



The Conference on the Future of Europe: 25 Ideas from ZEI

This issue of the Future of Europe Observer presents 25 ideas for the Conference on the Future of Europe, which was launched on the 9th of May 2021 and is scheduled to conclude in April 2022. A wide range of authors from the ZEI network has made this publication possible. We are grateful for having received such a considerable number of contributions and will continue posting ideas on the EU's official platform of the Conference. Check out more proposals from ZEI under <https://futureu.europa.eu/profiles/ZEI-UniversityofBonn/following?locale=en>.

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Future of Europe Observer

accompanies the debate on governance and regulation in the European Union. Authors are ZEI Scholars, Master of European Studies Fellows and Alumni.

The COVID-19-pandemic is often said to have accelerated or even aggravated preexisting trends in European as well as international politics. While this certainly holds true for growing attacks on the rule of law of the European Union as a legal community of democracies, joint efforts by EU institutions to contain the deadly virus have at the same time displayed the vitality of the European Union's founding values. First, solidarity comes to mind. Despite initial tribalist impulses, member states eventually helped each other out by honoring their commitments made within the RESCEU mechanism - an upgraded EU tool of disaster assistance that requires governments to stockpile medical equipment for emergency situations. Most importantly, EU countries opened their hospitals to EU citizens from states that ran short on intensive care unit beds and staff, bridging political East-West and North-South divides. Second, the organization of a common vaccine procurement has saved lives and certainly affirmed the EU's self-conception as a guarantor of human dignity.

Yet as much as EU decision-making has been informed by these noble values, the pandemic has laid bare painful political and institutional deficits. The shared competence for public health between the supranational level and member state governments in line with Art. 168 TFEU made decisions on vaccine purchases more time-consuming, less effective and harder to understand.

This is only the most pressing case for why the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFEU) has to revisit an old question in new ways: "Who is responsible for what?". Finding appropriate answers might well lead to a fierce public battle along the traditional but inadequate conflict line of 'more or less centralization'. Despite this, Europeanists should not shy away from making bold proposals whether they culminate in a treaty change or not.

We at ZEI decided to get involved by tapping the vast creative knowledge of our multinational network in order to make concrete proposals for creating a more dynamic, secure and democratic European Union. **Dr. Robert Stüwe** is a ZEI Research Fellow, University of Bonn.

Conference on the Future of Europe - Ideas from ZEI

The EU needs more emergency competences in health matters

According to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU Title XIV, Article 168) public health is a matter of shared competences in the EU. The extreme challenges of the Corona pandemic have demonstrated how insufficient „shared competences“ can be under conditions of a major natural disaster affecting public and personal health across the EU. Therefore, the EU must be in the position to upgrade the „Emergency Support Instrument“ with additional funds from the general EU budget or other necessary financial means. New emergency competencies under conditions of a serious natural disaster must include efforts for strategic foresight in the EU by better coordinating public health institutions and the pharmaceutical industry.

Overcoming existing deficits and experiences during the Corona pandemic requires realistic and coherent assessments, mutually accepted clarifications of competencies and crisis-proof regulatory mandates. It would be of the essence to revise the Treaty of Lisbon, thus granting the European Commission more emergency flexibility under conditions of a natural disaster of the magnitude of the corona pandemic. The resolute legal upgrading of EU competences in emergency and disaster management as well as in health policies is necessary to prepare for the next pandemic.

The Treaty of Lisbon needs to be revised with a view on more flexible and more unified emergency competencies of the EU under conditions of a natural disaster of the magnitude of the Corona pandemic.

Prof. Dr. Ludger Kühnhardt is Director of the Center for European Integration Studies (ZEI), University of Bonn.

One single location for all activities undertaken by the European Parliament

The activities of the European Parliament are currently spread out over three different locations, namely Strasbourg for the monthly plenary meetings, Brussels for all other gatherings, with Luxembourg hosting the Secretariat. This peculiar ‘moving circus’ continues to confound EU citizens, and the inability to rectify the situation has proved highly damaging for the legitimacy of the integration project.

Moreover, for those directly involved, the status quo constitutes a logistical nightmare, not to mention the associated pressures placed on infrastructure and the environment. The price tag amounts to roughly 114 million euro per year, the annual CO2 emissions varying between 11-19 thousand tons. This needless waste of time, money and energy needs to be ended as soon as possible. Doing so requires changing the protocol in which the current arrangement is laid down.

Advocating such a change lies within the remit of the Conference of the Future of Europe, as it involves but represents a minor operation compared to modifying the EU treaties. Although practical, the new single site of activity need not necessarily be Brussels, but could equally be Strasbourg, Luxembourg, or another city somewhere in the Union. Importantly, the Secretariat ought to be moved to this location as well, in order to ensure a close proximity between MEPs and their support services.

Prof. Henri de Waele is a ZEI Senior Fellow and Professor for International and European Law at Radboud University Nijmegen and Guest Professor of EU External Relations Law, University of Antwerp.

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CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE
PROVISIONAL CALENDAR

TIME	EVENT	COMMENT /Action(s) needed
26-05-2021		
2021		
JUNE		
17 JUNE	Citizens' event (Lisbon)	Hybrid
18-19 JUNE	Inaugural Conference Plenary	
SEPTEMBER		
17-19 SEPTEMBER	European Citizens' Panel 1 – first session	In presence
24-26 SEPTEMBER	European Citizens' Panel 2 – first session	In presence
OCTOBER		
1-3 OCTOBER	European Citizens' Panel 3 – first session	In presence
8-9 OCTOBER	European Youth Event	
15-17 OCTOBER	European Citizens' Panel 4 – first session	In presence
22-23 OCTOBER	Conference Plenary	
NOVEMBER		
5-7 NOVEMBER	European Citizens' Panel 1 – second session	Virtual
12-14 NOVEMBER	European Citizens' Panel 2 – second session	Virtual
19-21 NOVEMBER	European Citizens' Panel 3 – second session	Virtual
26-27 NOVEMBER	European Citizens' Panel 4 – second session	Virtual
DECEMBER		
4-5 DECEMBER	European Citizens' Panel 1 – third session	In presence
10-12 DECEMBER	European Citizens' Panel 2 – third session	In presence
17-18 DECEMBER	Conference Plenary	Panel 1 and Panel 2 present their recommendations to the Plenary
2022		
JANUARY		
7-9 JANUARY	European Citizens' Panel 3 – third session	In presence
<small>¹ Including preparatory meetings (caucuses, delegations, etc).</small>		
14-16 JANUARY	European Citizens' Panel 4 – third session	In presence
21-22 JANUARY	Conference Plenary	Panel 3 and Panel 4 present their recommendations to the Plenary
FEBRUARY		
18-19 FEBRUARY	Conference Plenary	Proposals
MARCH		
11-12 MARCH	Possible Conference Plenary	
22-24 APRIL (TBC)	European Citizens' Panel – final event	Virtual or hybrid/Feedback to the participants in the panels



Elections to the European Parliament: With transnational lists to a 'European Society'

The proposal to rely on transnational lists in European parliamentary elections is not new. However, there is still a lack of proposals for concrete implementation. The EU needs to strike a balance between federalism and a European Society. After Brexit, the number of seats in the European Parliament was aptly reduced to 705. But 141 seats (20 per cent) should be allocated via transnational lists. All citizens should have two votes.

With the first vote, candidates of the national parties will continue to be elected according to the respective electoral system of the state. The second vote needs to be reserved for a European party that will stand for election in all 27 member states. These European parties agree on a common list on which at least a quarter of all European nationalities must be represented & no nationality may be found more than once in a block of five candidates.

In addition, only national parties which belong to a European party may participate in the parliamentary elections. This system would give the European Parliament more weight. The fact that 80% of MEPs would continue to be elected via national lists would also prevent the risk of placing the MEP at a distance from their voter. New constituencies would not have to be drawn either. The 564 national seats could still be distributed via the electoral systems of the member states. The absolute pan-European votes for the European parties will be distributed proportionally among the remaining 141 seats.

Lukian-Timon Ahrens is a Master-Student in Political Science, University of Bonn.

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The European Union should produce and publish a regular (annual) report on the costs of non-Europe.

The report should be based on two criteria:

How much tax money would the member states of the EU be able to save if they

(a) would act more farsighted, more precautionary and faster.

(b) would act collectively and therefore at a European level?

A systematic assessment needs to cover all possible policy fields, i.e.:

- The net benefits of the European single market which by far exceeds the membership fees of the member states of the EU in the common EU budget.
- The net benefits of a common military structure with common weapon systems and a common European military and civilian intelligence system compared with the waste of public finances given 27 different national armies and 44 civil and military intelligence services.
- The net benefit of prioritizing peace-keeping and resolute investment in jobs and infrastructure in fragile regions and/or post civil war countries compared with the follow-up costs for integration of asylum seekers in the EU.
- The net benefit of the joint promotion of vaccines and therapies as well as the joint ordering of vaccine doses in 2020/2021 over the negative impact of the stinginess of EU member states not to provide more financial resources upfront.
- The net benefit of donating a much higher share of vaccines to the global COVAX initiative over the negative consequences of ongoing global economic, mobility and health uncertainties.

Prof. Dr. Ludger Kühnhardt

The EU should support efforts to bring about a global corporate tax

US President Joe Biden and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen have proposed to bring about a global minimum corporate tax. While the exact rate will be up for debate, the German and French finance ministers have already expressed support for a 21 per cent rate.

For years, countries across the world, as well as within Europe, have faced a “race to the bottom” situation in taxation, and tax havens have cropped up as it has often been an easy way for smaller countries to attract foreign investment. This has resulted in the decline of welfare states across Europe and an increase in wealth inequality.

Under a global corporate tax regime, multinational corporations would no longer have the power to evade taxes by simply changing address. Taking this massive bargaining chip away would go a long way towards ensuring accountability for large multinational corporations, many of whom play an important role in our day-to-day lives without our knowledge.

In addition, a global corporate tax would allow countries to compete for foreign investment on an even footing and, from the European perspective; help solve a problem that leaders have faced for years with regards to taxation. No longer would European leaders need to argue over small details in national tax codes, nor would legal cases such as that of Ireland’s tax arrangement with tech giant Apple arise and gain such notoriety.

Cillian O’Gara is a ZEI Master Fellow “Class of 2019”



Conference on the Future of Europe

Creating high-speed passenger rail connections between older, newer and future EU member states

The EU should massively boost the development of trans-European high-speed passenger rail networks between old, newer and future EU member states. In the upcoming annual EU budgets, financial resources should be specifically reallocated for this purpose. The expansion of pan-European passenger transport corridors would both stimulate the economy and tourism as well as protect the climate, as EU citizens and visitors will more often be able to avoid air travel. Expanded trans-European passenger networks also help overcome old East-West divides, as an inexpensive travel alternative becomes available, especially for citizens from economically weaker countries.

The improvement or construction of such networks can be organized within the Trans-European Networks (TENs-T) program of EU transport policy. The legal basis for this is the chapter on “Trans-European Networks” (Art. 170 to Art. 172) in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The EU can provide financial support for individual projects with the help of the Cohesion Fund, the Connecting Europe Facility or other funds. The following projects should be regarded as priorities:

- Brussels - Cologne - Frankfurt - Prague - Krakow - Lviv - Kiev
- Paris - Zurich - Vienna - Budapest - Cluj-Napoca - Odessa
- Amsterdam - Frankfurt - Munich - Zagreb - Sarajevo - Prishtina - Skopje - Thessaloniki
- Hamburg - Gdansk - Vilnius - Riga - Tallinn - Helsinki

Two key requirements for moving forward such projects have been met. First, in March 2021, negotiators from the European Parliament and the Council agreed to upgrade the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) program, worth 30 billion euro for 2021 to 2027. It will not only fund transport projects but also endeavors in the energy and digital sector. The CEF is meant to ensure that essential Trans-European projects, such as Rail Baltica, alternative fuels charging infrastructure and the roll out of 5G coverage to important transport axes are finished on schedule by 2030. Second, the Council on the 14th of June 2021 gave the greenlight for quicker permit-granting procedures to speed up the completion of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T). The new ‘smart TEN-T’ rules adopted by the Council shall clarify the procedures which project promoters need to follow with regard to permit granting and public procurement for cross-border projects. Dr. Robert Stüwe is a ZEI Research Fellow, University of Bonn.

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All public TV stations across the EU should jointly offer regular „Euro Talks“.

Once a month, as many public television stations as possible in the EU should jointly offer a joint discussion event („Talk Show“) for ninety minutes on specific issues that are relevant across the EU. The participants in the discussion should talk to each other in their mother tongue, supported by translation services. This format makes it possible to bring together authentic perspectives from different societies across the EU. „Euro-Talk“ can contribute to the development of a European public sphere. The establishment of a regular European talk show would be a novelty in the European discussion culture. It would take into account the fact that most important discussions on matters of public life today take place in similar ways in all EU societies, while in terms of media coverage these debates remain unconnected across the EU. In addition to the political debates in the European Parliament, public television stations can contribute to the development of European democracy. What is possible during the Eurovision Song Contest should be made possible in the service of European democracy.

Prof. Dr. Ludger Kühnhardt

The EU Should Establish a Pan-European Public Service Broadcaster.

A broadcaster financed by the EU's own resources should be established, with a structure modeled along the lines of the German ARD: regional broadcasters gathered under one roof. This would guarantee a diverse program that could cover national topics of interest as well as present pan-European stories.

This would significantly expand the existing „Euronews“ concept. The goal of joint broadcasting is to bring European citizens closer to the everyday life, perspectives and culture of their neighbors and thus to generate a sense of common awareness. For this very reason, not only seemingly neutral news events should be covered, but entertainment formats too must play a role. When journalists and creative artists are supported in joint projects, this also has the potential to create a lively pan-European media public sphere.

Can Tim Akinci and Jonas Steidle are Master-Students in Political Science, University of Bonn.

Direct election by EU citizens of the President of the European Council

All citizens of the European Union should be enabled to directly elect the President of the European Council. Until now, the approach has been that the heads of state or government of the member states appoint a new incumbent. This setup strengthens the impression that the people have little to say in how the continent is being run – the legendary ‘democratic deficit’. Implementing a change here will greatly enhance the EU's legitimacy at grassroots level. Also, the person who manages to obtain support from a demos of roughly 450 million will be able to serve effectively as the Union's spokesperson and representative towards the outside world.

Conversely, since the actual powers of the office-holder remain limited, there is no risk that the position will be abused or lead to ‘executive dominance’. Instead, it is conceivable that a directly elected President will exert a strong moral and political authority, so that the symbolic and unifying potential of the function are exploited much better than is presently the case. Lastly, it should be noted that this proposal would not require any change to the EU treaties, and that there are no obstacles to its realization in the current law either. All it takes is for a simultaneous pan-European popular vote to be organized whereby the heads of state and government pledge to proceed with the official appointment once the people have made their choice. **Prof. Henri de Waele**



The European Parliament needs to be given a right to dismiss individual EU commissioners.

In the current institutional reality, the European Parliament can pass a vote of no confidence against the European Commission as a collective body. Yet it may not dismiss individual Commissioners. This reduces the EU Commission's accountability to MEPs as the political costs of a collective recall would be too high for MEPs. An institutional crisis would be the inevitable consequence. An individual "right of dismissal" by contrast - conditioned on an absolute or a qualified majority - would give a new lever to MEPs for co-legislating proposals with the Commission and the Council, as commissioners would more actively seek reassurance from the Parliament on draft legislation. Parliamentary accountability would emerge stronger, whereas the EU's democratic deficit would be mitigated. National capitals would likely anticipate the Parliament's gain in power in the nomination of commissioners, paying greater attention to the credentials of candidates in advance. A realignment of national interests would be a side-effect. **Dr. Robert Stüwe**

ZEI Discussion Paper C 267/2021

"The post-corona world. A research agenda"

By Ludger Kühnhardt

With the corona pandemic, a genuine world event has taken place for the first time, affecting all of humankind and all human societies on earth. Beyond the current crisis management, complex questions arise for future research. ZEI Director Prof. Dr Ludger Kühnhardt identifies aspects of a transdisciplinary research agenda evaluating the corona pandemic and its impact. In addition to soft issues (moral dilemmas, fear, guilt, ideological conflicts) and hard issues (health as a security topic, economic consequences, political management, power issues), he examines the implications for the European Union. He advocates a revision of the Lisbon Treaty in order to supplement the existing "shared competence" (Article 168) between the EU and its member states in situations of health-endangering natural disasters with a more robust emergency mechanism in favor of stronger EU decision-making and budget competencies.

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Ludger Kühnhardt

The post-corona world.
A research agenda

Discussion Paper
C267
2021

Bringing all Western Balkans countries into the EU

Strategic cohesion can only be achieved through full EU and NATO membership for all countries of the Western Balkans. Southeast Europe as a whole is part of Europe. Beyond technical membership negotiations, the EU and governments in the WB need to define jointly in which way the region provides value-added to the current and future EU agenda. The most relevant topics are evident: innovation and digital competitiveness; resilient good governance and seriously fighting dishonesty & corruption; robust border management as prime necessity to return to rule-based and voluntary migration.

The EU and the Western Balkans need to advance a common agenda for trust: Life chances for the youth; investing in human resources and not only

Introducing an Erasmus-plus scheme for the Western Balkans

The EU and the Western Balkans (WB6) should introduce an Erasmus Plus scheme within the WB6 region and thereby implement a mobility initiative in the field of formal higher education in order to connect the institutions, researchers, students and the overall youth throughout the region. The mutual recognition of diplomas is a key prerequisite along with establishing joint degree qualifications. Whereas Erasmus has encouraged short-term mobility for students, researchers, and staff within the EU for more than 30 years, Erasmus Plus has extended the scope to non-EU countries in 2015. Both mobility programs give students

in infrastructures; enhancing cultural dialogue, resilient rule of law and human centered security. In advancing such an ambitious agenda, the logical link between a Western Balkans of added value for all and the idea of a common sovereign Europe will evolve almost naturally.

Such a tall agenda would also strive for the smartest possible approach to transcend the Dayton Agreement without making it formally disappear. And the wider agenda will need to address the geopolitical fact that Turkey with almost 80 million citizens will not become less important for the EU when the 18 million citizens of the Western Balkans may finally join the EU. The EU must win the trust of the young generation across the Western Balkans, often born after the end of the Yugoslav Wars. They must get fully accepted in the EU as Union citizens-now.

Prof. Dr. Ludger Kühnhardt

the opportunity to study at a foreign university for several months (Erasmus Plus also at job training centers). Launching an additional mobility initiative for intraregional exchange among the WB6 would create an educational and research environment for promoting intercultural dialogue, fostering regional cooperation and stimulating the flow of ideas across borders. It would support reducing distance and division along ethnical lines among citizens in the region, also helping to reduce brain drain by giving an incentive to

harmonize the WB6 educational frameworks with EU standards. In the end, this would accelerate the region's accession process to the EU.

Teodora Lađić is a ZEI Master Fellow "Class of 2017"



The EU should support the establishment of a „European Academy“ with a focus on the Eastern Neighborhood

An innovative academic format could create new bridges across the borders into the countries of the Eastern Neighborhood. A „European Academy“ could serve as hub to bring together academics, artists and intellectuals from across the EU & from the countries of the Eastern Neighborhood. A European Academy would find a suitable location in Lithuania. The European Humanities University (EHU), the Belarusian university-in-exile is located in Vilnius. It is supported, among others, by the Lithuanian government & the European Commission.

A „European Academy“ could be developed under the roof of the EHU. Such an academy would support the diffusion of liberal thinking across the spheres of academia & culture across the Eastern Neighborhood, with strong focus on younger generations. It would provide space for meetings between EU-based academics & intellectuals & their colleagues from the Eastern Neighborhood. Rooting the „European Academy“ in the only existing university-in-exile in EU soil would send a signal of support to the youth not only in Belarus but across the Eastern Neighborhood about the EU's commitment to sharing values across ongoing divisions. The core mission of the EHU is to support free & pluralistic thinking through education. With the establishment of a “European Academy“ under its roof, the university-in-exile can serve as a focal point & hub to collect, reflect & disseminate knowledge about developments in the Eastern European neighborhood, including Russia & Central Asian countries.

Prof. Dr. Ludger Kühnhardt

United in diversity as a concept for reconciliation in the Western Balkans

Ghosts from the past have resurfaced in the Western Balkans. The rise of radicalism, nationalism, clerical fascism and disrespect for the other can stand pars pro toto. As in the 1990s, the reaction of EU institutions and national elites in the Western Balkans is not sufficiently firm. The EU role is not visible enough in countering the threat of foreign influence and revitalizing reconciliation in the WB6 region. For instance, Montenegro, a peaceful, cooperative and multicultural society, is the most recent proof of rising national radicalism and instabilities with malign foreign influence that can spill over across the region.

The EU's role in Montenegro, as well as throughout the Western Balkans, needs to be strengthened by extending its model “United in diversity” within the region. Strengthening of existing mechanisms or creating new truth/reconciliation regional institutions that would tackle education, memorialization and connect governments, organizations and people, could be a great impetus for reconciling our societies.

Teodora Ladić

ZEI Discussion Paper C 268/2021

“Corona und die Verfassung Europas”

By Daniel René Jung, Wolfgang Picken, Matteo Scotto, Liska Wittenberg (eds.)

The classification and processing of the corona pandemic represents a new challenge for the European Union. New forms of organized solidarity in the complex interplay between the EU and its member states are necessary in order to be better prepared for similar natural disasters. Better international responses are also necessary to better cope with the global implications of the corona pandemic. For the German society, and not only there, a new way of thinking about social co-responsibility is necessary. The revised contributions to the 19th “ZEI Europakolloquium” provide impetus for further thinking.

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Daniel René Jung, Wolfgang Picken, Matteo Scotto, Liska Wittenberg (eds.)

Corona und die Verfassung Europas

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ZEI Discussion Paper C 266/2021

““Loud thunder, little rain” – Participatory Democracy in the European Union, Examining the European Citizens’ Initiative as an example”

By Kwan Lok Alan Ho

The European Citizens’ Initiative channels citizens’ participation from member states to the European Union at an unprecedented scale. The initial expectations on it and its potentials are as “loud” as a “thunder”. Contrasting with the implications assessed, this research finds there is only “little rain” dropped. Instead of concluding the instrument as a failure, the Union should shape the challenge as an opportunity to build a European public sphere for bringing Europeans closer to each other and the EU.

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Discussion Paper
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Kwan Lok Alan Ho

“Loud thunder, little rain”
Participatory Democracy in
the European Union



The European Union should decide on a European Constitutional Declaration.

In order to achieve a European Constitution in a meaningful period of time, it will be necessary to concentrate on a short, pointed and rather declaratory text. It would stand as a kind of prelude or preamble to the complex primary law of the EU enshrined in the Treaty of Lisbon. It is time to formulate a European Constitutional Declaration and to put it ahead of the existing European primary law. Such a European Constitutional Declaration of no more than five to ten pages, could easily be combined with necessary (and ever ongoing) revisions of individual paragraphs and chapters in the Treaty on the European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

In pursuing such a simplified path, the EU will finally receive a Constitution that would combine the declaratory text with the existing treaties constituting binding primary law. The European Constitutional Declaration would serve as a bracket around the treaties, as a sort of preamble ahead of the finesse and subtleties of European primary law. European political actors, who are so keen to use the dazzling concept of Europe as a community of values, should succeed more easily in writing and agreeing on such a short European Constitutional Declaration.

This format would be more feasible and certainly also more popular than a renewed effort to produce a hyper-complex and well-differentiated construction of primary law which again would be subject to an unpredictable marathon of ratifications.

Prof. Dr. Ludger Kühnhardt



Realizing a decentralized European federal state

The European Union must become a European federal state - decentralized where possible, centralized where necessary. To achieve this, it needs a common constitution. Following the conclusion of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the EU must convene a constitutional convention. This convention should give a decentralized and federally structured Union a legally binding constitution with a codified set of fundamental rights and strong institutions. For this, European regions need to be assigned a more prominent role in the institutional set-up of the EU when it comes to law-making. **Dr. Robert Stüwe**

Upgrading the European Committee of the Regions to a legislative chamber

The EU should upgrade the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) to a legislative chamber. This can either be done by incorporating the CoR into the Council of the EU as a sub-chamber or by setting up a separate body which would enjoy institutionalized veto rights on key policies such as trade, fiscal policy and the distribution of cohesion funds. This would certainly place the regions on a more equal footing with the member state governments yet also carry the risk of political clashes with national ministers.

At the same time, such an arrangement would offer regional governments such as Catalonia or Wallonia the chance to exercise their regional autonomy in a constructive way. To incentivize cooperative behavior, the institutional set-up needs to favor decisions in the form of qualified majority votings. This would also mitigate the risk of obstruction at national level. Proponents of regional autonomy would inevitably have a harder time using regional elections as a means to punish governmental elites let alone to fuel separatist propaganda.

The broader idea behind creating a managed form of regional autonomy is that European integration has made it necessary to bundle national powers due to functional pressures to centralize lawmaking, whether as a result of crises or as part of the process of dealing with the consequences of past integration steps. To alleviate this pressure, a decision-making body is needed which, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, more effectively takes into account the impact of European decision-making on regional needs, interests and identities. This would ultimately serve as a counterweight against the spread of economic nationalism within the European Union.

Dr. Robert Stüwe

Upgrading overseas countries and territories to the status of outermost regions

Interconnectedness and interdependence are new realities to be recognized when reflecting on an adequate notion of 21st century European sovereignty. The time has come for a structural and strategic overhaul of the importance of Overseas countries and territories associated with the EU. This is an urgent matter if the ambition of simplifying EU instruments shall be completed. It is even more urgent if considered through the prism of long-term strategic interests of the EU. The upgrading of the OCTs will also empower the maritime-related agenda in EU policy discourses. As much as Outermost Regions, the Overseas Countries and Territories could benefit from a coherent EU policy in support of their specific interests and derogations from EU law. A rebranded grouping consisting of all current Outermost Regions and all – or at least most – current Overseas Countries and Territories would definitely enhance the strategic significance of the overseas for the EU.

Together, European Outermost Regions and OCTs are home to 5.7 million EU citizens (post-Brexit). This figure is practically equivalent to the population of Denmark (5.77 million.), more than the population of Finland (5.5 million) or Slovakia (5.4 million.) and more than the five smallest EU member states (Malta, Luxemburg, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia) together. EU foreign policy cohesion would receive an enormous boost should the OCT status be upgraded. European sovereignty would gain a new exemplification. European legitimacy, too, would be enhanced. As EU Outermost Regions, OCTs would become part of the European domestic policy instead of remaining marginalized as an appendix to the EU's international cooperation and development agenda. The EU would be able to make much better use of its global presence and power. Graduating the OCTs will require a revision of their status as part of the pending new Overseas Directive and, possibly, a revision of the Lisbon Treaty. **Prof. Dr. Ludger Kühnhardt**

The EU should globalize the Green Deal and strengthen the World Bank's Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)

The EU should globalize the Green Deal by strengthening the World Bank's Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and applying it to blue hydrogen imports. For this to come about, the EU needs to provide direct funding to EITI. EITI is an international initiative to establish global transparency standards in the extractive industry based in Oslo. Numerous NGOs, companies & states participate. After its founding in 2003, oil firms from ten countries with strong involvement in producing states joined the EITI process, including energy multinationals such as BP. Specifically, the EU Commission should push EU member states to commit their energy & commodity partner countries to EITI standards when concluding import contracts. Commission & Parliament must press for blue hydrogen import agreements to be included.

To this end, the EU COM needs advance review rights similar to the control mechanism used for natural gas & petroleum agreements. Despite considerable difficulty in implementing EITI, e.g. i.t. case of Azerbaijan, the participation of large Western energy companies is a political lever for the EU to limit autocratic abuse of power in producer countries. In EITI member states, civil society can more effectively hold the government accountable for the use of export revenues from the energy sector (oil, natural gas / blue and green hydrogen). Greater EU commitment to EITI offers the opportunity to better reconcile economic interests & normative goals in external energy policy.

Dr. Robert Stüwe



Conference on the Future of Europe

The EU needs common rules for imports of (renewable) hydrogen

To safeguard energy security, the Energy Union legislation has given the EU Commission a veto right for intergovernmental energy agreements in the natural gas and oil sector. It is allowed to give the agreements advance scrutiny. This right extends to intergovernmental agreements of member states with non-EU countries (Decision 2017/684 on energy agreements with third countries) and private contracts between energy companies (SoS Regulation 2017/1938). This screening mechanism should be extended to the procurement of hydrogen imports of all kinds and its derivatives under the modified energy partnerships in the case of with Russia, Ukraine and the countries of North Africa and the Middle East. The most important milestone will be the harmonization of member state regulations. In order to guarantee continuous security of supply, the EU member states will continue to depend on energy imports. In view of this dependence, energy policy will always constitute foreign and security policy as well. This also applies to the examination of energy-related investments from non-EU countries in critical network and transport infrastructures within the European Union.

Dr. Robert Stüwe

Advance new schemes to activate remittances of migrants for productive investment in their countries of origin and promote joint projects with the African Union for new cities

All too often, the countries of origin of migrants and refugees lose particularly qualified specialists. Amidst all efforts to integrate refugees it is necessary to contribute to the fight against the root causes of involuntary and voluntary migration by contributing to a better future for the home countries of migrants and asylum seekers.

The return flow of remittances of migrants in Europe exceeds the public funds spend on development cooperation. Most remittances support personal lives of family members but remain without effect on the overall investment and productivity. The African Union and the European Union have started to talk about a more productive and sustainable use of remittances returned to developing countries. These efforts have to be intensified.

The AU and the EU should also engage in pilot projects aimed at developing new urban areas on the African continent. Such new cities need to offer human services, including housing, health and education, provide sustainable jobs and connect production activities into larger value chains. By offering sufficient life chances, new cities in Africa can offer human alternatives to problematic and illegal forms of cross-border migration, all too often exploited by human smugglers and without predictable perspectives for people in search of better life chances.

Prof. Dr. Ludger Kühnhardt

Conference on the Future of Europe - Ideas from ZEI

Establishing partnerships between elementary schools in the EU

Political participation needs an awareness of political community. To create such an awareness the tasks and structures of the European Union should be brought even closer to younger citizens. For this purpose, elementary schools within the European Union could establish partnerships which enable cultural and linguistic exchange across borders. The language barriers in the EU in particular mean that people still see themselves in their national categories. Hence, it is also important to focus on language education for children and to make it obligatory to learn any official language of the EU other than the mother tongue and English.

In addition, the individual European institutions should also increasingly approach the younger generation via social media (Tik Tok, Instagram, Twitter) in order to raise interest in our political system in Europe.

Anna-Katharina Hofmann is a Master-Student in Political Science, University of Bonn.

Preventing home-grown radicalization in the EU

In November 2020, a 20-year-old Austrian killed four people in downtown Vienna in the name of IS. The perpetrator was not an immigrant terrorist, but a boy who radicalized himself in Europe and turned away from European society. This was and is not an isolated case. For an effective and sustainable fight against terror of any kind, young people in particular must be protected from possible sources of political radicalization.

A major problem for many young people is the feeling of having no prospects at all, of not being seen by the society or even experiencing discrimination. For this reason, they often form substitute identities that make use of a particular extremist ideology.

In both the 2018 Youth Strategy and the 2021 Strategy for the Rights of Children, the Commission does not recognize these problems and risks that children and young people face. Therefore, the Commission should develop a joint prevention strategy that focuses on promoting Europe-wide democratization and education projects, fostering greater awareness and recognition of diversity in beliefs in the EU, and providing counseling services to affected families. In the form of a Europe-wide strategy, it would allow member states to share best practices. The European Social Fund (ESF) should serve as a key funding instrument.

Paula Fierdag is a Student Assistant at ZEI and a Bachelor Student in Political Science and Psychology, University of Bonn.



Conference on the Future of Europe

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The European Union must move from governance to a government.

The EU has to break the Gordian knot of wanting to rule but not having a government. Governance without government has long been an effective means of cultivating the special form of European federalism. But this formula is not enough to support the ambition of European sovereignty. It is not enough to fulfill the tasks of a world power. In the face of global natural disasters in a post-corona world with infection-related emergency powers, it is not enough to ensure the protection of all Union citizens well and more consistently.

A European government with a reasonable monopoly on the use of force will always be a complementary government, complementary to the governments of the EU member states that will, of course, continue in the future. The path from European governance to a European government will become more and more arduous the more it interferes with existing state core competencies. But the prejudice of merely being a bureaucracy will stick with the European Commission as long as it does not clearly exercise the competences and the role of a government executive. What seems utopian today, is what realism and reason dictate tomorrow.

Prof. Dr. Ludger Kühnhardt



The European Union should form one EU Olympic Team for 2024.

The 2024 Olympic Games are scheduled to take place in Paris from July 26th to August 11th, 2024. One exceptionally powerful way of giving Europe a soul by creating new social networks will be the creation of a united European Union Olympic Team for the Olympic Games in 2024. The youth of the world would certainly be electrified by such an appearance of unity in diversity.

The proposal can be realized in two different forms:

(a) A genuine single, united EU Olympic Team comprising of all accredited athletes from all EU member states.

(b) A combined form of traditional national olympic teams whose members will always carry the EU flag

along with their national symbols (dress code, accommodation, presentation in the Opening and Closing ceremonies).

The EU would receive full attention of the media of the world. All national teams of EU member states receive medals, but as a unified team, the EU team would clearly be the leading team in the global medal table of Olympic Games. The creation of an EU Olympic Team will strongly support the idea of forming a European society in all its diversity.

Prof. Dr. Ludger Kühnhardt

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