

A topographic map of Europe and its surrounding regions, including parts of North Africa, the Middle East, and Iceland. The map uses a color gradient from green (low elevation) to brown and red (high elevation) to show terrain. The sea is a deep blue. The text is overlaid on the map.

EDITED BY MICHAEL KAEDING,
JOHANNES POLLAK & PAUL SCHMIDT

The future of EUROPE

VIEWS FROM THE CAPITALS



The Future of Europe

Michael Kaeding • Johannes Pollak
Paul Schmidt
Editors

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FOREWORD

Our European history began on the islands, by the sea and on the river banks. This led the way to centuries of exchanges, a blending process where ideas, art forms and scientific endeavours nourished themselves from one another.

Merchants from Crete, craftsmen from Etruria, philosophers and playwrights from Athens, lawyers and engineers from Rome, all met and shared their ways of thinking. This dynamism unleashed by the Renaissance made us receptive to new forms of trade and to new discoveries, to finance, to manufacturing, and paved the way for the emergence of great patrons of the arts.

Through our Union, we have ushered in a new European renaissance. We have created a vast space where people can meet and exchange ideas, in which the dignity and freedom of the individual are at the heart of everything we do. We should be proud of the legacy we are passing on to our children: the freedom to travel, to study, to work, to set up a business and to innovate.

Guaranteeing freedom in the largest economic area in the world has helped us create millions of jobs. Through our cohesion policy we have worked to ensure that no-one is left behind. We need to complete this massive undertaking and exploit its untapped potential, through the digital market, the capital market and the energy market. All along, we must keep firmly in mind the cost of non-Europe, which goes well beyond an economic value.

We still believe in Europe, but we want it to work better. So many mistakes have been made. Our Union is still unfinished and it often seems

remote from people's problems, divided, inefficient, and overly bureaucratic. As the President of the European Parliament, the only institution directly elected by European citizens, I am concerned at the growing disillusionment with Europe, which many of them now profess. A new start must mean bringing Europe closer to its citizens once again. This is the priority I have set for my term in office.

Window-dressing is not enough. We need far-reaching change. We need effective policies which enable us to overcome the fears of those who cannot find work, of young people who cannot see a future for themselves. We need a sound response for those who feel threatened by terrorism, by illegal immigration, and for those who are calling for us to reaffirm, loud and clear, within and beyond our borders, the values on which our Union is founded. They all call for a more practical Europe, a Europe of results.

We need to boost growth, attract investment, create jobs, make Europe fairer and more business-friendly. Our common currency must be matched by real convergence, backed by common reforms and by genuine economic governance. In addition to the Stability and Growth Pact, we need a Generational Pact. We cannot pass on unmanageable debts, and an inefficient economy hampering job creation, to our young generations. We must ensure that they too can enjoy the benefits of a social market economy. We need simpler rules and procedures. We must not get bogged down in the details of policy. Instead, we must concentrate on the major challenges facing us: foreign policy, defence, trade, climate change. In a world in which innovation and digital technologies are tearing down borders and barriers, individual States have no choice but to pool their resources. It is only by drawing on the combined power of 500 million European consumers that we can defend our interests in the world. Only in unison, can we enforce rights of ownership, and assert our safety, social, environmental and technological standards. No European State acting alone is strong enough to negotiate with the USA, China, Russia or India. Only by acting together can we exercise our sovereignty properly. We must continue to promote more open markets and put an end to unfair competition. Like our own internal market, the world market must guarantee freedom from the yoke of unnecessary regulation.

To protect our fellow citizens, we need more trust between European partners. Our intelligence services, our courts and our police forces must work together and exchange information. In the same way, if we are to monitor our borders effectively, we need a strong European Border and Coast Guard Agency. Together, standing shoulder to shoulder, we must

make the right of asylum more effective by overhauling the Dublin Regulation. We must be just as rigorous in taking in people who qualify for asylum as we are in countering illegal immigration. If we are to deal with this epochal phenomenon, we need a joint strategy, which focuses on development in Africa through a robust economic diplomacy.

If we are to address these challenges properly, today more than ever we need European unity. We cannot afford to leave Europe half-finished. We need to change Europe, not destroy it. We are much more than just a market or a currency. These ideals of freedom, prosperity and peace have shaped our Union and our identity. But we must also reflect on our mistakes, and change the image of a remote, ineffectual Europe. Only in this way can we communicate to our young people that they are part of a great project once again. Let us allow them to dream once again about a better Europe and a better world.

Europe is thinking hard about its own future. We have to find answers to two fundamental questions: what it is that we want to do together in the future, and how we want to do it. The European Parliament was the first to contribute to this reflection process, through the Brok-Bresso, Böge-Bérès and Verhofstadt reports.

President Juncker has presented the Commission White Paper setting out the possible scenarios and, more recently, President Macron put on the table a range of ideas and proposals that warrant in-depth consideration.

The Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament has decided to devote a series of debates in plenary to the future of Europe, and to invite the Heads of State and Government and leading European figures who wish to speak to outline their vision and debate with us. Several Heads of State and Government have already taken the occasion to speak in the plenary of the European Parliament in Brussels and Strasbourg.

The European Parliament, the beating heart of European democracy, will respond to its institutional duty to be at the centre of this debate, and lead the way for a Europe closer to its citizens.

President of the European Parliament
Brussels, Belgium

Antonio Tajani

WHY THIS BOOK?

The economic and financial turbulences of the last decade and the recent crisis of European migration policies have shaken the very foundation of European integration. These must be taken alongside the British vote to leave the European Union that triggered a reform process, which – to be successful – needs to be well on track before the United Kingdom exits the European Union (EU). The debate on the future of Europe picked up speed when Jean Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, proposed five reform scenarios as a basis for discussion. In September 2016 at their informal meeting in Bratislava, the 27 EU heads of state and government committed to offer Europeans a vision of an attractive EU that they can trust and support. Subsequently, when commemorating the 60th anniversary of the European Union in Rome, leaders pledged to work towards a safer, stronger, and more social Europe. It is not the first time that Europeans have heard the promises of a deep reform of EU institutions, policies, and also future orientations. Will their patience be rewarded this time?

The diversity of views regarding the direction and speed of European integration seems to be getting rather bigger than smaller, as complex negotiations on the next Multiannual Financial Framework lie ahead. While some European leaders have publicly reiterated their European preferences, others have preferred to issue statements jointly and, further, others have remained silent. However, it was the European lecture by French president Emmanuel Macron at the Sorbonne University in Paris that revived and drew the most of public attention. While the European Commission has already been organizing citizen's dialogues all over

Europe for quite a while, the French president was the first national leader to call for democratic assemblies on the future of Europe to be held in every EU-country before the next elections to the European Parliament in 2019. This public call was crucial because Macron, addressing his fellow colleagues, touched on one of the weak spots of European integration: the lack of national political ownership and public debates. The debate on the future of Europe needs to reach all member states to gain momentum, and it needs to engage with Europeans on all levels possible.

This book sheds light on the political dynamics within the EU member states and contributes to the national discussions about Europe. We have asked authors from the – still – 28 member states as well as Iceland, Switzerland, Norway, and Turkey to assess in short, concise, and easy-to-read opinion pieces how their respective country could get more involved in the European debate. They take the reader on a journey through various political landscapes and different views. In the end, they all have one thing in common: they want national politics to finally get involved in shaping the European project.

The manifold contributions reflect the diversity of Europe. The articles cover issues ranging from a perceived lack of ambition at the periphery to a careful balancing act between diverse national players and their standpoints at the geographical centre. The future of Europe is not only about bridging the dividing policy lines, but it is also about shifting powers, regaining trust and support for the European integration process, and the need to create policies that work. In the end, nobody is born a Eurosceptic.

Yet, discussions share common features: the anxiety regarding national sovereignty and the reflection on the division of power in Europe, the different levels of political activism to defend one's interests, the migration and border discourse, as well as security concerns, among other examples.

The opinion pieces on countries with an external border, such as Italy, Malta, Bulgaria, Greece, the Baltic States, and Finland have, as one might expect, a particular focus on the security dimension of the Union as well as the migration challenge. For example, due to the worsening security environment, Finland is a frontrunner in arguing for a deepened defence cooperation, mutual assistance, and solidarity. On the other hand, Malta, as a small state that benefits from the EU's policies in many fields, could contribute through its established links with Northern African states. Recent events have transformed public opinion in Italy, a country that has moved from a deep love for the EU to severe dissatisfaction. The further

evolution of this relationship will depend very much on the answers given to the two most sensible issues for the Italian public: economic growth and migration control.

In respect to the latter, the authors of the Slovak piece, as well as those of other CEE countries, encourage their governments to bring more realism into the debate and look at the real numbers as opposed to escalating rhetoric and evoking the “fear of the others”.

The writers from Lithuania and Latvia point to the level of emigration of young people – a brain drain challenge with which many central, southern and eastern EU member states are confronted. At the same time, Estonia has become a hub for digital innovation by turning itself into a pathfinder for e-solutions. Thus, in a small geographical space, we find trends and countertrends that very much highlight the success and challenges national governments face.

Due to the legal and political frictions with the EU, the authors from Hungary and Poland emphasize the importance of the EU’s credibility, which they see is at stake. They urgently call for a clear and firm EU position regarding the application of its own norms and values. Yes, migration and the economy are issues, but where would Europe’s post World War II claim to humanity, enlightenment, and equality stand if reactionary identity politics would creep back in at the expense of the weakest in our societies?

The contributions on France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Ireland argue for a multispeed Europe. For Macron’s vision of Europe, there are no red lines but new horizons. But do his plans really appeal to blue collar workers? Here, the authors suggest that a European unemployment scheme could be of assistance. Belgium, on the other hand, is described as a former custodian of the European integration process. Today, however, its proactivity is disappearing due to its internal political constitution. In Luxembourg, again, support for integration occasionally goes even beyond pure cost-benefit calculations through, for example, demands for a stronger social pillar. Still, the author describes certain preferences for a multi-speed Europe to overcome current tensions between the member states. For Dublin, in turn, the UK’s decision to leave the EU changes everything. Thus, a recalibration of its European strategy is deemed necessary to strike a new balance between proactive European engagement as a core member of the European Union and the preservation of its distinctive national interests, e.g. military neutrality and tax competition.

The pieces from Austria and Slovenia argue that their countries should focus and prioritize in order to be heard and make a difference. Both could become much more active EU members if they carefully choose the policy areas in which they can bring value added to the European discussion. This calls for an open screening process at home and an honest evaluation of each country's potential. Austria considers itself a bridge builder between central, eastern and western Europe. In order to put their money where their mouth is, Austria should invest more in sustainable strategic alliances.

The articles on Romania and Bulgaria draw on the country's experiences regarding EU-enlargement. In addition, they consider their countries as laboratories of political trends that are common for the whole of Europe, like the rise of populism or nationalistic conservatism.

Portugal and Spain take the approach of the "good pupil": two countries committed to the European integration process despite moderate criticism that have not really had a clear strategy towards EU integration since their accession. This highlights a common feature of the integration process as such: once a state secures membership in the club, further development of the club takes a backseat. Or even worse, membership in the club is downplayed and used for petty domestic politics – the place where political power and office are still predominantly traded.

Sweden, Denmark, Croatia, and the Czech Republic are perceived as outliers, as each tries to find their way through managing the risk of belonging to the periphery of integration. Denmark is occupying a peculiar position due to its many opt-outs, and it creates a special environment for those who want to move ahead and deepen the Union: it is an environment where those who fear being isolated determine the speed of integration. Thus, if it wants to be heard, it is advised to stay close to the core, sometimes even circumventing the exemptions. The Swedish government is also reminded that its preference for the status quo might not be sufficient to decisively influence the debate. For their part, the Czechs' negative views on the EU are largely a result of the perceived political disconnect between domestic concerns and broader EU-related issues. But if worries about e.g. East-West double food standards, fair taxation, and the protection of the external borders of the EU were to be overcome, the country is seen to have the potential to become an active member state with a clear defined agenda again. On the other hand, Croatia's primary goal as the youngest EU member remains full accession to the EU, i.e. joining the Schengen area and the eurozone. A more integrated Croatia could also be

a significant gain for the future enlargement process of other south eastern European countries.

Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, and Turkey, on their part, assess the different ways to adhere to and influence EU decision making without being members of the Union, which also provide potential lessons for the UK in its search for an adequate future relationship with the EU. Iceland, for example, is advised to increase its weight in Europe through a three-fold strategy: team up its European expertise at home, deepen the Iceland-German alliance, and establish closer relations with the Nordic states on European affairs.

Clearly, the future of Europe is not an academic debate! There is an obvious need to talk about Europe more vigorously in all capitals and every corner of Europe because this is where its future will be decided. Governments have to spearhead those deliberations not by drawing red lines, but by engaging as many people as possible to gauge the future direction of Europe. Public support depends on whether the benefits of European integration outweigh any negative effects on respective national interests. Citizens' views are as diverse as they are exciting. Ultimately, Europe needs all the support it can muster. Governments' tasks are to foster debate, listen, and then make a new Europe possible.

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Michael Kaeding
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