

09:00-10:30

First round of panel debates (held in parallel)

EU ENLARGEMENT: WHAT NEXT?

INSTITUTE FOR POPULAR STUDIES (ROMANIA)

The European Coal and Steel Community, founded in 1951, has evolved into what is now the European Union comprised of 28 states (soon to be 27) out of 50 countries belonging to the European continent. A number of these remaining countries are in the pre-accession phase or have aspirations to become members in spite of recent challenges the EU has faced. Many of the states wishing to accede to the Union are ill-equipped and unprepared for EU integration. Furthermore, many of these countries are in the former sphere of influence of the Russian Federation, which feels threatened by the expansion of European and Euro-Atlantic structures in this region. It is inevitable that the EU will eventually undergo further enlargement. When is the next enlargement likely? Which states are most likely to accede? What challenges will arise?

Moderator: Ioana Lung, Senior Communications and Marketing Officer, Martens Centre

Kick-off speaker: Allan Jones, Head of Unit, Strategy, Policy, Planning, EEA/EFTA, DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR)

Panel Speakers:

Vlad Nistor, Professor of History, Bucharest University, Vice-President of the National Liberal Party (PNL)

Florica Cherecheș, MP (PNL), President of the Liberal Women Organization

Violeta Vijulie, Executive Director, Institute for Popular Studies (ISP)

Q&A session

THIEVES OF STATE: WHY POLITICAL CORRUPTION IS AN INCREASING PROBLEM IN THE EU

JARL HJALMARSON FOUNDATION (SWEDEN)

As trust in politicians has decreased over recent years, there has been a proliferation of reports of an increase in political corruption on many levels. As a result, populist forces have gained ground across the EU, challenging the legitimacy of its institutions and of our common values. To counter this, good behaviour and high ethical standards of the representatives of EU institutions is essential and must be encouraged. In order to strengthen the confidence of the people and to tackle the many challenges facing the citizens of Europe, we need to open the discussion, increase participation and transparency to regain trust in institutions, representatives and values so that we can effectively fight corruption. This panel will centre around openly discussing corruption and how it can be fought so as to save the EU.

Moderator: Angelos Chrysosgelos, Teaching Fellow, King's College London

Kick-off speaker: John Dalhuisen, Former Special Adviser to the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and Former Director for Europe and Central Asia at Amnesty International

Panel Speakers:

Olof Ehrenkrona, Consul General of Sweden to the Åland islands

Alexandra Stiglmayer, Secretary General, Senior Analyst and Editor, European Stability Initiative

Q&A session

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE MENA REGION FOR A STRONG EUROPE

ANTON TUNEGA FOUNDATION (SLOVAKIA)

In recent years, Europe has been faced with one of the most challenging and critical situations; the migration issue. If we want to ensure a secure and stable future for the union, we have to develop an effective structure of support for neighbouring countries. In particular, the MENA region and its internal balances which play a strategic role. The panellists will make an attempt to answer following questions: What is the current development of MENA region countries? What are the results of actual programmes supporting MENA region? What can be done to improve these programmes and to achieve the desired results? How can we face the most critical challenges in MENA region and improve the situation? Who can help? In which areas? Is there a way to discourage displacement from the MENA region?

Moderator: Marek Degro, Director, Anton Tunega Foundation

Kick-off speaker: Tomáš Zdechovský, MEP, EPP Group

Panel Speakers:

Marcela Szymanski, EU Liaison, Aid to the Church in Need Brussels Office

Friedrich Bokern, President, Relief and Reconciliation for Syria AISBL, Former Press Officer in Jerzy Buzek's Cabinet

Ajla Verhulst-Hotic, Political Adviser, Middle East and North Africa Affairs, EPP

Q&A session

11:00-12:30

Second round of panel debates (held in parallel)

THE IMPACT OF THE ENERGY TRANSITION ON EU COMPETITIVENESS

FAES FOUNDATION (SPAIN)

The EU is undergoing a radical transformation: the transition to a decarbonised, secure and competitive economy. This intense process of transformation is critical not only to combat climate change, but also for job creation, the search for new sources of sustainable growth and for supporting technological and industrial development in the EU member states. Specific targets for the reduction of emissions have been set and the foundations of a governance system has been laid, but there remains much to do for this new economy to become a reality. The panel will provide an overview of the technological, political and economic opportunities and challenges that the Energy Transition brings for both the economy and society, as well as the different ways in which the EU countries are engaging with this transformation process.

Moderator: Miguel Marín, Director of Economy and Public Policy, FAES and CEO, AEI Public Affairs

Kick-off speaker: Isaac Valero-Ladron, Member of the Cabinet of the Climate Action and Energy Commissioner, European Commission

Panel Speakers:

Christian Egenhofer, Associate Senior Research Fellow & Director of Energy Climate House, CEPS

Alexandre Affre, Director of Industrial Affairs, Business Europe

Q&A session

FROM MAINSTREAM TO MODERN: POLITICS 2.0 IN AN ERA OF POPULISM

ÖVP POLITICAL ACADEMY (AUSTRIA)

In various European countries, over the past few years, populist parties and movements have gained increasing support and will presumably continue to do so. There are many reasons for this: the ongoing challenge of migration, the perception among many people that they are not represented across the political landscape, a general mistrust in political institutions among the electorate and, over all, a particular feeling of confusion and disorientation regarding globalisation. This panel wants to discuss models for contemporary politics, how to deal with such developments in future to offset the challenges posed to politics by populism. It is important to strike a balance between doing the right thing, making the right decisions and increasing the participation of people in the political process.

Moderator: Margherita Movarelli, Project Officer, Martens Centre

Kick-off speaker: Werner Fasslabend, Former Austrian Minister of Defence, Head of the Academic Council, Martens Centre

Panel Speakers:

Roland Freudenstein, Policy Director, Martens Centre

Pierre-Henri Dumont, MP for Calais Region (France)

Q&A session

IS THERE A THIRD WAY? POST-BREXIT FUTURE OF THE EU PROJECT

FOUNDATION FOR A CIVIC HUNGARY (HUNGARY)

On 23 June 2016 the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. This rejection is perhaps the most important challenge the EU has faced thus far, but it also represents an opportunity to think about the future we want for our Union. Brexit aside, the EU faces many internal and external challenges. Without comprehensive answers to these challenges, the future of the European project as a whole may be at risk. What are these challenges and how should we react to them? How should we interpret the decision of the UK to withdraw from the EU? Do we need more integration and centralization or do we need to loosen our current partnerships, or is there perhaps a third way for continued cooperation? These are just a few of the questions we will try to address about Brexit, but perhaps more importantly about the future of Europe.

Moderator: Federico Ottavio Reho, Strategic Coordinator and Research Officer, Martens Centre

Kick-off speaker: Pieter Cleppe, Head of Brussels Office, Open Europe

Panel Speakers:

István Pócza, Senior Research Fellow, Századvég Foundation

István Kiss, Senior Research Fellow, Századvég Foundation

Csaba Fodor, Executive Director, Nézópont Intézet

Q&A session

13:30-15:00

Third round of panel debates (held in parallel)

SOCIAL MARKET ECONOMY UNDER PRESSURE: BALANCING SOLIDARITY AND COMPETITIVENESS

HANNS-SEIDEL-FOUNDATION BRUSSELS OFFICE (GERMANY)

Many EU members states continue to struggle with high levels of unemployment, a middle class with stagnating incomes and the persistent problem of growing wealth inequality. This raises the question of whether our economic model still meets the demands of a social market economy. This model was established in order to achieve growth through social participation and a balance of competition and solidarity. However, current global changes and challenges have increasingly put this economic concept under pressure. The principle of solidarity seems to have become less important as the principle of competition has more frequently taken precedence. Conversely, the social market economy can only be successful if there is a balance between both. How can the European economy best adapt to new economic and social challenges?

Moderator: Federico Ottavio Reho, Strategic Coordinator and Research Officer, Martens Centre

Kick-off speaker: Tobias Zech, former Member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, Deutscher Bundestag

Panel Speakers:

Günter Ederer, Economic journalist, film producer and author

Gabriele Bischoff, DGB Special Advisor for the ETUC, EESC and EU Reform, Federal Executive of the German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB)

Q&A session

ANOTHER EU REFERENDUM IN THE MAKING? EUROSCEPTICISM IN CENTRAL EUROPE

TOPAZ (CZECH REPUBLIC)

The recent financial and migration crises and Brexit have unsurprisingly affected the attitude across Central Europe to the project of EU integration. Together with domestic political developments, which have the potential to undermine the democratic institutions of these countries, we now face a situation, whereby populist and extremist forces in societies try not only to erode the Western, democratic, and pluralistic character of these countries, but have also received growing attention from the media and the public. This panel will analyse the causes and potential consequences of the rising legitimization of anti-EU forces in Central Europe, the spread of Russian influence, and what role the EU and its institutions might play in supporting centre-right pro-European democratic forces across Central Europe.

Moderator: Lucie Tungul, Head of Research, TOPAZ

Kick-off speaker: Michal Boni, MEP, EPP Group

Panel Speakers:

Ildikó Szenci, Deputy Director, Antall Jozsef Knowledge Centre

Veronika Neprašová, Journalist, Hospodářské Noviny

Q&A session

THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN PUZZLE

DE GASPERI FOUNDATION (ITALY)

Since the 1990s, there has been a pivot of Mediterranean geopolitics to the east. The increasingly fraught region has been the centre of much international attention, given the global repercussions of the various conflicts. In the North African region, the ongoing Libyan conflict has greatly contributed to the destabilisation of the area, and in turn Europe's borders. In the Middle East, the future equilibrium of the area is now dependent on the evolution of the escalating confrontation of Iran and Saudi Arabia. There is an opportunity to aid in the redressing and redistribution of the balance of power in the region, for the benefit of our neighbours, and to ensure the stabilisation of our borders. What are the possible scenarios? What is the potential role of the EU in defining the new equilibrium in the region?

Kick-off speaker and Moderator: Riccardo Redaelli, Professor of Geopolitics, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan; Director of the Center for Research on the Southern System and Wider Mediterranean (CRiSSMA)

Panel Speakers:

Paolo Alli, President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly

Marc Otte, Diplomat, Former Director General of EGMONT – The Royal Institute for International Relations

Niklas Nováky, Research Officer, Martens Centre

Q&A session

15:30-17:00

Fourth round of panel debates (held in parallel)

HOLDING THE CENTRE: RESTORING AN ASPIRATIONAL MIDDLE CLASS IN EUROPE

CDA RESEARCH INSTITUTE (NETHERLANDS)

This panel will highlight the key issues that affect middle class households in Europe. Drawing on nine case studies, a recent joint publication of the Martens Centre, CDA-WI and KAS has identified the importance of non-income related perspectives as central elements of the current middle-class malaise. In the context of the 2019 European elections, we will discuss possible priorities for centre-right political parties in attempting to attract centrist voters and ultimately to restore an aspirational middle class in Europe. Key questions to be addressed include: what are the key drivers of middle class dissatisfaction? Are there common themes or are nationally specific issues predominant? What should the response of centre-right parties be? Are Europe's middle classes facing a real expectations dilemma?

Moderator: Eoin Drea, Senior Research Officer, Martens Centre

Kick-off speaker: Arjen Siegmans, Economist, CDA Research Institute

Panel Speakers:

Juha-Pekka Nurvala, Acting Head of Unit for Policy and Strategy, EPP

Rumiana Stoilova, Director, The Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge (ISSK) at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS)

Q&A session

TIME TO ACT: FINDING A REALISTIC STRATEGY FOR THE MIGRATION CHALLENGE

LUIGI STURZO INSTITUTE (ITALY)

In recent years, the number of irregular migrants entering Europe via the Central Mediterranean route has consistently increased, creating an unprecedented challenge for the EU. From mid-2017, there has been a decrease in this number attributed to the new cooperation agreement with Libya and the improved management of migrant flows and asylum requests. However, this remains a pressing issue for which the EU is still struggling to find an adequate response. It is time to go beyond the emergency and find a common credible policy on asylum and border management, which combines the control of borders and deterrence of irregular migration, with the respect for existing refugee law and the protection of people in need. The aim of the panel is to debate concrete proposals to overcome the emergency and manage the phenomenon.

Moderator: Loredana Teodorescu, EU affairs and Research Project Coordinator, Istituto Luigi Sturzo

Kick-off speaker: Mikuláš Dzurinda, President, Martens Centre, and Former Prime Minister of Slovakia

Panel Speakers:

Federico Soda, Director, Coordination Office for the Mediterranean, International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Roderick Parkes, Senior Analyst, EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS)

François Bienfait, Liaison Officer to the EU, European Asylum Support Office (EASO)

Q&A session

WHAT ROLE FOR COHESION POLICY POST-2020?

AGERB (BULGARIA)

Cohesion Policy has represented a good share of the EU budget, aiming to tackle the comprehensive challenges faced by Europe's regions and to strengthen the most vulnerable ones. For many EU member states, mainly those with lower GDP levels, Cohesion Policy has provided a genuine source of growth and aided in attracting foreign investments. In its report on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the European Parliament outlined its expectations to maintain the existing levels of resources for traditional policies, including cohesion. However, in the years after 2020, the EU will also need to respond to new challenges in a context of budgetary shortfall of €10 billion annually due to Brexit. This panel will discuss the role of Cohesion Policy in the next MFF and the need to accommodate both old and new objectives.

Moderator: Serafín Pazos-Vidal, Chair, Expert Group on Cohesion of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)

Kick-off speaker: Siegfried Mureşan, MEP, EPP Group, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Budgets

Panel Speakers:

Lambert van Nistelrooij, MEP, EPP Group, Member of the Committee on Regional Development

Michael Schneider, State Secretary, Representative of the Land of Saxony-Anhalt to the Federal Government, EPP CoR

Q&A session