

FUTURE OF EUROPE

Over a relatively short period, Europe and consequently the EU have been faced with a number of difficult situations, having lived through the financial and migration crises and Brexit. The direst of crises – the COVID-19 pandemic – still continues, affecting the social, economic and political structure of the entire world, Europe, the EU, its Member States and every individual.

In these challenging years, the EU has been changing, adapting and transforming. It has adopted new measures, but its organisation has remained the same. The latest health crisis caused by the pandemic has put the EU's functioning to a critical test, both in Europe and at the global level: its responses are slowed down also as a result of the weakening trust in international law and international organisations, and at the same time, the world is observing an alluring illusion of the apparent greater efficiency of autocratic modes of governance. Where – in this respect – do opportunities for the EU's robust engagement at the global level, together with transatlantic and other like-minded democratic partners, lie? How can we rise to the global challenges the free world is currently facing, including in terms of preparedness for crises – health, cyber or any other?

To be able to enforce its standards and values, the EU must build up its resilience to crisis and its own strategic and production sovereignty in the health, economic, social, defence and cyber fields. Post-crisis economic recovery can only be possible through an evolution of the economic model channelling investments into digital and green projects. Investing in knowledge, technology, R&D, infrastructure, energy and digital connectivity, and artificial intelligence is becoming part of the global competitive race. Important factor in determining the winner will also be the ability to come up with the right responses to the demographic changes in the EU and around the world. Furthermore, the European way of life and values demand prompt answers to the questions related to migration management, asylum policy, integration and the functioning of the Schengen system. And even more importantly, the understanding of another common European value – the rule of law – must be deepened.

The European way of life and the EU itself still inspire and attract many, both in Europe and beyond. However, the EU has competitors promoting different values. This is why it is vital to extend its influence and strengthen its external political power and capability to deal effectively with European and global geopolitical processes, particularly in its immediate vicinity – in the Western Balkans and in its southern and eastern neighborhood. And to reap success, the European Union needs a well-functioning transatlantic partnership.

So, what will the future of Europe be like? This year, together with young people who will be living this future, we will seek answers to these questions at the Conference on the Future of Europe and the 2021 Bled Strategic Forum.

Wednesday, 1 September

08.30–09.30 | Gathering

@Bled Festival Hall

9.30–10.00 | Opening

@Bled Festival Hall

Welcome address by H.E. **Dr Anže Logar**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia

Address by H.E. **Mr Charles Michel**, President of the European Council

Address by H.E. **Mr Janez Janša**, Prime Minister of Slovenia

10.00–12.00 | Leader's Panel – Future of Europe – To Stand and Withstand

@Bled Festival Hall

Keynote address by H.E. **Ms Ursula von der Leyen**, President of the European Commission

H.E. **Mr Andrej Babiš**, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic

H.E. **Mr Eduard Heger**, Prime Minister of Slovakia

H.E. **Mr Janez Janša**, Prime Minister of Slovenia

H.E. **Mr Charles Michel**, President of the European Council

H.E. **Mr Kyriakos Mitsotakis**, Prime Minister of Greece

H.E. **Mr Viktor Orbán**, Prime Minister of Hungary

H. Em. **Mr Pietro Parolin**, Secretary of State of the Holy See

H.E. **Mr David Sassoli**, President of the European Parliament

Ms Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President for Demography and Democracy, European Commission

H.E. **Mr Aleksandar Vučić**, President of Serbia

Moderated by **Mr Marko Balažič**, Political Analyst, Secretary General of Focus2031

12.00–12.15 | Coffee Break

@Bled Festival Hall

12.15–14.00 | Former Leader's Panel – Future of Europe – Experience Counts

@Bled Festival Hall

After the Second World War, European political institutions and strategies – often in combination with American initiatives – were founded on national and international reconciliation, solidarity and cooperation. The limitations imposed by the Cold War were gradually removed during the last decade of the previous century.

The great change articulated by the 1990 Paris Charter and accompanied by the slogan *Europe whole and free* provoked a wide-ranging discussion about the meaning of the phrase and, in particular, how to implement it. Thirty years later, the great challenges remain the same: should the EU become a *closer (supranational) union* (maybe a federation), or should it stick to its traditional concept emphasising *national sovereignty and intergovernmental operation*? In the last 60 years, Europe has enlarged, its eastern borders moving further to the east, but recently (due to *Brexit*), its western border has also moved to the east. The question of the day is whether the EU should grow towards the south – accepting into its membership the Balkan states, and how such enlargement would affect

the Union's future (treaty/constitutional) organisation: would it become closer or more divided? An equally important question is how a larger Europe could position itself on the stage next to the great players, such as the United States, China, Russia and India.

Mr Elmar Brok, Former Member of the European Parliament

Mr Mikuláš Dzurinda, Former Prime Minister of Slovakia

Ms Ana Palacio, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Spain **DIGITAL SPEAKER**

Mr Alojz Peterle, Former Prime Minister of Slovenia

Prof Dr Jacques Rupnik, Visiting Professor, College of Europe *TBC*

Mr Mirek Topolánek, Former Prime Minister of the Czech Republic

Moderated by **Dr Dimitrij Rupel**, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia

14.00–16.30 | Lunch

@Rikli Balance Hotel

15.00–16.30 | Post-epidemic Recovery: Opportunity for a Better Tomorrow?

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold II Hall

In partnership with Generali and Ministry of Finance of Slovenia

The restrictive measures imposed to control the COVID-19 pandemic caused the most severe drop in economic activity in the last few decades. To stimulate recovery, considerable financial resources will be provided both at the national and EU levels. In addition to public money that should be spent on investments with a long-term impact on productivity, available private funds are an important factor as well. Alongside large-scale public investments, ways to attract a higher number of private investors should be explored. Participants of the panel will discuss the opportunities that the recovery funds bring to Europe and the limitations arising from the fiscal rules and commitments on the green and digital transformation at the EU level.

How should the available funds be used to ensure a true transformation of the economy? What is the role of capital markets and loans at historically low interest rates? Is it possible to mobilise private savings to a higher extent? Does large-scale government borrowing make sense? Will it increase the burden, or will it benefit future generations? Will economic management in the EU be strengthened on the basis of experience and the implementation of national recovery and resilience plans, in which not only investments, but also reforms have a major role to play?

Mr Valerio De Luca, Board President of the Task Force Italia, Board President of the Global Investors Alliance

Ms Liliyana Pavlova, Vice-President, European Investment Bank

Mr Klaus Regling, Managing Director, European Stability Mechanism

Ms Odile Renaud-Basso, President, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Mr Miroslav Singer, Director, Institutional Affairs and Chief Economist, Generali CEE Holding

Mr Andrej Šircelj, Minister, Ministry of Finance of Slovenia

Mr Boštjan Vasle, Governor, Banka Slovenija

Moderated by **Mr Francesco Papadia**, Senior Fellow, Bruegel

16.30–18.15 | Leader's Panel – Future of Europe – Enlargement

@Bled Festival Hall

There was a lot of soul searching in the recent years in the relations between EU and the Western Balkans. In the absence of credible political will to take enlargement and reform processes forward,

we were faced with an array of new initiatives, tools, mechanisms and instruments, which were designed to keep the fire alive. Debate on the future of Europe brought new dynamics into the whole relationship. It's almost impossible to envisage consolidated, stable and sustainable European future without the Western Balkans. Or is it? Although Western Balkans is back on the agenda of the EU, there is still a question mark regarding our common resolve to make Western Balkans a geostrategic priority No. 1 for the EU. While we are debating regarding the best way forward in the enlargement process, there are global actors and players who are very much engaged in concrete and tangible projects in the region, while at the same time pushing their political and in some cases security agenda forward. Geostrategy of the EU starts and ends at its doorstep.

There is only one geostrategic approach with transformation power and in the recent years it was not used enough nor properly - enlargement policy. We have a new methodology, but do we have the ambition? In this more for more relationship between the EU and the region, who will be the one who will make the first step? Strategic patience doesn't help anybody, world is rapidly changing and standing still means we are taking two steps back. Is it still time to repair this relationship? How do we muster enough political will in the EU and in the Western Balkans countries to go back to the fundamentals of the enlargement process and pursue actively the implementation of the necessary criteria in order to finally consolidate European continent?

Keynote address by **H.E. Mr David Sassoli**, President of the European Parliament

H.E. Mr Janez Janša, Prime Minister of Slovenia

H.E. Željko Komšić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina *TBC*

H.E. Mr Zdravko Krivokapić, Prime Minister of Montenegro

H.E. Mr Albin Kurti, Prime Minister of Kosovo

H.E. Mr Mateusz Morawiecki, Prime Minister of Poland

H.E. Mr Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of Croatia

H.E. Mr Rumen Radev, President of Bulgaria *TBC*

H.E. Mr Edi Rama, Prime Minister of Albania

Mr Christian Schmidt, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina *TBC*

Mr Olivér Várhelyi, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement

H.E. Mr Zoran Zaev, Prime Minister of North Macedonia

Moderated by **Dr Andraž Zidar**, Head of Diplomatic Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia

18.30–20.00 | Future of Europe – Diversity and Consensus

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold I Hall

In partnership with Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies

On 9 May 2021, after a long delay due to unexpected disruptions caused by COVID-19, the Conference on the Future of Europe, the EU's most ambitious democratic venture since the Convention that drafted the ill-fated Constitution for Europe two decades ago, finally began. Will it enjoy a better fate? The Conference offers a platform for European citizens to participate in the debate on Europe's challenges and priorities and to think about the kind of future they want for the EU. It follows a decade-long 'polycrisis' in which disagreements about core aspects of European integration have emerged both within the EU and also between the member states and ideological families. The need for an honest and open conversation about what is desirable and achievable for the future of the continent has never been more urgent.

How do European political families differ in their visions and plans for the future of European integration? Does the EU need a new economic and fiscal framework? Is the distribution of

competences and powers between the EU and its member states fit for the 21st century? Is an institutional overhaul of the EU desirable, for example in a federal or confederal direction? How can the quality and representativeness of EU democracy be improved?

Mr François Decoster, President, Renew Europe Group, European Committee of the Regions

H.E. Mr Milorad Dodik, Member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina *TBC*

H.E. Mr Šefik Džaferović, Member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina *TBC*

Mr Olgierd Geblewicz, President, European People's Party Group, European Committee of the Regions

Ms Giorgia Meloni, President of the European Conservatives and Reformists Party

Mr Christophe Rouillon, President, Party of European Socialist Group, European Committee of the Regions

Ms Christa Schweng, President, European Economic and Social Committee

Mr Manfred Weber, Leader of the political group of European People's Party, European Parliament [DIGITAL SPEAKER](#)

Mr Marco Zanni, President, Identity and Democracy Group

Moderated by **Mr Federico Ottavio Reho**, Strategic Coordinator and Senior Research Officer, Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies

18.30–20.00 | Future of Europe – Our Common Values

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold II Hall

Different historical experiences and separate political discourses shape the differences in moral, ethical and political values in the EU Member States as well as their legal protection. This raises the question of whether the EU's role with regard to these differences is to retain flexibility or strengthen the unification mechanisms. The panel participants will hold a wide-ranging discussion about Europe, European values, and values in Europe. What is the role of historical experiences and national identities arising from them that influence the functioning of constitutional democracies? They may be similar in a formal sense, but considerable differences can be noted between the Member States of Western, Northern, Central or Southern Europe.

Is the EU an organisation of the European civilisation or has it "outgrown" such concepts? Is the EU a pragmatic project based on trade and interests or a project building upon values, principles, culture and tradition? To what extent does the balance tip one way or the other? Does the European Union embody a union of values, or is it valuable because it is a Union? Can one talk about European values or are values universal? Is there a common consensus among the Member States about European values? Furthermore, does the lowest common denominator apply or should one search for the highest common factor? How important is value development for the future of a joint European project? How many internal disagreements and differences in understanding the values among Member States can the EU take?

Ms Shada Islam, Managing Director, New Horizons Project

Mr Guillaume Klossa, Founding President, EuropaNova

Prof Dr Kalypto Nicolaïdis, Professor of International Relations, University of Oxford [DIGITAL SPEAKER](#)

Ms Maria João Rodrigues, President of the European Foundation of Progressive Studies

Dr Žiga Turk, Professor, University of Ljubljana, Academic Council Member, Wilfried Martens Center for European Studies

Moderated by **Prof Dr Matej Avbelj**, Professor of European Law, New University

20.00–22.00 | Dinner (Invite only)

@Grand Hotel Toplice, Grand Hall

Address by **Mr Janez Fajfar**, Mayor of Bled

Address by **Ms Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya**, Belarusian human rights activist and an independent politician

Chaired by **Mr Peter Grk**, Secretary General of Bled Strategic Forum

20.00–22.00 | Dinner

@Rikli Balance Hotel

22.00–23.00 | Night Owl Session

@Grand Hotel Toplice, Lake Lounge

Mr Mark Boris Andrijanič, Minister for Digital Transformation of Slovenia

Sir Nicholas William Peter Clegg, Vice-President for Global Affairs and Communications at Facebook, Inc. [DIGITAL SPEAKER](#)

Dr Jure Leskovec, Associate Professor of Computer Science, Stanford University

Moderated by **Mr Jaka Repanšek**, Founder, RePublis d.o.o

Thursday, 2 September

08.30–10.00 | AmCham Breakfast: Small Steps in Space – Giant Leaps on Earth

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold I Hall

In partnership with AmCham Slovenia

Under the honorary patronage of Zdravko Počivalšek, Minister of Economic Development and Technology of Slovenia

The desire to explore space is as old as humanity. Numerous present-day agencies, such as NASA, ESA, CNSA and others, are constantly making scientific breakthroughs that shed light on the past and fundamentally shape the future. These discoveries answer some of the questions and raise new ones about humankind, its existence while promoting, and facilitating innovation and progress on Earth. Europe's access to space consolidates the role of the Old Continent as a powerful global player, enables it to pursue a number of policies, raises the global competitiveness of European companies and industry, and finally strengthens security, defence and its strategic autonomy. In the European Union alone, the space sector contributes between € 46-54 billion to the economy and provides 230,000 jobs.

Space technology is a highly competitive industry that nevertheless requires the cooperation of countries and different stakeholders. Slovenia plays an increasingly important role in the global space sector by becoming a centre of European space technology, providing knowledge and a certified biomedical research laboratory.

Opening remarks by **Mr Zdravko Počivalšek**, Minister of Economic Development and Technology of Slovenia

Mr Josef Aschbacher, Director-General, European Space Agency *TBC*

Ms Rebecca Bresnik, Assistant Chief Counsel for International Matters, Johnson Space Center NASA

Prof Dr Andreja Gomboc, Center for Astrophysics and Cosmology, University of Nova Gorica

Mr Dušan Olaj, Director, Duol

Dr Tomaž Rotovnik, CEO, SkyLabs

Moderated by **Ms Ajša Vodnik**, CEO, AmCham Slovenia

09.00–10.30 | Building connectivity in CEE – the Case of the Three Seas Initiative

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold II Hall

Connectivity is key to economic growth and competitiveness in Europe. Physical and digital networks are a prerequisite for a thriving economic activity. While the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the importance and the need for digital infrastructure, it also impacted on the transport industry and severely disrupting the global economy. As a consequence, reshaping global supply chains and strengthening EU's internal digital and transport infrastructure and logistics capacity will be crucial. The 3 Seas Initiative (3SI) is one of the key platforms supporting this transformation in the CEE region. The purpose of the 3SI Investment Fund is to contribute to closing cross-border infrastructure development gaps in the 3 Seas region, building modern infrastructure, and providing connectivity on the north-south axis. While the development of railway infrastructure in CEE has been lagging behind, the focus is nevertheless shifting towards sustainable modes of transport, reflected in 2021 being the European Year of the Rail. Invigorated efforts towards modernization will therefore be needed across CEE.

The panel aims to address and offer potential solutions to key challenges in connecting the EU, particularly the CEE countries. It will also discuss the development of the 3SI and its compatibility with other EU instruments on infrastructure development.

Mr Matthew G. Boyse, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State

Mr Paweł Jabłoński, Undersecretary of State for Economic and Development Cooperation, Africa and the Middle East, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland

Mr Tadashi Maeda, Governor, Japan Bank for International Cooperation **DIGITAL SPEAKER**

Mr Aleš Mihelič, State Secretary, Ministry of Infrastructure of Slovenia

Mr Paweł Nierada, First Vice President of the Management Board of Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego

Mr Tomáš Pavlíček, COO, HELIOT Group

Dr Peter Verlič, Director, Slovenian Railways, Institute of Traffic and Transport Ljubljana

Mr Czesław Warsewicz, Chairman of the Board of Directors, PKP CARGO

Mr Matej Zakonjšek, Director, Transport Community

Moderated by **Ms Evelyn Kaldoja**, Head of Foreign News Editorial, Postimees newspaper

9.00–10.30 | Green Recovery with Social Sustainability at its Core – Putting People First

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Zrak Hall

In partnership with Knauf Insulation and Center for Energy Efficient Solutions

From year to year, we are facing stronger environmental changes. We are failing to meet the Paris 2°C target, sea levels are rising at an alarming rate, CO2 emissions remain at record levels. As more and more pressure arises to take action, we need to seek new, creative and bold solutions. What is the next step towards »Green Recovery«? Alongside environmental challenges, the past year has challenged humanity with the covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic brought rise to a variety of

challenges, human wellbeing being one of them. From lock-down to lock-down, most of humanity saw the importance of social interactions effecting our society and individuals' mental health. Yet from all of the challenges, human wellbeing remains the most understated. Have we foreseen the next step for »Human Recovery« as well?

We have long known that solving complex problem requires an interdisciplinary approach, that bringing people from various fields together can yield great results and that times of crises also give rise to new opportunities for change. The New European Bauhaus is a creative and interdisciplinary movement in the making, which is fast gaining momentum. It is a platform for experimentation, bringing together citizens, experts, businesses, and Institutions that want to design our future ways of living together. There are many correlations between mental health, wellbeing and nature. Looking at the future and the steps that we as leaders, companies and individuals must take, let's ask ourselves, if helping nature and driving »Green Recovery«, will also help us thrive as humans. Sustainability is not only about helping nature to heal, it is also about creating a thriving environment for humans in the long run.

How can we make the European Green Deal tangible? How do we ensure that changes are inclusive? Do the challenges which arose because of Covid-19 pandemic also offer opportunities for a new approach? How can collaboration between sectors and industries boost the implementation of the Green Deal?

Dr Saša Bavec, Member of Executive Committee, Knauf Insulation Group

Ms Saša Božič, Founder and CEO, Sophia Academy

Mr Manfred Köhler, President, World Green Infrastructure

Ms Ruth Reichstein, The New European Bauhaus Initiative, Advisory Board to the President, European Commission

Mr David Thomson, Vice President, TFG Hotel Management Company

Ms Anja Zorko, Head, Center for Creativity, Museum of Architecture and Design

Ms Urška Zupanec, Head of Unit for the Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council 2021 program, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of Slovenia

Moderated by **Mr Gregor Benčina**, President, Center for Energy Efficient Solutions (CER)

9.00–10.30 | Digital and Transatlantic Cooperation: A Way Forward to CEE Resilience and Economic Recovery

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Sonce Hall

In partnership with Google

Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries have much to gain from digitalization: it can provide an impetus for renewed and vigorous growth and development. In light of the region's geostrategic position, digitalization is also an important piece of the puzzle to raise its resilience. Regional cooperation on infrastructure funding, harmonisation of standards, overcoming language barriers and policy coordination within the EU can facilitate the creation of economies of scale, thus enhancing the chances of a successful digital transformation. Supporting ambitions towards a more competitive, inclusive and green Europe with a human-centred approach to digitalization and safeguarding democracy is another of the EU's major goals. These values can best be fostered by working together with like-minded countries and allies. Ensuring that the future global digital standards reflect the EU values of democracy and human rights will require a concerted effort, not only by the EU, but also by other digitally advanced countries.

How do democracies work together to protect the open and free values in our common digital future? How can CEE countries harness the digital power for an economic leap forward? What is the role of

CEE in strengthening the transatlantic alliance? How can the EU-US cooperation be strengthened through TTC?

Mr Mark Boris Andrijanič, Minister for Digital Transformation of Slovenia

Mr Fredrik Erixon, Director, European Centre for International Political Economy

Ms Eglė Markevičiūtė, Vice-Minister of the Economy and Innovation of Lithuania *TBC*

Mr Petr Očko, Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic

Ms Marta Poslad, Head of Public Policy & Government Relations for Central and Eastern Europe and Transatlantic Policy Lead, Google

Moderated by **Mr Jaka Repanšek**, Founder, RePublis d.o.o

9.00–10.30 | Leaders in Communication: Fostering Future Engagement with Citizens

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Voda Hall

In partnership with Global Diplomacy Lab

Apathy towards the EU poses a considerable challenge for democracy as it creates a barrier to developing and improving public policy. The COVID-19 pandemic has only widened the gap between communities across Europe and eroded citizens' trust of the EU as well as of national governments. The Conference on the Future of Europe creates an opportunity to bring the EU issues to the public agenda and spark interest in Europe's future in all segments of the society. Research shows that, compared to international organisations, communication by national representatives (government or civil society) is more effective in shaping the perceptions of citizens. Furthermore, exposure to information on European politics and engagement in political discussions are factors that increase citizens' interest and engagement in European affairs. This gives a responsibility to everyone, be it a politician, diplomat, bureaucrat, or a civil society representative, a responsibility to promote the EU's achievements, European values and democracy.

This session aims to encourage participants to be 'leaders in communication' by addressing how to effectively engage their communities on the role of the European Union to help plug the gap on awareness, needs and expectations.

Ms Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen, Director-General for Communication, European Commission
[DIGITAL SPEAKER](#)

Mr Sebastián Rodríguez, European Political Entrepreneur, Founder of the [campaignplaybook.eu](#)

Prof Dr Alexander Stubb, Former Prime Minister of Finland, Director of the School of Transnational Governance in EUJ [DIGITAL SPEAKER](#)

Mr Matt Jacobs, Digital Coordinator for the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs at the US Department of State

Moderated by **Ms Elif Çavuşlu**, Member of the Global Diplomacy Lab

10.00–13.00 | The Future of European Tourism

@Grand Hotel Toplice, Grand Hall

In partnership with Slovenian Tourist Board and the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology of Slovenia

For many European countries, tourism is a central and vital part of the economy. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this industry was among the most affected, and activities directly or indirectly related to tourism suffered heavy losses. At the Tourism Panel, we will talk about the future of European tourism, the success of the recovery mechanisms over the past 18 months and the European Recovery and Resilience Plan. We will work with the most relevant experts and institutions to find

answers to the question of whether European and national recovery and resilience plans will ensure a digital and sustainable transition to post-crisis reconstruction. We will explore what has been done well and what should have been done better. Has the European Union played its role, what will it look like in the future and what will be the new era of European tourism? Will European tourism successfully adapt and recover even after the worst health and economic crisis, how and when? We will focus on sustainable and digital transformation and human resources as the biggest challenges. We will talk about the necessary adaptation of destination organisations, new performance indicators, changes in demand and other key challenges of European tourism.

Leading experts in the field of tourism from the most important institutions – UNWTO, ETC OECD, WTTC, HOTREC, ECM – will share their views on and recommendations for the operation of companies and destinations in this challenging time for global tourism.

Mr Zdravko Počivalšek, Minister of Economic Development and Technology of Slovenia

Ms Maja Pak, Director, Slovenian Tourist Board

Prof Alessandra Priante, Director, Regional Department for Europe, World Tourism Organization

Mr Luis Araujo, President, Portuguese National Tourism Authority

Ms Marie Audren, Director General, HOTREC

Dr Mario Hardy, Former Chief Executive Officer, Pacific Asia Travel Association **DIGITAL SPEAKER**

Ms Jane Stacey, Head of Tourism Unit, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development **DIGITAL SPEAKER**

Ms Petra Stuček, President, the Board at European Cities and CEO at Ljubljana Tourism and Marketing

Ms Lola Uña Cárdenas, Vice President for Government Affairs, World Travel & Tourism Council **DIGITAL SPEAKER**

Mr Simon Zajc, State Secretary at the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, of Slovenia

Moderated by **Prof Dr Ljubica Knežević Cvelbar**, Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana

10.30–11.00 | Coffee Break

@Rikli Balance Hotel

11.00–12.30 | Strengthening Europe against Economic Coercion

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold I Hall

In partnership with European Council on Foreign Relations

China's sanctions against European individuals and businesses have underscored the need for the EU to strengthen itself against economic coercion and to devise a strategy for its position in a new geo-economic world. The nature of globalisation is changing, and with it, the way countries and companies build their economic strength in strategic areas. China is enrolling its »dual circulation« strategy that could make Europe more dependent on it unless Europe invests heavily in its innovative base and protection of data and intellectual property. China and other countries also do not shy away from openly wielding their economic heft to extort policy concessions. Beijing has threatened several European countries with economic consequences over security decisions, boycotted Australian exports over Canberra's stance on the Covid outbreak, and boycotted clothing brands over their stance on human and worker's rights. In Eastern Europe and on the Balkans, it is continuously aiming to expand its influence through strategic investments.

Beyond China, Russia is looking into expanding its sanction toolkit as well and Turkey has used calls for boycotting European products, too – all while the future geo-economic map of the world will look very differently: a range of emerging markets that integrate geopolitics and state action into their economic and trade policies will profoundly redefine global economic relations. These developments pose fundamental questions for the EU's rules-based approach to its foreign, trade, and economic policies:

How does the EU position itself in this new geo-economic world? To what extent is China a rival, to what extent can Europe cooperate with Beijing? How to overcome transatlantic disagreements if and where they arise? Does the EU invest sufficiently in its own innovative strength, through NextGenEU and beyond? Does the EU need an anti-coercion instrument for counter-measures to keep markets open and deter economic coercion as proposed by the Commission? What other instruments does the EU need for greater resilience? What would be the right EU geo-economic strategy for the Western Balkans?

H.E. Mr Jakub Kulhánek, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

Mr Wolfgang Niedermark, Member of the Executive Board, Federation of German Industries

Mr Denis Redonnet, Deputy Director-General, Chief Trade Enforcement Officer, European Commission [DIGITAL SPEAKER](#)

Mr Milan Ročen, Special Advisor of the President of Montenegro

Ms Marie-Pierre Vedrenne, Member of the European Parliament *TBC*

Moderated by **Mr Jonathan Hackenbroich**, Policy Fellow, European Council on Foreign Relations

11.00–12.30 | New Wind in the Adriatic – Adjusting the Sails of Collaboration

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold II Hall

The Adriatic Sea is a treasure, bringing together the nations of coastal states and driving the socio-economic progress in the region for centuries. It remains crucial for modern society to the same extent as in the past, offering immense potential to the coastal states that preserve the traditional sectors and develop new ones on or by the sea. This semi-closed sea with a high density of maritime transport and a vulnerable ecosystem requires close cooperation of the coastal states so that they can protect the environment, prevent risks, attain sustainable development goals, and implement the blue economy principles. In recent months, Croatia, Italy and Slovenia have established enhanced cooperation in the North Adriatic, which is a particularly sensitive area owing to its geographic location and numerous activities. Enhanced cooperation of the coastal and inland countries is also taking place in the framework of the EU macro-regional cooperation (EUSAIR) and international bodies to protect marine and coastal areas as well as prevent accidents and provide rescue at sea.

Taking into account the above facts, the panellists will discuss the possibilities for enhanced cooperation in the North Adriatic within the recently introduced trilateral cooperation mechanism of Slovenia, Croatia and Italy, with an emphasis on the integrated management of the marine environment, cooperation between ports, and the implementation of the principle of freedom of navigation as a prerequisite for unrestricted maritime trade.

How can the activities to protect the marine environment, prevent pollution and ensure the freedom of navigation and the related economic interests be coordinated? How might it be possible to promote maritime traffic without further affecting the marine environment? How can cooperation in the North Adriatic Ports Association (NAPA) improve the competitiveness of the North Adriatic ports? How can the cooperation between the ports for joint ventures on global markets be strengthened?

Mr Zeno D'Agostino, President, Port Network Authority of the Eastern Adriatic Sea
H.E. Mr Luigi Di Maio, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy
DIGITAL SPEAKER
H.E. Dr Gordan Grlić-Radman, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia
Prof Dr Alen Jugović, President of the Supervisory Board, Port of Rijeka *TBC*
H.E. Dr Anže Logar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia
Mr Dimitrij Zadel, President of the Management Board, Port of Koper

Moderated by **Prof Dr Marko Pavliha**, Professor at the Faculty of Maritime Studies and Transport, University of Ljubljana

11.00–12.30 | Decarbonisation of Transport through Sectoral Cooperation: the Coordination of Policies for Achieving Climate Neutrality

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Zrak Hall

In partnership with Ministry of Infrastructure of Slovenia

Demand for transport is growing steadily in the light of globalisation processes and rising demand for mobility of people and goods. If this trend persists, it is unlikely that the transport sector will reach the decarbonisation target set out in the Paris Agreement. The greatest challenge the transport sector is facing is how to substantially reduce emissions and become more sustainable despite the increasing demand. If a systemic change is to be achieved, all modes of transport should be made more efficient, connected and sustainable. More sustainable alternatives should also be available in the multimodal transport system, and the right green transition incentives should be put in place. While climate policy objectives are often defined on an economic basis at the international and national levels, they should, in practice, be based on cross-sectoral cooperation. The panel will explore the complexity of transport decarbonisation and have the opportunity to discuss the potential impact of other sectors in achieving climate neutrality. The focus will be placed on the following key areas.

Keynote address by **Mr Jernej Vrtovec**, Minister of Infrastructure of Slovenia

Mr Walter Goetz, Head of Cabinet of Ms Adina Vălean, Commissioner for Transport **DIGITAL SPEAKER**

Prof Dr Tomaž Kutrašnik, Professor, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, University of Ljubljana

Mr Blaž Košorok, State Secretary, Ministry of Infrastructure of Slovenia

Mr Stephan Neugebauer, Chairman, ERTRAC Executive Group

Mr Uroš Salobir, Director of the Strategic Innovation Department, ELES

Dr Iztok Seljak, President, Management Board, Hidria

Moderated by **Mr Peter Frankl**, CEO and Publisher, Finance

11.00–12.30 | TSI and BRI: The Future of Infrastructure Competition and Interconnectivity in South-Central Europe

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Sonce Hall

In partnership with International Republican Institute

The Covid-19 lockdown certainly did not obstruct strategic moves being made in Europe. Developments since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic indicate that the strategic positioning of malign actors did not stop. Evidence proves that both Beijing and Moscow scaled up their efforts to influence public opinion and legislation in many countries of the world, but most notably in Europe.

While the main thrust of these efforts was focused on doubling misinformation and disinformation tactics, neither Russia nor China missed the opportunity to implement a more holistic strategy – including major infrastructure decisions – to increase their footprint and system of influence in Europe. It is most opportune to analyze the results and consequences of these developments in order to gain a realistic picture of the situation in Europe, especially as we discuss its future.

The IRI panel will explore the different and competing major infrastructure visions for the region, including their economic and security implications, from China's Belt and Road Initiative through TSI and the plans of the Build Back Better Initiative to address global infrastructure gaps in telecommunications and energy infrastructure. What spurred the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, how concerning is it and was there a way to avoid it? Is there a way to trade with China without becoming strategically ensnared? How can specific infrastructure deals i.e. the 3 Seas Initiative develop into security initiatives across Europe?

Mr Matthew G. Boyse, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State

Mr Radoslaw Fogiel, Member of the Sejm of Poland

Ms Meia Nouwens, Senior Fellow, International Institute for Strategic Studies

Dr Mareike Ohlberg, Senior Fellow, Asia Program, The German Marshall Fund of the United States

Mr Matt Schrader, Advisor, Center on Countering Foreign Authoritarian Interference, International Republican Institute

Moderated by **Mr Scott Mastic**, Vice President for Programs, International Republican Institute

10.40–11.15 | Conversation with Mr Pedro Opeka, humanitarian, and Dr Aloysius John, General Secretary of the Caritas Internationalis

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Voda Hall

10.40–11.00 Presentation of the BSF Distinguished Partner 2021 Award

11.00–11.15 Conversation with Mr Pedro Opeka, humanitarian, and Dr Aloysius John, General Secretary of the Caritas Internationalis

12.30–14.15 | Lunch

@Rikli Balance Hotel

14.15–15.45 | Mediterranean: A Geostrategic Chessboard

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold I Hall

Located at the junction of the European, Asian and African continents, the Mediterranean has always been a meeting point of civilisations and nations working in concert to offer the world works of culture and art of extraordinary beauty, promote trade and economic development, and lay the humanistic, democratic and diplomatic foundations for humanity. And yet, the Mediterranean is marked by continued conflicts.

Stability in the Mediterranean is a vital interest of the Union. The Barcelona Process, today's Union for the Mediterranean, EUROMED and the new EU Agenda for the Mediterranean are mechanisms aimed at strengthening our cooperation, political dialogue and activities based on mutual interests of the northern and southern Mediterranean countries. Political and socio-economic recovery and resilience based on investments in the green and digital transitions, the promotion of peace and security, intercultural dialogue, prevention of forced displacement, human rights, the rule of law and

good governance must become the bedrocks of a strengthened Mediterranean partnership focused on people, in particular women and the young. Education, including through the Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI), plays an important role in this. The European Union, especially the MED7 countries, and the Mediterranean partner countries bear a shared responsibility for a secure and successful future.

H.E. Mr José Manuel Albares, Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation of Spain

H.E. Mr Evarist Bartolo, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Malta

H.E. Mr Nikos Christodoulides, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus

H.E. Mr Nikolaos-Georgios Dendias, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece

H.E. Dr Anže Logar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia

H.E. Mr Augusto Santos Silva, Minister of State and of Foreign Affairs of Portugal

Moderated by **Mr Ali Aslan**, Journalist and TV Presenter, Germany

14.15–15.45 | Climate Change: Understanding Risks and Ensuring Policy Resilience

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold II Hall

In partnership with Chatham House

The impacts of climate change are already being experienced, with the last seven years being the warmest on record. However, global efforts to reduce CO2 emissions are dangerously off track and even if policy ambition, low-carbon technology deployment and investment follow current trends, 2.7°C of warming by the end of the century is likely. Therefore, there needs to be both a roll out of further ambitious low and net zero carbon policies and measures and an acceleration of adaptation and mitigation pathways. Combining scientific knowledge with policy expertise, this workshop will bring together academics, researchers and national and international policy makers, to discuss where mitigation plans and climate change risks (direct, indirect and systemic) have been successfully and not so successfully assessed, understood and aligned into national policies and sectorial operations.

What are the most serious climate risks (direct, indirect and systemic) that will impact societies? What are the critical bio-physical and socio-economic amplifying tipping points where policy attention is required? What are the lessons learned from mitigation plans that have been successfully and not so successfully assessed, understood and introduced into national and sectorial policies and measures?

Ms Elina Bardram, Acting Director – International, Mainstreaming and Policy Coordination Directorate, DG Clima, European Commission [DIGITAL SPEAKER](#)

Mr Nick Bridge, Special Representative for Climate Change, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, United Kingdom

Dr Werner Hoyer, President, European Investment Bank (EIB)

Dr Lučka Kajfež Bogataj, Climatologist and Professor at Biotechnical Faculty, University of Ljubljana

Ms Tina Kobilšek, Head of delegation to UNFCCC, Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning of Slovenia

Dr Koko Warner, Manager, Vulnerability subdivision, Adaptation division, United Nations Climate Change Secretariat [DIGITAL SPEAKER](#)

Moderated by **Prof Tim Benton**, Research Director, Energy, Environment and Resources Programme, Chatham House

14.15–15.45 | European Foreign and Security Challenges in a Digital World

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Sonce Hall

In partnership with Government Information Security Office of Slovenia and Microsoft

Growing digitalisation, already touching every corner of our lives, has increased the importance of cybersecurity. That has become clear in 2021, as we have seen malicious cyber activities significantly disrupt our energy supply and provision of critical healthcare services, and seek to undermine our democratic processes. Cyber threats are becoming more complex and are growing in terms of scope, frequency and sophistication. Today, state and non-state actors, as well as state-sponsored actors, have advanced cyber offensive capabilities and are persistent in their efforts. Not only that, cyberspace has clearly emerged as an area of global strategic competition. As a result, we are constantly faced with attempts to abuse and control new technologies, with threats to the internet as we know it – global, open, free and secure, and critically increased pressure on fundamental rights, freedoms and democracy. As a result, discussions around cybersecurity and digitalisation are morphing into broader reflections on Europe's ability to remain a formidable actor in a world increasingly torn apart by geopolitical tensions. What is Europe's path in this space? What could Europe's approach toward strategic autonomy be? What is the right balance between inclusiveness, international collaboration and independence?

Ambassador Tadeusz Chomicki, Ambassador for Cyber & Tech Affairs, Security Policy Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland

Ambassador Nathalie Jaarsma, Ambassador at-Large for Security Policy and Cyber of Netherlands

Mr Casper Klynge, Vice President, European Government Affairs, Microsoft

H.E. Ms Eva-Maria Liimets, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia

Mr Yigal Unna, Director General, Israel National Cyber Directorate **DIGITAL SPEAKER**

Moderated by **Dr Uroš Svete**, Acting Director, Government Information Security Office of Slovenia

15.45–16.00 | Coffee Break

@Rikli Balance Hotel

16.15–17.30 | Lining up the Europe's Defence

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold I Hall

In partnership with the Ministry of Defense of Slovenia

Last year, the EU embarked on the path of creating its Strategic Compass in the field of security and defence, and NATO approved the NATO 2030 agenda at the summit in June this year, setting itself the task of renewing its Strategic Concept by the middle of next year. The geopolitical challenges of both organisations are similar, as are some of the threats. It is in the interest of Slovenia, as well as most European countries, that both processes are as coordinated as possible, and that the security of the European and transatlantic space is strengthened through strategic reflection. The panellists will address areas of common interest to organisations, such as responding to hybrid and malicious cyber activities, addressing the challenges and opportunities posed by new technologies, and tackling climate change and its implications for security and defence.

How can organisations take advantage of technological advances and provide effective resilience to such modern challenges? How can both organisations strengthen synergies in capacity development while respecting their respective competencies?

Mr Mircea Geoață, Deputy Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Mr João Gomes Cravinho, Minister of National Defense of Portugal

Ms Florence Parly, Minister of the Armed Forces of France

Mr Matej Tonin, Minister of Defence of Slovenia

Moderated by **Mr Ali Aslan**, Journalist and TV Presenter, Germany

16.00–17.15 | Partnership for a Rules-based Order in the Indo-Pacific

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Arnold II Hall

In partnership with Observer Research Foundation

The Indo-Pacific has emerged as the new grounds for international cooperation in the 21st century. Given the rapidly evolving balance of power in the region, the necessity for like-minded nations to cooperate to provide an effective counterbalance has increased. As these powers navigate different crises related to the ongoing pandemic, trade, connectivity, climate change, security, and data, the Indo-Pacific provides an opportunity for their interests to manifest. One such partnership that has scope for revival in this arena is the one between the EU and India, as the EU seeks to increase its involvement in the Indo-Pacific. Any cooperation will, however, require an established framework to be successful. The panel will discuss the potential for and dynamics of a EU-India partnership in the Indo-Pacific that can work with middle powers in the region.

What are the potential areas of cooperation for the EU and India in the Indo-Pacific? What rules and principles will guide such a partnership? Is EU ready to be a political and security actor in the region? How can India and EU catalyse participation of other countries in their Indo-Pacific project? Which are the key areas and key actors that must be considered? What will the implications of a EU-India strategic partnership for regional economic and connectivity aspirations? How can EU and India work with Japan, U.S. and Australia to offer a sustainable, transparent and accountable infrastructure and connectivity alternative?

H.E. Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Minister for External Affairs of India

H.E. Dr Anže Logar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia

Hon. Ababu Namwamba, Chief Administrative Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kenya

Dr Daniel Twining, President, International Republican Institute **DIGITAL SPEAKER**

Moderated by **Dr Samir Saran**, President, Observer Research Foundation

16.00–17.30 | Digital Europe - Unlocking the Potential

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Zrak Hall

In partnership with Facebook

Digital technologies play an invisible but structural role in the delivery of products and services that EU citizens rely upon in their day-to-day lives. From public services to dating, our lives are increasingly lived online or digitally enabled. This growth, particularly in artificial intelligence, brings new opportunities and challenges. Europe is poised to build a new framework that can kick-start the adoption of AI in a human- and rights-centric manner. Yet conversations around technologies like AI cannot be held in isolation and we must ensure that our governance frameworks are matched and reflected by the real infrastructural needs of SMEs who are looking to digitally-enabled tools as means to grow and scale. Data flows are part of that discussion; they are the prerequisite to the promise of a digitally-enabled Europe. Like the train tracks of old, the future of the EU's economy needs to be built on an outward and global approach to data flows.

The panellists will address questions such as: How can the EU be a leader in AI innovation? How does this relate to the European Commission objectives to create both ecosystems of trust and of excellence? How can regulation and innovation work together? How important are global data flows for the successful development of AI and European competitiveness in this field?

Dr Marko Grobelnik, Chief Technical Officer, Unesco International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence (IRCAI)

Mr Boštjan Koritnik, Minister of Public Administration of Slovenia

Mr Petr Očko, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic

Mr Markus Reinisch, VP Public Policy, Facebook

Moderated by **Prof Dr Dunja Mladenič**, Head of Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, Jožef Stefan Institute

16.00–17.30 | EU's Challenging Eastern Partnership Summit 2021: Calibrating its Agenda

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Sonce Hall

In partnership with German Council on Foreign Relations

The Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU will host the Eastern Partnership Summit, which has been postponed from last year due to the pandemic. Since its postponement, several Eastern Partnership countries have faced deep crises, including the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh and ongoing brutal repression in Belarus following falsified presidential election results. Moreover, the three unofficial frontrunners of the EaP, Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova, are increasingly dissatisfied with what the EU has to offer. The EU must rise to the task and prepare a new strategic agenda for the EaP Summit that allows for substantial differentiation and tailor-made approaches to EaP countries while preserving its transformational power vis-a-vis geopolitical competitors, including Russia and Turkey. Part of the task lies in becoming more engaged on security issues in its neighbourhood, particularly in unresolved conflicts in the Eastern neighbourhood that have direct repercussions for Europe's security. But how well is it doing? And how can the EU Member States strengthen cooperation with the OSCE/other multilateral mechanisms and work more closely with the Biden administration in this regard?

Keynote address by **Ms Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya**, Belarusian human rights activist and an independent politician

H.E. Mr Bogdan Aurescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania

Ms Orysia Lutsevych, Head and Research Fellow, Ukraine Forum, Russia and Eurasia Programme, Chatham House

Ms Katarína Mathernová, Deputy Director-General, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission

Ambassador Teimuraz Janjalia, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

Moderated by **Dr Stefan Meister**, Head of the International Order and Democracy Program, German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP)

16.00–17.30 | Fighting Disinformation with Information: Securing Security through Facts

@Rikli Balance Hotel, Voda Hall

In partnership with BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt

Disinformation campaigns and fake news are emerging as a long-term threat to the values and the security of the European Union, as the line between information and disinformation is becoming increasingly blurred. Unfortunately, while there is agreement that this challenge exists, there is no consensus on how to deal with it. However, efforts to fight disinformation have improved in recent years. They include promoting free and unbiased international media outlets that protect editorial independence; cybersecurity agencies; fact-checking teams and networks; and international non-governmental organisations dedicated to ensuring media freedom.

Our BSF session aims to contribute to the ongoing debate by bringing together various experts and activists involved in combating fake news and disinformation campaigns. As part of our participatory forum, those who play a direct role in the process will have the opportunity to engage in dialogue with European citizens directly or indirectly affected by these developments.

Mr Graham Brookie, Director, Digital Forensic Research Lab, Atlantic Council

Dr Ivana Karásková, Founder and Leader, MapInfluenCE and China Observers in Central and Eastern Europe (CHOICE)

Mr Juhan Lepassaar, Executive Director, European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA)
TBC

Mr Baybars Örsek, Director of The International Fact-Checking Network [DIGITAL SPEAKER](#)

Mr Marjan Zabrcanec, National coordinator for strategic communications / Head of communications of the North Macedonia

Moderated by **Mr Burak Ünveren**, Journalist, Member of the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt and the Global Diplomacy Lab

17.45–18.15 | Closing Remarks

@Rikli Balance Hotel

Mr Gašper Dovžan State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia

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