

STATE OF
EUROPE



EVENT REPORT

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State of Europe
The festival of politics and ideas

Voices, choices and leadership: A tipping point for Europe?



In partnership with



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About Friends of Europe

WHO WE ARE

Friends of Europe is an independent think tank that drives effective policy change by taking a multi-sector, multi-disciplinary approach across Europe and beyond underpinned by equity, inclusion and fairness

OUR PURPOSE

It's simple; we work to involve wider audiences in improving policy thinking, development, decision-making and implementation. We bring together diverse voices, including policymakers, civil society, the private sector and citizens, to co-create policies that address real-world needs and drive sustainable change. At the core, we stand for a more inclusive, sustainable and forward-thinking Europe.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

We believe Europe's current social contract – the implicit agreement between governments, private sectors, civil society and citizens – no longer meets the needs of today's diverse and rapidly changing societies. As technological, social and economic shifts accelerate, traditional policy models often struggle to keep up. The outdated contract reinforces inequalities, limits social mobility and perpetuates divisions, failing to address the complex challenges faced by communities across the continent.

Thanks to our in-house citizen engagement unit, Debating Europe, we engage directly with citizens who feel disconnected from policymaking. This disconnect is further compounded by a lack of engagement from those directly impacted by policies, who often remain unheard in critical discussions. Without an inclusive approach that considers all voices, including those on the margins, policy decisions risk being unfit for purpose and unresponsive to the realities of life on the ground, further creating polarisation in society.

OUR VISION FOR POLICYMAKING

Our solution is a Renewed Social Contract for Europe that reflects the changing needs, aspirations and challenges of the 21st century. This renewed contract aims to redefine the relationships and responsibilities across sectors, fostering a more inclusive approach that brings citizens, governments, businesses and civil society to the table.

By co-creating policies with those affected and basing decisions on real-time data and long-term foresight, we can ensure adaptable, fair, and resilient policies to future challenges.

This mindset of inclusion and collaboration is hardwired into everything we do as a think tank. From diverse events to thought-provoking publications and podcasts, we bridge gaps between sectors, government departments, civil society, thought leaders and citizens across Europe.

OUR MISSION

We aim to advocate for and strategically engage with leaders and citizens to revitalise the European Project through a Renewed Social Contract for Europe by 2030. We actively engage in an iterative process to refine the policy choices we suggest to policymakers. Achieving our goal will not be easy or quick, and collaboration is key. These choices form the backbone of all our activities and are further supported by multistakeholder working groups providing strategic guidance and foresight. We also continue conducting citizen engagement to guide decision-making with evidence-based sentiments.

We connect, debate and change.

Our approach to change-making is clear: we bring people together, debate critical issues and drive meaningful policy change.

A Renewed Social Contract

Friends of Europe argues for a Renewed Social Contract as the key to achieving the inclusive and fair transitions, peace and security and social prosperity needed for Europe to care for its citizens and retain its role on the global stage. Building upon the ideas set out in Friends of Europe's recently published '**10 policy choices for a Renewed Social Contract for Europe**', the 21st State of Europe high-level roundtable was dedicated to sketching the Europe we want. Conversations were underpinned by citizen-

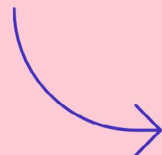
generated data from **Debating Europe**, as part of the Voices for Choices project.

As Friends of Europe embarked on a journey for a Renewed Social Contract for Europe, our 21st annual State of Europe high-level roundtable – the festival of politics and ideas – brought together over 300 discussants from the arts, culture, politics, business, civil society and academia sectors.

→ [Read Friends of Europe's 10 Policy Choices for a Renewed Social Contract](#)

→ [Learn more about the Renewed Social Contract here](#)

10 policy choices
for a Renewed
Social Contract for
Europe



friends
of europe

Executive summary

Donald Trump's election victory - announced barely 24 hours before State of Europe 2024 - gave heightened urgency to the roundtable's discussions on how Europe can step up to the plate and provide leadership on crucial global issues, from the war in Ukraine to boosting flagging economic competitiveness; from fighting climate change, to protecting Europe's democratic and social models.

The 21st edition of Friends of Europe's annual State of Europe high-level roundtable drew European Commissioners, an Executive Vice-President, national government ministers and top officials, business leaders from disruptive start-ups and household-name multinationals, prominent experts and academics, and civil society representatives ranging from a Nobel Peace Prize-winning human-rights defender from Ukraine to senior Swiss climate campaigners.

Throughout the day, roundtable discussants emphasised the necessity of Europe building resilience in an increasingly uncertain world, to defend democratic and social values from internal and external threats, while spurring the economic dynamism needed to harness the benefits of technological change for all citizens and remain at the forefront of the drive for a sustainable future.

As Europe mulls blueprints to and boost its economy out of stagnation and the doldrums, the roundtable sessions focused on steps to enhance competitiveness through investment and expand the European Union's single market to include energy, finance and digital services

fully. There was recognition of the need to prioritise such issues as the world slides towards an era of heightened rivalries and war.

Policymakers were urged to reach out to business and civil society to draft the right regulatory framework to enable Europe's tech sector to narrow the gap with US and Chinese rivals while protecting democracy and society from the digital dark side.

On climate, there was optimism that Europe could continue to take a global lead in pushing forward environmental protection, even as concerns over the incoming US administration overshadowed the rocky start of UN climate talks in Baku at COP29.

The US election results in Ukraine also increase pressure on Europe to do more. Governments, businesses and citizens were urged by former NATO Secretary General and Friends of Europe Trustee Jaap de Hoop Scheffer to view the conflict as an 'existential threat' to Europe that requires a heightened response from upping military and financial support to Kyiv, to accelerating Ukraine's path to NATO and EU membership.

More broadly, the EU enlargement process was highlighted as key to bolstering Europe's position in the world when its international influence is under threat. To avoid frustration and a potential public-opinion backlash in candidate countries, Brussels was urged to clarify its position on when and how the expansion will happen.

When the going gets tough

The urgency of lifting Europe's economy out of the doldrums was already clear before the US presidential election, which seems certain to herald a period of enhanced international rivalry, even global trade wars.

Against that alarming background, the 2024 State of Europe high-level roundtable focused its plenary sessions on achieving a more competitive European economy while defending Europe's social model and maintaining its ambitions for a green future. The debates were framed by reports on the European single market and competitiveness presented earlier this year by former Italian prime ministers Enrico Letta and Mario Draghi respectively. The reports highlight the need to deepen and expand European market integration to include digital services, energy and finance, and to create the financial and regulatory frameworks necessary to close the growing productivity and growth gaps between Europe and its competitors.

Discussants emphasised the need for Europe to embrace change to avoid a downward spiral towards economic decline, weakened security, strained public services and social welfare systems, which would erode public trust in democratic institutions and leave its businesses increasingly uncompetitive.

"We are becoming the museum of the world," warned **Loubna Bouarfa**, Chairwoman AI Innovation Board at Envision Pharma Group and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40). "If we don't act, I'm afraid we will become that beautiful museum and people will come here and look at us and see how we once were."



The Draghi report recalls that the gap between US and EU growth has doubled to 30 per cent in the decade leading up to 2023, while US disposable income grew twice as fast. As tech increasingly dominates the global economic landscape, Europe has zero representatives in the sector's top ten firms, compared to seven from the United States, two from China and one from Japan.

State of Europe heard an array of ideas to close those gaps. High among them is the completion of the EU single market to generate economies of scale that fuel sales and investment. To get there, EU member states must overcome 'micro-nationalism' holding back European solutions and stymying integration of financial services, capital, digital sales and energy networks, insisted **Mario Monti**, Italian Senator, former Prime Minister and European Commissioner for the Single Market, and Trustee of Friends of Europe.



“We would delude ourselves and not take the issues seriously enough if we neglected ... the fact that the common denominator behind much of Europe’s lack of progress, delays and insufficiencies, is simply little forms of obstructive nationalism,” Monti told a session on aligning capital with Europe’s future ambitions.

Monti advocated a stronger role for EU institutions in enforcing existing rules and an expanded EU budget to ‘normalise’ spending for the common good. Germany, in particular, has to change course on such issues, notably its constitutional ‘debt brake’ limiting government investment. “A small change in Germany would facilitate the event of more rationality across Europe,” Monti suggested.

“We would delude ourselves and not take the issues seriously enough if we neglected [...] the fact that the common denominator behind much of Europe’s lack of progress, delays and insufficiencies, is simply little forms of obstructive nationalism”

Mario Monti, Italian Senator, former Prime Minister and European Commissioner for the Single Market, and Trustee of Friends of Europe

Private-sector introductory discussants in the session were among the most outspoken in urging European policymakers to make the right choices for growth, including through consultation and cooperation with business in framing the necessary legislation. “We need the public sector to create the right framework for us to operate in,” stated **Rami Sabanegh**, Senior Vice-President of Strategy at The Coca-Cola Company. “You need to accelerate the (regulatory) process; it just takes too long,” he added. “Companies are choosing to go to Singapore; they are choosing to go to Canada, they are choosing to go elsewhere, because it’s just not fast enough.”

“You need to accelerate the [regulatory] process; it just takes too long. Companies are choosing to go [...] elsewhere, because it’s just not fast enough”

Rami Sabanegh, Senior Vice-President of Strategy at The Coca-Cola Company



There was broad agreement that promoting competitiveness must be balanced with a continued commitment to a sustainable and inclusive future that protects Europe’s social model and responds to citizens’ concerns over health, education, housing and living costs.

“Competitiveness is a tool; it is not an aim in itself,” said **Nicolas Schmit**, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights. “That is a message [...] to give to the millions of people [...] who are excluded. When they hear the word competitiveness, they feel they will be even more the victims than they are already today. I think this is the reflection how our societies are organised and what we can do better.”

Commissioner Schmit’s comments echoed those of **Sylvain Johansson**, Director of McKinsey Global Institute and Senior Partner of McKinsey and Company, who stated that Europe wouldn’t be able to pay for its social or environmental ambitions without a more productive economy. “We need to be competitive so we can finance



Sylvain Johansson

“We need to be competitive so we can finance our social model”

Sylvain Johansson, Director of McKinsey Global Institute and Senior Partner of McKinsey and Company

our social model,” Johansson noted. “At a time when business cycles are accelerating, we need to continuously stimulate the growth, the innovation, and we need investment because that is the lifeblood of competitiveness.”

Failure to reach out to citizens in the race for competitiveness risks empowering political extremists ready to exploit feelings of alienation

and exclusion, warned **Dharmendra Kanani**, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Spokesperson of Friends of Europe and plenary sessions moderator.



Dharmendra Kanani

Properly targeted investment can ensure that Europe meets climate goals while reducing inequality and soothing voters’ worries over issues such as affordable housing, heating and public transport, asserted **Leena Ylä-Mononen**, Executive Director at the European Environment Agency (EEA). “If we want to achieve the goals of the European Green Deal, we will need massive investment ... we will need radical changes in all our core systems, mobility, food, how we consume, how we produce,” she said. “We really need to make the right choices so the investments can deliver both the environment and policy objectives and bring economic and social benefits.”



Leena Ylä-Mononen

Some discussants expressed unease with the Draghi report's prediction that massive public investment will be needed to spur the economy. Cautioning about the dangers of runaway public debt, **Charles Wyplosz**, French economist and Emeritus Professor at the Graduate Institute in Geneva, suggested more creative use of existing EU funds, such as diverting money from agricultural support or regional programmes. "You can free up overnight if there is the political will, two-thirds of the Commission budget [...] and that is quite a bit of money," Wyplosz said. "If you want money for good causes, take it from where it is being wasted."



Charles Wyplosz

Rather than debt-fuelled government handouts, European tech companies need government contracts – like their competitors in the United States or Israel - contended **Nicolas Brien**, French entrepreneur, founder of Wastetide and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40). "Money and capital are not enough; I need to sign contracts," he told the meeting. "More capital is great, more clients is even better."



Nicolas Brien



António Leitão Amaro

“Well-intentioned rules are dragging us behind”

António Leitão Amaro, Portuguese Minister of the Presidency

While agreeing that unified markets in key sectors are a crucial part of Europe's path to a stronger economy, some EU member-state representatives complained that excessive European regulation is holding back progress. They appealed for more leeway for national initiatives. **António Leitão Amaro**, Portuguese Minister of the Presidency, called Brussels-based regulation 'blue tape' and said it should be cut to allow countries to do more for themselves, notably in online privacy, land use and public tendering.

“We have created layers and layers of blue tape which are hindering the speed, the capabilities of acting like we should in renewables, in supplying housing that our populations need, healthcare and schools, security for our people,” he said. “Let’s think at the same time what we can do together [...] but also what we can undo together [...] Well-intentioned rules are dragging us behind.”

Whatever measures are adopted to jumpstart the economy, discussants insisted Europe should cherish and look after - not sacrifice - its social, economic and political values on the altar of productivity.



Margrethe Vestager

“The most important thing is to stay loyal to the European model, which is to create prosperity and to translate that into welfare for everybody”

Margrethe Vestager, European Commission Executive Vice-President for a Europe fit for the Digital Age and Commissioner for Competition

“The most important thing is to stay loyal to the European model, which is to create prosperity and to translate that into welfare for everybody,” said **Margrethe Vestager**, European Commission Executive Vice-President for a Europe fit for the Digital Age and Commissioner for Competition.

“That’s the idea and that is what has made Europe the best place to live ever in history, especially if you’re a woman,” she said. “If we

want to give that up now, then I am absolutely certain that we will lose.”

Vestager reminded all present at the roundtable that there is less competition in Europe today than there used to be. “In Europe, mark-ups are going up, profits are going up, concentration is going up. The one effect of that is loss of GDP and wage inequality. This is what [less competition] has given us.”



TONU



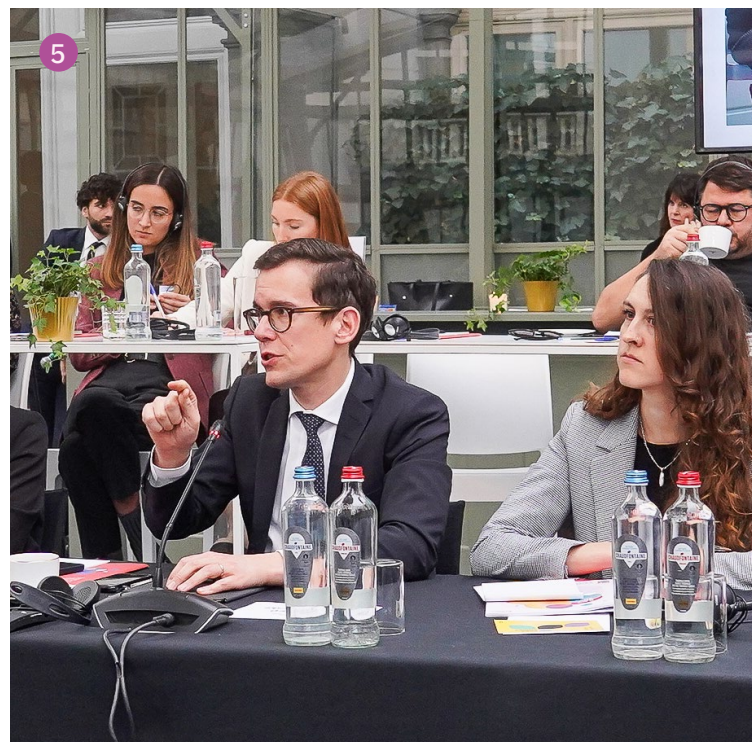
1. **Paul Walton**, Executive Director, Africa-Europe Foundation (AEF); **Sylvain Boko**, Senior Fellow for Sustainable Finance, Africa-Europe Foundation (AEF)

2. **Valbona Zeneli**, Senior Fellow for Peace, Security and Defence, Friends of Europe; **Anna Diamantopoulou**, President of DIKTI0, former European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and former Greek Minister for Education and Development, Trustee of Friends of Europe

3. **Mario Monti**, Italian Senator, former Prime Minister and European Commissioner, and Trustee of Friends of Europe; author of 'Demagonia and the Politics of Illusion'; **Anna Diamantopoulou**

4. **Sebastian Nieto-Parra**, Head of Latin-America and the Caribbean, OECD Development Centre; **Zoran Jolevski**, Professor, European University of Skopje, former minister of Defence, North Macedonia

5. **Benjamin Brake**, Digital and Data Policy Director-General at the German Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport (BMDV)



Out of the digital doldrums

With the digital economy already representing 15 percent of world GDP and growing at a pace far outstripping other sectors, it was natural State of Europe placed particular emphasis on the prospects for Europe to harness its tech potential and drag itself out of economic stagnation. Europe has taken a global lead in regulating the digital sphere, with pioneering legislation such as the Digital Markets Act, Digital Service Act, Data Governance Act and AI Act, all legacies of the ending 2019-2024 mandate. However, its digital industry lags way behind the United States and China in a global tech race that will intensify as politics magnifies economic rivalries.

Roundtable discussants looked at how policymakers can create regulatory and financial frameworks that encourage digital progress and innovation, while protecting society and democracy from the abusive reach of big tech.



Marietje Schaake

Marietje Schaake, International Policy Director at the Stanford University Cyber Policy Centre, and author of ‘The Tech Coup: How to Save Democracy from Silicon Valley’, and Trustee of Friends of Europe issued a warning on the ongoing ‘power grab by tech companies at the expense of democracy.’

Despite its raft of tech legislation, Europe must go much further to prevent a ‘leaking loss’ of governance and power from governments to big tech, Schaake said. “Even with all these new laws in place, there is still enormous dependence and there is still a lot of decision making that is done by tech companies and not by democratic European governments.”

“Even with all these new laws in place, there is still enormous dependence and there is still a lot of decision making that is done by tech companies and not by democratic European governments”

Marietje Schaake, International Policy Director at the Stanford University Cyber Policy Centre, and author of ‘The Tech Coup: How to Save Democracy from Silicon Valley’, and Trustee of Friends of Europe



Discussants urged governments to counterbalance regulation to protect citizens by providing space for European companies to innovate and grow. Europe needs better regulation, rather than more regulation, argued **Liisa-Ly Pakosta**, Minister of Justice and Digital Affairs from Estonia, a world leader in digital services for citizens and businesses.

“Regulation should ground a network for innovation and development,” she said. “I would like to underline this principle: that we keep regulating in the EU only when it enables growth and when it enables development and when it enables technical interoperability of services ... having these outcomes to be ethical,

“We don’t have the right digital single market in place. We always tell ourselves that we [do] but too often, we leave the interpretation of European law to national regulators and national courts”

Benjamin Brake, Digital and Data Policy Director-General at the German Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport (BMDV)

transparent, auditable and (in line with) all those basic values that we have.”

Benjamin Brake, Digital and Data Policy Director-General at the German Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport (BMDV), was among several introductory discussants emphasising the negative consequences for competitiveness if Europe fails to complete a unified market in digital and other key fields.

“We don’t have the right digital single market in place. We always tell ourselves that we have this, that we are going forward with it, but too often, we leave the interpretation of European law to national regulators and national courts,” Brake lamented “That has led to a scattered landscape of interpretation of European law.”

Speaking from the European Commission’s Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs, Deputy Director-General **Elena Flores Gual**, appealed for a mindset change among national authorities across Europe to unblock the integrated markets Europe tech industry needs to scale up and compete globally. “This is a must. We need to have this capital markets union,” she said. “I hope that with the current challenges globally and this current focus on competitiveness and productivity, we have a clear window to really push for that.”





Joakim Reiter

“It is time for all of us to wake up and realise that we are going to have to take control of our own destiny, including in the digital space”

Joakim Reiter, Chief External and Corporate Affairs Officer at Vodafone and former deputy director general of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

European decisionmakers must take a more comprehensive approach, listening to players from across the digital sector to craft a framework that enables Europe to stand up for itself in the increasingly competitive international context, contended **Joakim Reiter**, Chief External and Corporate Affairs Officer at Vodafone and former deputy director general of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

“There is very limited recognition in Europe how far we have fallen behind in digital infrastructure,” he warned. “If we are serious about competitiveness [...]there is a lot to do in Europe.”

The news from across the Atlantic makes that even more crucial, Reiter said. “In the light of the US election results, I think it is time for all of us to

wake up and realise that we are going to have to take control of our own destiny, including in the digital space,” he added. “Incrementalism must be over; we need to have a very comprehensive understanding of the entire ecosystem.”

With properly targeted investment, a well-drafted and well-enforced regulatory framework, and cooperation between the private and public sector, discussants at the roundtable were confident Europe can develop its potential for innovation and growth.

“Europe can and must be the hub for innovation to boost our competitiveness while protecting the health and wellbeing of our citizens,” said **Annette Brüls**, Corporate Vice-president for EMEACLA at Edwards Lifesciences. “To achieve this, we need a bold vision for innovation, combined with a strong partnership, to rethink our regulation and really collaborate together.”



Annette Brüls

“Europe can and must be the hub for innovation to boost our competitiveness while protecting the health and wellbeing of our citizens.”

Annette Brüls, Corporate Vice-president for EMEACLA at Edwards Lifesciences



1. **Pedro Duarte**, Portuguese Minister of Parliamentary Affairs; **Dragos Pislaru**, former chair, European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL), former minister of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly of Romania

2. **Xavier Damman**, Co-founder, Commons Hub Brussels and European Young Leader (EYL40); **Jon Worth**, Political Blogger and Campaigner, #CrossBorderRail project, and European Young Leader (EYL40)

3. **Dharmendra Kanani**, Chief Spokesperson and Chief Operating Officer at Friends of Europe; **Margrethe Vestager**, European Commission Executive Vice-President for a Europe fit for the Digital Age and Commissioner for Competition



Baku to the future

As the United Nations COP29 Climate talks were poised to get underway in Baku, State of Europe considered how Europe can maintain global leadership in climate action, solidifying existing alliances and building new ones to mitigate the impact of the incoming Trump administration rolls back US environmental protection.



Sinead Walsh

“The US is 10% of emissions, there are 90% of emissions that we can still make progress on, even if we don’t see a lot from the US”

Sinead Walsh, Climate Director at Ireland’s Department of Foreign Affairs

Despite concerns over signs of a backlash against climate action on this side of the Atlantic, discussants had a generally positive message. “The US is 10% of emissions, there are 90% of emissions that we can still make progress on, even if we don’t see a lot from the US,” said **Sinead Walsh**, Climate Director at Ireland’s Department of Foreign Affairs. “We will need to step up and I think we will step up.” She noted, too, that during the previous Trump administration, there had been significant US climate action at a sub-federal level from states, cities and the private sector.

Diana Ürge-Vorsatz, Vice-Chair at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Professor at the Central European University (CEU), agreed that Europe can take the lead.

“We have to continue to be trailblazers, and we will be able to be trailblazers,” she said. “For that, it needs to be a bit easier to say goodbye to some of our formally very important, historically very strong economic sectors and be able to transform to totally new areas.” For example, Ürge-Vorsatz mentioned the new industries related to building retrofits, and the more digital and service-based industries. “There is a lot of investment we have to do, but let’s use that giant investment not to enshrine the status quo, not to enshrine business-as-usual, but to transition to a very different, 21st-century European economy.”

Among proposals arising from the session were calls for the EU to work more closely with other global partners on climate outreach, including

China. “We need to cooperate more with other partners,” said **Oras Tynkkynen**, Member of the Finnish Parliament.

“If we want to tackle the climate crisis, I think we need to work together with China,” he added. “From a principled point of view, it would be lovely if we lived in a world where we could cooperate with people who share our values. We are not in that world today.”

Other suggestions were for countries to concentrate their climate action on specific aspects of the crisis – following Ireland's example in working with most vulnerable nations on adaptation and loss and damage; and ideas for mobilising the financial sector behind climate action.



Frank Elderson

Frank Elderson, Executive Board Member and Vice Chair of the Supervisory Board of the European Central Bank (ECB) stressed the advantages for financial institutions adopting a climate-positive approach – from the short-term imperative of avoiding litigation over failure to meet legally binding climate commitments, to the wider economic benefits of managing a smooth transition to a sustainable future.

“The climate and nature crises translate into financial risks ... we need to make sure that banks manage these risks,” Elderson said.

“An orderly transition, also from an economic standpoint, is much more preferable to a world where you kick the can down the road and close your eyes to what is happening.”

“An orderly transition, also from an economic standpoint, is much more preferable to a world where you kick the can down the road and close your eyes to what is happening”

Frank Elderson, Executive Board Member and Vice Chair of the Supervisory Board of the European Central Bank (ECB)

Rong Zhang, Global Coordinator, Sustainable Banking and Finance Network at the International Finance Corporation, spoke of the need for ‘fundamental reform to change the financial system to really bring the finance and development together’. She urged the EU to work more with global partners to promote interoperability in climate action and ensure the implementation of climate decisions through capacity building and impact measurement. “COP policy is only a means to an end; it’s about implementation and impact,” Zhang concluded.

“COP policy is only a means to an end; it’s about implementation and impact”

Rong Zhang, Global Coordinator, Sustainable Banking and Finance Network, International Finance Corporation (IFC)



Isabelle Jörg and Rosmarie Wydler-Wälti

In setting the scene of the climate session, **Isabelle Jörg** and **Rosmarie Wydler-Wälti** from Klima Seniorinnen, the, Swiss Senior Women for Climate Protection, explained their long but ultimately successful legal action

against the Swiss government for failing to take sufficient action against climate change. “We believe that it is the moment to fight for climate protection in the courtroom,” said Jörg. “We will keep on fighting for our rights and the planet.”



1. Margrethe Vestager; Andrea Rappagliosi, Senior Vice President Public Affairs EMEA, Canada, Latin America, Edwards Lifesciences; **Nicolas Brien**, French entrepreneur, founder of Wastetide and 2022 European Young Leader (EYL40)

2. Sylvain Johansson, McKinsey Global Institute

3. Antonio Leitao Amaro, Portuguese Minister; **Ana Isabel Xavier**, Portuguese State Secretary for National Defence; **Pedro Duarte**, Portuguese Minister; **Adriano Rafael Moreira**, Portuguese State Secretary for Labour

4. Vladimira Marcinkova, Member, Slovak National Parliament Committee on Human Rights and Minorities, European Young Leader (EYL40); **Disa Jironet Loewe**, Dutch Public Prosecutor and European Young Leader (EYL40); **Ruxandra Ivan**, State Counsellor for European Affairs to the Prime Minister of Romania

5. Kim Jorgensen, Permanent Representative to the EU, European Investment Bank (EIB); **Nicolas Schmit**, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights

Europe's existential threat

The need to keep on fighting was also the message emerging from the State of Europe session on Ukraine. Although the debate was themed on 'European strategy for recovery and reconstruction,' discussant after discussant stressed the importance of maintaining military and financial support for Kyiv as it struggles to hold back Russian advances and braces for policy changes under the incoming regime in Washington. All dignitaries recalled that Ukraine's fight is crucial for the security of Europe.

"Europe's future is tied to Ukraine's future," asserted **Pierre Heilbronn**, France's Special Envoy for Ukraine's Relief and Reconstruction. "Obviously this is existential for Ukraine, but this is existential for Europe too."

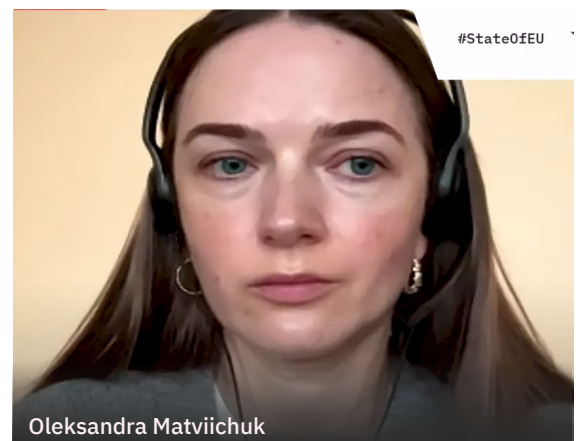
"Europe's future is tied to Ukraine's future"

Pierre Heilbronn, France's Special Envoy for Ukraine's Relief and Reconstruction

That existential risk stems from Russia's expansionist ambitions that run far beyond Ukraine and have been heightened by the Kremlin's increasingly solid partnership with other authoritarian regimes, including China, Iran and North Korea, at a time when Western solidarity is being stretched.

"All these regimes have something in common. They have the same idea of what the world should look like. In this regard, Ukraine is not a goal, Ukraine is a tool to break the international

order and help their vision," warned **Oleksandra Matviichuk**, Head of the Centre for Civil Liberties, 2022 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and 2023 European Young Leader (EYL40).



"Europe needs Ukraine no less that Ukraine needs Europe in order to defend freedom and provide global security," she said. "If we are not able to stop Putin in Ukraine, he will go further. We need to take decisive actions, have a common strategy to defend values, because only determination to act defines a society that has a future."

Europe needs a concerted effort to back Ukraine, mobilising civil society, the private sector and the government, said **Geert Cami**, Co-founder and Secretary General of Friends of Europe. "If we are serious about the existential threat that this war in Europe poses to the European Union, then we have to step up our efforts as well," he said. "Not enough people in our part of the world [...] realise the importance of supporting

Ukraine for our democracies. Ukraine is part of Europe and is part of our own fight against authoritarianism.”

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Oleksandra Matviichuk, Head of the Centre for Civil Liberties, 2022 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and 2023 European Young Leader (EYL40)

As doubts mount about continued US support for Ukraine with the prospects of a Trump Administration 2.0. and European nations impose restrictions on their own aid, Cami joined other discussants in calling for Europe to activate the \$300bn in seized Russian assets in order to provide Ukraine with support without burdening taxpayers.

“We understand that assistance will be decreasing in the future. The flow of funds from the taxpayers, Western budgets to Ukraine is going to decrease, so we need to look for other sources of funds. The first one is, of course, Russian assets. Russia has to pay for what it did and has to pay for recovery,” said **Oleksii Sobolev**, Ukrainian First Deputy Minister of Economy.



James Appathurai, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Innovation, Hybrid and Cyber at NATO, noted the priorities for Ukraine support as the country faces a deadly winter following months of systematic Russian attacks on civilian energy infrastructure designed to freeze the country into submission.

“They need a massive amount of support now, NOW, to protect their infrastructure,” he told the audience. Air defence systems are key, but Ukraine also needs ‘passive protection’ such as concrete shells for energy plants and Western components to patch up damaged energy systems, together with equipment and expertise to build new, more decentralised power units that are less vulnerable to attack than existing coal and nuclear plants.

Appathurai also highlighted Russia’s threat to the West, evidenced by consistent cyber sabotage and other hybrid attacks on NATO Allies. A strong Ukraine is key to deterring that threat, he noted. “We have to manage a generation of aggressive, paranoid, expansionistic and very well-armed Russia supported by other autocracies. That is the reality we have in Europe right now and Ukraine is an essential keystone to helping

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James Appathurai

“We have to manage a generation of aggressive, paranoid, expansionistic and very well-armed Russia supported by other autocracies. That is the reality we have in Europe right now and Ukraine is an essential keystone to helping to manage this problem, including through NATO membership, which will come”

James Appathurai, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Innovation, Hybrid and Cyber at NATO

to manage this problem, including through NATO membership, which will come. They are the best at fighting the Russians; they have demonstrated they can do it.”

Given the Russian threat and doubts about continued US commitment to NATO, Europe urgently needs to bolster its defence capabilities. “Whatever has been happening around or beyond European borders, we have to equip ourselves to be able to ensure the security and safety and of our continent,” noted Heilbronn. “The question of stepping up massively our effort in Europe is obvious for us.”

Ana Isabel Xavier, Portuguese Secretary of State for National Defence, reminded the roundtable that while most discussions on Ukraine take focus on Europe, a battle of narratives is taking place in what we call the plural South, where Russia continues to increase its presence and influence, including in South America, in Asia, and especially in Africa. “Russia is employing its influence to pierce through its



Ana Isabel Xavier

“Russia is employing its influence to pierce through its international isolations, to evade sanctions [...], and to get access to natural resources that fuel Putin's regime and war machines”

Ana Isabel Xavier, Portuguese Secretary of State for National Defence

international isolations, to evade sanctions [...], and to get access to natural resources that fuel Putin's regime and war machines.

Contributors also underscored support for Ukraine's simultaneous challenge of defending its citizens from attack, rebuilding shattered infrastructure and promoting political, economic and social reforms to prepare for EU membership.

“We're fighting, we're growing the economy and we're doing the reforms at the same time. Which is really, really stressful, but this is the only way we can move forward,” Minister Sobolev recalled. In response, the West has to provide whole-of-society backing, concluded moderator **Jaap de Hoop Scheffer**, Chair of Clingendael Institute, Dutch Minister of State, former NATO secretary general, former Dutch foreign minister and Trustee of Friends of Europe.





1. Oras Tynkkynen, Member of the Finnish National Parliament; **Jeppe Kofod**, CEO of Kofod Global Advisory Services, former Danish minister of Foreign Affairs, and Member of the Friends of Europe Ukraine Steering Group

2. Diana Ürge-Vorsatz (on screen), IPCC Vice-Chair and Professor at the Central European University (CEU); **Sinead Walsh**, Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs; **Frank Elderson**, European Central Bank (ECB)

3. Jordi Solé, EU Politics Professor at the University of Girona, former Member of the European Parliament

4. Maryam Bukar Hassan, Nigerian Poet

5. Jamie Shea, Senior Fellow for Peace, Security and Defence, Friends of Europe, former NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges



Better together

The entry of Ukraine and other candidate countries into the European Union is a necessary step for strengthening Europe as a geopolitical player when its international influence is waning, said contributors to the debate on EU enlargement.

“Enlargement today is a geopolitical necessity for Europe. [...] It has to become the geopolitical priority of the EU”

Arancha González Laya, Dean of the Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA) at Sciences Po and former Spanish minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation

“Enlargement today is a geopolitical necessity for Europe [...] because the region is one of the world’s geopolitical fault lines. It has to become the geopolitical priority of the EU,” said **Arancha González Laya**, Dean of the Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA) at Sciences Po and former Spanish minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation.

Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, Former president of Croatia and Trustee of Friends of Europe, also sees ‘the process of enlargement as the necessary element for the EU to become a truly global actor’.

A successful enlargement will be a win-win situation, strengthening both the existing Union and its new members, several discussants

noted. “The enlargement policy is one of the most successful ones that the European Union has had and what enlargement gave to Europe was peace, stability, unity, prosperity,” said **Megi Fino**, Albanian Deputy Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs and 2024 European Young Leader (EYL40).

Gordana Dimitrieska-Kochoska, Minister of Finance of North Macedonia, agreed. “Our future is only that, the European Union and nothing else [...] Our young people are expecting as soon as possible to be part of the European Union,” she told the meeting. “The European Union is our future, if the EU is stronger, we are stronger [...] We need to be part of this family because we believe together, we are stronger.”



Gordana Dimitrieska-Kochoska

“The European Union is our future, if the EU is stronger, we are stronger [...] We need to be part of this family because we believe together, we are stronger”

Gordana Dimitrieska Kochoska, Minister of Finance of North Macedonia

Discussants cautioned that continued delays, setbacks and doubts over the enlargement agenda risked fuelling frustration among citizens in candidate countries, turning them against Europe and opening the path for malicious players – such as Russia – to exploit disappointments and expand their influence.

“Enlargement fatigue is not only an EU concept; it is also something we struggle with in the region. Public support is shrinking,” Fino warned. “That is very dangerous, not just for our region but beyond.”

To overcome that danger, both sides need to maintain the sense of urgency that Russia’s attack on Ukraine has injected into the enlargement process. “New momentum has been opened because of the war ... the name of the game is how to seize the momentum,” said **Tanja Miščević**, Serbian Minister of European Integration. “This enlargement is the completion of Europe.”

The debate considered that the current 27 EU member states need to provide a clear pathway ahead for the candidates, including by examining reforms the EU needs to ensure that it can function effectively with an expanded membership. “Not only do future member states need to do their homework ... but the EU itself needs to do its homework to be able to welcome new member states,” remarked **Shahin Vallée**, Head of the Geo-Economics Programme at the German Council on Foreign Relations, member of the Group of Twelve, co-author of the report on EU Institutional Reform, and 2014 European Young Leader (EYL40).

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Megi Fino, Albanian Deputy Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs and 2024 European Young Leader (EYL40)



Arben Fetail, North Macedonia’s Deputy Prime Minister for Good Governance and **Megi Fino**



Tanja Miščević

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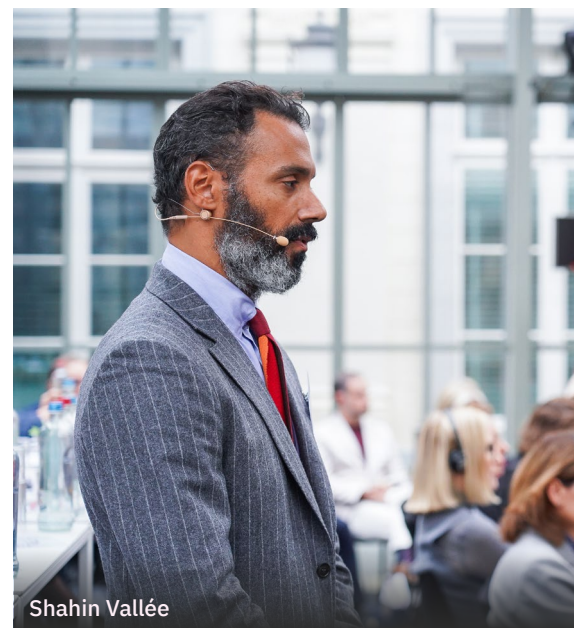
Suggestions were made that candidates could integrate into the EU on a step-by-step basis ahead of full adhesion. Still, it was made clear that any such ‘non-binary’ solution could not result in them getting stuck in any form of ‘second-class’ membership.

European policymakers were reminded that rather than being a technical process, the enlargement is central to the hopes and aspirations for a better future for millions of Europeans. “This enlargement discussion is not just a bureaucratic exercise ... It is about the hopes, the expectations and the fears of people,” said González. “If we treat it as a bureaucratic exercise, what we are doing is generating a lot of mistrust, which is exactly the opposite of what you need to do if you are trying to enlarge the family.”

While recognising the risk of dissatisfaction arising from protracted enlargement negotiations, Grabar-Kitarović pointed out that the process brings its benefits, empowering

candidates to strengthen their democracies, economies and societies.

“We have not fully realised the transformative power of Europeanisation. We often focus on the goal itself of accession, while we should be focusing on the journey, the fact that the process of accession provides an excellent blueprint for reform, democratic reform, political, economic,” she stated. “The ultimate aim of the accession process should not be satisfying the EU’s criteria, but really providing for a better life, in a better country, for all of our citizens.”



Shahin Vallée



Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović

“The ultimate aim of the accession process should not be satisfying the EU’s criteria, but really providing for a better life, in a better country, for all of our citizens.”

Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, former president of Croatia and Trustee of Friends of Europe

**WE NEED
MORE EUROPE!**



TONU



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1. **Shahin Vallée**, Senior Fellow at the German Council on Foreign Relations, member of the Group of Twelve and co-author of the report on EU Institutional Reform and European Young Leader (EYL40)
2. **Henrietta Moon**, Co-Founder and CEO, Carbo Culture and European Young Leader (EYL40); **Pia Alina Lange**, EU Public Affairs & Policy Director, Trina Solar; **Daniela Morari**, Ambassador, Mission of the Republic of Moldova to the EU
3. **Nanna-Louise Linde**, Vice-President for European Government Affairs, Microsoft; **Joakim Reiter**, Chief External and Corporate Affairs Officer, Vodafone

Poetic justice

Ahead of the full debating sessions, State of Europe 2024 opened with a series of ‘early-bird’ roundtables that examined Europe’s role in the world from the perspective of US relations, the Middle East, China, Latin America and Africa.

“This Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a faraway conflict, there are intimate links between Europe and this conflict in all kinds of ways”

Mary Fitzgerald, Non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute, Senior Fellow for Peace, Security and Defence and Trustee of Friends of Europe

The group of 12 senior policymakers debating the impact of the war in Gaza pondered divisions in European policy and the risk that Europe’s relations with the Arab world and elsewhere could face long-term harm due to perceptions of EU double standards in dealing with Israel. There was a general assertion that many in Europe don’t understand the complexities in Israeli, Palestinian and Lebanese societies, or the potential impacts for Europe of conflict in the Middle East.

“This Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a faraway conflict, there are intimate links between Europe and this conflict in all kinds of ways,” said discussion facilitator **Mary Fitzgerald**, Non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute, Senior Fellow for Peace, Security and

Defence and Trustee of Friends of Europe, 2013 European Young Leader (EYL40). “This is a deeply European war in many respects.”

Nigerian poet **Maryam Bukar Hassan** delivered an eloquent plea for peace around the world. “What is peace if it does not extend to all the corners of the world, to every human being? And what is peace if it leaves behind a legacy of pain and forgotten suffering?”



Maryam Bukar Hassan

She appealed for Europe to adopt an inclusive and compassionate leadership role, promoting sustainable development that leaves nobody behind and working not just to halt conflict but to repair the damage done by years of war and neglect. “Peace is more than the absence of war. We must restore health, dignity and hope.”

“What is peace if it does not extend to all the corners of the world, to every human being? And what is peace if it leaves behind a legacy of pain and forgotten suffering?”

Maryam Bukar Hassan, Nigerian poet

The call for compassion was also taken up by **Disa Jironet Loewe**, Dutch Public Prosecutor and 2024 European Young Leader (EYL40). Based on her own experience in the judicial system dealing with the victims and perpetrators of crime, she petitioned for a more human, more empathetic approach to the law.

“If we can’t understand what really happened, we can’t find the right punishment and we can’t look towards the future, and we can’t provide the solace and the healing that is needed for both the defendants and the victims and the community around them,” Jironet said.

“If we can’t understand what really happened, we can’t find the right punishment and we can’t look towards the future, and we can’t provide the solace and the healing that is needed for both the defendants and the victims and the community around them”

Disa Jironet Loewe, Dutch Public Prosecutor and 2024 European Young Leader (EYL40)

To stimulate that change, governments need to craft legislation that empowers society, implement policies that relate to citizens’ priorities and recognise the need for understanding and empathy in people’s lives. If not, the risk of voters heeding the siren song of populism will rise.

“If we continue to build our societal bodies on mistrust and fear, that is what we will get back from our citizens,” Jironet stated. “People who feel that laws and policies are not made for them will be hankering for somebody who at least says that they matter ... if we don’t pay attention to emotion, it provides a great opportunity for anti-liberal forces to conquer the hearts of people.”



Disa Jironet Loewe

Conclusion

In conclusion, State of Europe 2024 recognised the US election results as a wakeup call, heightening the need for Europe to strengthen and modernise its economy in an increasingly competitive world and build renewed unity for leadership in the face of global challenges from the war in Ukraine, to the deepening climate crisis.

The roundtable reiterated the pivotal role a Renewed Social Contract should play in ensuring Europe can forge a more competitive economic model while protecting and improving its social model. It underscored the need for Europe to harness the benefits of technological advances to underpin economic progress while introducing safeguards that protect democracy, freedom and social well-being from the dark side of the tech revolution.

As the war rages unabated, European policymakers must redouble efforts to support Kyiv's fight for democracy, battling "Ukraine fatigue" at home and pushing to maximise military, financial and humanitarian support.

With new doubts about US commitment, Europe needs to step up its game both to protect Ukraine and to beef up defence capabilities across the continent. Domestically, Europe has to do more to tackle threats to its democracy. That includes countering disinformation and social-media manipulation by authoritarian populists, both within the European Union and among candidates working to join the Union.

Europe must build on its global leadership position on climate change, reaching new partnerships and seeking innovative ways to take forward the fight against global warming.

The key is rejecting the temptation to re-nationalise European policies. Instead, EU member nations must set aside petty differences and work closer than ever to craft a common European approach to the challenges ahead.

President's Gala Dinner



On the eve of State of Europe, **Etienne Davignon**, President of Friends of Europe, invited several hundred high-level guests to the President's Gala Dinner.

The theme of this year's President's Gala Dinner was "Stubborn optimism in today's world", featuring people like **Mario Monti**, Italian Senator for life and former prime minister and

European Commissioner for the Single Market, as well as **Aranca González Laya**, Dean of the Paris School of International Affairs at Sciences Po and former Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs; and **Marietje Schaake**, Non-Resident Fellow at Stanford's Cyber Policy Center and the Institute for Human-Centered AI and Trustee of Friends of Europe.



1. Henrietta Moon, Co-Founder and CEO, Carbo Culture and European Young Leader (EYL40); **Patrick Child**, Deputy Director-General, European Commission Directorate General for the Environment

2. Gordana Dimitrieska-Kochoska, Minister of Finance of North Macedonia

3. Geert Cami, Co-Founder and Secretary General, Friends of Europe; Co-Founder and Co-Secretary General, Africa-Europe Foundation (AEF)

4. Veronika Wand-Danielsson, Swedish Ambassador to Germany, Trustee of Friends of Europe; **Kim Jorgensen**, Permanent Representative to the EU, European Investment Bank (EIB)

5. Dragos Pislaru, former chair, European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL), former minister of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly of Romania; **Oana-Silvia Toiu**, Vice-President, Chamber of Deputies, Romania, European Young Leader (EYL40)



Arancha González Laya, Dean of the Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA) at Sciences Po and former Spanish minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation

Arancha Gonzalez Laya stressed that Europe cannot rely on American politics to dictate its future and must take responsibility for its destiny. Gonzalez Laya called for greater consolidation and integration within Europe, particularly in energy, technology, and capital markets, to enhance the continent's competitiveness. She also underscored the importance of investing in Europe's collective security and taking more ownership of the European pillar of NATO.

Regarding Ukraine, Gonzalez Laya warned against the temptation for individual European countries to pursue transactional deals, stressing that a Ukrainian defeat would be a loss for the entire European Union. She urged

European unity and resolve in supporting Ukraine. She emphasised the need to take democracy seriously, cautioning against complacency among citizens, businesses, and politicians. She highlighted the threat of "tech tyranny" and called for a renewed commitment to democratic values.

Finally, Gonzalez Laya advocated for building alliances with countries around the world, rather than insulating the EU, to enhance European resilience and mutual support. She concluded with a passionate call to action, quoting her mentor Jacques Delors: "Never choose between being an optimist or being a pessimist, choose being an activist."



1. **António Leitão Amaro**, Portuguese Minister of the Presidency; **Rami Sabanegh**, Senior Vice-President of Strategy at The Coca-Cola Company

2. **Karlo Ressler**, Chair, European Parliament Delegation to the EU-North Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee

3. **Brando Benifei**, Chair, European Parliament Delegation for relations with the United States of America; **Laszlo Andor**, Secretary General of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), former European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Trustee of Friends of Europe

4. **Marietje Schaake**, International Policy Director at the Stanford University Cyber Policy Center and International Policy Fellow at Stanford's Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence, author of 'The Tech Coup' and trustee of Friends of Europe

5. **Valbona Zeneli**, Senior Fellow for Peace, Security and Defence, Friends of Europe; **Mario Nava**, Director-General, European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (EMPL)





Marietje Schaake, International Policy Director at the Stanford University Cyber Policy Center and International Policy Fellow at Stanford's Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence, author of 'The Tech Coup' and trustee of Friends of Europe

Marietje Schaake addressed the theme of "stubborn optimism" in Europe by arguing that Europe can sometimes be too stubborn and overly optimistic. Schaake provided several illustrations to support this, including Europe's handling of anti-democratic forces like Hungary's Victor Orban, the overly optimistic expectations around diplomacy with Russia, and Europe's abdication of responsibility in Gaza. Schaake also criticised the EU's approach to self-governance, where new laws are praised without adequately addressing underlying problems, using the flagship GDPR laws as an example. Schaake warned about the impact of Trumpism and the influence of Silicon Valley on transatlantic tech policy, predicting rollbacks in regulation and more mixing of corporate interests with geopolitics.

Schaake advocated for a shift from "stubborn optimism" to "determined principalism," drawing from bioethics principles like respect for autonomy, beneficence, and justice. She urged the EU to double down on these principles, even in the face of fragmentation and temptations towards pragmatism. Schaake also suggested that the EU should offer opportunities to academics and tech talent who are leaving the US.



1. **Serpil Timuray** CEO, Vodafone Investments, United Kingdom
2. **Benjamin Haddad**, French Minister Delegate for European Affairs
3. **Vladimira Marcinkova**, Member, Slovak National Parliament Committee on Human Rights and Minorities, European Young Leader (EYL40); **Oana-Silvia Toiu**, Vice-President, Chamber of Deputies, Romania, European Young Leader (EYL40)
4. **Karien Van Gennip**, former Dutch deputy prime minister and minister of Social Affairs and Employment
5. **Nicolas Schmit**, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights; **André Loeseckrug-Pietri**, Chairman and Scientific Director, JEDI – Joint European Disruptive Initiative, European young Leader (EYL40)





Mario Monti, Italian Senator, former Prime Minister and European Commissioner, and Trustee of Friends of Europe; author of 'Demagonia and the Politics of Illusion'

Mario Monti's intervention began with an expression of his surprise and honour at being considered a "living legend" by Friends of Europe among Italian Prime Ministers. Monti then reflected on the challenges posed by the Trump presidency, noting that while Trump was not directly against Europe, he was certainly against European integration. Building on this remark, Monti credited the EU's cohesion in 2017 to the leadership of Angela Merkel, who had kept the bloc united in the face of the UK's "divide and conquer" tactics. Turning to the present, Senator Monti acknowledged that Europe's situation has become increasingly complex, with wars raging around Europe. He argued that Europe needs to take greater responsibility for its defence rather than relying on the 'unstable' United States.

Mario Monti also took a jab at his fellow former Prime Ministers, Enrico Letta and Mario Draghi,

joking that he hopes Paolo Gentiloni will soon be tasked with writing another important EU report, as Monti himself had been asked to do 'before even becoming prime minister.'

Monti then delved into the growing influence of nationalism within the European Council, which he described as the "best and worst idea" of recent decades. Monti warned against the tendency of the Commission to defer to the Council and called for the Commission to be more assertive in its role as the guardian of the EU treaties. Ultimately, Monti sees a unique opportunity for cohesion under the leadership of the current Commission President, whom he described as being of "enormous stature". Senator Monti concluded by asking European politicians to be willing to make sacrifices, short of "blood," for European unity, drawing parallels to the legacy of leaders like Helmut Kohl.

List of discussants

Mika Aaltola

Member, European Parliament
Committee on Foreign Affairs
(AFET)

Samir Abdelkrim

Author of Startup Lions, Founder
and CEO, EMERGING Valley, Africa-
Europe Foundation Digital Strategy
Group Member, European Young
Leader (EYL40), France

Ahmed Abdurahman

Founder and CEO, Järvaveckan,
Sweden

Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen

Director General, European
Commission Directorate General
for Education, Youth, Sport and
Culture (EAC)

Anna Akhalkatsi

Country Director for the European
Union, The World Bank Group

Laszlo Andor

Secretary General of the
Foundation for European
Progressive Studies (FEPS), former
European Commissioner for
Employment, Social Affairs and
Inclusion, Trustee of Friends of
Europe

Stefania Andreescu

Director General, Implementation
of Policies, Programmes and
Projects, Ministry of Labour and
Social Solidarity, Romania

Vytenis Andriukaitis

Member, European Parliament,
Subcommittee on Public Health,
Former European Commissioner
for Health and Food Safety

Teresa Anjinho

Human Rights expert, Member
of the Supervisory Committee
of OLAF, former Portuguese
Deputy Ombudsman, European
Ombudsman Candidate, Portugal

Danijel Apostolovic

Ambassador, Mission of Serbia to
the EU

James Appathurai

Deputy Assistant Secretary General
for Innovation, Hybrid and Cyber,
North Atlantic Treaty Organization
(NATO)

Uladzimir Astapenka

Representative, Democratic
Belarus United Transitional
Cabinet, Belarus

Daniel Attard

Member, European Parliament
Committee on Transport and
Tourism (TRAN)

Petras Austrevicius

Member, European Parliament
Committee on Foreign Affairs
(AFET)

Bertrand Bainvel

Representative to the European
Union Institutions Director,
Partnership Office, Brussels, United
Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
Brussels Office

Tigran Balayan

Ambassador, Mission of Armenia
to the EU

Giulio Barbolani di Montauto

Head, European Space Agency
(ESA) Liaison Office with the
European Union

Natalie Barkei

Director Public Affairs, DocMorris

Dan Barna

Vice-President and Member,
European Parliament Committee
on Foreign Affairs (AFET)

Etienne Bassot

Director, European Parliamentary
Research Services (EPRS)

Brando Benifei

Chair, European Parliament
Delegation for relations with the
United States of America

Monica-Elena Berescu

Vice-Chair, Chamber of Deputies,
Romania Committee on
Information Technologies and
Communications, Romania

Willy Bergogné

Europe Director and EU
Representative, Save the Children

Nienke Beuwer

Director of External
Communications, McKinsey Global
Institute

Oliver Bisazza

Chief Executive Officer, MedTech
Europe

Sylvain Boko

Senior Fellow for Sustainable Finance, Africa-Europe Foundation (AEF)

Michele Bologna

Head of European Affairs, Enel

Eline Boon

Senior Policy Manager, Ellen MacArthur Foundation

Alex Borg

Member, House of Representatives, Malta Committee on Foreign and European Affairs, Malta

Loubna Bouarfa

Chairwoman AI Innovation Board, Envision Pharma Group, European Young Leader (EYL40), United Kingdom

Manfred Boudreaux-Dehmer

Chief Information Officer (CIO), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Benjamin Brake

Director General for Digital and Data policy, Ministry for Digital and Transport (BMDV), Germany

Nicolas Brien

Founder, Wastetide, European Young Leader (EYL40), France

Annette Bröls

Corporate Vice-President EMEA, Canada, Latin America, Edwards Lifesciences

Maryam Bukar Hassan

Nigerian poet

Lada Busevac

Head of Office, International Finance Corporation (IFC) European Stakeholder Liaison

Geert Cami

Co-founder and Secretary General, Friends of Europe, Co-founder & Co-Secretary General, Africa-Europe Foundation (AEF)

Edoardo Camilli

Co-Founder & CEO, Hozint - Horizon Intelligence, European Young Leader (EYL40)

Alessandra Cardaci

Head of Programming and Operations, Debating Europe

Francesca Cavallo

Chief Creative Officer, Undercats Media, European Young Leader (EYL40), Co-creator of Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls, Italy

Vsevolod Chentsov

Ambassador, Mission of Ukraine to the EU

Patrick Child

Deputy Director General, European Commission Directorate General for the Environment

Themis Christophidou

Director General, European Commission, Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy

Sophia Chrysopoulou

Director EU Public Affairs, The Coca-Cola Company

John Alistair Clarke

Former trade negotiator and head of the EU Delegations to the UN and WTO

Richard Corbett

Former UK Labour Party leader in the European Parliament

Laura Cozzi

Director of Sustainability, Technology and Outlooks, International Energy Agency (IEA)

Bogdan Cristescu

State Secretary, Ministry of Education, Romania

Ciarán Cuffe

Former Member, European Parliament

Pedro Miguel da Costa e Silva

Ambassador, Mission of Brazil to the EU

Xavier Damman

Co-founder, Commons Hub Brussels

Dora David

Member, European Parliament Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO)

Etienne Davignon

President of Friends of Europe, Belgian Minister of State, former Vice-President of the European Commission

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

Chair of Clingendael Institute, Minister of State, former NATO Secretary General and former Dutch Foreign Affairs Minister, Trustee of Friends of Europe

Carole De Sterck

Director of Finance, Friends of Europe

Petra De Sutter

Belgian Deputy Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister, Ministry of the Civil Service, Public Enterprises, Telecommunications Trustee of Friends of Europe

Massimo Deandreis

General Manager, Economic Research Center (SRM), Italy

Nathalie Delapalme

Executive Director, Mo Ibrahim Foundation, co-Secretary General of the Africa-Europe foundation

Daphne Dernison

Head Government and Public Affairs Europe, Philips

Ciarán Devane

Executive Director of the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations and Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for International Relations at Coventry University, Trustee of Friends of Europe

Carmine Di Noia

Director, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Directorate for Financial and Enterprise Affairs, France

Anna Diamantopoulou

President of the Athens-based thinktank DIKTIO, former European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and former Greek Minister for Education and Development, Trustee of Friends of Europe

Gordana Dimitrieska-Kochoska

Minister of Finance, North Macedonia

Klara Dobrev

Member, European Parliament Committee on Regional Development (REGI)

Simon Draper

Ambassador, Mission of New Zealand to the EU

Pedro Duarte

Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Portugal

Isabelle Durant

Former Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), former Deputy Prime Minister of Belgium, Trustee of Friends of Europe

Saïd El Khadraoui

Brussels Representative and Institutional Expert, European Environment Agency (EEA)

Joe Elborn

Executive Director, Evens Foundation

Frank Elderson

Member of the Executive Board and of the Governing Council, Vice Chair of the Supervisory Board, European Central Bank (ECB)

Darren Ennis

Head of EU Affairs & Brussels Office, Vodafone

Maria Teresa Fabregas Fernandez

Director, Recovery & Resilience Task Force, Recovery & Resilience II, European Commission Secretariat General

Michael Falzon

Minister of the Family and Social Solidarity, Malta

Tomas Fénix

Former Vice-President, European Young Farmers' Council (CEJA), European Young Leader (EYL40)

Arben Fetai

Deputy Prime Minister, North Macedonia

Florika Fink-Hooijer

Director-General, European Commission Directorate General for the Environment

Megi Fino

Deputy Minister, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Albania

Mary Fitzgerald

Trustee of Friends of Europe and Non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute

Elena Flores Gual

Deputy Director-General, European Commission Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs (ECFIN)

Claus Folden

Senior Advisor, McKinsey & Company

Clémentine Forissier

Managing editor, Contexte, European Young Leader (EYL40), France

Markus Freiburg

Founder and CEO, Financing Agency for Social Entrepreneurship (FASE), European Young Leader (EYL40), Germany

Nathalie Furrer

Director, Friends of Europe

Rui Hermenegildo Goncalves

Chief Legal Officer, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Portugal

Manuel González Bedia

Director-General for Strategic Planning in Advanced Digital Technologies, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation, Spain

Arancha González Laya

Dean of the Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA) at Sciences Po and former Spanish minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation

Gustaf Göthberg

Member, National Parliament, Sweden (Riksdag) Committee on Defence

Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic

Former President of Croatia, Trustee of Friends of Europe

Benjamin Haddad

Minister Delegate for European Affairs, Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, France

Benjamin Haddad

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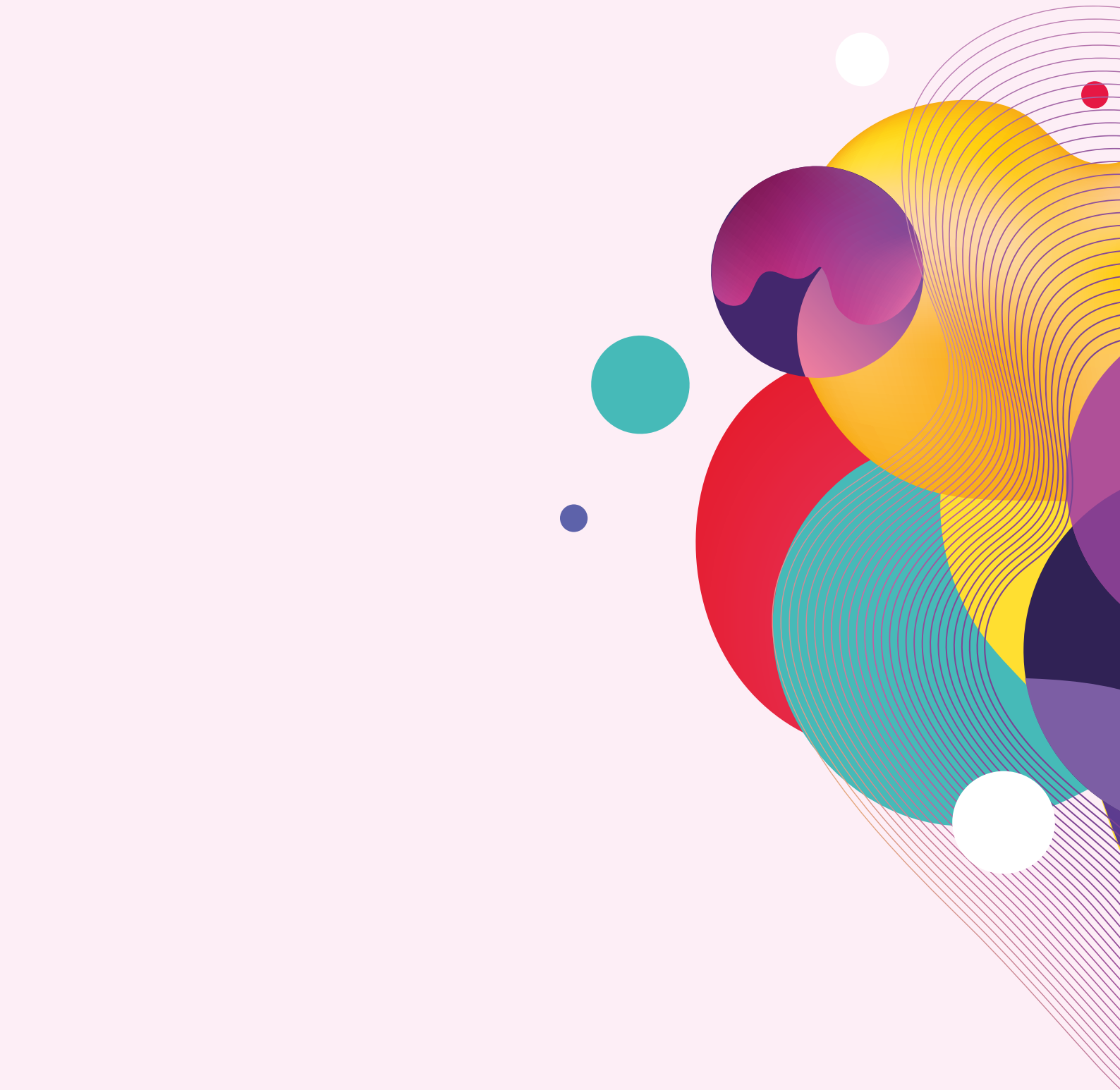
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