mimica.

Pros and cons

With Croatia joining exactly now, in the middle of economic insecurity and unrest, it seems that the EU is still

an attractive club to be a member of. One could, however, ask the question whether it would be better for Croatia to wait a bit and join when the currently ongoing fundamental structural changes (banking union, deeper economic cooperation, etc.) in the EU system have been implemented.

Yet the Croatian Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic seems confident that membership now, just before the new financial framework will take effect, is a "good deal" for his country.

"We stand obliged to pay in four billion Euro to the EU budget in the next seven years in the budget framework. And we stand a chance of getting five billion in return for various projects. It's not granted, but there are prospects," he said when asked by Debating Europe.

From the perspectives of other countries, the immediate gains seem visible, too. The backbone of the EU, the internal market, makes sure that the 20 percent duties on products from other EU countries vanishes now, making them a lot more competitive in Croatia. Basically the internal

market opens up for 4.4 million new potentials customers.

But it is not all happy days in Croatia now. As this round-up on the Croatian accession by Der Spiegel excellently illustrates, the economic situation in Croatia is as grim as anywhere else, with 20 percent of the work force being unemployed.

Many Croatian companies have caved in, and the fact that Croatian industry and businesses now will face hard competition from the rest of the EU could force many more of them into bankruptcy.

Corruption is also still a big problem in Croatia. The politicians stick to old "virtues", so to speak. Bribery among regional officials, for instance, causes big parts of the countryside to be uncultivated.

But there is also potential in Croatia, and in their agriculture in particular. Croatia is usually known for their early ripened tangerines, the exclusive Maraska cherries and truffles.

Whether Croatia will become a success story for the EU, and vice versa, remains to be seen.

Welcome!



The Interactive Media Knowledge Transfer is a non-profit organization working as a broker

 <http://www.intermediakt.org/> for vocational education and innovation. home

 <https://www.facebook.com/InterMediaKT>

They support, inspire and empower actions for developing businesses and entrepreneurship. From their headquarters in Patras, Greece, they provide an effective promotion of knowledge and vocational training through e-learning activities. They are looking to expand their network of activities

and partners on both a national and international level, as they believe in and pursue exchange of knowledge, experiences and know-how, along with the empowerment of a "citizen of the world" profile for EU citizens.

They provide a gateway for informing and educating young, existing and future entrepreneurs regarding opportunities, challenges and risks. They also introduce national and international frameworks, and propose means for surviving and becoming competitive in business. They also conduct research on a continual basis, in collaboration with multiple organizations and countries, in order to ensure innovation and sustainability.



The Balkans is a unique place with rich cultural and historical background, proud people and beautiful nature. After Croatia joined the EU, future enlargement of the Union towards the Balkan Peninsula seems just a matter of time. But how close is it actually?

Taking into consideration the historical patterns of the Balkans, we will see that one of the main fields that present a problem for the future EU enlargement are the nationalist issues within Balkan countries. Their histories are intertwined, their languages are similar and there are minorities living from the neighboring nations in almost each one of them.

The legacy of history

The dream of certain political leaders for a united Balkan country has been present for time immemorial, but it never has come true. Joining the EU will be more or less a step towards this direction. The closest to the realization of the united country was the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which existed between 1943 and 1992. It included 23,724,919 people living on 255,804 sq.km. However, the characteristics of the different nations it tried to unify, altogether with the

The end of the federation was manifested in a violent way, with the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which took place just 20 years ago.

"We very often use the word 'historic' in an abusive manner, but this is historic. Let's not forget what happened not so long ago in that part of Europe, with one of the most violent wars we saw - and now we will start negotiations with Serbia", Barroso commented in Brussels.

A Balkan expansion:

Which are the next countries to join the EU?

by Yuliya Kosharevska

fall of the communism, played their role. The end of the federation was manifested in a violent way, with the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which took place just 20 years ago.

Out of former Yugoslavia 7 new countries – Croatia, Slovenia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo - were formed. The first two are already part of the European Union and earlier this month it was announced that Serbia will begin its accession talks in January, 2014.

Balkan countries on their way to accession

The announcement came after Serbia agreed to improve its relations with Kosovo. Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia just 5 years ago and is still not recognized by all countries in the European community. Its population consists of 92% Albanians and 5,3% Serbians. Serbia wants a guarantee that its nationals will be treated fairly and is even ready to support them financially, because of the high unemployment rate in the newborn country.

many Bulgarian history characters as Macedonians, this might take a while.

Undoubtedly, all countries from the region will benefit from an open market. The presence of more international companies is believed to be able to fight the chaos and corruption that emerged in the 90s. According to the

Undoubtedly, all countries from the region will benefit from an open market. 2013 Corruption Global Barometer the perception level of corruption has worsened around the Balkans with only Serbia improving its performance.

However, it is questionable whether the Balkan countries are ready to join a union which often goes beyond the powers of a trade-block, and whether they would only benefit from the membership and remain open for the time being or not.

The part of Europe with some of the most passionate, emotional and creative people will probably surprise the world once again.

EU enlargement

The EU concept has changed a lot since it was formed. From a free trade agreement, it has slowly become a European family based on the concept of solidarity and cooperation between countries and their citizens.

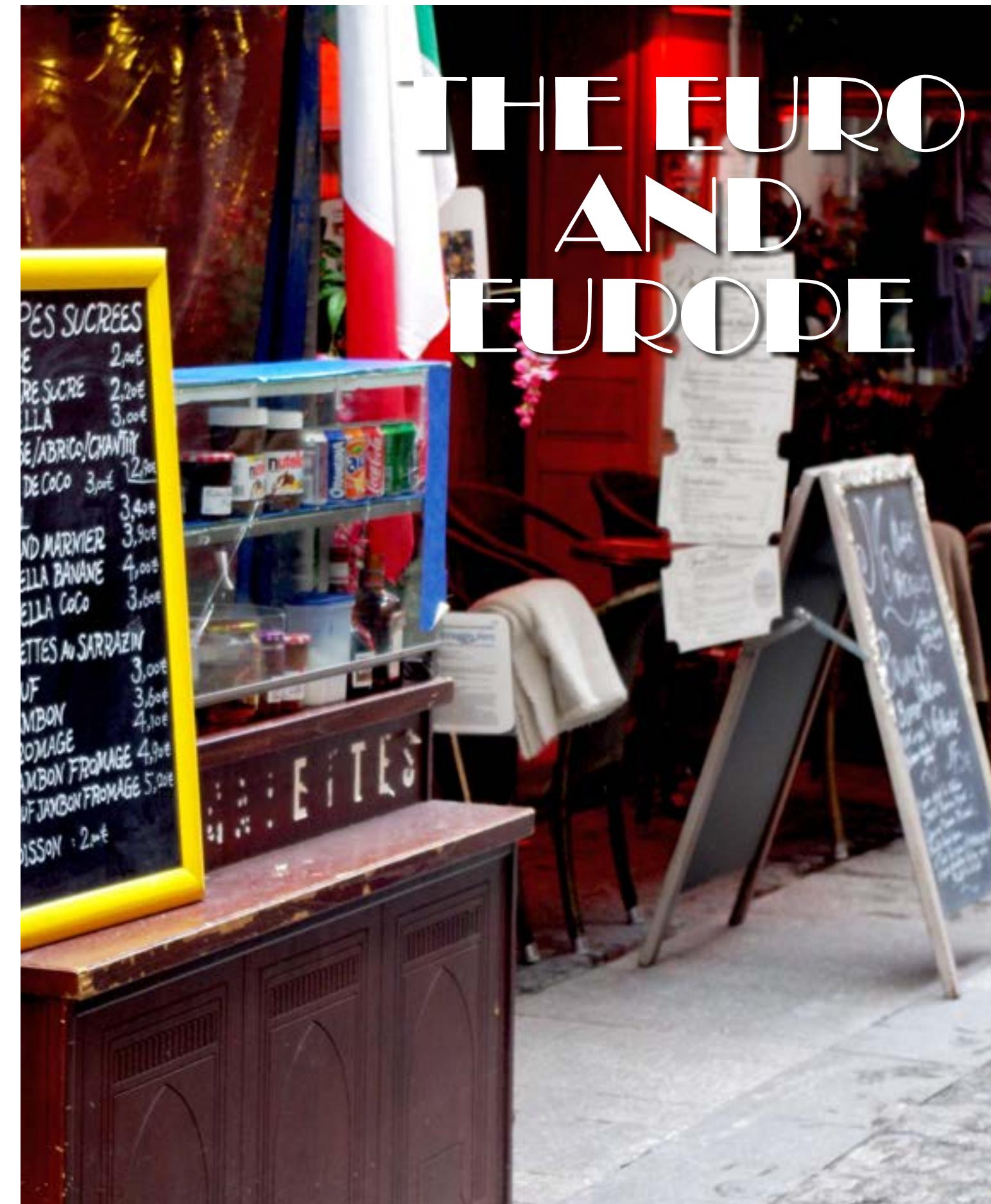
After the enlargements of 2004 and 2007, EU is now steps away for



welcoming a new member - Croatia, after almost 10 years of negotiations.

Due to the economic situation around the world, including Europe, is another enlargement a risk or an opportunity?

Which countries do you think are most likely to join the Union next?



THE EURO
AND
EUROPE

The Euro and its Future

by Christos Mouzeviris

With the ongoing economic crisis, we hear a lot about the collapse of the EURO, the EU's most ambitious project so far. Many skeptics are feeling justified, while most Euro-zone and EU ministers bow that the euro will not and cannot fail, as it would lead to the collapse of EU itself.

First of all, I really believe that the euro is here to stay, even if some countries are forced out for a while or a new form of it may

be created. Imagine a single market without a common currency. Free movement of capita, goods and people while having constantly to change currency and being charged interest rates for every transaction, is simply absurd!



Those who benefit from all these charges, certainly would love to see the Euro go.

We cannot blame the Euro for the crisis. The single currency as an idea, political and financial experiment is

and safeguards to deal with situations like the ones we are dealing now.

The crisis was not created by the Euro, however it has worsen because of the cracks in its structures. If

Europe's elites had agreed to do what was necessary to create a successful currency from the beginning, we would not be in such difficulties now.

a very ambitious one, but it was not designed properly by its creators. In other words it is our governments and Europe's leaders that must be blamed, for creating a currency without the appropriate bodies, policies

A single currency needs a single governance in its policies. It needs a more federal Europe, further integration on economic and political level, something that our leaders are not yet ready to proceed with. They certainly

fear their voters' reaction or their countries' business and financial elites, that do not want to change the current status quo.

How can we have a common currency without a common economy? Why aren't all Euro-zone member states encouraged to harmonize and collectively diversify their economies, develop new industries instead of relying on subsidies or bubble economies? If we harmonized our economies, then we would not need to have national currencies in the first place.

National currencies are a better solution when you have a distinct economic model. Without so many different models, we could achieve a more stable Euro. But doing something like that is difficult. Europe lacks of strong leadership and I do not think that we are ready for something like that. We have yet to start thinking "European."

We could set up a European fund to start

investing in all states, trying to exploit their natural resources and help them develop new technologies, new fields or science while creating more jobs as well! Why have a fragmented European economy with different policies while we try to fit all those under one currency? Instead of that, our leaders chose the "solution" austerity. Well it hasn't done much good for countries like Greece and Portugal so far.

Isn't it crucial when you have one currency, to have one economy as well? Does the USA have two or multiple different kind of policies in its economy while they are having one currency, the dollar? It is time to start dealing with problems in a European level and set up tools now, for any further crisis that will most certainly come. Then the European integration will become more successful.



Imagine if there was a common European industry and all states contributed resources, knowledge and funds to research new fields of science. And potentially explore new ways of finding solutions to our problems. Instead of that our leaders believe that competition at any cost is good for our continent, when it only benefits the banks and multinational corporations, who gain from playing one state against another.

Personally, I like the euro. To me money and currencies are something I just use to buy stuff, I do not consider them as "national heritage". We used to trade with sea shells and animals bones, having a national currency does not add to my national heritage. I travel a lot as well and not having to change currency while moving from country to country, suits me just fine.

And that is only one of the benefits of the euro. The EU market will get a boost by the elimination of currency fluctuations, while the single currency creates stable inflation and product prices, price transparency, fewer bureaucratic barriers in transferring large amounts of money between borders. Thus giving Europe a

greater influence in global economic policy, rather than having to react to developments in USA and Japan.

The future of the Euro can be a great one, if we accept what needs to be done and proceed with the reforms. Like salary harmonization for example across the block. If we keep trying to promote our national interests over others', while keeping the Euro we will find ourselves going in circles again.

We will keep patching things up temporarily, until the next crisis appears. By then, the European voters will definitely have enough of having to pay for the mistakes of our governments that public support for the Euro will crash. And if that happens we will have no choice but to revert to our national currencies.

Measures to end the Eurocrisis until 2012. Did they really help?



The new Eurozone star: Latvia

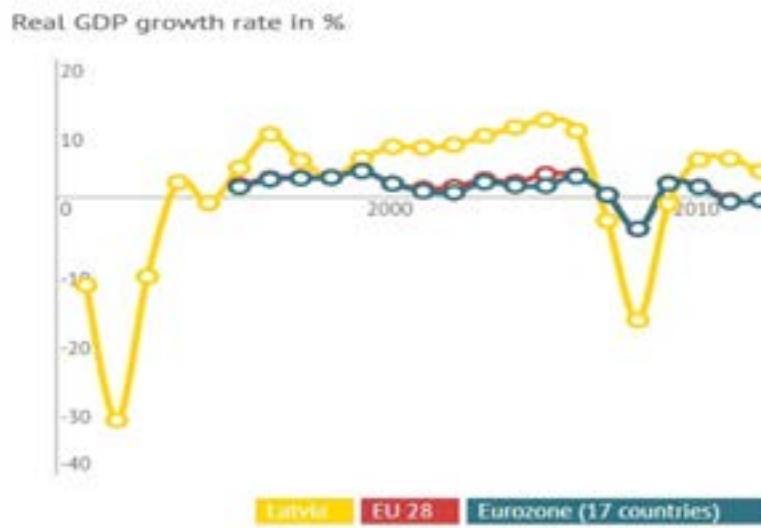
by Ana-Maria Ducuta

Even though the economic dynamics of the last few years have revealed fissures in the European economic background, the common euro currency still remains a significantly important tool in helping the integration in the financial sectors. With this in mind, Latvia has slowly but surely recovered from economic drowning and secured a place in the Eurozone.



GDP growth figures during 1998 and 2006, followed by a great GDP decline of the financial crisis of 2008-2010.

Economic growth in Latvia



by M. Wiechmann for OneEurope distribute under CC (BY-NC-SA)

Create infographics

infogram

The European Commission and the European Central Bank have agreed few weeks ago on Latvia to join the Eurozone in January 2014. And last week Tuesday the European finance ministers officially agreed to make Latvia the new member of the Eurozone next year. For Latvia being a part of the monetary union will be a great sign of independence and political stability, helping the country to get closer to the west and distance itself from the Russian imperial past and from Russia itself.

Adhering to the euro will mean more budget savings for Latvia, foreign direct investment and recovery from the economic collapse of 2008-2009. The 18th country to use the euro, Latvia seems keener than ever to strengthen

its western connections and cut down on Russian dependency. Of course it is hard to predict how important membership in the European currency will be in the political arena for Latvia, but a breakthrough from Russian influence is expected. Latvian economy will have to prove that it can meet the criteria for membership, namely the low inflation, long-term interest rates, low public debt, low public deficits and a stable exchange rate. MEPs say that the Latvian government has to struggle more in order to remedy structural deficiencies in the labour market and to reduce poverty and growing income inequality. Latvia was also advised to ensure that Latvian banks are sound. This could be done by stepping up supervision of banks active in non-resident deposit business.

The Latvian government argues that since all Eurozone decision-making already shapes the economic and fiscal policy of the country, joining the Eurozone officially would be highly advisable to take part in decisions.

The European Parliament plays a consultative role in scrutinising the fitness of prospective Eurozone countries. [The Parliament endorsed the committee's recommendation on 3 July](#), and the EU finance ministers gave their green light on 9 July.

[Olli Rehn, the EU's economic chief](#) said that "Latvia's experience shows that a country can successfully overcome macroeconomic imbalances, however severe, and emerge stronger". The central bank warned that the sustainability of Latvia's long-term economic convergence with the rest of the Eurozone is entering a difficult period as, according to the latest available forecasts, inflation is projected to rise in near future. [The European Commission and Latvia's finance ministry forecast growth in GDP of 3.7 percent in 2013](#) for Latvia, which would make it one of the strongest countries in the Eurozone.

The next applicant in line for euro membership is expected to be Lithuania, which would make it the third Baltic member of the EU. It seems like Lithuania's government would like to enter the single currency within a few years, EU officials have said Lithuania could join as early as January 2015.



Treffpunkt Europa

Treffpunkteuropa.de is the online magazine of the Young European Federalists (JEF) in Germany.

It publishes in several languages and was awarded with the [European Citizen's Prize](#).

"The online magazine treffpunkteuropa.de contributes to a well informed European public space with highly topical analysis and politically balanced articles."

– Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament



<http://www.treffpunkteuropa.de/>

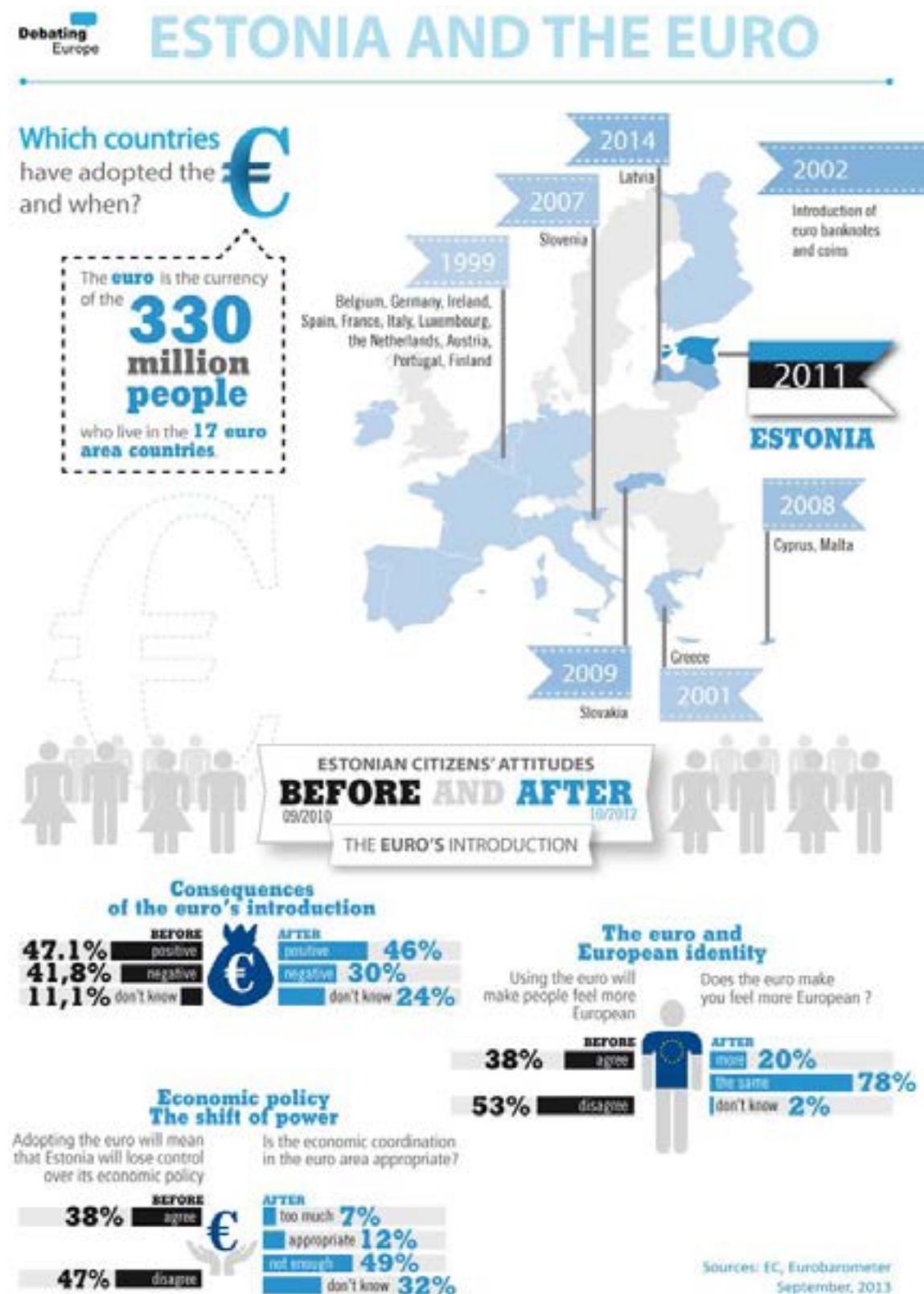
<https://www.facebook.com/treffpunkteuropa.de>

[@tpe_webzine](https://plus.google.com/+TreffpunkteuropaDe/posts)

The Euro: Estonian experience

In 2014 Latvia is going to join the Eurozone. This very important step towards European integration raised a debate in the Latvian society: despite the obvious benefits for country's economy, sceptics predict the significant rise of prices which will hit average consumers. In 2011 Latvian closest neighbour, Estonia, already adopted Euro. The infographic reflects the attitude to the European currency in Estonia according to the surveys held there in 2010 and 2012. Curiously, the Euro did not affect much the European identity of Estonians: *only 20% of the respondents were feeling more European because of joining the Eurozone.*

How did your country accept the Euro? Which changes did it make in the society? Did it rise your European identity?



European Citizens' Initiative: Unconditional Basic Income¹

The “European Citizens Initiative” (ECI) is a project by the European Commission, which encourages citizens to participate directly in the development of the EU and its policies. It does this by allowing us to make proposals for legislative changes. You can read more about the project on ECIs [on the dedicated page at the website of the European Commission](#).

The opportunity to create ECIs and change the EU legislation, was launched less than a year ago, on the 9-th of May, 2012 (Europe day), and already [14 different ECIs have been set up](#).



¹ Everyone has the right to have his/her material needs met, in order to ensure a life of dignity as stated by the EU treaties.

Unconditional Basic Income

The ECI on Unconditional Basic Income was launched 3 months ago, and its purpose is to offer everyone the right to have his/her material needs met, in order to ensure a life of dignity as stated by the EU treaties. In short they want everyone to have a basic, guaranteed wage, which is at least enough to cover our day-to-day expenses.

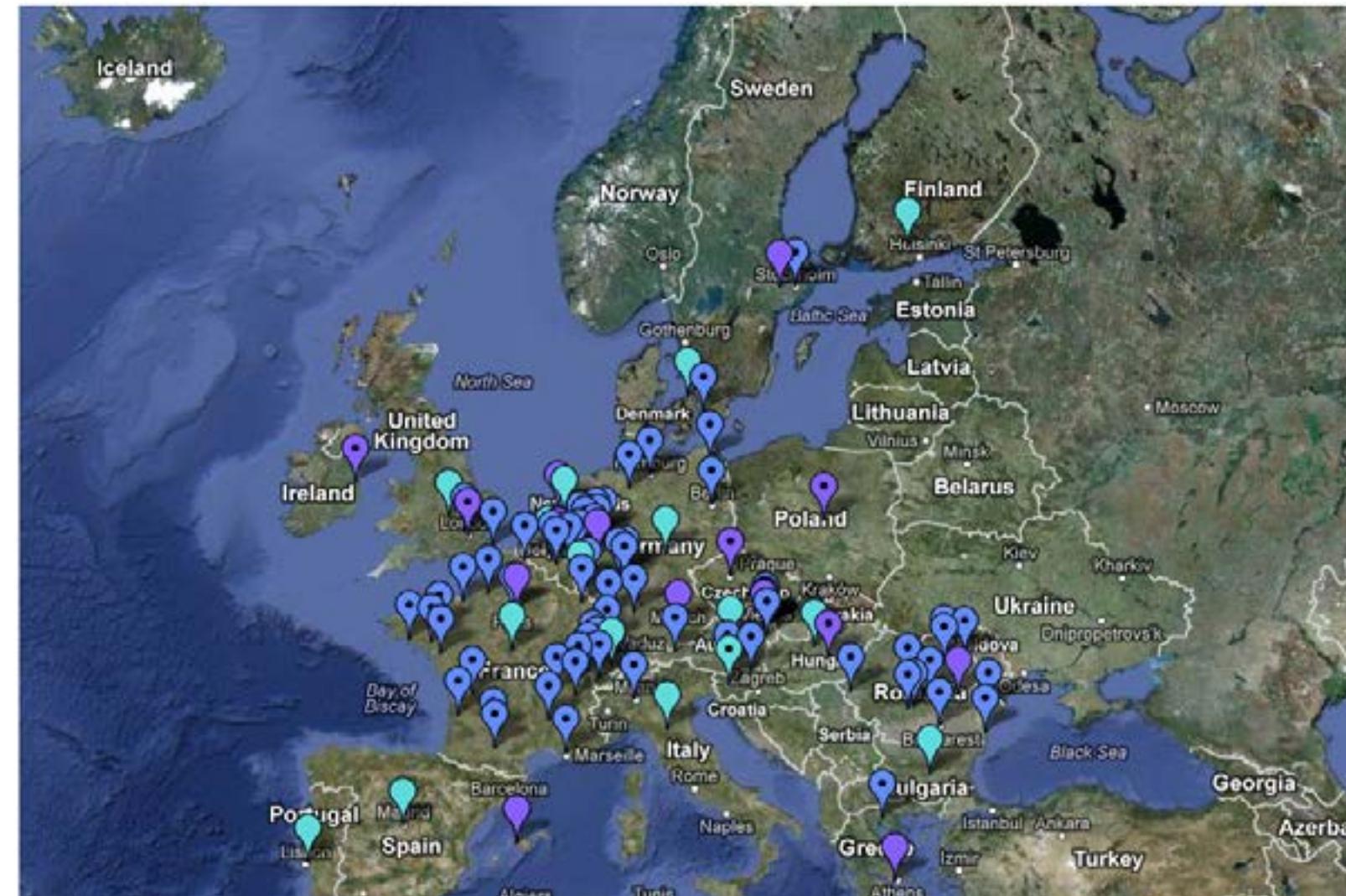
The subject matter is officially defined as: "Asking the Commission, to encourage cooperation between the Member States (according to Art 156 TFEU) aiming to explore the Unconditional Basic Income (UBI) as a tool to improve their respective social security systems."

This can be achieved through "pilot-studies"(Art 156 TFEU) and examination of different models of UBI (EP resolution 2010/2039(INI) §44) should be promoted by the EU."

At the time of the publishing of this article, the ECI on Unconditional Basic Income collected 24,300 signatures. It must collect 1 million signatures from across the EU (with its 501 million citizens) by next January (one year from its launch).

If you'd like to support the idea of an Unconditional Basic Income, sign the ECI here: <http://basicincome2013.eu/ubi/signup-page/>

If you'd like to get involved, promote, or volunteer for this ECI, there are a number of ways to do this, which you can find on their website: <http://basicincome2013.eu/> and on their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/BasicIncomeUK>



See an interactive map of all groups fighting for Basic Income here:
<http://basicincome2013.eu/ubi/european-map-of-basic-income-groups/>

Other Basic Income Groups

The campaign on the Unconditional Basic Income has been active for a long time in different forms, and in many parts of Europe, prior to the creation of the ECI on the subject.

Here are some other projects, initiatives and organizations which are campaigning for an Unconditional Basic Income:
[The BIG Movement](#)
[Basic Income Earth Network](#)
[Livable 4 All](#)

In addition to these European-wide campaigns aiming to change EU policy, there are also local campaigns targeting national governments. In Finland and Switzerland there are currently national petitions on unconditional basic income.

- <http://basicincome2013.eu/>
- [@basicincomeEU](https://twitter.com/basicincomeEU)
- <https://www.facebook.com/ECIBasicIncome>

The Abolition of Poverty in Switzerland: A Template for Europe?

by Ivan Botoucharov

For the past 18 months people all over Switzerland have been campaigning for the "Citizens' Initiative for Unconditional Basic Income". Today the result of their efforts will be handed to the Federal Chancellery: 116,000 signatures (the minimum required number of signatures for the initiative to trigger a referendum was 100,000). The success of the initiative means that citizens of Switzerland will be the first in the world to vote on "Unconditional Basic Income".

What does the proposal involve? If unconditional basic income is implemented everyone will receive a guaranteed income every month, regardless of age or employment status. It is a bit like a state pension, but for all age groups. It cannot be reduced or withdrawn. It is a real alternative to austerity. Pilot projects in Canada



and India have demonstrated that the effects include improved public health and higher levels of educational attainment.

The referendum in Switzerland will be held between 2014 and 2018. Meanwhile citizens of the member states of the European Union are campaigning for the European Citizens' Initiative for Unconditional Basic Income (www.basicincome2013.eu). This initiative asks the European Commission to explore the possibility of introducing unconditional basic income in the European Union. It aims to gather a million signatures by January 2014.

Support this initiative and encourage the European Commission to find ways of tackling austerity and providing growth, by signing the ECI here: <http://www.basicincome2013.eu/ubi/signup-page/>

let me vote
European Citizens' Initiative

In a massively interconnected European union with open borders it has become common for European citizens to go live in another member state for work or study. EU nationals that go live in another member state

in the national elections of your home country.

to collect 1 million signatures from the 501 million citizen of the EU.

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) "let me vote" intends to change this. The initiative aims to reduce the take part in

If you live in another EU country, you are allowed to vote in municipal and European elections. However, you have no right to vote for the national government whose decisions will impact on your daily life.

democratic deficit through granting all EU citizens the ability to use their full democratic rights by allowing them to vote in national elections of the state they live in. This would help integration, encourage mobility and give the concept of European citizenship more meaning.

The initiative was launched by Européens sans frontières (Europeans Without Borders), a non-for-profit, apolitical association. It was ultimately approved by the commission this year in January. As all other ECIs it will have one year

You can support this initiative by signing the ECI [here](#).

You can find more information about this campaign on its [website](#). You can also follow the initiators of this campaign on [twitter](#) and [facebook](#).

If you want to further support the cause of Européens sans frontières (the NGO behind this initiative) you can help them by supporting them financially [here](#).

<http://www.letmevote.eu/en/>

@letmevote

<https://www.facebook.com/letmevote>



"The weight we need"

A revival of EU common defense policy?

by Michel Anderlini

"We Europeans must understand that soft power alone is really no power at all. Without hard capabilities to back up its diplomacy, Europe will lack credibility and influence." These words were spoken by the Secretary General of the NATO Anders Fogh Rasmussen on May, 6th 2012 at the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee. There is strong evidence that Rasmussen's concerns are being heard at an European level. While the defence sector employs

more than 400,000 people throughout Europe and generates annual revenues of 90 billion Euro, it seems that the European Union is willing to build up its common defence policy. On Wednesday, July 24th the European Commission put forward proposals to foster competition, efficiency and innovation in the European defence industry.

On December 2013 the European Council will discuss those proposals. What will the future of European Defence look like? And what should we expect from EU leaders?

A common defence in times of austerity?

The European Commission appears to revitalize the European defence sector as it has been severely hit by the global financial crisis. According to Andrea Frontini, from the European Policy Centre “cuts to defence budgets – with few exceptions – range from up to 20-30% in smaller EU member states to 10-15% in medium-sized countries, while bigger states are reducing their military expenditure by at least 5%”.

Against this background, the Commission had already – at the end of 2010 – launched the “Ghent framework”, aimed at integrating the European

defence sector. This sector is mostly dominated by national interests and industrial giants such as EADS, BAE systems or the Italian Finmeccanica.

Accordingly, the Foreign Affairs Council prioritized, from December 2011, “11 specific and concrete projects” for a process that was named “Pooling and Sharing”. European member states were encouraged to pool their resources and share their results in order to solve Europe’s capacity gaps in defence matters. For example, much attention was put on air-to-air refuelling (as Libya’s intervention prove that EU forces were dependent on US support for air-to-air supplies) or establishing a common helicopter training program.

Going beyond Ghent

Opinions on the outcomes of the Pooling & Sharing projects are divided. Sven Biscop, Director of the Europe in the World Programme at Egmont, notes that “*Important progress has been achieved: a European Satellite Communications Procurement Cell have been established e.g., and Letters of Intent signed by fifteen countries on field hospitals and by ten on air-to-air refuelling*”.

However, another scholar, Christian Mölling, reckons that EU member states had different ideas about which resources and equipment should be subject to the Pooling and Sharing Program.

Consequently, the Commission sought to come up with a new proposal, which intended to provide even deeper integration to Europe’s defence

policy. Michel Barnier, the EU Internal Market Commissioner, assured that the EU needs to “*identify areas where can develop its own capacities*”.

According to him, the EU should look into “*constructing drones*” instead of importing them. It should also buy common aircraft or navy refuelling systems and share them between member states. But one of the key ideas of the proposal is a better standardization of military standards.

Michel Barnier underlines that military standards are “*developed nationally, hindering co-operation and increasing costs for the industry*”. The lack of common norms had let to EU member states not being able to share equipment – as of today there are for instance 16 types of frigates throughout the EU but only one in the US. Furthermore, defence manufacturers

have to undergo certification testing in every country to which they wish to export their products. Such testing is not only time-consuming, but also costly for the defence industry, as shown by Tereza Pultarova.

Ball to the Council!

The European leaders will review the proposal in December this year. Are they likely to speed up the EU’s defence integration? Andrea Frontini, a Programme Assistant at the European Policy Centre (EPC) in Brussels concludes that “*number of uncertainties still lie ahead*”. Will the EU leaders be able to create a consensus on such a deepening of the EU common defence policy at home? Will they manage to convince their military establishments and their national defence sectors? How will the ongoing financial crisis impact on this process?

As for every foreign policy matters, the conclusions of those negotiations will – by not doubt – surprise us.



Military Intervention in Syria and the EU

by Dimitris Dagdeverenis
InterMedia@KT



A recent article in the [New York International Times](#) was concerned with the catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Syria. Millions of people are in urgent need for shelter, food and medicine and a great deal of the country's infrastructure has been destroyed. The situation is expected to worsen during winter.

There is strong evidence that the humanitarian crisis will deepen since there seems to be no prospect of ending the violence and the fighting. The deal for disarming the Syrian chemical

arsenal is a positive development; however, it is not part of a wider peace process. The conflict still continues and the human suffering increases. At this point, we should mention that the humanitarian crisis is not an issue only in Syria: neighbouring countries are dealing with hundreds of thousands of refugees, a situation which endangers a wider regional destabilization.

UN agencies and NGOs, which work in Syria, have highlighted the inadequacy of the international aid to meet the needs of the Syrian people. However, the issue here is not only the total amount of aid.

The problem lies at its channeling. The main reasons for the poor channeling of aid are the deterioration of the Syrian administrative structures and the inability to access certain areas of the country's territory.

Perhaps the most important issue is not how to increase aid, but how to channel it in a more effective way. Only the inefficiency of the Syrian government is to be blamed. The system for the delivery of aid as a whole suffers serious drawbacks. More specific, the principle of cooperating with governments, which is followed by the UN, the European Commission and aid agencies is a reason for the inadequate channeling of aid. In other words, aid programmes have to be implemented in a way so that they are in cooperation with governments.



This principle intends to ensure respect for state sovereignty.

However, the compliance with this principle raises serious concerns, which are part of the difficult and complicated relationship between humanitarianism and politics. The "traditional" approach of humanitarian actors holds that humanitarianism has nothing to do with politics and that, in fact, humanitarianism should remain untouched by politics. However, this distinction is more a "wishful thinking" and a declaration of intentions rather than the reality. Humanitarianism and politics are related and the current situation in Syria (poor channeling of aid and inaccessibility) is the best proof of this.

This article is not concerned with the difficult relationship of humanitarianism and politics. What we want to underline is the negative consequence of their interweaving – that less people have access to life-saving aid. This situation raises questions, which bear a crucial moral dimension: how "humanitarian" (and untouched by politics) is humanitarian assistance when it is confined by political considerations? How viable and practical is the adherence to the principle of cooperating with governments on issues of humanitarian assistance since governments fail to fulfill their role?

To avoid any misunderstandings, I do not support an opinion against state sovereignty



here and in favor of an unchecked humanitarian action. However, sovereignty should not be a barrier to humanitarian assistance. For example, the UN has introduced the so-called "Responsibility to Protect"—a principle, which states that governments must not use sovereignty as a pretext for violence and oppression against their own people. I believe that something similar can be applied to the case of humanitarian assistance—sovereignty must not block the delivery of urgent aid.

What I mean is that there should be a re-examination of who—and to what degree—is responsible for the delivery and the channeling of humanitarian assistance. Perhaps in times where government structures are not able to fulfill their role, humanitarian actors should be given greater freedom to act. Another issue which needs to be re-examined regards the unhindered access to areas which assistance is much-needed.

What could be a possible contribution by the EU in alleviating the

humanitarian crisis in Syria? EU's role and influence in resolving the conflict may be limited, but regarding humanitarian assistance, the EU can play a decisive role. EU has the necessary expertise and skilled manpower to undertake such a role.

A new initiative for ending the conflict in Syria is being discussed at the moment. The EU may not be able to exert influence to the parts to accept any agreements; however, what it can

do is to bring the issue of humanitarian crisis to the fore. It can put the issues of channeling and access to the negotiating table and propose new mechanisms and formulas, which will guarantee both the maximization of aid effectiveness and respect for state sovereignty. For example, the plan for disarming the Syrian chemical arsenal includes provisions that UN inspectors will have safe access to certain areas of the country. A similar arrangement can be discussed for the humanitarian workers as well.

A European initiative for dealing with the humanitarian crisis would help to save lives and alleviate suffering. The same time, it would be a strong symbolic message with many recipients. It would show to the world that the EU is present and takes action in international affairs. Probably, we are not yet ready (or willing) to exert "hard" influence, in political or diplomatic terms, however we have strong elements of "soft" power. A European initiative based on soft

power and focusing on the humanitarian dimension of the Syrian crisis could affirm what kind of mediator the EU can be in the international arena—an actor which does not speak the traditional language of "hard"

power, but which seeks to influence international affairs based on "soft" power. And "soft" power (including humanitarianism) can make a great difference in peoples' lives. In addition, a European humanitarian initiative with innovative

proposals would open a fruitful discussion in the humanitarian community on issues like channeling and access and open new ways of thinking and acting.

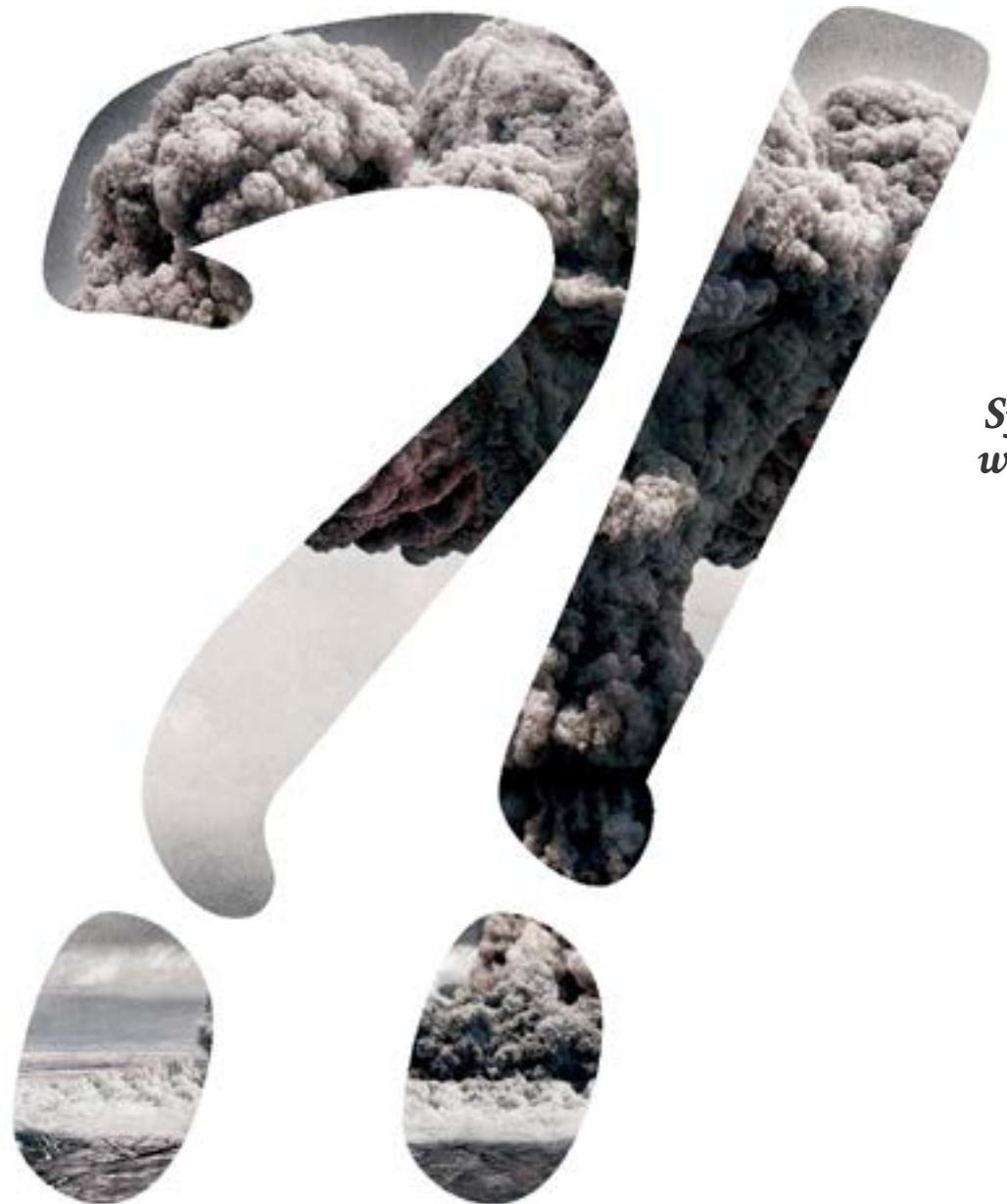
A European initiative for dealing with the humanitarian crisis would help to save lives and alleviate suffering.

I do not support an opinion against state sovereignty here and in favor of an unchecked humanitarian action.

IRAN'S NUCLEAR DEAL: looking on to Syria

by Hallvard Barbogen

Last week, diplomacy celebrated a victory as an agreement was reached between the world's greatest powers and Iran about its nuclear programme. The USA, Russia, China, UK, France and Germany agreed to lift sanctions on Iran in exchange for a stop in the uranium enrichment process. UN inspectors will also be allowed access to several Iranian sites. But this deal will only last six months, and it does not directly address Iran's military ambitions. Additionally, Syria will become an even greater question than before.



Other regional powers in the Middle-East are worried about Iran's potential to attain nuclear weapons. Not present at the negotiating table, Israel and Saudi-Arabia are deeply unsatisfied with what they take to be an acceptance of Iran's nuclear ambitions. Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, called US President Barack Obama, to "suggest" to him he needs to change his ways "*if he intends to stay the most powerful man on Earth*".

Saudi-Arabia, on the other hand, is likely to step up their arms support for oppositional forces in Syria. This happens as a result of Iran getting a greater scope for action, something which will boost Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Syria may, in fact, decide the whole future of Iran's nuclear programme.

Soft power

To fully grasp Syria's role here, we first need to better understand the immediate reactions to the nuclear deal. Two factors are central for whether it is hailed as a breakthrough in a deadlocked situation, or condemned as a fatal misstep.

Firstly, we have geography. As mentioned, Israel and Saudi-Arabia are the most outspoken opponents of the deal. This is simply because they are the regional powers closest to Iran, and would be the first to suffer if Iran

is being deceptive. Their reaction is therefore not surprising at all.

Shall we believe in the slow, gradual and sometimes fickle power of negotiations between potential enemies in international politics?

The second factor for judging the deal's merit is more interesting. Shall we believe in the slow, gradual and sometimes fickle power of negotiations between potential enemies in international politics? US President Obama has notoriously, ever since his inauguration, made a show of willingness to extend a hand to those who hold up their clenched fists. If we trust his analysis of the happenings, the deal is a substantial victory. And his perspective is the one many political analysts seem to support at the moment, albeit in a more cautious variant.

Lady Catherine Ashton, the chief of the European Union foreign policy, is considered another kingpin in the unhurried process of mediation with Iran. What the EU lacks in military strength, it tries hard to make up for in soft power. With potential success stories like these negotiations, the argument for an effective pan-European foreign policy is solidifying. But again, for those with the attitude that diplomacy is a mere shadow-game concealing military realities, the EU's strength is here based on delusion.

Iran's nuclear programme is, at its core, a big test for the power of diplomacy.



Six tense months

The “hard versus soft power” debate will therefore undoubtedly be heated in the coming six months, as the process of nuclear negotiation continues. And it is what happens after those six months that will decide the debate. If Iran – whose president is showing cooperative and with a “friendly” public opinion – can maintain the commitment, it will gradually become more accepted in the international community. A new dynamic would then develop, and Israel and Saudi-Arabia will have the possibility to alter their tough stance.

However, Iran and the international public opinion will not be the only dynamic at work in the coming months. Syria will get the bulk of the attention.

Middle-Eastern patterns of conflict are so complicated that they are impossible to predict: like a game of chess with innumerable pieces that every now and then change colour and position. A major like Iran’s deal will therefore cause most other parts of the board to be affected.

Now that the nuclear deal is settled for the time being, Syria will again be the king and queen of this chess-game. With increased engagement from Saudi-Arabia and Iran, the conflict will be a much more immediate concern in the coming months than the follow-up of Iran’s commitments. Israel may also decide to increase its direct engagement with its war-torn neighbour. The stability in the region depends on the way this dynamic will unfold. How the nuclear deal with Iran ends up affecting the conflict in Syria can therefore come to be the central factor determining the deal’s success.

The focus turns to Syria

At the moment, President Obama’s diplomacy Iran is hailed as a success by many. His strategy on Syria, on the other hand, has been more erratic. The real outcome of the chemical weapons agreement with Syria is still an open question. Without the help of Russian President Vladimir Putin, Obama’s options in Syria would be significantly more limited. Actually solving the nuclear problem in Iran will not happen without an end to Syrian civil war.



by Eva Peña

With the rising importance of global production chains and international firms, the logic for a transatlantic agreement seems compelling. The EU and the US enjoy the most integrated economic relationship in the world, and both account together for about half (47%) the entire world GDP and for nearly a third of world trade flows. Both countries need new sources of growth, and see the Agreement as an incentive for their economies. Although the EU and the US are relatively open towards each other in terms of investment and trade (as reflected in relatively low levels for tariffs), there are several forms of domestic regulations on both sides of the Atlantic that still constitute important impediments to transatlantic trade. Whereas Europe champions openness, the US and other commercial partners are increasingly passing protectionist laws at home, like the American



Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which generates a protectionist-like outcome.

Back in autumn 2012, the EU and the US initiated a formal dialogue in order to deepen transatlantic trade relations. On the 13th February 2013, they both agreed to launch negotiations on a [Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership \(TTIP\)](#), presented as the largest bilateral trade agreement ever negotiated.

Both economies are big, and bilateral trade is to a large degree composed of intra-firm trade, but tariff barriers for both regions are now an average of 4%. Although in some areas like textiles, sugar and agriculture are much higher, for these sectors are submitted to special regimes, encompassing a variety of political instruments. If negotiations

would be successful, this EU-US agreement would be the biggest bilateral trade deal ever, and it could add around 0.5% to the EU's annual economic output (the static effect on GDP from a transatlantic zero-tariff agreement is estimated to be 0.01 percent for the EU, while dynamic gains are estimated to be 0.40 percent for the EU (according to [this report](#) from 2010)).

What is the logic behind this Partnership?

This is not the first time this economic project is being put forward. Clinton launched the New Transatlantic Agenda in 1995 to create mutual recognition agreements to establish a free trade

If negotiations would be successful, this EU-US agreement would be the biggest bilateral trade deal ever, and it could add around 0.5% to the EU's annual economic output

area. Bush, in 2007, worked to create the Transatlantic Economic Council together with Germany in order to gradually break down the regulatory barriers between the two markets. Obama has also made his political will clear. What makes the transatlantic deal difficult is that the Americans and Europeans collide in terms of regulatory policies.

While in the United States the cost-benefit analysis prevails, in Europe product's safety and consumer rights are more relevant, meaning that the EU puts the emphasis on the process. This is clear in the agricultural policies (for example [the restrictive EU regulations for genetically modified food](#)), in online contents, cybersecurity and data protection (see, for example, the recent [Google and facebook conflicts](#)), emissions standards, and investment protections and investor-state dispute settlement. These are highly politicized issues. So the logic behind the deal is not just economic, but also political.

A big issue is the cross-recognition of standards, and we will see whether the US negotiators will agree to provide an equivalent level of protection for their consumers. US Organic Industry has already praised US-EU Partnership in organic trade, for it will recognize the two organic programs as equivalent and allow access to each other's market.

In spite of this, in light of the eurocrisis, some EU leaders are more prone to adopt market-based stimulus and are working to overcome the mistakes that had prevented past deals. In

order to reach a deal, all the Member States should agree on the terms. How well this process works remains to be seen, keeping in mind there are strong national interests in key sectors, like agriculture and energy.

What can we really expect from this deal?

Another question is whether this agreement will be good from the point of view of the development of the EU single market, bearing in mind the EU is the most open commercial area in the world. An agreement with the US should not be used to justify public aids to economic sectors. And most of all, it should end the bilateral agreements between the United States and the different Member States, which are based on national preferences, and



undermine the Single Market project and the prospect of the EU as a single voice. The harmonization of rules and standards is another crucial issue to deal with, so that the EU will be legally able to oppose subsidies and disguised protectionism in the American industrial sectors. The answer for Europe should not be to carbon copy the American protectionist acts to protect the interests of their businesses. Big issues are at stake, like how the EU should cope with a Community market flooded with imported products.

The elimination of tariffs alone could remove impediments to transatlantic trade, but beyond free trade, the real gains from the deal would come from regulatory cooperation. Transatlantic business would flourish, for example, if German cars that passed safety inspections in Europe also met standards appropriate for American drivers.

Global relevance: Towards a new era in global trade?

Recently the United States has shown interest in creating a strong western trading area to counterbalance Asia. Washington is negotiating a separate Asia-focused free trade pact, the [Trans-Pacific Partnership \(TPP\)](#) in order set rules on behind-the-border barriers to trade. The EU is facing geopolitical problems particularly with Russia; despite it signing a [Partnership Agreement](#) with the EU in 1997 (the EU is the most important

The harmonization of rules and standards is another crucial issue to deal with, so that the EU will be legally able to oppose subsidies and disguised protectionism in the American industrial sectors.



investor in Russia). After the [Russia–Ukraine gas dispute of 2009](#), Russia has threatened to review the fundamentals of its relations with the EU, because it considers Ukraine as a threat to Moscow's interests. Moreover, Russia has recently banned live imports of EU animals, and applies a recycling fee on imported cars. In this context, the EU sees a transatlantic pact as a geo-political counterbalance to the American-Asia Alliance.

Some may argue that a successful deal would give the US and the EU greater influence in the international order, now, that the [OECD predicts](#) that China will become the largest global economy by 2016. So it has to be seen who keeps the capacity to set the terms of global trade, meaning who will be able to take the lead in terms of global economic governance. However, it is difficult to predict if this will mean the end of the [Doha rounds](#), which have not delivered as expected, with

important gaps in terms of harmonisation. One of the main ideas behind the EU-US Trade Agreement is to assert European leadership in standard setting and rule making.

Promises and pitfalls of the deal

Now the Commission has requested the Member States' green light to open negotiations to expand transatlantic trade



and investment as soon as possible. The ideas suggested by the Commission include: a) elimination or reduction of conventional and non-tariff barriers to trade in goods, services and investment; b) enhanced compatibility of regulations/standards; c) enhanced cooperation for the development of rules and principles on global issues.

But are these realistic measures in order to build a transatlantic union? Some argue that these developments may put the EU single market and the collective security at risk. Negotiators in the United States and Europe aspire to make the TTIP the most advanced economic agreement in the world, including alignment of their regulations regarding manufacturing and services

(online intellectual property as well) and elimination of almost all barriers to foreign direct investment.

Undoubtedly, an ambitious and comprehensive trade agreement could bring significant economic gains as a whole for the EU and US (around €100 billion a year). Liberalising trade between the EU and the US would have a positive impact, as long as rules place a cost on trade. As much as 80% of the total potential gains come from cutting costs imposed by regulations, as well as from liberalising trade in services and public procurement.

The most likely scenario is that some tariffs will be removed, but it is not realistic to

assume that all barriers and costs from regulatory divergence will be removed. There are narrow and comprehensive scenarios regarding elimination of tariffs, the regulatory convergence and spill-overs. Direct spill-over is based on the assumption that the streamlining of regulations and reduction in regulatory burdens benefit other exporters to the EU and US. On the other hand, indirect spill-over is meant

to gauge the economic implications of third countries adopting the common standards agreed between the EU and the US. There is a strong possibility to influence on third countries, given that the EU-US will be the biggest trading bloc in the world. The bloc may act as a regulatory hegemon. However, there is also scope for some diversion of trade away from the US and EU and toward intra-third country trade. There will be other impacts, still unknown, in the field of the market access to new products.

Finally, there is no doubt that liberalising trade would imply some significant increases in EU-US trade. According to a report by the Irish Presidency of the EU, in the less ambitious scenario, EU exports to the US will increase by 16 per cent, while US exports to the EU increase by 23 per cent. On the other hand, aside from political costs of removing regulations, lowering of tariffs naturally implies that tariff revenues in the EU will somewhat decrease.

Europe faces the pitfalls of an ageing population and the hollowing-out of medium-skilled jobs due to technological change and competition from emerging markets.

Europe faces the pitfalls of an ageing population and the hollowing-out of medium-skilled jobs due to technological change and competition from emerging markets. The increased level of economic activity attached to the Partnership has the potential to increase overall wages and create new job opportunities for high and low skilled workers.

Different approaches to the same regulatory challenges may have the unintended consequence of increasing costs for firms, and so dragging down labour productivity. So, the real impact depends on many of the elements that have been mentioned here, and the direction is unknown a priori. Negotiations provide the opportunity to pursue a policy-mix particularly in the field of regulatory convergence that will reduce barriers to trade, pointing to substantial gains, including a rising demand for labour, which has the potential to promote economic growth and welfare in both sides of the Atlantic. But this is not an easy challenge. The negotiations are due to start next June. Official sources point at two years as a reasonable minimum timeline to close the negotiations.



EUROPEAN CULTURE
—
EUROPEAN PRIDE

Europe, Aim at Culture!



The paradoxical state of Italian culture

After the last German elections we all understood that the majority of voters preferred the rigorous policy of Angela Merkel and her coalition. We all know that in the last decades, Germany has put its fundament for getting a leadership in Europe and nowadays its political point of view has a huge impact on the choices of the Union.

Actually, I don't want to talk about politics as I am not the right person to explain to you how it works. What incited me to begin this article is the huge power Germany has in the EU. Is this country just a political and economical leader of our continent, or is it facing also a prevailing leadership in the field of culture?

I will try to answer this question by comparing what Germany is doing in order to develop culture and cultural companies, to another European country in which culture is facing a catastrophic mess: Italy.

Some years ago I went to Germany for the very first time in my life, and I was definitely surprised by the unexpected cultural vivacity of the country. Before discovering German culture, my stereotyped point of view considered only the southern countries of our continent as the cradle of culture, above all Italy and Greece, due to our thousand-year old history.

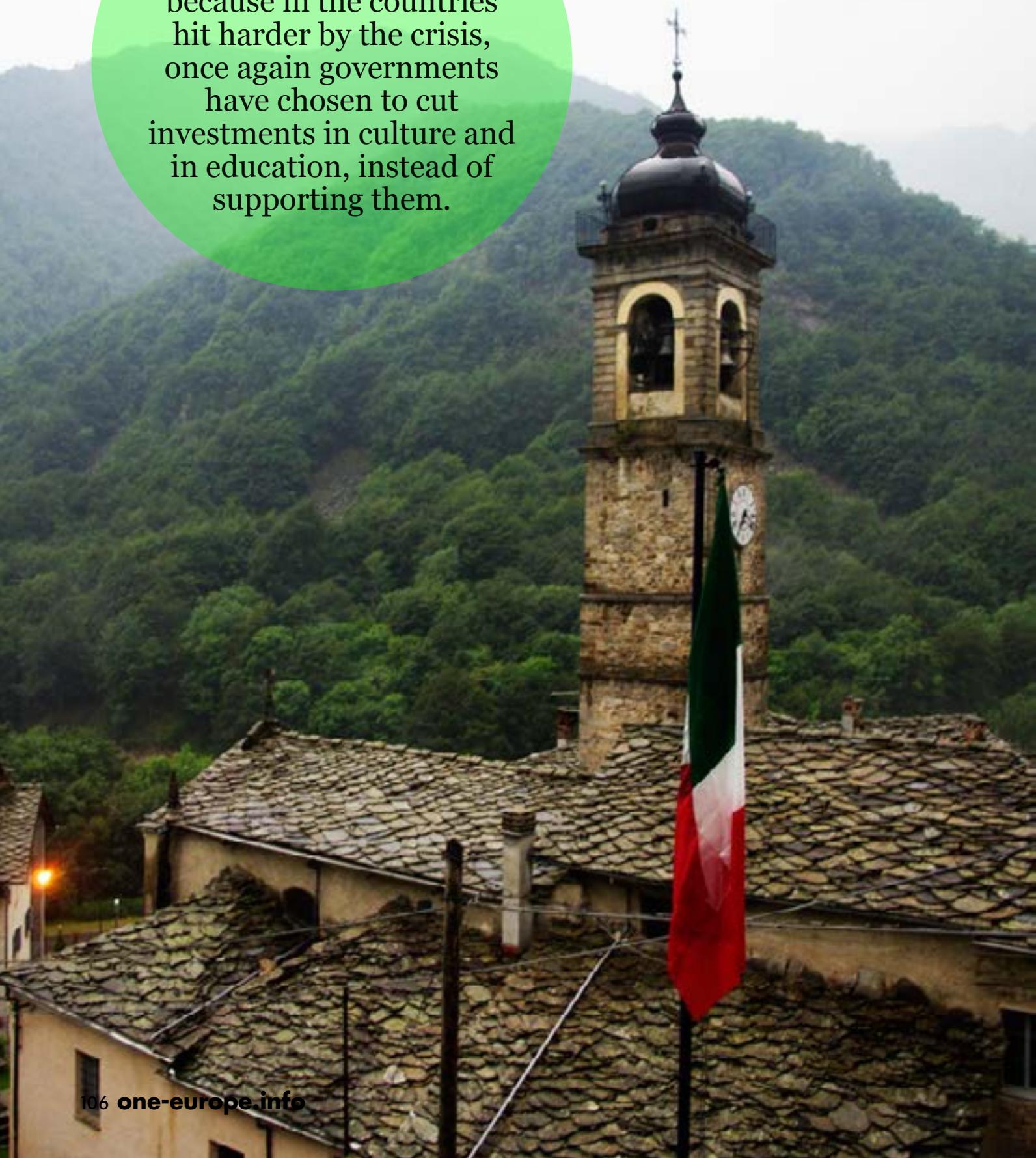
I was obviously influenced by a scholastic history and by my personal points of view, developed by closed and limited knowledge and experiences.

I acknowledge that much of Western history and cultures were born along the Mediterranean Sea, and also the fundamental European features themselves, developed and spreaded from the South of our continent. However, day-by-day I had the chance to discover both German culture and lifestyle in depth and I realised how limited my way of thinking was.

It surprised me to discover how much creativity and interests German people indicate in arts, culture and education. It was gaping me to realise that nowadays the northern regions of Europe are more inclined to invest more resources and vitality in the field of culture and education compared to Italy, Greece or any other countries.



The problem is that the situation is getting worse, because in the countries hit harder by the crisis, once again governments have chosen to cut investments in culture and in education, instead of supporting them.



Southern Europeans like to proclaim the honour of coming from ancient populations that shaped civilisation. Today southern countries are paradoxically the area of Europe, which miss to cultivate interest and attention in culture.

The current situation in Italy

In Italy politicians invest less funds and resources in culture than any other European countries, and Italians pay less attention to art and culture, spending every year less hours in cinemas, theatre and museums, compared with people in Northern Europe.

An interesting report has been recently published by Eurostat, the European Statistical Institute, which has compared percentages of public investments in culture and education of 27 EU countries in 2011. According to that research, the Italian government invests the least in culture. In fact, only 1.1% of Italian GNP is spent on culture, and this percentage is exactly half of the European average, which is 2.2%.

Furthermore, in the same research, Italy is also second to last in investments in education, investing only 8.5% of GNP, while the average in the Union is 10.9%.

This research shows that all southern European countries are placed in the last positions and Greece is the last of the EU members.

These statistics reveal that the economic crisis is probably not just a problem of spread, but it is also a result of several bad choices made in the past.

The problem is that the situation is getting worse, because in the countries hit harder by the crisis, once again governments have chosen to cut investments in culture and in education, instead of supporting them.

Going back to Italy, many people share a certain view of our cultural heritage: it is a bulky obstacle and unproductive to maintain. Ignorance and corruption impede the creation of good projects of recovery and rescue of our enormous cultural patrimony, procreating the loss of many cultural companies, and the loss of good opportunities for a new development of the country.

Meanwhile, some of the most important Italian heritage has begun to collapse. It has happened again and again in the last months in Pompeii.

In Italy the system of cultural production is one of the biggest industrial sector of the country. There is a chain of business and foreign investments around culture that fruits every year around €68 billion, 5% of the total wealth, giving employment to over 1.5 million people, 5.7% of the national figure. Unfortunately this sector is seriously threatened by ignorance and political incompetence.

The truth is that Italy uses only a limited portion of its ability, exploiting less than half of the possible talent that could be used. If you consider that Italy is a country with a really high number of cultural elements and heritages worldwide, you probably understand that in my country there is a big loss of prosperous chances.

The current situation in Germany

In Berlin there are about 24,000 small and medium-sized cultural and creative companies, for a total of 237,000 enterprises scattered in Germany. This business contributed in 2009 to 3.3% of employment in this sector, which grew by 1.8% since 2008. While the economic crisis began to afflict Europe, Germany increased employment in the cultural sector and decreased employment in the field of manufacturing by 4.5%. In Germany culture is a very dynamic sector, in which most of the workers are self-employed, the majority of companies are relatively small and for this reason these enterprises could be very fragile. In every German city there are cultural centres and important projects to develop cultural life.

The Creative Coaching Centre has been founded in Berlin, which aims to support companies in financial assistance, management or marketing. 50% of the total costs of this initiative are funded by the European Fund for Regional Development (EFRD).

Also, in the city of Aachen a similar project has been set up, which has the goal to support the creative and innovative companies of the city.

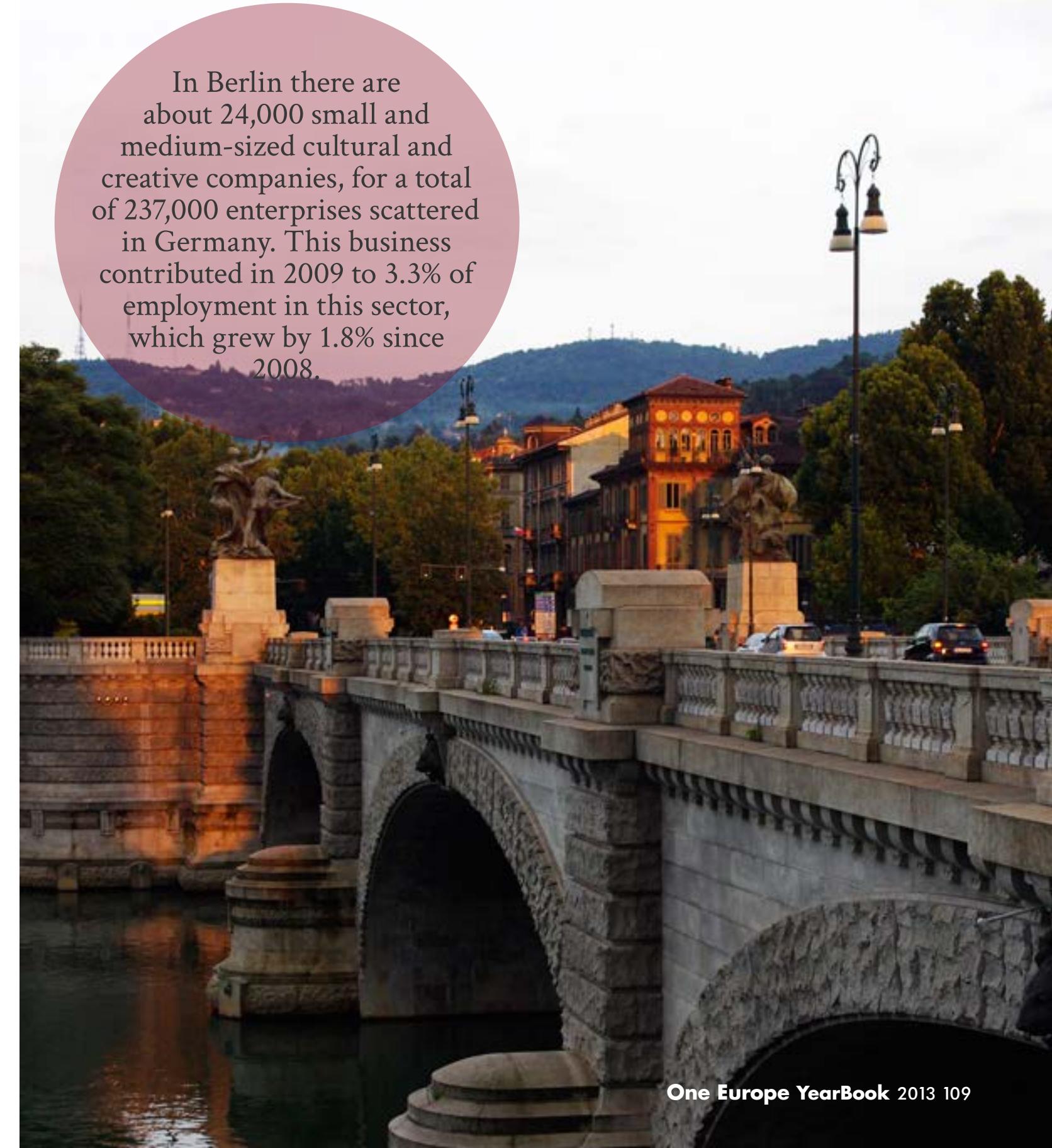
The regional agency for innovation in Baden-Württemberg encourages local companies to invest more and more in design and new technologies. The aim of this encouragement is not just to replace classical experiences, but also to innovate new ones.

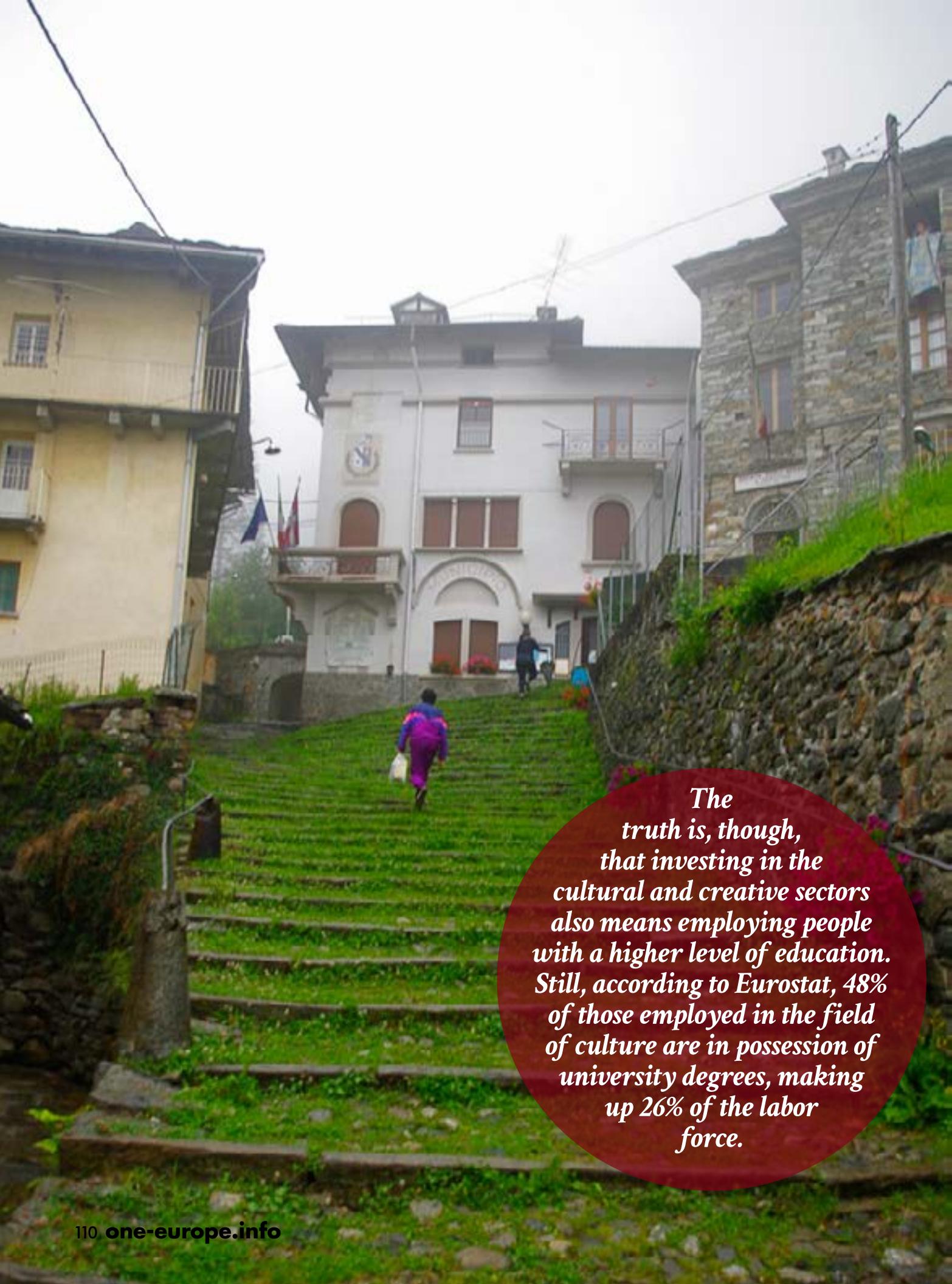
The national government indicates serious interest in the creative and cultural industries, thanks to the initiatives undertaken by the Federal Minister of Economics and Technology and the Federal Commissioner for Culture and Media.

Finally, I would like to mention the support of common people, private initiatives and important events, that makes Germany a contemporary hub of the European culture, where innovation is considered as the most important aim to reach.

In my opinion some historical events facilitated the development of a new cultural vitality, because people accepted to change ideas and traditions. In fact, Germany is historically more inclined to make innovations compared to Italy. We all know that after the Second World War, the country faced a kind of tabula rasa. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and

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The truth is, though, that investing in the cultural and creative sectors also means employing people with a higher level of education. Still, according to Eurostat, 48% of those employed in the field of culture are in possession of university degrees, making up 26% of the labor force.

the reunion of the country, Germans had to rediscover their original culture to recreate some national features, but people didn't lose the chance to test originality, expressing new vitality, changing life-styles and traditions.

I'm not implying that everything depends on historical events, because in that sense all Eastern countries should have expressed similar cultural vitality. Instead, many regions of Eastern Europe haven't developed a real cultural plan yet.

So what emerges from my reasoning is that apart from historical events, there are some other fundamental factors that influence a cultural development, such as political choices, education, personal interests and private investments.

The latter is one of the most important protagonists of modern culture. In fact, in many European countries these kinds of investments have been fundamental for the development of both cultural events and buildings. It is the case in the Netherlands, in which philanthropists have a strong power in planning and funding culture of their own cities and regions.

The European Union has made a fund available for the development of culture in all member states, but this fund is not used correctly everywhere on our continent. In fact, after the invitation of the European Commission, all EU members must rethink the use of structural funds, since it is currently

under-utilised for the creative and cultural sectors (only 6% of the fund benefits this sector), or wasted in other projects.

In Italy the scandal of wasted funds for the Elton John's concert in Naples in September 2009 is a well-known one. The singer received an amount of €750.000 for singing only 4 songs. After that scandal many people started reconsider the benefit of the cultural financing and the crisis put people under the impression that investing in culture is a waste of money.

The truth is, though, that investing in the cultural and creative sectors also means employing people with a higher level of education. Still, according to Eurostat, 48% of those employed in the field of culture are in possession of university degrees, making up 26% of the labor force.



Commonalities across borders: Observations from Chios (Greece) and Siena (Italy)

by George Chtazelenis

From my recent travel to Tuscany, I found that in Europe, there are cities and regions which have many common features. How beautiful and interesting it would be if the inhabitants of these regions would get to know each other and discover how many things they have in common. This might help in bringing together not only these people, but also their whole cities and perhaps even their nations.

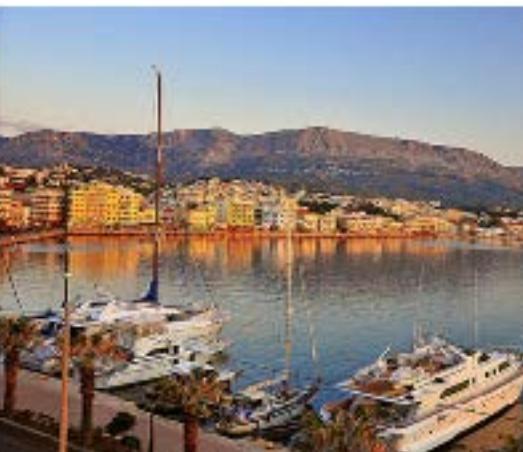
This idea came to my mind in Tuscany, when I browsed through the streets of [Siena](#) and the beautiful village of [San Gimignano](#). Three days in beautiful Tuscany were enough to make me realize that this region is so similar to the southern regions of Greece like Chios.

Let's take everything from the beginning, starting with the history of both places.

History

Both Siena and Chios had a glorious past and rich people. But in both of these areas this period ended with a big disaster. In Siena, there was a plague which decimated the city's residents. This large epidemic wiped out 70,000 of the 100,000 residents. This resulted in the weakening of Sienna and the fall under the dominion of Florence.

A similar tragedy happened in Chios. During the Turkish occupation, the island went through a long and productive commercial boom. The disaster came when Anthony Bournias (a mercenary of Napoleon) went to Samos with two hundred men and asked Lycurgus Logothetis (a Greek political and military leader) to participate in the



revolution of Chios. There was a quarrel between Bournia and Logothetis on who will head the revolution, leading to its ultimate failure. Despite the failure of the revolt, Turkey sent 7,000 troops to the island. Then began the great massacre of Chios. At that time the population was between 120,000 to 180,000 inhabitants (depending on whether you trust Greece or Turkish estimates). After the massacre only 1,000 to 2,000 residents remained on the island, and 20,000 had escaped to the surrounding islands. After these disasters came a constant decline for both Siena and Chios.

Architecture

Let us continue with the common features of these two cities in the architectural and urban sector. The old city of Siena has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is also considered the best preserved medieval town in Europe. In this respect Siena is similar to the region of Mastichochoria of Chios. Within Mastichochoria lies the town Mesta, the best preserved (and inhabited) medieval settlement of

the island (and perhaps of the Aegean Sea). The narrow backstreets of Mesta are very similar to those of Siena. Both cities also contained a castle which is evident from the combined houses that convert these two cities as forts. Chios also features a medieval monastery called Nea Moni, which has also been recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Traditions

As for tradition, this was the first time I meet another city where parishes rival in traditional customs. Every New Year's eve, Chios holds the traditional ship model competition where each parish prepares its own boat. After having completed the contest in the main square of the city, where the parish with the best boat takes the prize, the parishes roam the city singing rearranged carols. Easter also has the famous "Rouketopolemos" which literally means "rocket war". Two parishes, Panagia Erythiani and San Marcos, prepare homemade rockets throughout the whole year, and then on the evening of the Resurrection try

to target the rival parish's church bell. This custom dates back to the Ottoman period.

Agriculture

Both Tuscany and Chios are rich and famous areas for the fruits of their land. Tuscany produces wonderful wine, while Chios is famous for its mastic, citrus, jasmine and, in ancient times, it was also famous for its wine.

Sports

Siena has a basketball team with remarkable success both in Italy and in the European championship. Similarly, Chios has a successful tradition in waterpolo.

And all these common traits can be found in two cities that have 50,000 residents...





Observations from Thessaloniki (Greece) and Izmir (Turkey)

Many cities in different European countries are remarkably similar. Thessaloniki and Izmir are such towns, closely linked by history and culture.

When we travel abroad we broaden our horizons and meet new people, experience new customs and even occasionally gain new habits. Often a traveler finds that there are many cities and regions in different countries which are very similar to each other.

After Siena (Italy) and Chios (Greece), this time I present the many remarkable similarities between Thessaloniki and Izmir. I hope that in the future I will find other similar cities.

History

Both Thessaloniki and Izmir are big names in world history, and both are linked to Alexander the Great. Thessaloniki was founded by General Cassander, who married Alexander the Great's half-sister and named the city in her honor. Izmir is older, founded in 3000 BC, but Alexander actually changed its position (for the second time, the first was in prehistoric times), putting it in a better defensive point, believing that the residents will be happier.

City and residents

Izmir and Thessaloniki are two historical trading ports of the Aegean Sea. One is regarded as the gateway to the Balkans (Thessaloniki) and the other as the gateway to the Near East (Izmir). Both cities have always been very multinational. Their residents consisted of Greeks, Jews, Turks,



Armenians, and other nationalities. But after the last wars, both the population and the image of the two cities changed.

When Thessaloniki joined the Greek state in 1912, the city's population changed substantially. The Muslim population was moved out and it was replaced by Greek refugees from Asia Minor and Eastern Thrace. The population changes contributed to

the strengthening of the Greek element. In addition, during the Second World War, the Nazis killed most of the Jewish community in town. Today the population of the city is 788.952 residents.

Before the great catastrophe of 1922, Izmir's population was 370.000 (165.000 Greeks, 80.000 Turks, 55.000 Jews, 40.000 Armenians, and others). After the massacre of the Christian population, the appearance of the city changed. The Greek, Jewish and Armenian population zeroed. Currently living in Izmir there are 3.210.465 residents.

Architecture

The image of the two cities changed after two major disasters. In Thessaloniki this was the Great Fire of 1917, after which the Greek government tried to add more ancient Greek and European elements in the city, while destroying Ottoman devotional and

functional buildings. After the Second World War the university campus was built on the old Jewish neighborhoods, while its facilities for the theological faculty were built over the old Jewish cemetery.

After The Great Fire of Izmir in 1922, the city became completely different from the old oriental Izmir with the horse-drawn tram waterfront, narrow streets and lanes, and wooden houses (except for a portion of the Turkish quarter, the "Over Mahala"). The famous cultural park of Izmir was created in a vast extent of the damaged area, in the six neighborhoods of St. Catherine,

St. Demetrios, St. Tryphon, the church of Euaggelistria, St. Nicholas, and St. John, which includes ponds, a zoo, restaurants and facilities of the annual trade show with permanent exhibition booths in an ancient Greek style. Also, the city's waterfront has changed considerably since it has been significantly expanded.

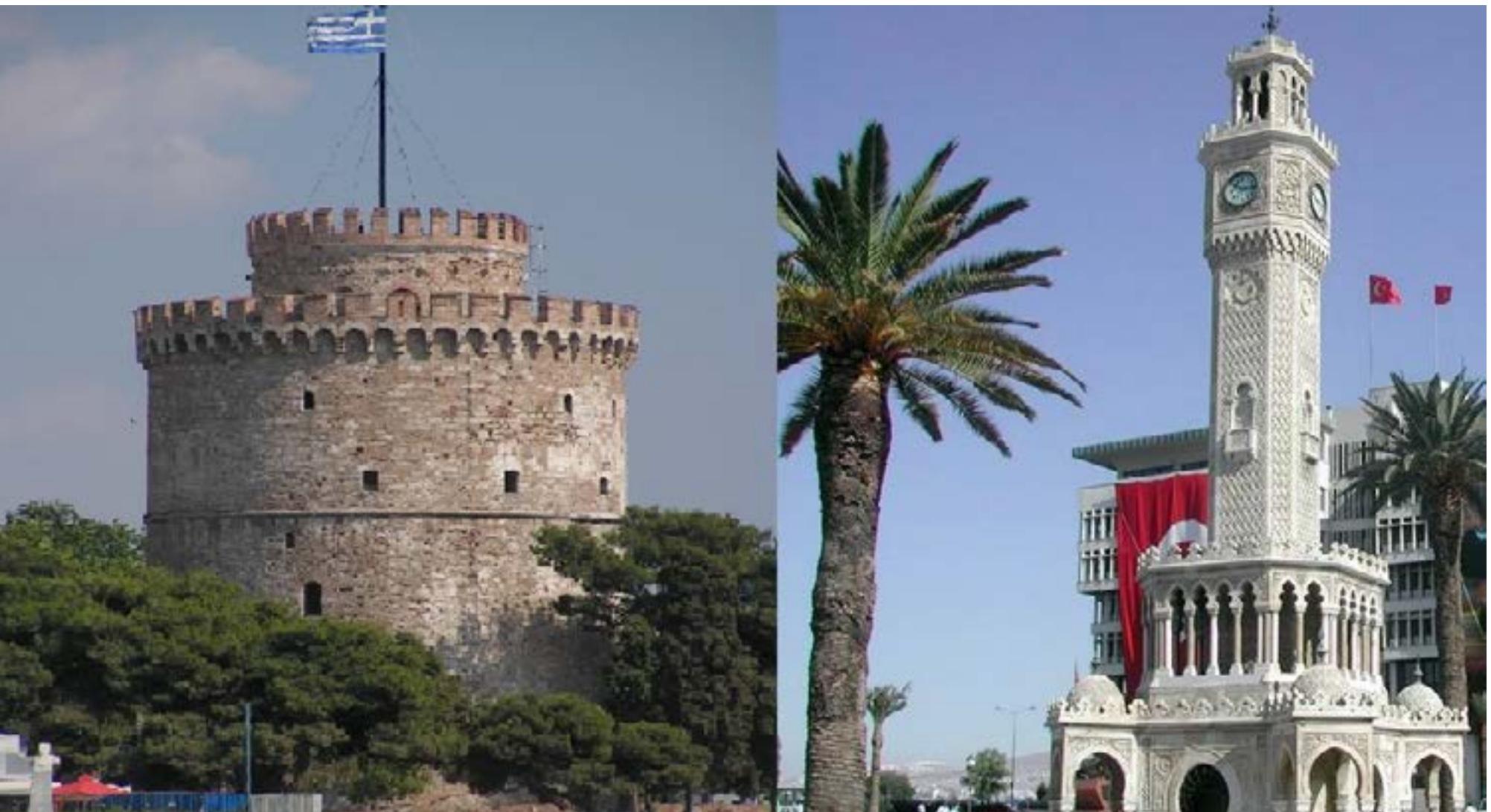
Central points and symbols of cities

Both cities have two large hotels as a benchmark. In Thessaloniki this is the Macedonia Palace and in Izmir they have

the Hilton. In addition, the symbols of both cities are located on the waterfront. For Thessaloniki this is the "White Tower" while in Izmir you can find "Konak's Clock Tower". Also in both cities there are two beautiful castles in the hills surrounding the city. Everyone can enjoy the view of the cities on the walls of the castles.

International Exhibitions

Thessaloniki and Izmir, host (each September and August respectively), the international exhibitions of their countries.



Europe and the old nationalisms

By Ignasi Meda

Part (I) Are nation states really necessary in today's globalised world?

Ever since I read the quote "*the only thing that never changes is that everything changes*" the first time, I have been living and analyzing the societies based on that powerful fact. Accept it: change is permanent and thus there are neither ageless systems, nor eternal social structures. However, such a concept seems to defend the urgent necessity

much clearer when focusing on business issues: for instance, words such as "adaptability", "change or die", "transformation", "technological evolution"

come frequently to us, don't they?

What about political structures and national states, though? Do

they perpetually maintain the same "status quo"? Do they not change the way everything else does? In these articles I will try

of a supranational state like the EU. Furthermore, I will try to question and confront the current (non)functionality of the old "nation" states in Europe. Italians, Spaniards, British, French, etc. Are these nationalities an entity distinct from the fact that everything changes?

The flux of power in Europe has always been changing along the pass of the centuries. Do you still think of your nationality as something forever?

Part (II) First of all: where are separatists from?

First of all: where are separatists from? Are they coming from the current incompetence run by nation-centered governments which are unable to deal with global issues, such as global warming or the financial market institutions?

While everyday Europeans' lives change at a fast pace pushed mainly by the technological development such as social networks, the national Parliaments and governments seem to live stuck in the past. Of course, during the last century there have always been changes regarding the political parties, the laws or the rights and duties. Nevertheless the competences and essential aims of the main democratic institutions have remained the same: politicians meet daily in the Parliaments to make or end laws that (supposedly) concern their electors.

The justification of separatism

Back in that time that formula worked quite well for many reasons. Think about it: during the 19th century, centralization of national Parliaments and governments was necessary to bring policymakers

together around the same buildings particularly in a time when there were no paved roads, cars and airplanes did not yet exist, and technologies like Skype or Internet were both utopian amusements. Therefore, physical distances were in the past larger and costly, as was communication and data transmission among people. Thus the consolidation of national power into central decision-making buildings was at least economically justified.

In any case, the aid to ease the mobility of the political class was not the unique reason that gave rise to the centralization of the national Parliaments in democratic countries. As Jeremy Rifkin¹ put it, the old "*nation-states are imaginary communities, artificial constructs created mainly by economic and political elites with the purpose of expanding national markets and secure the old western colonialism (...)*". Hence not only the centralization allowed politicians to meeting in a central point but also gave them the possibility to take over both the wealth of nations and its military force.

¹ J. Rifkin, "The Empathic Civilization", 2010.

What **is** a nation?

In this sense, someone might argue that the old nation-states attempt to keep the union among the population and also enrich and protect the diversity of cultures. Well, at that point we should have a look again at the illustration of “*The Europe of separatists*” and ask ourselves: is there a ‘unique and genuine sort of classifying nationalities’? What does the term “nation” really mean? Have nation-states remained the same throughout the history of mankind? Have they ever changed? To what extent can we be sure they are not changing whatsoever?

Again, Jeremy Rifkin notes that the key of the proliferation of nation-states was on their capacity to provide a new collective identity to the people, especially on those individuals who had been leading the matters in private properties as well as controlling the (supposedly) self-regulated markets so far. Therefore, only when looking back in time we may appreciate the romantic sense that nationalities currently convey to us was actually a sort of self-interested machinery to make citizens rely on the new empowerment of nation-states. That was not an easy one: to get docile citizens to trust them, the nation-states ought to seize their emotional support to count on them for different tasks such as collective jobs, tax collection and also the formation of armies that would defend the national businesses in the future.

At that point Jeremy Rifkin asks himself how nation-states could convince millions of people who had just emancipated after the Enlightenment period – an era when Europe did emphasize reason and individualism rather than tradition and romantic ideals. Put it another way: how could nation-states persuade citizens to resign a part of their autonomy and liberty they had reached until then? We find the answer in the narratives that nation-states did convey mainly based on attractive and common pasts as well as by giving them out identities and common fates. It is no coincidence that after the unification of Italy, the nineteenth-century politician, painter and novelist Massimo d’Azeglio – previously the prime minister of Piamonte – asserted that “*We have made Italy, now we must make Italians*”.²

Is it a coincidence that the whole of nation-states share myths based on their origins plus heroes, heroines and also idealistic past times with tests and trials that perpetuate themselves through baroque rituals? I don’t think so. Again, Jeremy Rifkin claims, “*In a most secular and disenchanted world, national-state had to create a more convincing new image about a town (or a country) that share a noble past and was destined to a future of greatness*”.

² R.B.Lyman Jr., “Barbarism and Religion: Late Roman and Early Medieval Childhood”, p. 76.



Finally, I would like to get back to the previous infographic. Why do we have to think of nationalisms as separatist or secessionist territories? Instead I propose another point of view: one that allows us to think of nationalisms in terms of what sociologists call “*glocalization*”. It consists of strengthening ties among citizens and neighbourhoods at a local level, while assigning more responsibilities – for example competences – to a supranational entity (for example the EU). This new perspective not only overcomes the romantic and old concept of nation-states but also goes further and gives us a sort of tools to start fixing some economic and social today's controversies between Europe and nation-states. Nevertheless this is going to be analyzed in the third part of the “*Europe and the old nationalisms*”.



Part (III) "Glocalization" as the European "lighthouse"

“glocalization” as an effective way to overcome today's concerns regarding nation-states and their fitting into a mere feasible European Union. As explained previously, glocalization consists of strengthening ties among citizens at a local level while assigning more responsibilities to a supranational entity - at the global level.

In the second part of the set “*Europe and the old nationalisms*” I chose the term

However, today's national parliaments have lost their capacity to be efficient agents when dealing with political and economic issues. Most important matters that affect nation-states are negotiated and voted at European level, and yet the national parliaments have not changed whatsoever. We have to admit it: the empowerment of the old nation states as centralized institutions has become costly and dysfunctional. What is the difference between meeting in my country or in yours? Planes fly back and forth many times a day, and Internet or other current technological tools allow policymakers to meet almost daily in Brussels or other ‘neutral’ cities and spaces. Everything is changing but the nation states.

Seeing that European institutions are constantly being summoned to assume control of the global competences that nation states cannot manage on their own, one begins to wonder whether it wouldn't be more efficient to give power to European citizens rather than to their national parliaments. Put it another way: maybe local administrations such as town councils could assume responsibilities that are supposed to belong with national governments? After all, we all agree that ‘proximity policy’ does offer advantages over the centralized and distant governments. Let us analyse what could local power look like in a hypothetical and stronger European Union.

Duncan J. Watts, a professor of sociology at Columbia University, has focused his research on ‘local knowledge’. In his book, “*Everything is obvious (once you know the answer)*”, he notes that the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were characterized by too much optimism among engineers, architects, scientists, and also government technocrats. Their error was the obstinate belief that problems of a society can be solved just like those in science or engineering. According to the political scientist James Scott,



the central flaw in this “high modernist” philosophy is the lack of emphasis on local, context-dependent knowledge, while favouring rigid mental models of cause and effect. As Scott put it, applying generic rules to a complex world is “*an invitation to practical failure, social disillusionment, or most likely both*”.

In this respect, Duncan Watts explains that this kind of knowledge is hardly reducible to generally applicable principles, precisely because “*the environments in which it is*

exercised are so complex and non-repeatable that formal procedures of rational decision making are impossible to apply”. In other words: the knowledge on which a plan is based is necessarily local to the concrete situation for which it is destined. Is it not the same work and production method that many big companies are using? Take the Toyota Production System – it is engineered along “*just in time*” principles, which ensures that if one part of the system fails, the whole system is stalled until the problem is fixed. The advantage of such a model is that it

forces organizations to address problems quickly and aggressively. It also forces them to trace the ‘root causes’ of problems – a process that frequently requires looking beyond the immediate cause of the failure to discover how flaws in one part of the system can result in failures somewhere else. Finally, it obliges them either to look for existing solutions, or to adapt solutions from related activities. As Duncan Watts points out, “*together these three practices – identifying failure points, tracing problems to root causes, and searching for solutions outside*

the confines of existing routines – can transform the organization itself from one that offers solutions to complex problems in a centralized managerial manner into one that searches for solutions among a broad network of collaborators”.

Planner vs. Searcher

Could a “glocalized” EU use a similar approach to solve intractable policy problems? What if the EU became a global institution that specifies the “solutions” at the highest level, while leaving the specifics up to local administrations? Would it be useful to have national parliaments in such a system? I doubt that.

Today’s nation states have become obsolete, bureaucratic actors which devote their resources to finding “existing solutions” wherever they occur, and to spreading their practices.

“*to figure out the solution to every problem on their own*” says Duncan Watts. Instead, they devise plans that revolve around the knowledge and motivation of local actors rather than relying on their own. In other words, they need to learn to behave more like what William Easterly, the development economist, calls searchers:

“*A Planner thinks he already knows the answer; he thinks of poverty as a technical engineering problem that his answers will solve. A searcher admits he doesn’t*

Today’s nation states have become obsolete, bureaucratic actors which devote their resources to finding “existing solutions” wherever they occur, and to spreading their practices.

know the answers in advance; he believes that poverty is a complicated tangle of political, social, historical, institutional, and technological factors... and hopes to find answers to individual problems by trial and error... A Planner believes outsiders know enough to impose solutions. A Searcher believes only insiders have enough knowledge to find solutions, and that most solutions must be homegrown”.

An example of “glocalization” between the EU and local administrations is the case of a recent EU-funded project with the aim of analysing



cardiovascular health risks of ninety Madrid neighbourhoods. It is a valuable instance of collaboration between what we call “global” and “local” administrations, because it could serve to develop plans beyond individual behaviours would affect the whole population. Did the EU initially know the right “solutions” to improve health conditions of the citizens in Madrid? No. Nevertheless, its collaboration with the local Madrid administrations resulted in a common pursuit of European healthiness: local solutions to global aims.

Recently, the philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas has reminded us the lack of a large-scale European public sphere. In this regard, Liam Fitzgerald suggests that we create one encompassing all the national public spheres and the many small

pan-European media projects, in order to actually achieve a universal public sphere. I believe that “glocalization” can contribute to achieving this goal by fostering ‘proximity policies’ on the one hand, and by avoiding useless dualities between Europe and the old nation-states on the other. As Fitzgerald says: “*Above all, it will keep bureaucrats and officials in touch with everyday reality, and report on all events at Union and regional level. This process of reciprocal communication of problems and hopes, of solutions and proposals will help establish a real feeling of belonging together and an understanding that problems in one part of the continent can easily affect all other parts and that therefore they need to be addressed by all. The public sphere ideally will be Europe’s real democratic glue and the source of its legitimization, above and beyond common history, values, and beliefs. It is a way to bring problems*

to everyone’s attention and a collective means of proposing solutions in cooperation between the people and government.”

I would like to close this third and last part of the series “*Europe and the old nationalisms*” quoting Antonio Gramsci “*we all live in an interregnum, a moment when the old is dying and the new cannot be born: the rules and laws of the past are gone, but the new laws have not yet been invented. The sovereignty of nation-states is now largely a fiction. “Power” is the capacity to do, ‘politics’ is deciding what to do. Globalization has evaporated the power of nation states to supranational powers free from political control. If a government tries to get what its electors really want rather than what financial systems require, markets punish it severely*”.



project *for*
democratic
union

The Project for Democratic Union (PDU) is a political think-tank which makes the case for a full political union of the <http://www.democraticunion.eu/> Eurozone. We believe in a boldy democratic, unified Europe with a strong civil society and public sphere. Our activities range from running on- and offline campaigns to organising academic projects and enlisting contributors of all nationalities and professional backgrounds. Managed by a group of dedicated supporters, the PDU is primarily based in Munich but has a new office in London and is currently engaged in setting up representations in Lisbon, Budapest, Berlin, Athens and elsewhere.

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The Future of Europe: Challenges Ahead

André P. DeBattista

Europe's historical baggage: Berlin, Paris and London

In the early days following the liberation of France, Jean Monnet began formulating his ideas for the future of Europe. At a lunch hosted by General Charles de Gaulle, Monnet suggested that Europe – particularly Germany and France – must be united “on terms of equality between its members” in the form of a “single economic entity with free trade”. De Gaulle was sceptical: “after a war such as this, it is hard to see French and Germans belonging together to an economic union” (Duchêne, 1994: 127).

When relations with post-War Germany became critical, Monnet proposed a European federal authority to deal with coal and steel. This plan also had the support of the French foreign minister Robert Schuman. Schuman was quite clear in his aim; he wanted a “united Europe that would have Franco-German reconciliation at its heart” (Nugent, 2006: 36-37).

Ever since Konrad Adenauer and Charles de Gaulle signed the Elysée Treaty in 1963, Germany and France have been trying to find common ground on a number of positions. The future of Europe is one such area where both countries could not always agree on.

De Gaulle wanted a Europe of states rather than an integrated supranational Europe. He described the latter as “a myth and a fiction” but conceded that a “Europe made up of separate states will ultimately lead to a confederation”. On the other hand Germany advocated an integrated Europe. This goal was largely anchored in Germany’s bitter experience in the preceding two world wars – wars prompted by petty nationalism and the expansionist policies (Archiv der Gegenwart). De Gaulle’s resignation in 1969 prompted two significant changes. The French government softened its approach to European integration and dropped its opposition to Great Britain’s membership in the European Economic Community (Nugent, 2006:25-26).

WHAT FUTURE
FOR EUROPE?
EUROPE IN 2014

Britain's decision to apply for membership was primarily motivated by economic considerations (Archiv der Gegenwart). Its relations with the European Economic Community and the institutions which succeeded it were not always smooth.

Margaret Thatcher's strident approach to the European Community has been a rallying point for various eurosceptics. In her keynote speech to the College of Europe, Thatcher stated: "willing and active cooperation between independent sovereign states is the best way to build a successful European Community. To try to suppress nationhood and concentrate power at the centre of a European conglomerate would be highly damaging and would jeopardise the objectives we seek to achieve".

This historical resume illustrates the importance of monitoring events happening in three European capitals; Paris, Berlin and London. These centres of power are as relevant now as they were in the past.

Institutional Reform, Parliament and Citizen Participation

The level of uncertainty in the EU is not surprising. The EU is an ambitious project and the slightest hint of crisis can have a ripple effect over the entire institutional set up.

The Reform Treaty of the European Union was ratified in order to "promote the willingness of the political elites concerned to compromise and to increase the overall level of efficiency of the EU through suitable organisations and procedures". However, the treaty "leaves completely unaffected...

"the mentality and the participation of the populations" (Habermas, 2009:79-80).

Habermans (2009: 80-81) describes the current way of doing politics at EU level as being "blatantly elitist and bureaucratic". He provides a rather pertinent analysis: "the political class is sending the signal that it is the privilege of the governments to decide the future destiny of Europe behind closed doors". Whilst acknowledging that

the powers of the European Parliament have been extended, he warns that "until the usual spectrum of opinions and relevant issues within the national public spheres is broadened and until the public spheres become responsive to one another, the citizens derive no benefit from a formally strengthened status of the Parliament".

The perceived aloofness of the European Institutions and the apparent democratic deficit at EU-level seem to be strengthening the case of the Eurosceptic camp.

The Financial Crisis and the Euro

At the beginning of 2014, Latvia became the eighteenth member of the Eurozone. Despite the fact that the Eurozone is set to grow, its stability has been tried and tested throughout the financial crisis. The crisis has uncovered problems which are both structural and political. The search for stability and growth has so far been elusive and the challenges of integrating varied economies into a single monetary union should not be underestimated.

Habermas (2012, 120- 123) believes the Euro currency will determine the future of the





The European Union has often claimed to represent "Unity in Diversity".

European Union. The rescue packages devised to save the Euro differ from previous bail out packages since now the taxpayers of the Eurozone effectively “bear joint liability for the budgetary risks of each other”. This situation is in itself the cause of considerable disgruntlement and uncertainty. In addition to bearing the brunt of the crisis, the taxpayers may be under the impression that they are not reaping any tangible benefits. Youth unemployment and general underemployment are widespread whilst budgetary pressures are prompting the implementation of austerity measures. The problem is also one which it’s present at institutional level. In Habermas words, “a common market with a partially shared currency has developed in an economic zone of

continental proportions with a huge population, but without institutions being established at the European level capable of effectively coordinating the economic policies of the member states” (2010: 121).

Shared Values

The European Union has often claimed to represent “Unity in Diversity”. The coupling of ‘diversity’ and ‘unity’ may sound paradoxical. Nonetheless, it seems to indicate a willingness to respect or foster a sense of unity despite the diverse cultures and identities. However, occasional references to “European values” and

“shared identities” reveal a political desire to try and define some sort of common ground.

Cardinal Ratzinger, later elected Pope Benedict XVI, addressed some of these issues in a keynote speech delivered to the Italian Senate in 2004. He defines Europe as being a “cultural and historical concept, not a continent clearly definable in geographical terms” and asks “In the violent upheavals of our time is there an identity of Europe with hopes of a future – an identity for which we can commit ourselves, heart and soul?” He challenges the “self-hate” which seems to be taking root in the West: “All it sees in its own history is what is disgraceful and destructive, while it no longer seems able to perceive what is great and pure”.

This is indeed a widespread problem which is largely borne out of the innate guilt most European nations have developed after their colonial track record and their role in some atrocities which are still fresh in our collective imagination. Nonetheless, this “self-hate” seems to be poisoning the very future of Europe:

“In order to survive, Europe needs a new, critical and humble acceptance of itself; but only if it really wishes to survive. The multi-culturalism now being encouraged and fostered with such passion comes across at times as mostly an abandonment and denial of what is one’s own, a sort of flight from self” (Ratzinger, 2004). He adds that this multiculturalism “cannot subsist without shared constants; without points of reference based on one’s own values”. Indeed, whilst fostering diversity, an exploration of shared values is essential.

The Challenges Ahead

In her speech in Bruges, Margaret Thatcher made a rather pertinent remark: “Europe is not the creation of the Treaty of Rome. Nor is the European idea the property of any group or institution. The European Community is one manifestation of that European identity, but it is not the only one”. There must be a certain boldness and willingness to debate issues of identity and culture. Shared values based on human dignity, the rule of law and democratic governance are often presented as abstract concepts with little relevance.

One of the greatest threats for the European Union is that it develops into an organisation its citizens and the constituent member states do not want it to be. The European Union cannot be a monolithic and inward looking organisation concerned solely with self-preservation. It must be open to change and humble enough to recognise where it went wrong and where it can perform better.

Numerous campaigns have been ineffective in increasing citizen participation in the European Parliament elections, and it is highly unlikely that the European Parliament elections scheduled for June 2014 will reverse this trend.

A report by the European Policy Centre (2013), acknowledges that these elections are considered as “second-order national elections” by the voters “on account of being less important for the allocation of executive power than national electoral contests”. There is a widespread belief that there is “little at stake” and voters feel somewhat freer to vote for smaller political parties. Some of these smaller parties have embraced a Eurosceptic agenda.



The challenge here is three-fold. The first challenge is to encourage citizens to cast their vote. The second challenge is to ensure that the voice of those citizens who choose not to vote is not ignored: their reluctance to vote or their apathy is an evident sign that the European Union is not engaging with citizens. The third, and perhaps toughest challenge, is to accept that Euroscepticism is a reality which must somehow be integrated into the overall agenda of the EU.

Such views cannot be discarded on grounds of being uncomfortable or contrary to the initial aims of the EU. Rather, they must be embraced and integrated into its overall vision. Failure to do so may increase the perception that the so-called "*democratic deficit*" is widening.

The EU's institutions are all-too-often accused of being a "*gravy train*" for "Eurocrats". In other instances the EU is viewed as an elitist organisation whose only

aim is to impose unnecessary legislation. Prior to the financial crisis, the EU was also viewed as a reliable source of funds and subsidies – a "*cash cow*" to be milked by vested interests. These concerns cannot be ignored for they shape the way citizens relate to the Institutions.

The EU must not backtrack on its commitment to expand its borders. Enlargement has opened up various opportunities for numerous citizens in Eastern Europe and in the Mediterranean. Realistic institutions based on the challenges Europe faces can ensure that this process is not stalled or nullified by bureaucratic inefficiencies and institutional shortsightedness. The EU must also remain steadfast in its support for growth in the Eurozone. Such growth is dependent on private sector investment, research and innovation. These factors are essential to combat the scourge of unemployment and underemployment.

The above analysis does not seek to overplay the challenges Europe faces. If the European Union is to have a future, it must acknowledge its past, come to terms with the present and embark on a soul-searching exercise to determine its future. This future could be completely different from what was previously envisaged and such a process can be daunting. Nonetheless, this process might result in a stronger Europe based on a sounder footing and realistic goals and principles.

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The Two Challenges of an “ever-growing Union”



A new intense and challenging year opens up in front of the European Union

By Michel V. Anderlini

2013 has been a year full of events for the European Union. After four years of a harsh economic crisis that has triggered sky-rocketed unemployment rates, GDPs and poverty rates throughout the Union, austerity has continued to be the political response shown by the leaders of the EU member states. However, the Union has kept on growing – Croatia became its 28th member on the 1st of July and Latvia entered the euro zone on the 1st of January 2014.

Therefore, as I recall it, 2013 reminds me of a fascinating book I once read – “*A Study of History*” by Arnold J. Toynbee. Toynbee, in his prominent “Challenge-and-Response” theory, explains that civilizations that successfully managed to respond to the challenges facing them progressed, while those who failed to address them declined. In a crucial election year, the EU is – to my mind – facing at least two challenges that it would have to respond to. And the answers that the new EU political leadership will provide are likely to influence the future of the “ever-growing Union” and its 500 million citizens. Let me briefly sum up those two challenges.

(1) The Democratic-Deficit-Challenge

According to the European news agency *Euronews*, the May 2014 elections will happen in a “50-shadows-of-grey landscape”, “with trust in the EU institutions and governments at an all-time record low”. An unfortunate situation that could lead, according to many experts, to the rise of populist and Eurosceptic parties in EU member states. *The Economist* even suggests that “Anti-EU populists of the left and right could take between 16% and 25% of the parliament’s seats, up from 12% today”. Some of them are even starting pre-election alliances in hope of forming a Eurosceptic bloc at the EU Parliament after the elections, like Marine Le Pen (*Front National – France*) and Geert Wilders (*Party for Freedom – The Netherlands*). Although these political groupings are ideologically far from each other, they seem to unanimously target one single “enemy”: the “monster Europe”, which according to Ms. Le Pen “has enslaved our various peoples”.

Moreover, since 1979, the EP elections turnout has been constantly decreasing, from 61,99% to 43%. There is yet little sign that the 2014 Elections will be an exception to the rule, with younger citizens feeling particularly disinterested about European politics.

To sum up, the results of the forthcoming EP elections could, according to the journalist Jan-Werner Mueller, “force the EU to its shutdown”, due to a EU Parliament paralyzed by a large number of Eurosceptic MEPs and a Commission lacking political legitimacy. Such a shutdown might be improbable. Yet, to the minds of numerous EU citizens, the EU is still considered as “a project devised by and for the elites”, intruding into national lives, national pension schemes, national budget and national laws.

In 2014 and onwards, the EU – in order to fill up this democratic deficit gap – would have to come up with solutions. Some progresses have been made on the way. For the first time, the EP elections will be held after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty – meaning that the main European political families will nominate their own candidate for the position of President of the European Commission, allowing each campaign to occur behind a “face”, a “candidate”.

Even though, the balance of EU institutional powers is still in favor of national governments, thus leading many citizens to distrust the EP elections. As Heather Grabbe, director of the Open



What will the Commission, the national governments of the EU and the EU Parliament come up with in order to remedy the situation?

Society European Policy Institute expressed it: “[...] *The commission does not decide big issues such as economic governance. The president is also not a prime minister who chooses his or her own ministers; rather, she has to take one nominated by each member state, so the overall political complexion of the College of Commissioners would still reflect national governments rather than the European election results*”.

What will the Commission, the national governments of the EU and the EU Parliament come up with in order to remedy the situation?

Furthermore, the ongoing “sovereign debt” crisis in the EU and the increasing interactions between its member states have resulted in a greater need for innovative “risk-sharing solutions”. Allow me to take one single example. Last October, in the small Italian island of Lampedusa, 356 refugees drowned as their boat capsized in the Mediterranean Sea. Such tragedies are dramatically common in Southern EU member states - such as Italy, Greece or Spain – as they have been particularly hit by transcontinental migration due to their geographic position. Their governments

often points out at a controversial piece of EU legislation – the Dublin regulation, which forces each refugee to apply for asylum in the EU country he or she enters first.

After taking over the Council of the European Union on the 1st of January 2014, Greece is now pushing for a more integrated migration policy, in an attempt to find more supportive ways to mitigate the unbalanced impacts of these new migratory flows. The discussions for the creation of a single asylum system will occur under the first half of 2014.

The “risk-sharing challenge” will confidently find another expression under 2014: the so-called “Single-resolution mechanism”, just agreed by the EU finance ministers on December, 19th. The mechanism will allow for troubled banks from sovereign nations to receive bailout funds – after closed supervision - from the European Central Bank in order to alleviate the impact on one nation’s banks and avoid taxpayer to “foot the bill”, as the EU Commissioner Michel Barnier puts it. A general European “pot” containing those funds will be created in 10-years’ time. The mechanism is yet to be approved by the EU Parliament, where intense debates have to be expected after long and harsh negotiations rounds at the Council level.

The need for “*risk-sharing mechanisms*” have been at the core of the European projects for many years. Still, a common currency and growing transnational threats are intensifying it. 2014 will surely be another difficult year of European solidarity. As a proof, some EU members have under 2013 sought after “renegotiating” or “reviewing” their EU membership deal: David Cameron have agreed to a EU membership referendum before 2017 and found himself under attack of the main opposition parties in the UK, the Dutch PM Mark Rutte released in June a list of 54 different powers he wants to retain at national level and Angela Merkel has in many forums made her position clear: no ‘fiscal union’, on which each state helps itself (notably via Eurobonds) could emerge as long as she lived.

Will we see a more integrated EU under 2014? Will the EU continue to “muddle through” - muddle-through consisting of “*small doses of looser monetary and fiscal policy as well as a bit more integration, combined with large doses of change on both national and supranational levels*” (Hugo Dixon)? Or will a large number of EU competences be transferred back to the national level?

My predictions are likely to turn out to be false or ungrounded. It remains to be seen!

My predictions are likely to turn out to be false or ungrounded. It remains to be seen!



The anti-European Europeans

By Hallvard Barbogen

It's election time, and the European

Parliament needs to keep its enemies

close to remain relevant

The voter turnout in EU elections has been in constant decline for the last three decades. But in May this year, the European Parliament election will receive more attention than it has in a long time. Why? Because of anti-European initiatives.

Last year, Geert Wilders and Marine le Pen announced their intention to cooperate and work against the EU from within. Coming on top of a continued unemployment crisis in Southern Europe, this initiative could mean a backlash for the EU. The European project will be put to a test.

Perhaps surprisingly, then, the recipe for securing the European Parliament's continued relevance may be to encourage these anti-EU schemes. They are, after all, European.

A continued decline?

Four years ago, only 43 percent of voters participated in the European Parliament election, marking an all time low. The decline has been steady ever since 62 percent of voters partook in the first election in 1979. Not at any point have the figures suggested that European elections can become as recognised as their national equivalents.

Now, in the wake of le Pen and Wilder's new project, two possible scenarios have emerged for this year's vote. Either turnout continues to fall, making the European Parliament less legitimate than ever – or turnout rises as anti-EU MEPs multiply. These are of course not the only potential outcomes, but as they grow increasingly likely, they are worth examining in more detail.

Both alternatives seem less than ideal. But for the European Parliament, the choice should be easy.

The number one priority for the EU must be to reverse the decline in voter participation – even if that means making the Parliament itself more anti-EU. Because, at this point, the development cannot continue for many more elections before the European Parliament is rendered completely irrelevant. And that is the worst possible scenario for the EU.

But to what extent can one actually welcome parties that, in many ways, stand fundamentally opposed to the idea of the EU?

Anti-European Europeans

At the launch of their campaign, le Pen and Wilders spoke of liberation from "the European elite, the monster in Brussels" that has "enslaved our various peoples". The European Alliance for Freedom, as their coalition is called, is united "in the understanding that 'a single European people' does not exist and cannot be created". Such rhetoric does not invite any warm welcomes from Brussels.

Yet, le Pen and Wilders try to distance themselves from more radical groups, such as the British National Party (BNP), the Jobbik Party in Hungary and the Greek Golden Dawn. The members of the European Alliance for Freedom want to attain their goals through parliamentary politics and not, like Golden Dawn, through street violence. That should be commended. Even if one disagrees with their ends, one can support their means.

That le Pen and Wilders choose to take their fights to the European Parliament is a sign of strength for the EU. The alternative, that antagonising voices step outside of the structures, is always going to be worse. Any oppositional forces that want to stay within the existing frameworks should be welcomed. And when the support for Parliament is in decline, this becomes especially important.

Looking beyond the harshly spoken words will thus be beneficial for the current MEPs in Brussels, to try to foster some form of cooperation with rogue newcomers. Recognising that the European Alliance for Freedom is just that, a European alliance, may be a good starting-point for doing so. The slight paradox that occurs when anti-Europeans join forces on a European scale is one that should be treasured.

Responding to the intolerance

On the other hand, the anti-EU growth puts more pressure on moderate MEPs to bolster up enthusiasm around themselves and their policies. A European Parliament filled with intolerant parties is best avoided by mainstream European politicians stepping up their game.

The rise of intolerance may even give moderate MEPs a helping hand in becoming more heard. Voters not keen on getting a Parliament too influenced by xenophobia and distrust can see this rise as a call to action. Welcoming the anti-EU politicians while opposing them in Parliament would be the best solution for the EU.



Then: if le Pen and Wilders can take their fights to Brussels and be met with successful retorts there, we may even get a politically potent European Parliament. And that would be a first.



MyVote2014.eu

Elections for the European Parliament will take place in May 2014. [MyVote2014.eu](#) is a website that informs young voters about the European Parliament's decision-making process and provides them with tools to compare their views with those of its members, the MEPs.

The website contains four sections. **The first** is a tool called "Cast your Vote"- it allows you to compare your views with those of individual MEP's. The information is organised by country, political group in the European Parliament, and/or national party. You can vote for, against or abstain on fifteen policy issues and then compare your vote with the MEP's.

The second section is called "Their Vote", and shows the MEP's voting records on the fifteen policy issues from the previous section. Next, the section "What if...?" – shows what the voting results would have been if they were based on the opinions of the website's users. **The final part**, "Play the Game" to find out how much you know about EU politics!

MyVote2014.eu is an initiative of [VoteWatch Europe](#) – an organisation that aims to promote debate and transparency in EU-decision-making - in partnership with the [League of Young Voters](#).

MyVote2014.eu is also available in French (www.MonVote2014.eu), German (www.MeineWahl2014.eu), Polish (www.MojGlos2014.eu), Italian (www.IlMioVoto2014.eu) and Spanish (www.MiVoto2014.eu).

MyVote2014.eu has also a [facebook app](#) where you can "Cast your Vote" and "Play the Game".

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