



Sustainable Europe: Cross-cutting strategies for a future-proof Union

European View
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In recent years, the EU has been confronted with a series of unprecedented challenges—many of which are still ongoing—which have exposed our weaknesses but at the same time have prompted a united and determined response to overcome them together, as a Union.

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, we pooled our resources to ensure that every European citizen had access to medical equipment and vaccines on an equal footing. NextGenerationEU was a groundbreaking tool designed to tackle the social and economic consequences of the Covid-19 crisis. Faced with Russia's unjustified aggression against Ukraine, we stand together as one to support our neighbours in their fight for freedom, for democracy and for a European future.

While it is true, as Jean Monnet said, that 'Europe will be forged in crisis, and will be the sum of the solutions adopted for those crises' (Monnet 1976, 488), I believe it is now time to pass from crisis-management mode into a new, broader vision which will allow the EU not just to survive but to thrive. The project for which Monnet and the other founding fathers laid the basis is being put to the test by the threat posed by authoritarian regimes; by bold if not unfair practices from our global competitors; by the increasingly visible effects of climate change; and by the transformations brought about by the digital transition, migration and our ageing populations.

More than ever, we need new ideas to strengthen our democracy, foster peace and stability in our neighbourhood, defend our European way of life and ensure our continent has a leading role on the global scene.

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As we approach the 2024 European elections, we want to provide a comprehensive and forward-looking approach for the legislative term 2024–9. In this context, the Martens Centre for European Studies has undertaken a thorough assessment of seven areas in which our Union needs to be made more sustainable.

Sustainability is a fashionable concept nowadays but it has too often been limited to the sphere of climate change and nature preservation. This is, of course, an important dimension of the debate, but at the Martens Centre we aim to enlarge the debate to encompass all the policy domains in which we are confronted with vital challenges which demand immediate attention: defence, digitalisation, debt, de-risking globalisation, demography, decarbonisation and democracy—our ‘7Ds for Sustainability’ (Hefele, Welle et al. 2023).

For each of these areas, we have put forward five programmes, each comprising five concrete and practical projects. We hope these will provide essential background information for the negotiations between the new European Parliament and European Commission, and serve as a point of reference for policymakers during the next legislative term. Furthermore, we will keep updating this document and using it as a reference for the annual planning process of the Martens Centre’s research and events. Our goal extends beyond merely shedding light on these crucial issues; rather, we intend to provide practical programmes and strategies to build a resilient and sustainable Europe.

In this framework, we have asked seven of our authors each to dwell on one of the seven ‘Ds’. The authors have made sure to reflect upon the projects and programmes presented in our paper and provide a wider perspective. You will find the results of their analysis in the subsection titled ‘The 7Ds for sustainability’. The main section of this issue contains other articles related to a broad conception of sustainability.

I hope you will enjoy reading both the main and current affairs sections that together complement the *European View*, and that you find this issue engaging and insightful.

References

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Author biography



Mikuláš Dzurinda is president of the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies and a former prime minister of Slovakia (1998–2006). He has also held the positions of minister of transport and minister for foreign affairs.