

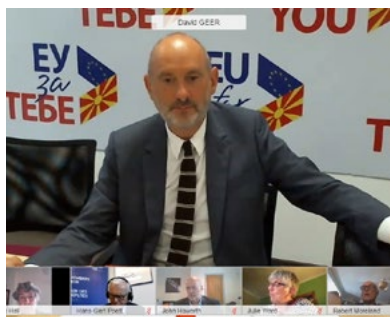
N°73/December 2020

# EPFMA BULLETIN



European Parliament Former Members Association

[www.formermembers.eu](http://www.formermembers.eu)



## FMA Online

Study Visit to North  
Macedonia

Page 14



## FMA Online

COVID-19: A  
global discussion

Page 26

# IN THIS ISSUE



The democratic opposition in Belarus has been awarded the 2020 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought.

The democratic opposition in Belarus is represented by the Coordination Council, an initiative of brave women, as well as prominent political and civil society figures. Belarus has been in the midst of a political crisis since the disputed presidential elections on 9 August, which led to an uprising against authoritarian President Aliaksandr Lukashenka and a subsequent brutal crackdown on demonstrators by the regime.

Cover: ©European Parliament

**03** Message from the President

**04** EP at work

## CURRENT AFFAIRS

**05** 75th Anniversary of the United Nations  
(Alexandre Gerard Stutzmann)

**06** A free Belarus  
(Filip Kaczmarek)

**07** EU-China Economic Relations: Some remarks  
(Godelieve Quisthoudt-Rowohl)

**08** Corona and world hunger  
(Karin Junker)

**09** European Recovery Plan and EU Green Deal (Peter Liese)

**10** Corona and us  
(Gisela Kallenbach)

**11** Advocacy For A "European Vocational Training Area"  
(Jean Arthuis)

**12** Do you like fish?  
(Brigitte Langenhagen)

## FMA ACTIVITIES

**14** Virtual Study Visit to North Macedonia

**24** Visit under the EU Presidency

**26** Former Members' Network

**27** EP to Campus Programme

**28** Book Review

## LATEST NEWS

**29** Activities

**29** New members

**30** In memoriam

## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS:

The Editorial Board would like to thank all those members who took the time to contribute to this issue of the FMA Bulletin. We would like to draw your attention to the fact that the decision to include an article lies with the FMA Editorial Board and, in principle, contributions from members who are not up-to-date with the payment of the membership fee will not be included. Due to the long time lag between the call for contribution and the publication, some articles may be outdated.

The FMA Bulletin is published by the European Parliament Former Members Association (FMA) with the assistance of the European Parliament. However, the views expressed in articles represent the views of contributing FMA members or guest writers and do not necessarily represent the views of either the European Parliament nor the FMA. Similarly, any advertisement does not imply an official endorsement by the FMA or Parliament.

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Jean-Pierre AUDY  
Monica BALDI  
Brigitte LANGENHAGEN  
Edward McMILLAN-SCOTT  
Teresa RIERA MADURELL

## PREPARED BY

Elisabetta FONCK  
Lisbeth BRAVO  
Valeh NASIRI  
Leandra ILGNER  
Valerie RASKIN

## CONTACTS

formermembers@europarl.europa.eu  
Tel.+ 32(0)2 284 07 03  
Fax.+32(0)2 284 09 89



# Message from the PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

The year 2020 is drawing to an end and unfortunately, the European Union has to contend with a second wave of coronavirus infections. Besides all of its negative aspects, we can look back on this year and can see that the Union has demonstrated cohesion by supporting its Member States and provided the economic assistance needed.

Above all, this is a time when we all have to adapt to new situations and be prepared to take fast and effective action. Our Association has felt this keenly and has promoted digital activities. Furthermore, the COVID-19 crisis does not only affect Europe but must be viewed in a global context. With this in mind, together with Former Members of the US Congress and Former Members of the New Zealand Parliament, we held a timely online roundtable under the heading 'COVID-19 – A Global Discussion'. It was an assessment of where different regions in the world stand in fighting the pandemic and an opportunity to exchange best practices and share thoughts on the road ahead. By increasing online teaching through our EP to Campus programme, we were also able to support many lectures and hold intense talks with students at universities all over the world. For the first time ever, our study visit to North Macedonia took place online and we were able to meet prominent speakers

such as Stevo Pendarovski, the President of North Macedonia, Talat Xhaferi, the President of the Assembly (the Sobranie), Nikola Dimitrov, the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs, and Bujar Osmani, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. This edition includes a full report of the visit with contributions written by our delegation's members and university students.

Our planned visit to Germany in the context of this year's EU Presidency generated insightful discussions with Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble, President of the German Bundestag and Prof. Dr. Norbert Lammert, President of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, among others. A long list of FMA members participated in this visit remotely, contributing with their reflections and comments. In particular, we appreciated the open and constructive dialogue with active civil society organisations in Germany, which expressed their views on the Conference on the Future of Europe.

We concluded this intense autumn programme by hosting two special virtual events on 9 and 10 December: a discussion with Werner Hoyer, President of the European Investment Bank, followed by our second webinar entitled 'Together for the Future of Europe'. This was an integral part of a cycle of events co-organised with the main European political foundations and the European University

Institute in Florence. Thank you for your great participation in these talks, I am very much looking forward to continuing our discussions throughout the new year.

Allow me also to thank our Secretariat for organising these virtual events with great dedication and at short notice, and for ensuring visibility and vivid exchanges on social media.

I sincerely hope that we will be soon able to meet again in person, but in the meantime I wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year 2021.

Stay Safe.

Kind regards,

Hans-Gert PÖTTERING  
FMA President

# EP AT WORK

## KEY FACTS

### **Vote on Own Resources: MEPs clear way for the COVID-19 recovery plan. (September session - P9\_TA(2020)0220).**

MEPs have fast-tracked on the Own Resources Decision (ORD). This removes an important barrier and speeds up the procedure to implement the key EU law to restart the economy, allowing the Commission to raise €750 billion on the markets for the recovery fund.

### **Member states need to harmonise health assessments and measures regarding COVID-19 crisis (September session - P9\_TA-PROV(2020)0240)**

MEPs deplore that member states have not learned the lessons from the beginning of the crisis and have yet again taken different and uncoordinated measures leading to differing health risk assessments and restrictions of free movement for people travelling from other EU countries.

### **Parliament demanded a legally binding, effective**

### **mechanism to protect EU values (October session -P9\_TA-PROV(2020)0251)**

The European Parliament puts forward its proposal for an EU mechanism to protect and strengthen democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights.

### **MEPs adopted proposals on how the EU can best regulate Artificial Intelligence (AI) (October Session - P9\_TA-PROV(2020)0277)**

The EP is among the first institutions to put forward recommendations on what AI rules should include with regards to ethics, liability and intellectual property rights.

### **MEPs adopted their position on the post-2022 EU farm policy reform. (October session - P9\_TA(2020)0287)**

It should be more flexible, sustainable, and crisis-resilient, so that farmers can continue to deliver food security across the EU.

*Other main dossiers discussed in the plenary sessions were:*

### **September 2020**

- **Green Deal:** MEPs called for more support to protect, restore and sustainably manage forests, protect biodiversity and carbon sinks, as well as to recognise forests' productivity and ecosystem services. (16.09.20)
- Parliament adopted the Commission's proposal to revise the EU system for monitoring, reporting and verifying **CO2 emissions from maritime transport**. (16.09.20)
- Parliament requested a substantial increase in the **Just Transition Fund** to mitigate the social impact of greening the economy. (17.09.20)
- MEPs approved that as of September 2022, **cars must meet EU limits on NOx emissions** under real driving conditions to comply with air pollution limits. (17.09.20)
- Parliament approved that the EU to tackle **pharmaceutical pollution**

to prevent risks to the environment and public health. (17.09.20)

- MEPs said that Council has to "finally act" to **protect minorities and the rule of law in Poland**. (17.09.20)
- MEPs demanded measures to ensure **Romani people** have equal access to housing, education, healthcare and employment. (17.09.20)
- MEPs approved € 6.2 billion to tackle crisis and speed up **vaccine deployment**. (17.09.20)
- MEPs call for strengthened public oversight on **exports of military equipment and technology**. (17.09.20)

### **October 2020**

- MEPs endorsed two proposals concerning the **Channel Tunnel** with the goal to maintain the same

set of rules governing the whole railway tunnel once the UK has the status of a third country. (08.10.20)

- MEPs called for **EU values to be fully and unconditionally respected in Bulgaria**. (08.10.20)
- MEPs approved **future-proof rules on digital services**, including online platforms and marketplaces, and for a binding mechanism to tackle illegal content online. (20.10.20)
- MEPs called for the **digital gap** in Europe to be closed, as the pandemic exacerbated inequalities in the EU, making it difficult for many to access school education. (20.10.20)

*For more information, please visit : <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/plenary>*

# CURRENT AFFAIRS

## 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The 75th anniversary of the United Nations was meant to be a joyful celebration. It was expected to be the opportunity to proudly recall the many significant achievements of the organisation in shaping a better world for all, while recommitting to the principles and values of multilateralism and to the UN Charter, sketching an ambitious roadmap for the decades ahead: the future we want, the UN we need!

It is no secret that international cooperation has been going through harsh times, worldwide, and for quite some years; the rise of nationalisms, the increasing prevalence of interests over values, the lack of determination to collectively tackle global threats and challenges, as well as the overall loss of trust in international institutions, have overwhelmingly become the dominant features of our world reality. In that context, the current unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, with its additional set of difficulties, will either toll the bell or be the last chance of revival for international cooperation: will the UN be able to deliver? Is it fit for purpose? Or does it seriously run the risk of becoming irrelevant?

On 21 September 2020, the General Assembly of the UN, at the level of Heads of State and Government, unanimously adopted a political declaration, which outlines the way forward for the decades to come, across the policy spectrum, in order to bring a strong collective answer to the most urgent needs and challenges that our planet is facing. Given the complex international context, the agreement on and the adoption of a text was almost a miracle. Negotiations did not



happen without serious frictions, most notably between China and the United States, on climate change commitments or on the jointly agreed ingredients for a common future, among others. But the result is there and speaks for itself: at a time when cooperation is extremely difficult, member states nevertheless acknowledged that cooperation is actually more needed than ever before.

The drafters of the declaration listened to citizens' concerns and aspirations. The document reviews the main policy areas and proactively calls for political solutions to the escalating climate emergency, the rising geopolitical tensions and the grave damage caused by the pandemic in exacerbating inequalities and the fragilities of the most vulnerable. It also expresses strong views on the need to reform the organisation in order to deliver more adequately. Last but not least, it invites the Secretary General to come forward, in the next months and following further consultations with all governmental and non governmental stakeholders, with concrete recommendations to advance this common agenda and overcome existing governance gaps and challenges.

The ongoing debate at the UN very much recalls the discussions that have taken place at EU level in recent years, and especially in the European

Parliament. How can international institutions be closer and more accessible to the citizens that they are meant to serve? How can they make best known to them the cost of non-Europe or the cost of non-UN? While not losing sight of necessary internal reforms in order to deliver better, faster and more efficiently, they also need to reimagine how to best communicate about the good things they do. The EU and the UN share the same DNA, the same principles and universal values. They have both made the plea to put the peoples at the core of their action. They both are more than the sum of their member states. And for both only political courage and leadership will make the difference. At the height of the pandemic, for the first time in history, the UNGA Heads of State and Government High-level week went digital. None withstanding the circumstances, it was the most attended yearly gathering ever, proof that the convening power of the UN is intact and that multilateralism in hard times matters more than ever. The lessons learned from the pandemic and the way out of the human, sanitary and economic crisis that it generated are to be seen as a unique opportunity for both organisations to act together and demonstrate to all how complementary their action can be. Polls show that people want more UN and that expectations are high. Once celebrations are over, it will be time to walk the talk!

**Alexandre Gerard Stutzmann**

Senior advisor to the President of the U.N. General Assembly

## A FREE BELARUS

The European Parliament has repeatedly addressed the situation in Belarus. The effectiveness of Parliament's resolutions on Belarus has been limited by the reluctance of the Belarusian authorities to engage in genuine dialogue and cooperation. However, the crisis this time is much more serious. It is not just because of the antics or the abuses of the authorities and the resultant political reactions of the international community. The qualitative difference between the current situation and previous crises is essentially the scale and protracted nature of the peaceful protests by the Belarusian people against the rigging of the August 2020 presidential elections. The unprecedented scale of the protests is increasingly being interpreted as a kind of national, social and political 'awakening'. It also confirms, indirectly, the lack of legitimacy of the current government.

**“The protesters in Belarus have to be admired for their courage, determination, consistency and creativity in exercising their right to freedom of expression and assembly.”**

In view of the history which Belarus shares with neighbouring EU Member States and the struggle of European societies for freedom, independence and democracy, the support of Europeans for Belarusians demanding free and fair elections is entirely natural.

From a European and axiological viewpoint, Belarusians have the right to elect their government freely and independently. The protesters in Belarus have to be admired for their courage, determination, consistency and creativity in exercising their right to freedom of expression and assembly. It is worth recalling Europe's core values as set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights: dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity, the rule of law and civil rights are, since they are universal in nature, also values of Belarus and its people. The Constitution of Poland, which is the EU's largest neighbour of Belarus, speaks of 'preserving the inherent dignity of man, his right to freedom and the obligation of solidarity with others'. The European Union, as an organisation with normative aspirations, also makes reference to these values. Both the Member States and the EU itself should therefore support the people of Belarus in their struggle for their fundamental rights. The institutions of the EU can and should encourage citizens, European communities and organisations to express this support and solidarity in both moral and material form. There have already been various initiatives to provide real assistance to a free Belarus and its people, for example by introducing the possibility for students expelled from Belarusian universities to continue their studies at European universities. Any way in which tangible support can be given to our neighbours at what is a difficult time for them should be welcomed. At the same time, the international community should take diplomatic action to find and implement a political solution. Some observers

believe that, for geopolitical reasons, Russia would have to be involved in finding a lasting solution. It would therefore be worth trying to influence the stance of Russia, which has considerable influence over the Belarusian government and can effectively prompt it to change policy. It will probably not be easy to persuade Russia to adopt a constructive attitude on this, but in the interests of Belarus it is worth making the effort. Irrespective of the assistance and diplomatic activities, the brutal reaction of the Belarusian authorities to the democratic protests should be declared unacceptable. Violence and repression against peaceful protesters should be condemned. Many European governments and institutions are rightly calling for the release of those arrested and an end to the use of violence and repression, and for the Belarusian government to enter into a genuine dialogue with the public. There is no doubt that the overarching aim of these talks should be to bring about a situation whereby the election results reflect the will of the electorate. Belarusians, like any other nation, have the right to elections which are free and fair. A sovereign and democratic Belarus is a dream not only for Belarusians. There are more people of goodwill who share the dream. Long live Belarus!

**Filip Kaczmarek**  
Poland, EPP-ED (2004-2014)  
[Filip.Kaczmarek@ue.poznan.pl](mailto:Filip.Kaczmarek@ue.poznan.pl)

## EU-CHINA ECONOMIC RELATIONS: SOME REMARKS

In the past, when one spoke of 'world' economic policy, in essence it meant transatlantic trade. These days, however, global economic policy is played out within the triangle formed by China, the US and the EU. In this constellation, the West is disunited: there is neither a coordinated strategy between the US and the EU, nor a common approach by EU countries.

The EU-China virtual summit clearly demonstrated the need for Europe to become more self-sufficient and independent.

China today is a dictatorship. While the ruling party is still Communist in name, in reality it is 'capitalist' and with great success. Nonetheless, it is a dictatorship. And its system is competing against that of Western democracies.

We have values and security/future interests that we must not give up for short-term profits, even if we cannot put it in such simple terms as 'it is either human rights or economic relations'. In defining our policies, we strive to strike a balance between our values, which remain the guiding principle, and legitimate economic interests. We need to clearly recognise that the economy and the State are closely intertwined in China. The state has a massive influence on

almost all economic processes. Plans and actions are viewed very much in the long term, much longer than the 4-year cycle of elections in the West. There is also a completely different view of coexistence and society.

In the West, the focus is on the individual and their rights, whereas in China the focus is on the community. The result is that standards, for example as regards privacy and data protection, are completely different, and indeed diametrically opposed — Cyber-surveillance is accepted as completely normal in China.

The challenge also lies in that our highly complex decision-making system of good governance and democratic rule of law is in direct confrontation and competition with a dictatorship.

As it is, following the failure of the 'Arab Spring', which resulted from the attempt to export our form of democracy, we should realise that there indeed are very different traditions and ways of thinking in other continents.

Chinese investment in both the US and the EU has fallen sharply since 2016, as recently reported by the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington. However, the main reason for this does not lie in Western safeguards, but in a tightening of Chinese capital outflow rules.

Conversely, the German solar cells industry has long wanted that a request be lodged with the WTO to apply punitive tariffs on the Chinese competition. However, as always in the EU, differing voices can be heard concerning this demand: various sectors of the economy are in favour or against, and the EU Commission

must take account of the general — not just German — interests. This certainly does not contribute to fast, strong decisions.

In the EU, the European Parliament voted in 2019 on a directive on the monitoring of foreign direct investment, pursuant to which Member States should regularly exchange views with the European Commission on investments and takeovers by third countries on their territory. However, the authority to approve such investments/takeovers remains at the level of national governments.

It is clear that this can only be a starting point.

As Wolfgang Ischinger says: 'The global economy is increasingly driven by geopolitical considerations. The new era of competition between major powers is also an economic challenge. The EU cannot avoid this development.'

In total, 15% of the world's gross domestic product already comes from China, with this proportion continuing to grow rapidly. China's economic power is so strong that Jack Ma, the CEO of Alibaba, suggested that the US and China should agree on common standards for the world economy. The EU does not seem to be of any relevance for this giant of commerce ...

It is high time to act!



**Godelieve Quisthoudt-Rowohl**

Germany, EPP-ED (1989-2019)  
gqr@quisthoudt.eu

## CORONA AND WORLD HUNGER

'No more hunger by 2030!' has been one of the United Nations' development goals since 2015. The target, which is ambitious but considered to be achievable, is now in doubt in the light of the worrying corona pandemic.

**"It is in the EU's own interest to provide large-scale support to poor countries to overcome hunger."**

Some experts are wondering whether economic slumps would be easier to bear than restrictive protective measures for people at risk from the disease. It is too early to reach a definite conclusion, but one thing is certainly true: it is in the EU's own interest to provide large-scale support to poor countries to overcome hunger. The World Food Programme, which has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, is going in the right direction, but much remains to be done if we are to celebrate success in 2030.

Since 2005 there has been a measureable improvement in the food situation globally, even though it varies from place to place. 690 million people are undernourished, 144 million children suffer from retarded growth due to malnutrition, 47 million children are suffering from emaciation and 5.3 million children have not survived until their fifth birthday. 'Hunger', says Simone Pott, spokesperson for the World Food Programme, 'is the greatest moral and ethnic failure of our generation'. The reasons: crises, conflicts, poverty, inequality, poor health and, last but not least, the consequences of climate change and now the corona pandemic. As a result, many people have lost their jobs in the informal sector or because of market closures, or they have been prevented from properly cultivating their fields. Large-scale losses of earnings are severely restricting imports of food necessary for survival. Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia have seen the least amount of progress. Yet the situation is not without hope, as positive examples demonstrate.

**"The European Parliament can and must ensure that the overall positive trend continues, aid goes to the poorest countries as a priority, and losses due to corona can be managed."**

There have been tremendous improvements in Angola, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone following the end of civil wars and military conflicts. Economic performance in Cameroon more than doubled between 2000 and 2018, from USD 650 to USD 1 534. Asia has witnessed a great step forward in the form of Nepal, where targeted investment has led to a significant reduction in poverty and enabled improvements to be made to the health system, resulting in a remarkable decrease in child mortality, for example. The European Parliament can and must ensure that the overall positive trend continues, aid goes to the poorest countries as a priority, and losses due to corona can be managed. Assigned resources can, of course, be a good option, but linking European funding almost exclusively to specified purposes can restrict or prevent the use of funding as situations arise. In 2030 we should be able to hold a huge festival in Brussels with the motto: No more hunger in the world!



*The fight to free people from hunger ©European Parliament*

**Karin Junker**  
Germany, S&D (1989-2004)  
karin.junker@t-online.de

## EUROPEAN RECOVERY PLAN AND EU GREEN DEAL

The corona pandemic is leaving its mark on the economy and society in a big way. The European Commission has put forward a comprehensive European Recovery Plan to remedy the damage caused, boost recovery and employment and protect jobs. The aim is to help Europe out of the crisis and pave the way for a modern, more sustainable Union. In order to respond effectively to the corona crisis, the Commission is relying on a range of instruments, including support for investments, key sectors and technologies, strategically-important programmes to deal with future crises, and investing in important value chains.

The Recovery Plan is overall a vital step for the European Union and its citizens, as Europe must be proactive during this difficult period. It must remain firmly united, which means in particular that the Member States must support each other. But financing the Recovery Plan will be a major challenge. This is why in July, the European Parliament adopted a resolution, by an overwhelming majority, to finance the Plan with the European Union's own resources. The EUR 750 billion now being held up

as a major step forward for Europe is necessary to offset the economic consequences of the corona crisis and further promote climate protection. Funding is used where it will have the greatest impact, by complementing and reinforcing the groundwork done by the Member States.

**“The current pandemic should not make the fight against climate change appear less important; rather, it should serve as a crucial signal that action against climate change needs to be taken without delay.”**

The crisis has highlighted the importance of the Union being able to act swiftly and flexibly to enable a coordinated European response. Yet this huge sum will first and foremost saddle the next generation with a massive debt. So the question is how they – or even they and their successor generations – will repay this

debt. There is no realistic repayment plan without the European Union's own resources. We must avoid leaving the young generation with substantial debts only; investment must be made in future-oriented infrastructure: primarily in digitalisation and climate protection. If we extend emissions trading, e.g. to shipping, road transport and the buildings sector, funds will be available to repay the debts arising from the European Recovery Plan. We would, moreover, be acting in the interest of the young generation, as this would reward climate-friendly economic activity. Our children and grandchildren would thus inherit a modern, climate-friendly and sustainable infrastructure. The current pandemic should not make the fight against climate change appear less important; rather, it should serve as a crucial signal that action against climate change needs to be taken without delay. Climate change is continuing in spite of the health crisis, and only our generation can keep it in check. If we do not take the vital step right now, the tipping points, such as the thawing of the permafrost, will render future generations helpless to curb the momentum of climate change. The question is not whether we can do this, but how. And a key opportunity in achieving it is provided by the Recovery Plan.

### Peter Liese MEP

Member of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety  
[peter.liese-office@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:peter.liese-office@europarl.europa.eu)  
[europa.eu](http://europa.eu)



Peter Liese during the ENVI Committee meeting with the Director of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) ©European Union 2020 - Source : EP

## CORONA AND US

For months now, people throughout the world have been living through very unusual times. An invisible virus has shown us very clearly how interconnected, how dependent on one another and how vulnerable we are. Only one thing has been certain: our uncertainty. Nevertheless, political decisions with far-reaching implications and of great moral significance had to be taken very quickly. Who is doing best - or worst - at protecting their own country? National interests took priority. Decisions to close borders overnight are hardly ones to be proud of. In my homeland, Saxony, which has a 600 km-long border with Czechia and Poland, the suspension of the Schengen Agreement turned into a painful experience, which imposed considerable demands on the commuters and local residents directly affected and made them more aware than ever of the benefits integration has brought in the region. The virus does not recognise national borders, but a regional approach can certainly make the task of controlling it manageable. Many Member States have learnt this lesson, and that is a good thing.

Views differ as to whether the choice

should be between 'lockdown and laissez-faire', entailing restrictions on freedom, or between 'lives and livelihoods', reflecting the standpoint that protecting lives harms the economy too much. Compromises are needed.

**“The pandemic has offered nature a break from overload, overexploitation, injustice and greed.”**

I am glad that in Germany the authorities have been able to send out a clear message that freedom and protecting lives and the measures needed to save jobs and livelihoods are two sides of the same coin. But this message has not got through to everyone. Self-styled 'prophets' are offering up doomsday scenarios, but thus far they have won only few followers. That is a good thing.

I would like to see more joint action at European level. Cooperation not competition. Security is achieved through cooperation. The ability to work together across borders is crucial. This is reflected in the 'Agenda for Reconstruction'. But this brings us to the crucial point, namely how we use the financial means available to shape our future. Melting polar ice caps and burning forests in California, the destruction of rainforests in Brazil and storms in France and Italy are reminders that there can be no more putting this off. The supposed restrictions on freedom introduced in response to the coronavirus pandemic may come to seem like small beer in the

face of future scenarios triggered by the climate crisis. The pandemic has offered nature a break from overload, overexploitation, injustice and greed. Will we now see a quick return to business as usual, to 'normal' life? The degree to which our future will be sustainable, stable, safe, socially just and liveable is will be decided now! Will we succeed in transforming the economy, at least in the EU Member States, by means of a real green transition? Away from climate-damaging forms of production, disastrous over-exploitation of natural resources, global injustice and unequal opportunities made plain by the widening gap between rich and poor? Europe could and can play a leading role in the world. This is crucial in the light of the geopolitical situation, in particular as a result of the unpredictable actions of the current US President and the ideologically rigid policies of the Chinese autocrats.

Of course, the European Union cannot address the challenges posed by current and possible future crises alone, but if we don't act, who will? We will need to demonstrate whether we are willing to defend our liberal democracy and the environmental sustainability of our way of life. Quite simply, we owe it to our children and grandchildren.

**Gisela Kallenbach**  
Germany, Greens/EFA (2004-2009)  
gisela\_kallenbach@yahoo.com



© Photo by marjanblan on Unsplash

## ADVOCACY FOR A “EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL TRAINING AREA”

In the era of the digitalisation and globalisation of our economies, skills are at the heart of business competitiveness. Many repetitive tasks are already being performed by computers and robots. Artificial intelligence is profoundly transforming professions: some are disappearing as fast as others emerge, but it is too soon to say exactly what the employment landscape will ultimately look like. Advanced technologies are rapidly spreading all over the world, transforming work. Against this background, economic competition between world regions, between states and businesses, now more than ever means competition for human resources and skills. The educational value of combined work and study programmes, in which experience in the workplace forms an essential part of training, has long been recognised. When they undertake apprenticeships, young people are not simply trained in a trade, it is the very act of practising the trade that trains them. European countries that have banked on apprenticeships have the highest employability rates among their young people. Moreover, internationalising apprenticeships gives young people a reason to choose this path, in the form of incentives such as the opportunity to master a foreign language. Apprentices with several months' experience in another country will be able to move ahead in their professional life with confidence. In 2015, buoyed by this conviction, together with ten fellow MEPs we launched a pilot project to test the scope for integrating into apprenticeships longer periods

abroad (at least three months, ideally six). From 2016 to 2019, 80 vocational training centres in 18 Member States participated in this experiment. The Commission gave us effective support by setting aside EUR 400 million for an Erasmus Pro scheme. The several hundred apprentices who took the plunge have spoken of their satisfaction and recognised that the combination of an apprenticeship and international mobility puts vocational training on the road to excellence. The major hurdles and barriers which still exist kept the number of pioneers low. We have identified and evaluated them, and they are legal, financial, academic, linguistic and psychological in nature. Since the beginning of the year, health constraints have compounded the problem. The importance of the protocols for fighting the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be underestimated, in particular as the European Union has not been able to lay down common principles. They are making mobility more difficult, but not impossible. Whilst waiting for the life-saving vaccine, we must learn to live with the coronavirus. What is vital for our economic activity is also vital for education and vocational training. It is therefore not a question of waiting for better days before promoting mobility opportunities for apprentices and trainees. Learning how to overcome barriers enables you to face risks. Having left Parliament, I created the 'Euro App Mobility' foundation to roll out the mobility scheme tested during the previous parliamentary term. We are prepared to listen to and help all those involved in vocational training. Our efforts



©European Parliament

must focus equally on training institutions, companies and national public authorities. Whether they concern laws, procedures for recognising periods of mobility when diplomas are awarded, course content or reciprocity of exchanges, the approaches taken must become more consistent. In order to facilitate partnerships, we are opening a platform for mobility offers and requests. In support of this, twinning arrangements between training centres located in different countries are to be encouraged. The EU has the tools and funding at its disposal: the Erasmus+ programme, the Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund. Potential beneficiaries need to be informed and helped to better understand and take advantage of the rules. The single market calls for mobility and exchanges of good practices. Our ambition is to bring about the establishment of a European vocational training area, matched by a European Apprenticeship Statute.

**Jean Arthuis**  
France, ALDE (2014-2019)  
j.arthuis@wanadoo.fr

## DO YOU LIKE FISH?

(adapted from Françoise Sagan, writer (1935-2004))

Recent years have seen a steady increase in the global consumption of fish [according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations].

Never before has so much fish been consumed throughout the world. In addition, more people than ever – 10 -12% of the world's population – are dependent on the fishing industry. The increased demand for fish can be explained by the increase in the world's population, in part also by higher incomes, and also by better distribution channels.

80 million tonnes of fish are caught every year. Aquaculture farming and production has risen to a record level of over 90 million tonnes.

An avowed objective of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is the protection of the environment, including the seas and oceans; conservation of resources; safeguarding fish, which is healthy and boosts the immune system; and maintaining jobs.

Biologically-certified fish with the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) label denotes a product from a responsible fishery striving for maximum sustainability and is the basis of the common fisheries policy (CFP).<sup>1</sup>

As Virginijus Sinkevicius, Commissioner for Environment, Seas and Fisheries has said, the fisheries sector has always faced major challenges, but these are now exacerbated by the dramatic corona pandemic. But we have supported the sector right across the EU: a

1. European Commission: Guidelines for 2021.

sustainable fisheries sector is also part of the Green Deal which the EU is looking to secure – and it is indispensable.

This is confirmed by Michael Ditzer (MD), fish trader and Chair of Cuxhaven (Germany) Fisheries Association.

**Me (BL): Corona has caused profound changes for us.**

MD: Yes, and some parts of the sector such as fish retail outlets are actually less affected by the pandemic. We've been able to buy a bigger selection of fresh fish, in terms of price and quality, due to the lack of European competition.

**BL: Private customers are happy.**

MD: But at the same time the wholesale sector has seen severe cutbacks, which will have a long-term impact. Deliveries to retailers have stalled. Traditional distribution channels have been lost. Global trade has largely ground to a halt.

As a specialist fish retailer I deliver to restaurants, canteens, kindergartens and hotels. I think the situation will remain the same in the future, and I can't see a rapid recovery to pre-corona levels. The closure of these establishments, including my restaurant, is a threat to my existence.

In addition, the new opening regime after weeks of being closed mean a completely new start, with all the associated difficulties.

And the big shows haven't taken place – the Brussels Seafood Expo, for example, has been postponed to 2021. These are important economically, particularly for medium-sized seafood companies, which use them to cultivate personal contacts with their customers – as we do.



**BL: And the future?**

MD: My colleagues and I just accept the considerable, keenly-felt challenges. I'm an entrepreneur through and through.

And we are also focusing on another activity: our online shop! This is even more important thanks to corona. Uncertainty about the situation is everywhere and means there are more and more restrictions throughout the supply chain.

This isn't a personal problem because we're incapable or haven't made provisions. At the very least it's an EU problem, one which, sadly, will be badly exacerbated by Brexit at the end of this year. As associations and retailers, as well as consumers, we are relying on the discernment and assertiveness of politicians to do all they can to keep the fishing industry alive.

Without functioning mechanisms, our industry, which traditionally does not bring substantial returns, is clearly on a downward path.

Many of our projects have ground to a halt or have had to be stopped. The way ahead will not be at all smooth. We are relying on the EU.

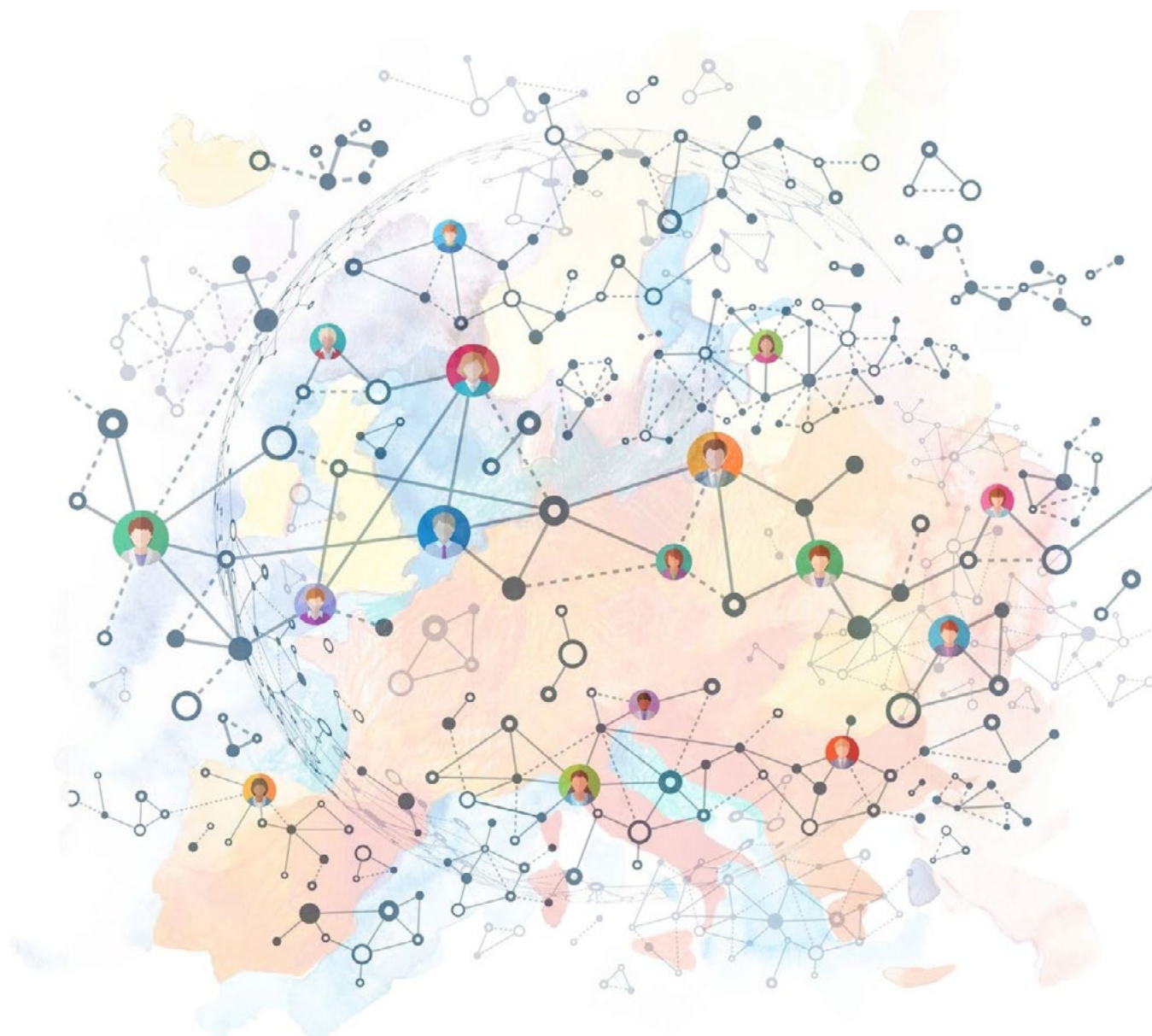
**Brigitte Langenhagen**  
Germany, EPP-ED (1990-2004)  
brigitte-langenhagen-cux@t-online.de

# FMA ONLINE ACTIVITIES



European Parliament  
FORMER MEMBERS  
ASSOCIATION

**In the time of Covid-19, we adapt and innovate to keep our members engaged and safe**



# VIRTUAL STUDY VISIT TO

## FMA, CSDP AND BREXIT

The virtual study visit to North Macedonia conducted by the Former Members' Association was a new experience for me. While I had previously participated in conferences 'on-line', as necessitated by the pandemic, it was my first study trip of this kind, with a comprehensive programme, including a museum visit. Our discussion partners were in Skopje; Hans-Gert Pöttering, who led the delegation, was in Brussels; and the remaining participants, including several from the UK, were in their studies and living rooms in various parts of Europe.

In contrast to real delegation visits of this kind, getting from one ministry to another was not an issue, with the result that numerous meetings could be held in a relatively short period of time. We were able to speak with President Stevo Pendarovski, Foreign Minister Bujar Osmani and representatives of parliament and civil society, among others. The programme also included a discussion with students from the University of Skopje.

A key topic of the talks was what would happen after Brexit. In that connection, the fact that President Pendarovski had written a doctoral thesis on the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy was of particular interest. I have published a book on the same subject, which includes a contribution from Hans-Gert Pöttering. This prompted a debate on European defence and Brexit, which is particularly topical at the moment. The following thoughts are my contribution to this debate:

So far, the UK has primarily sought to put a brake on European efforts to develop an independent security

and defence policy. In the discussions held in the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Defence, which was established in 2004, my then colleague Geoffrey van Orden, as the Tories' security policy spokesman, repeatedly expressed the view that the development of an independent European security and defence policy would be harmful and only lead to unnecessary duplication.

The UK was particularly outspoken in its opposition to the emergence of the European Defence Agency, which was set up to coordinate Member States' procurement and defence research activities.

The departure of the British might now have been expected to have removed a major obstacle to the development of the Common Security and Defence Policy. So far, however, these hopes have been dashed.

A clear-eyed assessment of the current priorities of and the situation in the European Union reveals that at present there is scope only for small steps in the area of defence.

One such step would be the further development of the European Defence Agency (EDA), which was established in 2004 to promote defence capabilities, joint procurement and joint research. President Trump is currently exerting strong pressure on the NATO member countries to increase defence spending. Here I see a danger of many duplications — not between NATO and the EU, but unnecessary duplications between the 27 Member States that arise when each of these countries acts without coordinating with its European neighbours. The EDA

must foster the establishment of a European internal defence market and help to ensure that effective use is made of the resources made available through the new Defence Fund. If the EDA is to carry out this task, its funding needs to be increased.

In the Brexit debate, statements emerging from the UK suddenly hinted at a greater appetite for involvement in the EDA. However, the simple fact that, in keeping with its foreign policy traditions, the UK will have no interest in helping to create an effective political entity on the continent after Brexit means that no credence should be given to these suggestions.

Nigel Farage, one of the architects of Brexit, has made this abundantly clear: 'After Brexit,' he said in a conversation with Michel Barnier, 'the European Union will no longer exist'. Boris Johnson's current rhetoric is less blunt, but it is consistent with the guiding principle of English foreign policy over the past four centuries, namely that the country has permanent interests, but no permanent allies.

The EDA and the other ESDP institutions only make sense as instruments of a comprehensive foreign and security policy for the European Union. Post-Brexit, that will be the Union of 27. It will not therefore be possible or appropriate to grant the UK special status in CSDP decision-making bodies after Brexit.

**Karl von Wogau**  
Germany, EPP-ED (1979-2004)  
kwogau@aol.com

# NORTH MACEDONIA

## NORTH MACEDONIA IN THE HEART OF THE BALKANS

After thirty years of dispute, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece agreed, in the 'Prespa Agreement', that the country should be renamed North Macedonia. It seemed that this was the last precondition for EU accession negotiations. Recently, however, Bulgaria has blocked North Macedonia on the basis of its opposition to the Macedonian language and its non-recognition of a Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. It was for these reasons that an FMA delegation to North Macedonia was organised. The Covid-19 emergency meant that it was the first virtual FMA delegation. No communication complications were encountered. The highest-ranking North Macedonian politicians set out the challenges and spoke of a strong desire and national commitment to joining the EU. A historical perspective makes it easier to understand the unenviable situation in which this young country in the heart of the Balkans now finds itself. Before the First World War, the territory was for decades a part of Bulgaria. The aftermath of that war saw the founding of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, incorporating part of Macedonia, which was divided between this kingdom and Greece.

Even at that time, Belgrade (later the capital of Yugoslavia) banned the use of the name Macedonia and its language. After the Second World War, when federal Yugoslavia was formed, Macedonia became one of its six republics, and in 1952 Macedonian became its official language. Slovenes from the post-war generation can understand and speak the languages of the other former Yugoslav republics; only Macedonian was different and largely incomprehensible to us. The Yugoslav republics cooperated with each other economically in accordance with the principles of a contract economy, directed by the Communist Party in Belgrade. In the 1991 independence processes, Macedonia was the only one of the former Yugoslav republics to achieve independence without war, but for three decades this small country, squeezed between countries to which it is historically connected, has had only modest military power and relatively low GDP. The pressures it has come under have various possible causes: from Serbia, due to its historical aspirations for a 'Greater Serbia', which to a large extent were responsible for the break-up of Yugoslavia; from Greece, owing to two thousand years of history and Alexander Great, who extended Macedonia all the way to India; and from Bulgaria, with its historical memory of having Macedonia within its territory for almost four decades. Macedonians' concern about being 'swamped' by Albanians should also be taken into account.

North Macedonia is again at the intersection of pressures in the Balkans today. It is also affected by

regional disputes, such as those between Serbia and Kosovo, and between Greece and Cyprus. However, their political orientation is towards finding peaceful solutions by diplomatic means. They stress that despite Greece blocking their EU application, they have not experienced a single incident. Slovenia and North Macedonia have always traditionally had good political and economic relations and this continues today. Stevo Pendarovski, the North Macedonian President, says that Slovenia and Croatia are their example to follow on the path to the EU. North Macedonia exports quality wine, vegetables and fruit. Economic cooperation in the region continues regardless of the various obstacles and political disputes. The country's cultural heritage, its natural features and the hospitality of its people need to be experienced first-hand. The country offers an unforgettable experience at the heart of the Balkans. EU integration can bring to North Macedonia, among other things, freedom of movement, which is something those of us with experience of the Iron Curtain can appreciate.



*H.E. Mr. Stevo Pendarovski, President of North Macedonia, during the virtual meeting*

**Zofija Mazej Kukovič**  
Slovenia, EPP-ED (2011-2014)  
[zofija.mazejkukovic@gmail.com](mailto:zofija.mazejkukovic@gmail.com)

## EU ACCESSION BUDGET INVESTMENT IN NORTH MACEDONIA

“We have a lot of history here, far too much. What we need is a bit more future”, the FMA virtual study visit to North Macedonia was told by Nikola Dimitrov, Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs. I had heard him say it before when I was in Skopje for the Joint Parliamentary Committee with the then Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It’s a line that well sums up the political dynamics of North Macedonia’s long road to EU accession.

A far-sighted and politically brave agreement struck between former Greek PM, Alex Tsipras and his FRYM counterpart, Zoran Zaev, road mapped the resolution of longstanding barriers to accession talks. The Prespes Agreement was ratified somewhat against the odds and the constitution of FRYM duly amended to re-name the country as North Macedonia. Progress on relations with Bulgaria has followed and NATO membership duly came about on 27 March. The scale of the political challenges that have been overcome must now be rewarded. EU Accession, however, remains a long way off. Fundamental challenges in governmental, economic and rule of law standards will be required before accession

can become reality and the timeline is calibrated in years rather than months. The challenge for both the European Union and North Macedonia is to ensure progress is both demonstrable and sustainable. At present opinion polling shows 83% of the population backing EU membership, but the absence of progress can erode support and enthusiasm. While the blockages to progress could only be resolved in the West Balkans, the EU had excuses, now it has to demonstrate its political will to turn its West Balkan strategy from theory to practice. The European Union Budget will be an important tool in ensuring accession progresses and that demonstrable benefits are delivered. The priority for the North Macedonian Government is infrastructure improvement. Lines of communication between capitals in neighbouring states are limited and frequently tortuous. Improvements in connections to neighbouring capitals and key centres: Tirana, Sofia and Thessaloniki, are the most obvious drivers for an effective return on EU accession investment in terms of economic performance. The second priority is digital infrastructure. North Macedonian

politicians have adopted an approach to technology that draws heavily on the experience of Estonia and other small EU member states. For the EU there are good reasons to direct accession funding toward the strategy. North Macedonia can become a successful digital economy but to do so it needs substantial improvements in cyber security. Enabling secure digital development of a potential member state is also self-evidently in the interests of the Union.

The third priority must be cultural and educational investment through the substantial expansion of programme-linked funding, in particular Erasmus+, but also Horizon and Creative Europe. There is a clear synergy with digital investment and the creation of opportunities for young citizenry to see their enthusiasm for the EU realising life opportunities.

Demonstrable economic and social progress in North Macedonia and Albania through EU budget pre-accession investment matters not just to those populations but sends a clear signal to the other states in the West Balkans with aspirations of EU accession: make the necessary changes and real progress will follow. North Macedonia has come a long way from Prespes, the onward route to Brussels now requires investment.



*A moment of the virtual meeting with H.E. Mr. Nikola Dimitrov, Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs*

**John Howarth**  
United Kingdom, S&D (2017-2020)  
john@pwbpolicy.com  
@johnhowarth1958

## THE SITUATION OF RULE OF LAW IN NORTH MACEDONIA

Democracy in North Macedonia was under serious threat for almost a decade between 2006 and 2016, when the judiciary, public prosecution, police and media were under the control of the former government, ruling VMRO-DPMNE party and its leader and ex-Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski. After the wiretapping scandal erupted in 2015 and contents of wiretapped conversations were publicly disclosed, the European Commission described the country in 2016 as a "state and institutional capture". The main features of the captured rule of law and captured judiciary were clientelistic relations between the judiciary and political elites, manipulation of the Automated Court Case Management Information System, culture of absolute impunity of politicians amid a surge of political corruption, misuse of amnesty, lack of accountability of public prosecutors, political pressure on the police in the initial stages of criminal proceeding, abuse of institutions and the lack of clear long-term reforms in the judiciary, public prosecution, the police and secret services. Today, despite the fact that VMRO-DPMNE is no longer in power and its leader and former Prime Minister Gruevski is in exile in Viktor Orbán's Hungary, traits of state capture remain in the judiciary, public prosecution and police. We must uncover the extent of the "state capture" in order to be able to understand existing institutional weaknesses, but also to develop strategies for early detection, prevention and proper sanctioning of such abuses. Progress made in the last four



*Fani Karanfilova-Panovska during her intervention at the virtual study visit*

years in the area of rule of law and judiciary are very well described in the 2019 European Commission country report as well as in the up-date on the pace of the reforms released in March 2020. European Commission's recommendation for starting the accession talks, was followed by the EU Council decision in June 2020 stipulating that the first intergovernmental conference between EU and North Macedonia should take place by the end of this year. At this point, I would like to reiterate civil society call that the accession talks need to start as soon as possible. In order to secure commitment and progress in the reforms and democratization of the society overall, the government should among other things conduct a comprehensive assessment of the root causes of "state capture" and strengthen the ability of the judiciary, public prosecution and the police to be proactive in the fight against corruption. Political influence should be removed and the Parliament should select non-judge members in the Judicial Council. There should be

full and timely implementation of the procedures on enforcement requests for ECtHR decisions and authorized bodies should conduct mandatory and timely audits of the use of the ACCMIS (Automated Court Case Management Information System). Newly adopted changes to the accession negotiations methodology would give more powers to the EU to act when acceding country shows significant backsliding under the rule of law. The European Union should therefore continue to demonstrate political will in order to make the upcoming negotiations process with North Macedonia more predictable, dynamic and credible.

**Fani Karanfilova-Panovska**  
Executive Director  
Foundation Open Society-  
Macedonia

## NORTH MACEDONIA: CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ...

North Macedonia, an ethnic melting pot at the heart of the Balkans, has an incomparable artistic, historical and cultural heritage.

Known for its enchanting religious sites, such as churches and monasteries, built between the 11th and 16th centuries, it has preserved some magnificent Byzantine frescoes and icons portraying refined masterpieces of the Macedonian school of ecclesiastical painting.

From the baroque perspectives and Ottoman memories of Skopje to its canyons and orthodox monasteries, such as the Monasteries of St. Jovan Bigorski, St. Clement and St. Panteleimon, and to the blue lakes in the south, such as Lake Ohrid, it is a magical place, a gem of peace and tranquillity, which provides a unique refuge for numerous endemic species of flora and fauna. It is also home to the town of Ohrid – one of the oldest human settlements in Europe, the ancient capital of the Bulgarian Empire – of great historical and cultural value – and a UNESCO world heritage site since 1979. It formerly had 365 Orthodox churches and used to be called the 'Jerusalem of the Balkans'. It now

has fewer churches, but which house illustrious examples of Byzantine art and architecture which should be safeguarded and promoted – as opposed to newer buildings – including through targeted restoration measures specifically designed for historic buildings.

The Orthodox Ss. Cyril and Methodius Cathedral, joint patron saints of Europe, can be found in Tetovo.

In the capital, which was rebuilt after the disastrous earthquake in 1963, the Old Bazaar – the largest in the Balkans – can be admired, alongside the market and the main mosques, such as that of Mustafa Pasha, as well as the National Art Gallery, the old Turkish bath converted into a museum in 1948. The Memorial House of Saint Mother Teresa, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, is certainly of particular historical and spiritual value. The house was built on the ruins of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, where she had been baptised and where she used to pray.

The nation has a great legacy in terms of its art, architecture and music, to the extent that its

festivals, involving performances, music, theatre and cinema, are well known. Recently, for example, the Giffoni Youth Film Festival was held there – a meeting point for different generations and a festival which, based in Skopje, brought together film buffs, culture and ideas, with many of its events also online.

It is important to bear in mind that, at the end of last year, the conflicts in the Balkans were unfortunately marked by the ferocity with which significant cultural heritage was destroyed, or 'ethnically cleansed', in the desire to destroy symbols that constitute the heritage which represents the most profound identity of a people.

In North Macedonia, religious and ethnic identities often coincide and today, Muslims cohabit peacefully with Orthodox Christians and churches with mosques. The Macedonian Orthodox Church (64.8 %) is the main religion for Macedonian Slavs; Islam (33.3 %) is practised mostly by the Albanian population and by the Torbesh and Turkish minorities; the Catholic Church (0.72 %), by Albanians, with a dozen or so parishes, and 1.5 % are represented by other unspecified faiths (e.g. those of the Aromanians and Roma).

The country is a mosaic of cultures, ethnicities and religions – where Macedonian and Albanian are the main languages spoken – surrounded by Serbia, Albania, Greece and Bulgaria. But it is precisely the difficult relations with its neighbouring states that have been one of the reasons preventing North Macedonia from 'taking off', together with its scarcity of resources and poor infrastructure.



*A moment of the meeting with the President of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, (the Sobranie), H.E. Mr Talat Xhaferi*

## ...INFRASTRUCTURE ON THE ROAD TOWARDS THE EU

Even now, Sofia has once again brought up the issue of the historical and cultural legacy that had been the subject of lengthy disputes – which appeared to have been settled three years ago with the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation – according to which Macedonian is considered to be a Bulgarian dialect and the Macedonian national hero Goce Delčev is in actual fact of Bulgarian ethnicity.

In 2019, the country resolved its fierce dispute with Greece by changing its name to 'North Macedonia' and in March it officially joined NATO, hoping to be able to join the European Union in 2025. The EU enlargement process to the Balkans has slowed down dramatically owing to the COVID and Brexit crises. With its October communication entitled 'Enhancing the accession process – A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans', the Commission is assessing the key progress made in each country: this covers, inter alia, the rule of law and judicial culture, the fight against corruption, freedom of expression and media pluralism. Josep Borrell, Vice-President of the Commission/ High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs, stated: 'The citizens of the Western Balkans are part of Europe and we have a shared interest in helping these six partners move forward on their EU path. With the Economic and Investment Plan, we are backing our Enlargement Package assessment with action, providing deep and strong support for economic recovery and reform – for a modern, greener and more prosperous Western Balkans delivering better to their citizens on



*A moment of the meeting with the Chair of the Committee on European Affairs, Dr Arbr Ademi*

the road to the EU'. He went on to say that there would be a 'rigorous assessment' of the transposition of the EU acquis, while Olivér Várhelyi, EU Commissioner for Enlargement, reiterated the need for 'rigorous but fair assessments', confirming further progress in the implementation of reforms in North Macedonia, which, in March, had managed to secure the long-awaited opening of accession negotiations, and is preparing itself for the first intergovernmental conferences.

The geographical location of North Macedonia, at the heart of the Balkan peninsula, has contributed substantially to the development of the transport network and, above all, of the country's road system, which includes the two interlinked pan-European corridors: Corridor VIII, East-West, and Corridor X, North-South.

The country, a strategic partner in areas such as immigration and terrorism, is moderately prepared when it comes to the transport sector. Further political efforts are still needed to deliver the necessary sectoral reforms; to strengthen the operational and administrative capacity of inspection bodies and to develop enforcement capacity

in order to reduce fatal accidents on roads and railways, including by adopting legislation on Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) and combined transport, working on a strategic framework for the implementation of ITS and core networks.

In particular, the country should further strengthen the operational and technical capacity of all management institutions and stakeholders involved in the development of the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) and Trans-European Energy Networks (TEN-E), and harmonise its legal framework with the Trans-European Network Regulation.

It is vital that North Macedonia continue its reforms, in order to facilitate the movement of resources towards more productive opportunities, to complete its work on infrastructure and structural transformation, promoting the adoption and innovation of technology, developing new employment opportunities and making effective use of its strategic position.

**Monica Baldi**  
Italy, EPP-ED (1994-1999)  
[baldi.monica@email.it](mailto:baldi.monica@email.it)

## INTERETHNIC DIALOGUE AND RIGHTS OF WOMEN

Thanks to an online 'Study visit' to North Macedonia by representatives of our association (FMA), we now have a much clearer understanding of the problems this small country and candidate for EU membership currently faces.

North Macedonia's location and diverse ethnic make-up have influenced the country's history, politics and record on women's rights. The states that emerged from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century still bear the burden of their imperial past. Since breaking away from Yugoslavia in 1991, North Macedonia has functioned as an independent multi-ethnic state. In my opinion, the country's greatest achievement is that it has managed to operate as a unified state that brings together Macedonians (64%), Albanians (25.2%), Turks (2.7%) and Roma (1.8%) as well as smaller numbers of Serbs, Bosnians and Vlachs (according to the most recent 2002 census). Under the constitution, all ethnic groups enjoy the same legal rights and the state protects and promotes their respective cultures. Moreover, minority groups can use their own language in official contexts if they make up at least 20% of the population of their municipality, while Albanian MPs can use their language in the parliament. Šuto Orizari, a suburb of Skopje, has adopted Romani as an official language; meanwhile, the government has demonstrated a firm political commitment to integrating the Roma people into Macedonian society and improving their living conditions, mainly through education. It should also be noted that many women led NGOs are



*Anna Karamanou during the virtual study visit*

working in the country to improve life for its Roma population. Women have contributed a great deal to the political discussion over the last 30 years, alongside organisations that have done important work to promote international dialogue, reconciliation and the peaceful coexistence of the country's various communities. The feminist movement has grown substantially over the years, booming around the late 1990s and the early 2000s, and it has managed to unite women from different ethnic groups and faiths as well as representatives of political parties, popular organisations and even individual women activists. Relations, however, were often marred by violent ethnic clashes primarily between Albanians and Macedonians, culminating in seven deaths in 2012. Moreover, the rise of nationalist movements between 2006 and 2017 impeded the progress that had been made in previous years to resolve external conflicts and improve relations with Greece and Bulgaria. After the elections in 2017 and more recently in July 2020 saw Zoran Zaev's pro-European coalition come to power, both international relations and tensions between ethnic groups have improved, especially after the Prespa Agreement (July 2018),

which opened up the possibility for the country to join both NATO and the EU. In addition, the feminist movement was able to ensure that at least 40% of local and parliamentary ballots featured women candidates, and that laws were passed against domestic violence, sexual harassment and workplace discrimination. The movement was also able to protect both abortion and LGBTIQ rights. Despite this progress, however, women still struggle to find employment in North Macedonia, with 39% of women in work compared to 61% of men. Meanwhile, women continue to be under-represented in government and other leadership positions: for example, none of the country's four vice presidents are women and only 6 of its 87 mayors are female. Of course, problematic patriarchal stereotypes persist, alongside ethnic and communal tensions. For this reason, we believe that empowering women and working towards real sexual equality will help to modernise North Macedonia and align it more closely with European values.

**Anna Karamanou**  
Greece, S&D (1997-2004)  
annkaramanou@gmail.com

## MEETING WITH THE YOUNG GENERATION

In October a group of former MEPs met with university students from 5 universities in North Macedonia via zoom at the end of a virtual study visit to Skopje. After a short introductory speech from Dr Hans-Gert Pöttering (FMA President and Former President of the European Parliament) the meeting was opened up for a Q&A session.

Although the students were a little overawed at first and hesitant to speak, FMA member Jackie Jones, a former Professor of Law, helped to break the ice by asking the students to say something about themselves and their studies. Many were studying law, International Relations, European Affairs and related subjects. They were very keen to know how long it would be before Northern Macedonia would be a fully fledged member of the EU. Already their generation have missed out on many opportunities and it was obvious that the students shared our European values and were keen to experience the benefits enjoyed by their peers in neighbouring countries that have already joined the bloc. As a former member of the Education and Culture Committee I was able to take some credit for the broadening out of the Erasmus+

scheme to include a wider demographic of young people not just university students. North Macedonian youth are able to participate in aspects of the scheme and also the newer European Solidarity Corps programme which focuses on volunteering.

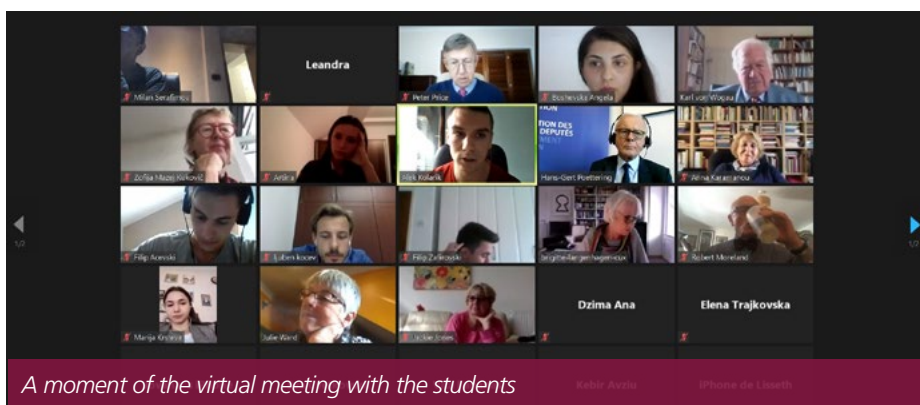
Unsurprisingly, issues related to historic problems between North Macedonia and its neighbours, Bulgaria and Greece, were discussed. Students were reminded that the successful resolution of the name dispute with Greece demonstrates that even the most difficult issues can be solved with political will and that the EU was gearing up to progress the accession process after a year of delays that began when President Macron blocked agreement at the Council Summit in October 2019. We emphasised that our study visit was evidence of a renewed political effort to bring the remaining Balkans countries into the European family, recognising that peace and stability in the region means a peaceful and secure Europe for all.

We enjoyed a lively discussion about what it means to be an EU Member State with comments about the regrettable withdrawal of the UK and references to the unfortunate

backsliding by some Member States particularly with regard to women's rights and gender equality. North Macedonia has made more progress than some Member States by ratifying the Istanbul Convention. Meanwhile, improvements are being made regarding LGBT rights at a legislative level but there's still a lot of ground to make up.

Female students on the call were particularly appreciative to hear strong women politicians:

"I've been so passionate about women's rights and gender equality my whole life so when you mentioned it on the zoom meeting, I had to say something," wrote Artina Mustafi, a law student from Tetovo, in a twitter message she sent to me later. "As a muslim feminist, I get a lot of Islamophobic, sexist and misogynistic DMs from people who think that it's absurd to identify as a feminist since I'm Muslim... but I've never stopped talking about how Islam is inherently feminist and I'll never stop fighting against racism, homophobia, xenophobia even though I live in the Balkans, which I think makes it a little bit harder since people are not that open minded. I'm willing to do everything to help my country change for the better. We are stronger together..."



**Julie Ward**  
United Kingdom, S&D (2014-  
2020)  
julie4nw@gmail.com  
@julie4nw

## A DREAM FOR A NORTH MACEDONIA CITIZEN

I am Viola Mahmudi, a law student. Every citizen of the Republic of North Macedonia wants our country to be part of the EU.

If my country became part of the EU, I would hope, firstly, that salaries would go up, because they are very low here. It is impossible for families to live a normal life on minimum wage, because expenses such as electricity, telephone bills and food are very high.

I would like more jobs to be created and for more than half of the people receiving unemployment benefit to be given jobs so that they do not have to rely on money or favours from political parties, something which is very common in the Republic of North Macedonia.

One of the most important things I would like to see would be an end to corruption, because in my country, corruption prevails in all institutions, hospitals, schools and universities – with many reliant on the support of a particular political party.

I would also like to see better

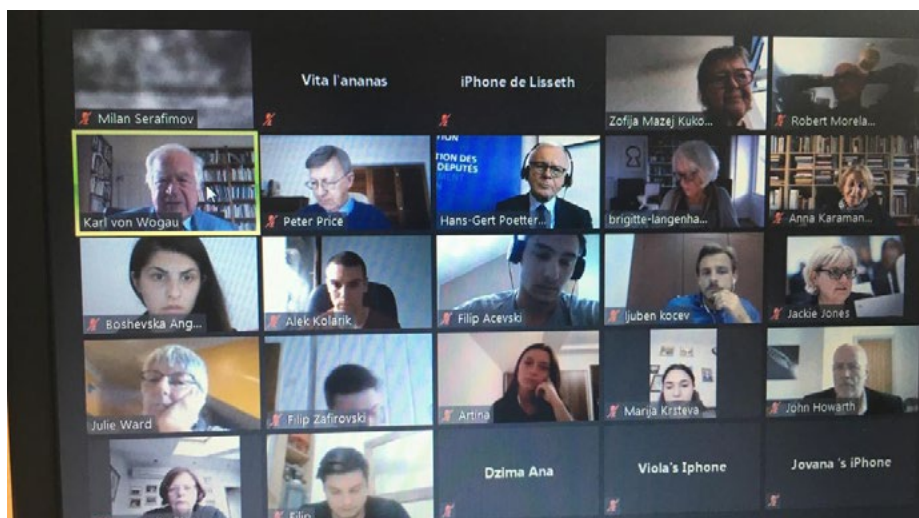
infrastructure. For example, I would like to see more people use public transport so that we can have cleaner air. I would also like to see improved conditions for people with special needs, who are often overlooked. This could include installing audible signals at pedestrian crossings and providing ramps to facilitate access to public buildings.

Regional cooperation in the Balkans still needs more work because there is a lot of tension between peoples of different ethnicities. However, I think that this situation will be resolved in the near future because we all want to live in harmony. We have all experienced wars with senseless killings.

Inter-ethnic dialogue in the Balkans will not be resolved until the day when corruption and electoral fraud are stamped out and until political parties and the people in them are aware that the main goal for themselves and for every citizen of the Balkan countries is to follow in the example of EU countries. As long

as there are irresponsible people in our countries who want to steal for themselves, with the poor being left to deal with the consequences, inter-ethnic dialogue in the Balkans will always be a failure.

When it comes to the future of these countries, many young people end up getting left behind. Even student protests in our countries are pointless because the sons and daughters of ministry directors or similar pass all of their exams without ever attending class, and they then go on to take jobs away from more deserving students. The same is true in all Balkan countries. So my question is, how can there ever be regional cooperation with these people in charge?



*A moment of the virtual meeting with the students*

**Viola Mahmudi**

Student at University of Tetovo

v.mahmudi218050@unite.edu.mk

## IF NORTH MACEDONIA JOINED THE EU ...



*Photo by Thiago Rocha on Unsplash*

My expectations from the accession of North Macedonia to the EU, a community of stability, democracy, security and prosperity, are high. I would expect to see the standard of living in general improve and to see increased economic development, including gross domestic product growth, higher wages and pensions, free movement of labour, goods, services and capital, growth of the internal market and domestic demand, and investment in achieving fair competition.

I think that EU membership would bring about reform in the North Macedonian judicial system, which would make courts unbiased and fair, make them issue transparent rulings regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity or age, and help to reduce the backlog of cases pending trial. I would also expect such a judicial reform to bring in judges who have the requisite legal training, who have not been involved in criminal offences in the past or while in office, and whose decisions

are not influenced by political parties or the policies they support; in short, judges that meet the vetting criteria. I would also expect to see a reform of the executive branch, with the government appointing adequately trained officials with the right skills to successfully lead their respective departments. By doing so, the government will reap success in all areas of the executive branch, both in terms of political leadership and when it comes to managing and leading individual departments. What is more, the executive branch should place special emphasis on the fair distribution of resources and ensure that departments are committed to achieving institutional progress and ensuring that the head of state openly exercises his or her legal rights in relation to the departments of the executive branch.

Most human rights are enshrined in North Macedonia's Constitution. If North Macedonia is to join the EU, it has to develop these rights and harmonise them with EU

legislation. For example: Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) states 'No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment', which is not yet fully implemented in North Macedonia. Article 8 ECHR lays down the right to respect for private and family life, which is also often violated in North Macedonia. Article 9 ECHR on 'Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion' is not upheld because we are a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic state and this right has suffered consistent blows. Article 10 ECHR covers freedom of expression, which in North Macedonia is threatened by a number of dominant factors, including political, economic, ethnic and religious ones. Finally, Article 14 ECHR covers the right not to be discriminated against, observance of which has intermittently improved over time in North Macedonia – comparing pluralism under Yugoslavia to the present situation – as successive political governments have abused or upheld it.

Against this background, I believe that North Macedonia should work consistently and effectively at meeting the EU's legal criteria in order to accelerate the accession process, given that EU membership is a crucial issue for the state and its citizens.

**Artina Mustafi**

Student at University of Tetovo  
a.mustafi219002@unite.edu.mk

# VISIT UNDER THE EU PRESIDENCY

## FMA (VIRTUAL) VISIT TO BERLIN

The interesting and varied catalogue of activities offered by the FMA to its members could not fail to include a visit to Berlin to mark the six-month German presidency. Unfortunately, the circumstances resulting from the COVID19 pandemic made it necessary to change the conditions of the visit, though we should acknowledge and be thankful for the fact that the meetings in Berlin went ahead at all, albeit through audio-visual means. And even though this medium did not allow us to enjoy the beautiful Berlin autumn and sample the famed German hospitality in person, I believe it had the benefit of encouraging a significant number of colleagues to attend the virtual meetings and debates, which — I have to say — did not lose an iota of their interest and cordiality. The entire visit, led by President Pöttering, who also adroitly encouraged lively debates, was extremely well prepared and accompanied by the current Head of the EP Liaison Office in Berlin, Mr Georg Pfeifer, who gave an overview of the current state of play

of the European debate, pending a budgetary agreement and in view of the major challenges ahead: digitalisation, climate change and resilience, against the background of major changes in global relations with the US, in the run-up to the critical presidential elections, or with China and Russia, with the persistent challenge of immigration and in the context of the great economic uncertainty suddenly triggered by the COVID19 pandemic, to which the EU is striving to respond with great determination and energy. The most awaited speech, and one which did not disappoint, was that by the President of the German Parliament, Dr Wolfgang Schäuble. He devoted a full hour of his time during which we were able to openly ask all kinds of questions, which he answered drawing on his vast experience and offering extremely pertinent reflections explaining the situation in the EU and, above all, setting out the need to address the major problems facing the EU by taking advantage of the unique opportunity represented by the

large budget that needs to be implemented as quickly as possible there where the EU has serious shortcomings — digitalisation, public health,... He stressed the urgent need to address the biggest challenge facing the EU at the moment: how to quickly and effectively implement the policies promoted and adopted by the EU in a manner that is clearly visible for the citizens at large. I can still hear his words full of conviction and passion advocating a swift and effective EU, displaying flexibility, pragmatism and above all a determination to move forward, brooking no blockages or delays. With a view to the anticipated Conference on the Future of Europe, he called for the right 'momentum' to be found to help meet all these challenges. The other meetings proved similarly rich in anecdotes and fresh thoughts, this being equally true of the individual meetings — including the discussion with the Chairman of the German Parliament's Committee on European Affairs, Mr Gunther Krichbaum — and of the excellent joint meeting on the second day with various representatives of civil society, notably with representatives of youth organisations with a great potential to strengthen participation in the Conference on the Future of Europe, with the aim of making the EU more transparent and accountable to the citizens, and combating youth unemployment and poverty.



**Ines Ayala Sender**  
Spain, S&D (2004-2019)  
[iayalasender@gmail.com](mailto:iayalasender@gmail.com)

*A moment of the virtual meeting with Gunther Krichbaum, Chairman of the German Parliament's Committee on European Affairs*

## YOUNG EUROPEANS AND THEIR EXPECTATIONS ...

### ... To the Conference on the Future of Europe

In occasion of the German Council Presidency, the Former Members Association also met with representatives from Civil Society Organisations working in Germany, inviting them to display their ideas and wishes for the Conference on the Future of Europe. In this regard also two youth organisations had the chance to discuss their visions: the Young European Federalists (JEF) Germany – which is the respective youth organisation of the Union of European Federalists Germany – and the German Federal Youth Council (Deutscher Bundesjugendring DBJR). What is it that young people expect from the Conference on the Future of Europe? And how did that eventually change under the experiences brought by the global Covid-19 crisis?

Both organisations, JEF and DBJR, firmly underline that young people in Germany and beyond do have a strong connection and commitment to Europe, its core ideas and its values and therefore claim to be part in discussing and designing their European future. However, in the light of the current challenges, such as the pandemic, but also climate change, migration and the ongoing undermining of democratic and liberal principles, more and more people raise the question whether the EU in its current institutional form is able to provide adequate and effective solutions. From a federalist perspective, institutional reforms that make the EU more coherent and consistent and that strengthen European democracy are crucial.



*A moment of the virtual meeting with representatives of the Civil Society organisations*

Issue-wise, the Conference on the future of Europe should therefore courageously push for long overdue reforms such as the strengthening of the European Parliament, the aligning of the electoral systems within the single EU-Member States and the shift from the principle of unanimity to majority voting. Yet, both organisations warn that the Conference must not fall short of the expectations already placed in it. This being sad, the Conference should follow a binding and result-open process in which treaty changes and/or a subsequent Convention should not be regarded as taboo. Moreover, in order to achieve sustainable participation, involving organised civil society in the process is essential. In these days, under the impression of a global pandemic and in view of the rise of populism and illiberal tendencies, a strong European Union that is able to address the needs and concerns of its citizens is needed more than ever. If we want to survive in turbulent times, we must also grow together as a society. Restoring citizen's trust and confidence must

be in the central interest of European policy-makers. Therefore, the conference should not be degraded into another so-called "listening exercise". Instead, this is the moment to be courageous and give citizens a real say over the future of Europe. Only a Conference on the Future of Europe that puts all options of deep policy and institutional change on the table can now deliver on citizen's expectations.

### Clara Föller

President of the Young European Federalists Germany and Member of the Europe Union Germany

### Marius Schlageter

Vice-President of the German Federal Youth Council.

# FORMER MEMBERS' NETWORK

## RESPONDING TO COVID-19-A GLOBAL DISCUSSION

One of the biggest and possibly permanent changes to come out of the COVID pandemic has been the growth of online discussion forums. Suddenly the world really is a much smaller place and the use of email has been supplanted by online tools such as Zoom which enable us not only to see each other but also to interact and converse in a way that few of us thought about or practised until very recently. We have seen this in the FMA with the growth of Zoom calls within the EP to Campus programme and especially in the growth of demand for lectures by Universities in regions outside Europe.

On Thursday 22nd October I represented the FMA in a three continent discussion about COVID 19. The United States former members of Congress were represented by their President Charles Bustany, the New Zealand former Members of Parliament by their Chair Peter Dunne.

In some ways Peter had the easier job as he represented a country with just one Government, 15 million people and no other power centres to compete with different rules. New Zealand also has the advantage of being over 3000 miles from its nearest neighbour Australia. So to an extent Peter was able to tell us how when you have these advantages and you can impose a quarantine you can control a disease. In Europe you just could not get away with locking people up in quarantine hotels and then posting the army outside to ensure they did not leave the hotel.

The USA with many States and Governors all with significant

*Rafael Bernal (moderator)  
with Lord Richard Balfe,  
FMA Board Member in  
charge of the relations  
with Former Members  
Associations outside Europe,  
Charles Bustany, President  
of the Association of Former  
Members of Congress (USA)  
and Peter Dunne, President  
of the Association of former  
Members of Parliament (NZ).*



powers and traditions was bound to be different especially in election year. There is also a strong tradition of rebellion against control in the American personality. So if we thought things were difficult in Europe they were much harder in the USA. Added to their problems of course was the election and the very real divide between Republicans and Democrats in their approach as to how to handle the pandemic. At one end we had a President who seemed to be in a state of denial about the disease, at the other extreme a Democratic challenger who spent much time not in front of crowds but dealing with election matters from his own home.

Europe for the purpose of this debate is of course the 27 countries that constitute the European Union. After the pandemic is over we will need to take a long hard look at how things were handled. Health is of course a national issue but there was a clear need for a clearing house for information exchange and for coordinating procurement and ensuring that the needs of smaller countries were not overlooked. If you are in Germany or France you can commission your own research and hopefully find a vaccine. The same is

not true in say Belgium or Portugal, so one task for Europe is to ensure a level of equity and make sure that all countries derive a common benefit. Europe and the rest of the developed world also have a responsibility to the rest of the world, a point I made on the programme which was endorsed by the other two participants. All three of us agreed that using our respective Aid agencies we must ensure that the vaccine if one is discovered must be fairly distributed. One day this will be looked back on in the way that the 1918 to 1920 Flu pandemic is. One wonders if it will just die out. Maybe it will mutate and like flu will need a new dose of vaccine every year or maybe we will just have to live with the disease. As the intellectual community comes out of panic mode they may well see that although the pandemic clearly claimed some lives early it still left in its wake an average age of death of over 80 years old.

Yes we may just have to live with it!!

**Lord Richard Balfe**

United Kingdom  
S&D (1979-2002)  
EPP-ED (2002-2004)  
richard.balfe111@gmail.com

# EP TO CAMPUS PROGRAMME

## THE MFF AND NEXT GENERATION EU: A TALE OF TIMING



*A moment of the intervention of Edit Herczog at the webinar at the Colorado European Union Center of Excellence*

I had the opportunity to present at the Colorado European Union Center of Excellence (CEUCE), of the University of Colorado Boulder on the 6th of October. My presentation, titled 'The Multi Financial Framework and Next Generation EU: A Tale of Timing' explained to the students, the role of the Multi Financial Framework, and the one-of-a-kind agreement: Next Generation EU, in the EU political landscape.

I explained the political nature of the budgetary negotiations, and how it became such a politically heated exercise over the decades: the impact of the enlargement and the WTO rules on the MFF own resources and its meaning for the power balance between the institutions; and the growing complexity by moving from EU15 to EU28, soon EU27. Moreover, I also demonstrated how the MFF is different from any state budgets and what areas the EU finances cover. Besides the content I explained the process of negotiations, which started with the original proposal of 2018, eventually ending up in a deadlock in the first quarter of

2020. I discussed the reasons for the deadlock, and the decision to modify the proposal due to COVID-19 and the urgent need for action. Lastly, I updated the students on the compromise reached in the European Council under the German Presidency and the current state of negotiations.

The NGEU as an economic stimulus injecting fresh resources to support the recovery and the European unity generated a number of questions, around how the two instruments: the MFF and NGEU will be distributed, managed and audited.

Besides the budget, I also delved into the disruptive change in the political climate to support the twin transition: greening and digitalization, as a way out from the crisis, to keep the EU at the forefront of competition via state of art solutions, while respecting the right of future generation to a habitable earth.

Lastly, I shared with the audience the concerns many of us have on whether the new deal weakens democratic oversight, whether it can

be tied to the Rule of Law and if the historically international programmes, will remain open to third country participation under recent calls for strategic autonomy.

Most of the questions from the audience were about the conditionality around the Rule of law, and the Next Generation EU instrument. I of course, tried to explain the Rule of Law discussion from both the perspective of the Council, the European Parliament and the Member States, both of whom are targeted by the proposal and both of whom advocate for the proposal.

It was a pleasure to see the interest of the audience, and their already well-established knowledge of the EU. It clearly showcased, the commitment of the CEUCE and the team led by Mrs. Felicia Martinez to promote the EU agenda in Colorado, which makes the institution a long-standing partner for the FMA. I wish a fruitful continuation for this relationship, which strengthens our transatlantic ties, through virtual people to people exchange.

**Edit Herczog**  
Hungary, S&D (2004-2014)  
[mrs.edit.herczog@gmail.com](mailto:mrs.edit.herczog@gmail.com)



## BOOK REVIEW

### **“A European conscience: Hans-Gert Pöttering - Biography” By Michael Gehler and Marcus Gonscher, published by Verlag Herder, 2020, 864 pages, €30**



The book's title, 'A European Conscience', draws you in straight away. All enthusiastic pro-Europeans will love this biography. Careful research and clear, comprehensible judgments make for a compelling read about Hans-Gert Pöttering, the man and the politician, and his reasons for working to make the European dream a reality. His life and career are used as an example to illustrate just how important Europe is in our lives. The authors, Michael Gehler and Marcus Gonscher, have written a biography which deserves to be read and digested, maybe in particular by those who are not yet fully aware of how important Europe really is.

The biography is published by Herder. A preface by Donald Tusk is followed by 11 chapters and detailed references to numerous

abbreviations and contemporary accounts, along with additional notes and a register of persons. We all have questions about what is happening in our world, about great achievements, such as the establishment of the European Union, and the many challenges that present themselves, both at home and abroad. Here, Hans-Gert Pöttering provides answers to these questions. They not only reflect the small but significant successes achieved by a convinced European, but also demonstrate a deep understanding and knowledge of the need for a Europe united in solidarity. The House of European History, a project initiated by Hans-Gert Pöttering, is proving to be a magnet for believers in the European dream. The biography focuses on significant cultural and historical events to tell the story of how Europe became what it is today. A key factor were the European policies of Konrad Adenauer and Helmut Kohl. The watchwords of 'United in diversity' and 'homeland-fatherland-Europe' emphasise how important it is that citizens take part in political life. The biography also explains that Hans-Gert Pöttering, a trained lawyer, is convinced that (European) law safeguards peace and that his Christian faith has taught him to hold firm to this conviction. His aim is to mobilise young people and appeal to them to take

responsibility for Europe. It is the broad range of his personal experiences that make the biography so rich. Hans-Gert Pöttering's reactions to world events such as Germany's reunification in 1989 and the 'wind of change' which swept through Europe are outlined in convincing detail. This alone makes the reader keen to find out what the next pages hold.

The authors write about Hans-Gert Pöttering's European conscience, or rather see him as the embodiment of a European conscience. They document this impressively in the biography.

According to Ludger Honnefelder (\*1936 Cologne/Germany), conscience without responsibility has no purpose. If MEPs are to cope with a complex task such as helping to shape Europe, they certainly need vision, creativity and courage.

As his biographers show, Hans-Gert Pöttering has lived up to his responsibility. According to Donald Tusk, Hans-Gert Pöttering carries Europe in his heart. And this biography shows how accurate that statement is.

**Brigitte Langenhagen**  
Germany, EPP-ED (1990-2004)  
brigitte-langenhagen-cux@t-online.de



# LATEST NEWS

## ACTIVITIES



### April/May 2021

#### VISIT TO PORTUGAL

Details will be communicated at a later stage.

### 1 June 2021

#### ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE AND DINNER DEBATE

Current and former MEPs will commemorate their colleagues who passed away in 2020-2021. Followed by the Dinner Debate.

From 5.45 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.  
European Parliament. Brussels.

### 2 June 2021

#### FMA GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND ANNUAL LUNCH

At 10.00 a.m. followed by the Annual Lunch at 1.00 p.m.

## NEW MEMBERS



#### **Zita GURMAI**

*(Hungary, 2003-2014, S&D)*

Through her time in the European Parliament, she served as Vice-Chair in the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, and Committee on Constitutional Affairs and as a member of the Committee on Regional Development, Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism, the Delegation for relations with Canada and the Delegation to the EU-Moldova Parliamentary Cooperation Committee



#### **Ari VATANEN**

*(France, 1999-2009, EPP-ED)*

Through his time in the European Parliament, he served as member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism, Delegation to the EU-Hungary Joint Parliamentary Committee and the Delegations to the parliamentary cooperation committees and delegations for relations with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Mongolia

## SPONSORS



Thanks to CANDRIAM and KBC for sponsoring the "EP to Campus" Programme.

## IN MEMORIAM



† 18 September 2020  
**Mario DI BARTOLOMEI**  
 L, Italy (1983-1989)

He served as an Italian member of the European Parliament.

At the national level, Mr Di Bartolomei represented the 'Partito repubblicano italiano'.



† 21 September 2020  
**Eusebio CANO PINTO**  
 PES, Spain (1986-1994)

He served as a Spanish member of the European Parliament.

At the national level, Mr Cano Pinto represented the 'Partido Socialista Obrero Español'.



† 8 October 2020  
**Tom G. O'DONNELL**  
 EPP-ED, Ireland (1979-1989)

He served as an Irish member of the European Parliament.

At the national level, Mr O'Donnell represented the 'Fine Gael Party'.

### BECAUSE YOU HAVE LIVED *by Ralph Waldo Emerson*

*"To laugh often and much; to win the respect of the intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the beauty in others; to leave the world a bit better whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know that one life has breathed easier because you lived here. This is to have succeeded."*