

N°64/September 2018

EPFMA BULLETIN



European Parliament Former Members Association

www.formermembers.eu

Focus on EU Public Opinion



FMA Activities

Visit under the EU
Presidency

Page 19



FMA Activities

EP to Campus
Programme

Page 24

IN THIS ISSUE



Supporting People Speaking Up for Democracy: The European Endowment for Democracy (EED) celebrates 5 years. The EED began its work in 2013 and has proved itself a valuable addition to the existing range of international democracy support organizations and initiatives.

Cover: ©Shutterstock

03 Message from the President

04 EP at Work

CURRENT AFFAIRS

05 Horizon Europe
(Teresa Riera Madurell)

06 Europe must start to untangle the Net (Cristiana Muscardini)

07 European Year of Cultural Heritage (Mariela Baeza)

08 9 May 2018
(Gérard Caudron)

09 Strasbourg by bike 2018
(Jan Dhaene)

FOCUS

11 Without truthful information, there is no democracy
(Jordi Sebastià Talavera)

12 New trends in Public Opinion
(Philipp M. Schulmeister)

14 Fake news and how it influences opinion polls
(Monica Franceschini)

16 Public Attitudes towards Brexit (Nancy Kelley & Ian Montagu)

FMA ACTIVITIES

18 Democracy Support

19 Visit under the EU Presidency

24 EP to Campus Programme

33 Former Members Network

LATEST NEWS

35 Activities

36 New Publication

37 New members

38 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 Due to the long time lag between the call for contribution and the publication, some articles may be outdated.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
Brigitte LANGENHAGEN
Edward McMILLAN-SCOTT
Manuel PORTO
Teresa RIERA MADURELL

PREPARED BY

Elisabetta FONCK
Lisbeth BRAVO
Valeh NASIRI
Alessandra PERNA

CONTACTS

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



Message from the PRESIDENT

Dear Member,

Greetings following the summer break and welcome to our September Bulletin, which is a chance for me to give you a taste of our upcoming events.

The focus of this issue is EU public opinion. The Collins English Dictionary defines public opinion as 'the opinion or attitude of the public regarding a particular matter'. Nowadays the mobilisation of public opinion is led by newspapers and social media, while other 'old' communication tools have been left behind. Public opinion is a significant force in our societies. In the words of Blaise Pascal, 'power rules the world, not opinion, but it is opinion that exploits power'. We consulted key players on the European political scene and former colleagues to help us delve deeper into this topic.

You will also find a section devoted entirely to FMA activities; in particular, this issue includes a series of reports by FMA members who have participated in our 'EP to Campus' programme. Through this programme, universities can benefit from the expertise and experience of former MEPs who share their insights into real EU policy. Positive feedback from universities and former Members tells us that students benefit from engaging dialogues and exchanges of views, which enable them to shape and construct their own conceptions of European matters.

In order to strengthen our network of former Members, our delegates Brigitte Langenhagen, who was elected Vice-President of the FP-AP in March, and Jean-Pierre Audy represented the FMA at the FP-AP meeting held in Brussels from 24 to 26 May. The FMA Vice-President, Jan-Willem Bertens, participated in the Annual Meeting of the US Association of Former Members of Congress on 25 and 26 June in Washington. You will find reports on both events, along with some pictures, in this Bulletin.

As for our activities in the field of democracy building, FMA member Filip Kaczmarek represented the Association at the Ninth Global Assembly of the World Movement for Democracy in Dakar from 6 to 9 May. You can read his impressions of the event in the section on FMA activities.

Looking ahead, our visit to Austria, the Member State currently holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, will take place from 28 to 30 October. The programme includes meetings with parliament and government representatives, as well as with the Mayor of Vienna and the Secretary General of the OSCE. A full report of the visit will be published in the December edition.

Lastly, our annual events in Brussels will take place on 28 and 29 November 2018. I am honoured that Carlos Moedas,

EU Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, has accepted our invitation to be the keynote speaker at the Annual Dinner. As usual, we expect high-profile speakers at the Annual Seminar, which this year is entitled 'How can former MEPs and European citizens help to rekindle enthusiasm for European construction based on the European ideal?'. You will receive more information about this important engagement in the coming weeks.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at our forthcoming events.

Best wishes,

Hans-Gert PÖTTERING
FMA President

EP AT WORK

KEY FACTS

RescEU: MEPs vote to upgrade EU civil protection capacity (May Session - P8_TA-PROV(2018)0217)

Proposals to upgrade the EU civil defence mechanism were approved. The aim is to help member states to respond faster and more effectively to natural and man-made disasters, by sharing civil protection assets more efficiently.

MEPs call on EU countries to end precarious employment practices (May Session - P8_TA-PROV(2018)0242)

This resolution calls on the European Commission and EU countries to tackle the issue of precarious employment practices and the abusive use of fixed-term work contracts in the EU public and private sector.

MEPs vote in favour to EU-wide rules for safety of drones (June Session - P8_TA-PROV(2018)0245)

These EU-wide principles for drones and drone operators will ensure a common level of safety and give operators and manufacturers the

predictability to develop products and services.

MEPs want robust EU cyber defence and closer ties with NATO (June Session - P8_TA-PROV(2018)0258)

MEPs urge EU member states to enhance the ability of their armed forces to work together and to strengthen cyber co-operation at EU level, with NATO and other partners.

MEPs approved that the EU budget for 2019 do more for the young, SMEs and the climate (June Session - P8_TA-PROV(2018)0107)

Priorities are growth, security, fighting climate change and migration.

MEPs agreed that giving humanitarian help to migrants should not be a crime (July Session - P8_TA-PROV(2018)0314)

MEPs believe the EU should ensure that helping migrants for humanitarian reasons is not punishable as a crime.

Other main dossiers discussed in the plenary sessions were:

May 2018

- MEPs push for a **modern EU farming**, with a common policy with fair funding. The post-2020 EU farm policy must be smarter, simpler, fairer and more sustainable. (30.05.18)
- MEPs condemned the continuation of **internal border checks in the Schengen area**. EU member states should “foster mutual trust in the functioning of the Schengen area, cooperation and solidarity”. (30.05.18)
- Parliament approved **€104.2m in EU aid to Greece, Spain, France and Portugal** following natural disasters in 2017. (30.05.18)
- MEPs called for **new legislation to combat odometer fraud**. (31.05.18)

June 2018

- Parliament voted for **€1 macro-financial loan to help Ukraine** cover part of its external financing needs in 2018-2019. (13.06.18)
- MEPs calls on Russia to end **occupation of Georgian territories** of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and fully respect the territorial integrity of Georgia. (14.06.18)

July 2018

- MEPs approved EU job-search aid worth **€ 9.9 million for 1,858 former Air France workers** to re-integrate into the labour market. (03.07.18)
- Parliament approves **€ 500 million for schooling of refugee children in Turkey**. (04.07.18)
- MEPs stress need for **personal data safeguards ahead of talks**

with eight non-EU countries to strengthen cooperation with Europol. (05.07.18)

- EP approved to reinforced EU border security. The new **European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS)**, which should be operational in 2021, will allow for advanced checks on visa-free travellers and those considered to pose a security, irregular migration or epidemic risk will be denied access. (05.07.18)
- MEPs have rejected a committee proposal to begin negotiations to update **copyright laws for the digital age**, copyright rules will be reviewed in September. (05.07.18)

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

CURRENT AFFAIRS

HORIZON EUROPE

Horizon Europe: a new opportunity for research and innovation in Europe

Horizon Europe, the Commission's new proposal for the framework programme for research and innovation (2021-2027), is now under consideration at the European Parliament.

Those of us who are convinced that investing in science and innovation is investing in the best future for Europe, and who have previously worked hard to ensure that the Horizon 2020 framework programme, which is still in force today was adequately funded, are pleased to see that the Commission's proposal for Horizon Europe entails increasing its budget to €100 billion.

Although Horizon 2020 laid the groundwork for a dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy by focusing on three priorities: scientific excellence, innovation-based industrial leadership and providing innovative responses to the social challenges of greatest concern to citizens, it should now focus on improving our innovation capacity and increasing the impact of our research and innovation on society.

To lead the European Union's comprehensive innovation policy, the Commission proposes setting up the European Innovation Council (EIC) which, in addition to providing effective support to innovators by creating the necessary instruments, is tasked with promoting a culture and environment conducive to innovation and creativity.

In this open and dynamic

environment, new stakeholders will undoubtedly emerge. It is widely recognised that the driving force for innovation is no longer solely technological processes, as was the case in the industrial era. People and communities as a whole are also important sources of innovation. It is therefore essential to provide them with the best training and tools to enable them to develop their full potential and actively participate in innovation processes, particularly those aimed at finding solutions to the major social challenges that affect them most directly.

So as to maximise the project's impact in tackling social challenges and in improving industrial competitiveness in the EU as a whole, the Commission's proposal for Horizon Europe entails devising bold and ambitious mission-oriented projects with the involvement and engagement of citizens and clear European added value in helping solve the problems affecting our daily lives.

This must be done while continuing to support excellence in European science and researchers. It is intolerable for Europe's talent to go to waste or be forced to emigrate owing to a lack of opportunities. Horizon Europe should therefore consolidate all measures strengthening our capacity to attract, retain and promote the best researchers. Further increases to the European Research Council's budget or funding for frontier research are needed to enable excellent scientists to work on high-risk projects, which are also those presenting the most innovative potential. And special support needs to be given to our

young researchers by increasing the budget for the Marie Curie Actions, in order to give fresh momentum to those who were deprived funds by some Member States that misguidedly slashed grants during the crisis.

If our goal as Europeans is to have a strong, high-quality science and innovation system, this cannot exist in isolation. To that end, establishing an effective dialogue between science and society must be an imperative for Horizon Europe. Via the 'Science for and with Society' programme, Horizon 2020 paved the way for improving this dialogue, but greater funding for it is needed. If science is to be a priority for public investment, the public must share its values and recognise the contribution it makes to knowledge and progress. The final text on Horizon Europe that will be approved will be the fruit of intense legislative work, in which the European Parliament, making use of the powers conferred on it by the Treaty, must push for its objective of achieving a strong and competitive European R&D&I system in negotiations with a Council that usually looks to cut spending. We wish the rapporteurs all the best!

Teresa Riera Madurell

S&D, Spain (2004-2014)

Member Research and Innovation strategic expert high level advisory group (RISE HL) to Commissioner Carlos Moedas, EC Former MEP and rapporteur of Horizon 2020.
trierama@gmail.com

EUROPE MUST START TO UNTANGLE THE NET

There is an issue in Europe that we began talking and writing about at the turn of the millennium, and we have continued to do so ever since: there are no rules governing the use of IT systems, and this has led to dangerous abuses. Sadly, we were right, once again, to point out a danger and to insist, in order to safeguard legality and freedom for all, that no information and communication system should be allowed unless it provided for at least some regulation and a degree of security as regards privacy. We knew that, especially in a globalised society, given that there were no shared rules, power was being abused, and news and minds manipulated; furthermore, the inability to decode messages had caused confusion in which falsehood was being taken for truth. Europe, unfortunately, has previously turned a deaf ear to the calls from Parliament to tackle the problem, and it has been blind to the evidence that has kept mounting up from year to year. The Internet has been an open range for terrorists hunting for recruits, those who teach how to kill and

exterminate defenceless people, assorted criminals, arms traffickers and people smugglers, pushers dealing in drugs and counterfeit medicines, hardened paedophiles and stalkers, fraudsters, and children who, having obtained drugs and been caught up in erotic games, are, as they grow up, being moulded according to the myth of bullying and violence. The victims have been legion, and the huge damage has not been purely economic. The data thefts that hit millions of people have finally persuaded inventors, system operators, and governments to talk in terms of rules strong enough to protect the freedom of the Internet and the privacy rights that should be enjoyed by individuals, states, and companies. We are hoping that Europe will make its voice heard loud and clear and manage without delay to translate words into action. What is good about the Internet, namely putting distant worlds in touch with each other, enhancing culture, counteracting ignorance and dictatorial regimes, expanding the possibilities for medical and

humanitarian aid, and encouraging exchanges of ideas and hopes, is largely being cancelled out because of the regulatory vacuum in which IT systems have been put to criminal use, bank data manipulated, airport systems thrown into chaos, and state intelligence services have taken infiltration so far as to alter political and institutional set-ups and bring untold wealth to those who with their brilliant discoveries have been doing business outside the law. And the biggest joke of all is that it is taxpayers at national and European level who are paying for the guarantees of privacy! The recent cases involving Facebook, which allowed outside companies to use millions of user addresses, have sent an alarm signal that cannot go unheeded. The subsequent fact-finding hearings in the US Senate and House of Representatives with the Facebook boss served to demonstrate that the questioners were unfamiliar with the digital platform concerned, to say nothing of the problems with social networks. That does not alter the fact that Internet regulation has still to be dealt with. Legislators cannot remain indifferent until some other scandal causes a public outcry. The sooner they do something, the better it will be for everybody.

Cristiana Muscardini

Italy

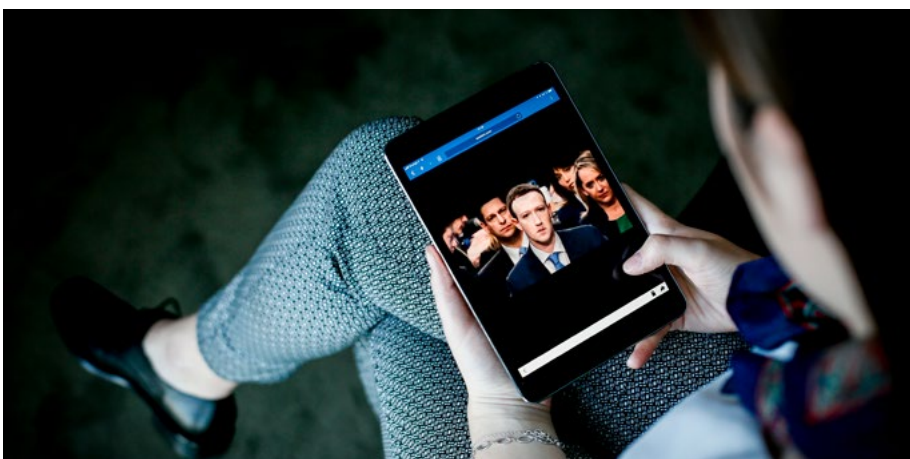
NA (1989-1999)

UEN (1999-2009)

EPP (2009-2012)

ECR(2012-2014)

c.muscardini@tin.it



Woman browsing Facebook social network on a tablet ©European Parliament

EUROPEAN YEAR OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

In the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage (EYCH), the information and awareness-raising events across Europe allow us to learn how to share our heritage. One of the EYCH objectives is to build bridges during the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022).

We all live in a world of dramatic – hopefully, progressive – changes. In the EYCH, we bring into the spotlight our differences. They are permanently challenged by a disruption of the notion of national identity vis-à-vis universal benchmarks. Taking part or, at least, taking interest in the processes or activities that transcend this failure proves crucial.

Our differences are not supposed to be a stumbling block to our intercultural communication, but rather an inspiration, innovation and integration.

The wealth of legacy is passed on to the generations to come. Hopefully, it brings them enlightenment in the following sense: what vision for a future of shared and mutually respected heritage and values do we provide?

It is the spiritual assets that peoples and communities carry from the past to the future. It is not “smart”

missiles and weapons; neither gold nor oil. It is more than that.

It is respect for nations’ sensitivities; for the diversity of peoples and their life stories... It is open-mindedness, empathy and equitable reconciliation, when possible. It is enlightenment – and scripts, ancient stories, and historical landscapes bring it home. Every year, 24 May marks the day of the Cyrillic alphabet, and the Slavonic language and cultural heritage.

Nowadays, over 300 million people use this alphabet globally. In 1980, two brothers – Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher and Methodius, who laid the alphabet foundation in the 9th century – were proclaimed co-patrons of Europe by Pope Saint John Paul II. The act was a hope of a possible overcoming of divisions between nations and peoples in Europe and globally.

In the EYCH, 1155 years are celebrated since the arrival of the two educators in Greater Moravia as a crucial part of their mission of a lifetime to create a script; to introduce a new language for liturgical and literary purposes; and to establish a school. Their disciples developed the alphabet, stemming from the “mysterious characters” of the two brothers, in 9th century Bulgaria. The ambitious undertaking

had as its consequence the integration of the various groups of the society. They learnt how to stand up for each other.

“Our differences are not supposed to be a stumbling block to our intercultural communication, but rather an inspiration, innovation and integration.”

Building a sense of community and shared heritage may prove to be an essential component of the European social fabric the EYCH is striving to join together. Shouldering this opportunity gives hope to understanding and mutual respect. It would also show a growing interest in the issues that peoples and communities care about.

The myriad of crises and difficulties that peoples globally have experienced in recent years should lead us – during the EYCH, afterwards, and in terms of cooperation with third countries – to a launch of more convincing, innovative ways that nations invent in order to bridge with each other. The endeavour should break new grounds, be honest, and enjoy the respect to truth and relevance. These characteristics call for recognizing the following vital principle: “We are all equal by virtue of our natural dignity.”

Mariela Baeva

ALDE, Bulgaria (2007-2009)

mariela.baeva@nanotech-oecd-partner.eu



The abduction of Europe ©European Parliament

9 MAY 2018

9 May 2018: For Europe too, 'you don't have to be hopeful in order to try, nor to be successful in order to persevere'.

On Tuesday, 8 May 2018, the anniversary of the end of the greatest world conflict in history, the President of the United States again lit 'the blue touchpaper' in the Middle East by ripping up the Iran nuclear agreement, at the risk of setting the region on fire and Europe with it. These actions are in defiance of Europe, which will pay a heavy price, and, of course, a slap in the face to all those who have yet to understand how worthless Mr Trump's smiles are and how little he values our continent.

Unfortunately, I fear that our President of the French Republic is not yet aware of this, despite the USA's brutal sanctions against European exports, which have now been confirmed.

There can only be one course of action to counter the dangerous, domineering arrogance of Mr Trump's America: a strong and

united Europe.

On 9 May 2018, a day enshrined as Europe Day, to commemorate Robert Schuman's declaration of 9 May 1950, I reminded us that we must, and I must, reiterate our commitment to Europe.

It is the construction of Europe that enabled us to avoid being 'colonies shared out between the USSR and the United States'.

It is the construction of Europe that has ensured 73 years of peace.

It is the construction of Europe that led to the reunification of Western and Eastern Europe.

If tomorrow the European Union manages to pull itself together and once again become a genuine source hope for its peoples, and leave behind 'economic liberalism at all costs' and an 'unregulated market economy without common social and fiscal rules', to finally make itself a fully-fledged political, social, cultural and civic great power, we may avoid being permanently caught in a pincer movement between Mr Trump's USA and Mr Putin's Russia, without forgetting Mr Erdogan's Turkey.

This year, 2018, one year before the next European elections, with my wealth of European experience, I wanted to repeat this.

The stakes are high, and we must all grasp this fact and adapt our behaviour accordingly.

Repeated meetings between the leaders of each European country and Mr Trump are not enough to give Europe fresh impetus.

We need to start again 'from a hard core' without the idea of dominating anyone within it,

build a consensus on essential aspects, leaving aside what is less important, stop seeking unanimity

at all costs from its 28 members, reminding each of them of our values, without compromising on the consequences of these values on the policies of each Member State.

This is the vital issue of the coming year!

Mr Macron, the French President, has had the chance to move forward in this direction for a year, since many of the conditions for success were in place. Unfortunately, he failed to do so.

What is more, on this point I also want to believe in the 'school of second chances'...

'You don't have to be hopeful in order to try, nor to be successful in order to persevere.'

Gérard Caudron

France

PES (1989-2002)

GUE (2002-2004)

gcaudron@nordnet.fr



Open Day 2018 Brussels ©European Parliament

STRASBOURG BY BIKE 2018

In 2002 I started in the European Parliament as a deputy for the Flemish Greens, and as a statement to go to work by bike, me and my wife cycled from Brussels to Strasbourg, in 5 days, with luggage including a small tent.

In 2003 I organised an all-party cycle trip to Strasbourg for MEPs and staff; more than 10 members joined; the luggages were transported by a van from the parliament. It was also to be seen as a protest to the monthly move of the parliament to Strasbourg and huge the cost of that (money and carbon).

In 2008 a few guys from the parliament staff organised the first SBB (Strasbourg By Bike) for racebikes. This year they did it for the 10th time and they contacted me to join in; so I did. It was an awesome experience. They are very well organised: they have a van for the luggage, bananas and water.

There are a few stops every day and we sleep in small hotels. This year we were 22 people, 4 women and 18 men. We started on Friday the



SBB participants at the European Parliament in Brussels

29th at 9 a.m. at the EP in Brussels. People from Finland, Latvia, Romania, Germany, Holland, France, Belgium, even Norway.

We were riding in three groups with different pace; I was in the slowest group..

First day was 143 km to Chimay, mostly flat along canals and an old railway track (Ravel).

(By the way this year was the trappistbeer edition).

Second day was "only" 122 km to Orval, but very hilly, and hot; the heath was a big obstacle.

Third day (Sunday) was the hardest day with a record distance of 216 km: we started at 6.30 am and arrived at 9 pm. Very long day, and I had one punctier (flat). Starting in Orval, we had lunch in Metz and went on to Sarrebourg.

The last day was "easy": only 97 km mostly along the canal to Strasbourg; arriving at 14.30.

There was no brassband welcoming us; the people took a shower and went to work.

After work, we had a few beers in the Swanns bar...and Belgium won against Japan!

I admire the people who organised it and all the participants. We really formed a good group.

This is the real spirit of Europe.

Thanks, see you next year.

Jan Dhaene

Greens/EFA, Belgium (2002-2004)
jandhaene@telenet.be



SBB participants at the European Parliament in Strasbourg

FOCUS

EU PUBLIC OPINION



WITHOUT TRUTHFUL INFORMATION, THERE IS NO DEMOCRACY

We are far from knowing what the consequences of Brexit will be. The terrible blow dealt by the decision of the British people has placed the European Union project in a dramatic and unfamiliar situation. No matter how much the worst effects may be mitigated as a result of the on-going negotiations, we all know that the EU has been dealt a body blow and that the spectre of the domino effect looms large over the EU. Amid all of this drama, there is a question which all of us who firmly believe in the project of a united and pluralist Europe have asked ourselves: would the British have voted in the same manner if they had had truthful information about what it really meant to be part of the EU? What if the most popular tabloids had not been awash with all of those demagogic lies and accusations? Many of us do not think so. The debate in the United Kingdom on whether or not to leave the European Union was shrouded in a web of deceit spun by journalists without scruples and demagogic politicians. The result was devastating. Unfortunately, the case of Brexit is not unique, for such cases abound in history – and not just in recent history. Wars based on

the possession of ‘weapons of mass destruction’ or invasions justified by non-existent provocations serve to remind us of how vulnerable public opinion is to self-serving manipulation. New channels for the distribution of news and the social media in particular have further exacerbated this vulnerability to misinformation and lies which are spread without restriction. It could be argued that the ability to lie and manipulate public opinion is no longer the preserve of power, be it political or journalistic. Thanks to the influence of social networks, more or less organised groups are now also able to successfully use falsehoods to alter opinions. Lying has been ‘democratised’.

“The case of Brexit is not unique, for such cases abound in history – and not just in recent history. Wars based on the possession of ‘weapons of mass destruction’ or invasions justified by non-existent provocations serve to remind us of how vulnerable public opinion is to self-serving manipulation.”

The situation is extremely worrying and constitutes a serious threat to democracy. Public authorities must remain in touch with citizens, professional associations of journalists, universities and other groups concerned and endeavour to ensure good journalistic practices

and to guarantee that public media provide the citizens with diverse, nuanced and high-quality information. This is a fundamental pillar of democracy which, if not kept in good health, will rot away and may bring down the whole system with it. This is by no means an easy task since, at the same time, we also have to guarantee that hard-won freedom of expression of ours here in Europe which remains but a dream in large parts of the world. One cannot use ‘control mechanisms’ that could pose a threat to legitimate criticism and complaints.

Achieving a balance between ensuring truthful information while not limiting freedom of expression is undoubtedly one of the challenges facing those in charge of this so-called ‘information society’ which could easily be turned into a society of lies. With this in mind, one of the key aspects must be to educate citizens about communication, training students in the art of public-opinion building and teaching them about the basic standards to be respected and the sources and balance which any item of information must display to be deemed truthful and trustworthy. The 21st century will be one of mass manipulation if we do not act in time to train the public to be critical thinkers and enable them to clearly distinguish between information and self-serving lies.

Jordi Sebastià Talavera
Former MEP and journalist
Greens/EFA, Spain (2002-2004)
jandhaene@telenet.be



©European Parliament

NEW TRENDS IN PUBLIC OPINION

Since 2007, DG Communication's Public Opinion Monitoring Unit is carrying out Eurobarometer surveys for the European Parliament. With less than one year to go to the next European elections, the latest Parliament Eurobarometer survey shows a continuous increase in citizens' support for the European Union.

Eurobarometer indicator measuring citizens' support for EU membership had always received a steady backing from respondents over time. This support significantly jumped in 2018 to 60% of citizens who believe that the EU membership of their country is a good thing. Even more importantly, 67% of respondents think that their country has benefited from being a member of the EU - this is the highest score recorded for this indicator since 1983!

Also for the first time in the last decade, a relative majority of respondents (48%) believe that their voice counts in the EU. Looking at the trend line for this indicator

one can see that this positive development started in the second half of 2016, pointing to a 'wake up call' after the Brexit referendum in the UK.

“Eurobarometer indicator measuring citizens' support for EU membership had always received a steady backing from respondents over time. This support significantly jumped in 2018 to 60% of citizens who believe that the EU membership of their country is a good thing. Even more importantly, 67% of respondents think that their country has benefited from

being a member of the EU - this is the highest score recorded for this indicator since 1983!”

Interesting developments can also be noted when looking at voters' perceptions of the upcoming European elections. Citizens all over the EU see the Spitzenkandidaten process as an important cornerstone of democratic life in the EU. In 2014, Europeans voters could participate indirectly in the process of electing the President of the European Commission for the first time. Today, results show that nearly half of EU27 citizens (49%) say that a repetition of this process would encourage them to go to vote in the next European elections. The lead candidates process is clearly associated with “more transparency” (63%), a significant progress for European democracy’ (61%) and “more legitimacy for the European Commission” (60%). In contrast, less than half of respondents think that this process would prevent national governments from choosing the best candidate (46%) and that it has no real impact (45%).

And what about the issues that matter? During the election campaign, Europeans want to hear about security in the broadest sense, including immigration. At the same time, issues related to personal prosperity and well-being are equally high on their agenda. 49% of Europeans cite the fight against terrorism as campaign priority topic, followed by ‘combatting youth unemployment’ (48%), immigration (45%), economy and growth (42%). Around one third of Europeans cite



Press seminar for audio-visual media - ' #EUElections2019 - one year to go ' - Eurobarometer "One year to the EE19" ©European Union 2018 - Source : EP

climate change and the protection of the environment (35%). Promoting human rights and democracy as well as the social protection of EU citizens are listed as priority by 32% of respondents.

“Issues related to personal prosperity and well-being are equally high on their agenda. 49% of Europeans cite the fight against terrorism as campaign priority topic, followed by ‘combatting youth unemployment’ (48%), immigration (45%), economy and growth (42%).”

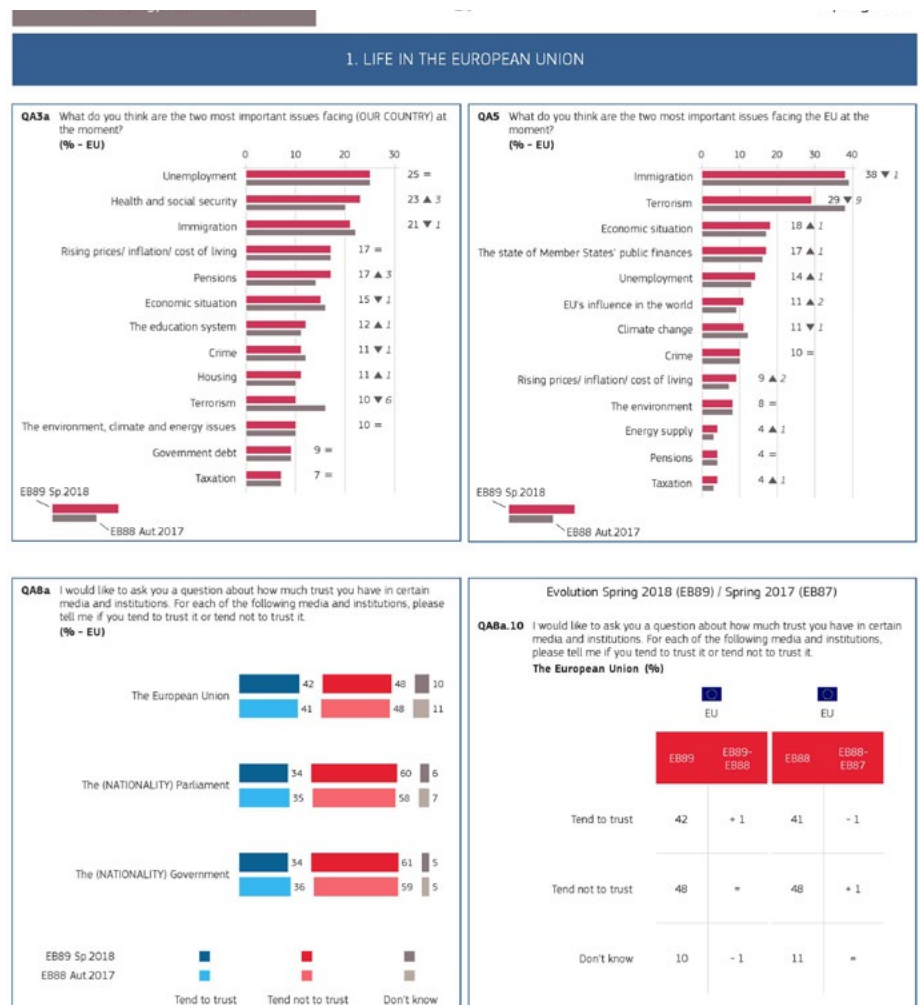
Europeans are also attached to democracy both on EU level and in their own country, yet the economic context seems to have a direct bearing on their views. While a majority of respondents continues to be satisfied with the way democracy works in their country (55%) and in the EU (46%), the situation differs from one country to the next. This becomes even clearer when the level of satisfaction with the way democracy works is put in relation to the countries’ GDP per capita as well as to their current unemployment rates.

Between 2013 and 2018, more than 70 new parties and political alliances emerged in EU Member States, some of which campaigned successfully by protesting against the political establishment. When asked to position themselves on a range of statements about such new parties and movements, half of the respondents do not consider

such parties or movements to be a threat to democracy, with only around a third (38%) thinking they would be. 70% of citizens surveyed consider that just being against something would not be enough and would not improve anything. 53% of citizens feel that new parties and movements could find new solutions better than the political establishment, 56% believe that they can bring real change. Nothing much has changed in citizens’ perception of the European elections compared to national votes - 68% of Europeans declare that voting in national elections is of

‘high importance’, only 49% feel the same about the European elections. However, with twelve months to go, almost a third of respondents (32%) know that these elections are taking place in 2019. Moreover one respondent in two (50%) declares to be interested in the European elections.

Philipp M. Schulmeister
Head of the Public Opinion
Monitoring Unit
Philipp.schulmeister@ep.europa.
eu
@pschulmeister



FAKE NEWS AND HOW IT INFLUENCES OPINION POLLS

The term 'fake news' denotes news and content framed for specific purposes, which almost invariably have nothing whatsoever to do with imparting information. Fake news in all its guises has its own taxonomy and can thus be classified as propaganda, libel, conspiracy theory, a hoax, clickbait, satire, hate speech, or an error pure and simple.

"In this era of post-truth politics, it's easy to cherry-pick data and come to whatever conclusion you desire."

Every item of fake news applies particular communication strategies and employs different channels of dissemination. Social networks enable news to travel fast, not least because IT tools (in particular bots) are used to publish a story on a mass scale. The more rapidly information is disclosed, the more difficult it is for news agencies and newspapers to ascertain that it is true before they are called upon to report on it.

Especially at election time, the instances of suspect news become more frequent. This can be produced quite simply, for example by faking images, or audio and video content, or lifting them out of context, mixing satire with real news, quoting figures that are either incorrect or hard to verify, and so on. Given the variety of information (in text and multimedia form), the speed at which it is disseminated, and the breadth of the subject matter involved, the fact-checking practices and tools being used more and more often rely on artificial intelligence based on big data technologies, affording scope for a sweeping response. With the aid of machine learning, algorithms can be trained to recognise the syntax with which bogus articles are typically written. This is undoubtedly more effective than specialised algorithms which probe information content that is not readily verifiable. The responsibility of checking facts falls first and foremost to journalists, but Facebook and other social networks have recently been taking

FAKE News discovery and propagation from big Data ANalysis and artificial intelligence Operations - FANDANGO

The aim of FANDANGO is to aggregate and verify different typologies of news data, media sources, social media, open data, so as to detect fake news and provide a more efficient and verified communication for all European citizens. It project aims to break data interoperability barriers providing unified techniques and an integrated big data platform to support traditional media industries to face the new "data" news economy with a better transparency to the citizens under a Responsible, Research and Innovation prism.

More info at:
www.fandango-project.eu



Conference on Fake news : " How to fight fake news in Europe " on May 8 at the Circulo de Bellas Artes in Madrid ©European Parliament

the precaution of incorporating digital tools to check photos and videos in order to reduce the numbers of published hoaxes and fake news stories, bearing in mind that these have lately risen to the point of marring countries' election campaigns.

"Social networks enable news to travel fast, not least because IT tools (in particular bots) are used to publish a story on a mass scale."



The more rapidly information is disclosed, the more difficult it is for news agencies and newspapers to ascertain that it is true before they are called upon to report on it.”

New forms of awareness raising, which aim to captivate the mind and be immediately comprehensible, are spreading throughout the world. Memes, which simplify information to the greatest possible degree, are exchanged on social networks much more quickly and easily than other types of content. To understand their meaning, text and image have to be interpreted together, which makes fact-checking more complex. An increasing number of American university studies are providing evidence that the outcome of the election was skewed by fake news consumption during the 2016 US presidential campaign. Specifically, according to a recent 2018 study

by Princeton University, Dartmouth College, and the University of Exeter, roughly one American in four visited a fake news website, but fake news consumption was found to be particularly marked among Trump supporters, who tended to pick news to corroborate their own views. This phenomenon is called selective exposure to misinformation. In particular, among Trump supporters, as opposed to supporters of Hillary Clinton, 40% read at least one article about Trump on a fake news site.



Monica Franceschini

The era of ‘post-truth’ politics and opinion-forming has gained such currency as to be cited in the Oxford English Dictionary, in which one entry reads: ‘In this era of post-truth politics, it’s easy to cherrypick data and come to whatever conclusion you desire’.

“The only way to fight it is by making people more aware.”

Ironically, following the suggestion that conspiracy theories are being bandied about on social media, most Americans have become convinced that mainstream TV channels and newspapers are the ones which are spreading fake news. That is why many politicians rely largely on Twitter to communicate with their voters. The Russian Embassy in London, for example, has a digital club that offers Twitter users ‘regular competitions and prize draws’ and even arranges invitations to the Ambassador’s residence if they let their accounts be used to automatically retweet official posts. Fake news is arousing great interest – from both the technological and the social point of view – because of the havoc that it is wreaking in the here and now. This phenomenon is likely to remain in the spotlight for several more years before it can be reined in. The only way to fight it is by making people more aware.

Monica Franceschini
Solution Architecture Manager -
Data & Analytics
Fake News discovery and
propagation from big Data
ANalysis and artificial intelligence
Operations-FANDANGO
monica.franceschini@eng.it
@twittmonique

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS BREXIT

It has now been almost 16 months since the invocation of Article 50 marked the beginning of Britain's withdrawal from the EU. While confidence that the UK will secure the 'good deal for Britain' promised by the UK's former Brexit minister David Davis has gradually eroded, there remains little hard evidence that voters have changed their minds about the merits of their choice at the ballot box.

Shortly before the invocation of Article 50, the February 2017 wave of NatCen's random probability panel found that a third of voters (33%) believed that the UK would achieve a good deal from the EU, while a slightly higher proportion (37%) felt it would get a bad deal. This plurality has now eroded. In July 2017, the percentage stating that the UK would secure a good deal had fallen to 25%, with 44% suggesting that they felt the UK would get a bad deal. By October 2017 this pessimism had become even more marked, with just 19% stating that the UK

would secure a good deal and over half (52%) of the belief that the UK would end up with a bad deal. The most recent data from ORB (collected just before the resignation of Mr Davis and his cabinet colleague Boris Johnson) paints a similar picture, with well over half of the population (56%) now disagreeing that Theresa May will secure 'the right deal for Britain' – a 20 percentage-point increase since late 2016.

Our data shows that this pessimism is no longer confined to those who backed Remain. While before the invocation of Article 50 just over half (51%) of Leave voters felt the UK would get a good deal from the Brexit negotiations, by October 2017 this proportion had fallen to just 28%. Yet there is little evidence that voters have changed their minds on the question of leaving the EU. While a variety of polling companies suggest that the small majority in favour of Leave may now have become a small majority in favour of Remain, any potential swing

appears to be largely the result of a proportion of people who didn't vote in the referendum stating that they would now back Remain.

So how do we square increasing discontent with the Brexit process – particularly amongst Leave voters – with relatively stable support for leaving the EU? The answer appears to be that rather than questioning the wisdom of their choice, voters place the blame on politicians on both sides of the negotiating table for being unable to successfully navigate the course set out for them. According to the NatCen Panel, the proportion of Leave supporters who feel that the UK government is handling the Brexit negotiations badly increased by 23 points between February and October 2017, while the proportion who believe that the EU is doing a bad job rose by 16 points.

While it remains to be seen whether the latest political shake-up in Westminster will have any impact on the aggregate level of support for Brexit, it appears that Leave voters are not questioning their worldview, but rather the ability of politicians to implement it.

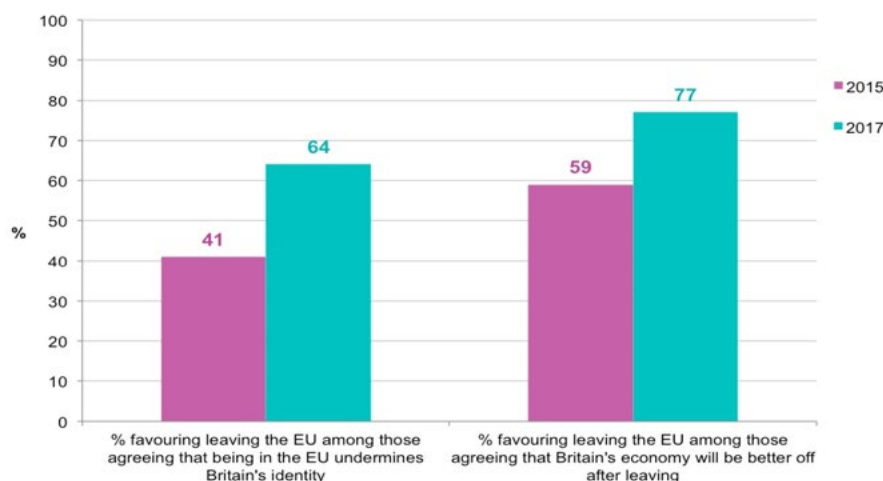
Nancy Kelley

Deputy Chief Executive
NatCen - Social Research that works for society
Nancy.Kelley@natcen.ac.uk
@Nancy_M_K

Ian Montagu

Researcher
NatCen - Social Research that works for society
ian.montagu@natcen.ac.uk
@IanMontagu

Support for leaving the EU, by attitudes towards the EU



FMA ACTIVITIES



European Parliament Former Members Association
Association des anciens députés au Parlement européen



DEMOCRACY SUPPORT

WORLD MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRACY

I had great honor to represent the FMA at the Ninth Assembly of the World Movement for Democracy (WMD), which took place at Dakar, Senegal from May 6-9. This year's theme was "Building Strategic Partnerships for Democratic Renewal". The Assembly, organized by WMD, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), has gathered more than 400 democracy activists, practitioners, donors, and scholars from around the world. The main aim of the Assembly was to explore the current challenges in democracy faced by different countries. Three main issues of Assembly were: defending democratic space against resurgent authoritarianism, strengthening democratic unity, focused on building cross-sector and cross-generational partnerships, and protecting integrity in the information space, related to the growing threats of disinformation efforts, cyber attacks, and challenges to Internet governance.

Directly before the Assembly I attended also the meeting of Working Group of Parliamentarians and Parliamentary and Political Networks. Parliamentarians (from USA, Canada, South Africa, Gambia, Ukraine, Australia), representatives of party and parliamentary associations discussed how to strengthen and improve collaboration and coordination among the parliamentary associations and political groupings (like e.g. African Liberal Network) to enhance the impact of these groups in advancing democracy and human rights. The EP was represented by honorable Ana Gomes (MEP). I had chance to

present the activities run by the FMA in the field of democracy support, promotion of democratic values and human rights. I have communicated also the results of the Annual General Assembly of the Association. One of conclusion of the Working Group, supported by majority of participants, was the idea of a global "sign-on" letter with current and former members of parliament and politicians signing on to on short statement on what MPs can do to advance democratic renewal. Such initiative could be connected with a social media campaign associated with the International Day of Democracy (September 15). This idea was discussed during one of the Assembly's workshops, entitled "Linking Parliamentary Associations to Promote Democratic Norms and Systems". It was the second opportunity to present FMA activities in the field of election observations, capacity building, mediation and human rights issues.

The last, but very moving, part of the Assembly was the Democracy Courage Tributes, which pay homage to activists and movements around the world working for democracy and human rights under particularly difficult circumstances. Recipients of the Democracy Courage Tributes 2018 were:

- Advocates for rule of law in Africa (accepted by Thulisile Madonsela, former Public Protector of South Africa),
- Human rights lawyers in China (accepted by Jin Bianling, the wife of Jiang Tianyong, a political prisoner),
- Nightwatchers – photojournalists in the Philippines (accepted by Raffy Lerma and Ezra Acayan,



documentary photographers of the Nightwatchers).

The fact that so many people are involved in defending and promoting democracy in the world allows to be moderately optimistic about this form of governance and social order. It is quite clear that parliamentarians play an important role in democracy. This also applies to former parliamentarians, who can use their experience and knowledge to strengthen democratic values. During the Assembly I found out that it was worth doing.

Filip Kaczmarek
EPP-ED, Poland (2004-2014)
Filip.Kaczmarek@ue.poznan.pl

VISIT UNDER EU PRESIDENCY

BULGARIAN VISIT FOR THE EUROPEAN PRESIDENCY

This trip was for the former members of the EP led by our Brigitte (not Macron or Bardot) but Langenhagen. The group consisted of 19 former members from the UK, France, Germany, Bulgaria, Netherlands, Spain, Czech Republic, Finland, and Poland from 5 different political parties.

It was a particularly moving visit for me. I first went to Bulgaria campaigning for the first free elections after the Berlin Wall came down, then as an official observer in my role as Vice-President of the Bulgarian Delegation in the EP. I was guided by Stefan Tavorov, future Foreign Secretary and Ambassador to London, Rome, Paris and UN; he is still involved in European Politics. I subsequently wrote and took through all the Bulgarian Reports for accession while I was on the Foreign Affairs committee under the Chairmanship of Otto von Habsburg. We had meetings with Ms Monika Panayotova Deputy Minister for EP relations and FMA member. Extremely probing questions were asked and the themes that wove their way through from the start were the preoccupation with the West Balkan Enlargement, plus of course all the old chestnuts. A mixture of late 19th century

combined with imposing communist architecture make up the grand Parliament Buildings, with spacious extra wide corridors. All the buildings are hung with interesting paintings of high quality from different periods and are well worth a visit in themselves. We should not forget that the EP has a very fine international collection of art too, well worth a visit.

Enlivened debate ensued the Bulgarian Foreign and European Affairs committees, with the Chairs Ms Dzhema Grozdanova and Mr Kristian Vigenin, as well as with the Bulgarian Vice-President Ms Iliana Iotova (former MEP).

Mentioned were Dublin Agreement 2007 needing reform, lack of clarity of the Budget, concern on Human Rights, too much bureaucracy and red tape, main crisis not economic but moral values. Possibly these are not new problems.

There followed a little light relief and cultural experience with a visit to the ancient city of Plovdiv in Southern Bulgaria; conquered by Thracians, Macedonians, Romans and many others.

Plovdiv has a state opera house and company run by Luciano Di Martino an inspiring Italian who had been for several years in Germany. He organised a stunning recital with Mr Mark Fowler, Ms Svetlana Ivanova and Ms Evgenia Ralcheva, they sang arias from La Boheme and La Traviata, accompanied by Ralitzia Boteva on the piano, in a sensitively restored period house. Bulgaria is renowned too for its world class singers and musicians. This brought big smiles from all the rather exhausted former MEPs that had been listening to serious

politics until' now.

I mustn't forget between all the debates and culture Bulgaria is famous for its cooking and wines. We were spoilt throughout. The final day we visited the Military Academy, founded in 1912. The surrounding park with magnificent trees a hallmark of Tsar Ferdinand as in Exinograd and Varna. He loved nature. Prince Ferdinand of Coburg came to the throne in 1886 following Prince Alexander of Battenberg, with the influence of his mother, the daughter of the last King of France he ruled Bulgaria for over 30 years.

Back to modern times our former very distinguished Finnish Member, Henrik Lax delivered a tour d'horizon a la Julian Amery. He reminded us of the importance of the European Elections next year. Will UK citizens have a vote? The pressure Europe continues to face with major flows of refugees and migrants that have come to stay. Economic progress to enable the EU to sustain its legitimacy, confirm its values and defend democracy. The Single Market, the Crown Jewel of the EU, will suffer a serious blow, if Britain as the consequence of BREXIT, leaves the customs union.

Thank you again to Brigitte, Elisabetta and her team, and our Bulgarian hosts, especially to Mr Hristo Kraevski, Permanent Representative of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria to the European Parliament, for the faultless organisation.

Baroness Patricia Rawlings
EPP-ED, United Kingdom
(1989-1994)
rawlingspe@parliament.uk



Tsveta Karayancheva, President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria

BULGARIA STILL AT A CROSSROAD

Entering the nostalgic world that is Sofia, with its 19th century buildings and garden restaurants, I could not believe that 10 years after EU accession, which was the last time the FMA group paid a visit, this country seems still to be under the influence of the old political rulers. With a per capita GDP of € 8064 - Germany's, by comparison, is € 41936 - it still has one of the highest poverty rates in the EU: 21.8%.

Because our visit related to the Council Presidency, it was more of an effort, amid the hustle and bustle, to get to speak to important politicians. At the Foreign Affairs, Europe and EU Funds Committee, Members' statements made it difficult to get answers to our raft of questions. Ex-MEP Monika Panayotova, now Minister for the Council Presidency, was receptive to questions and willing to provide solid answers and gave a well-put-together speech on the Presidency's objectives and priorities.

Bulgaria's Vice-President Iliana Jotova - we owed our meeting with her to our Secretary-General's organising skills - was also receptive to our questions and stressed her commitment to democracy and

human rights.

We had an interesting time at the Rakovski Military Academy, where our foreign policy speaker, Henrik Lax (Finland), addressed the audience with the demand to keep solidarity of all EU Member States to the sanctions against Russia.

Unfortunately, there were no questions from the audience of male and female officers.

What does Bulgaria expect from the EU - in addition to sources of funding?

While 16% of the population are in favour of leaving the EU (according to the Financial Times), many democrats who identify with the western world are hoping for political change through more contact with the West (Erasmus programme). EU subsidies (Cohesion Fund) are also being improperly used, however, as can be seen from funding allocations made to pro-government print media and broadcasters in order to 'build a media environment'.

In addition, according to journalists, the big newspapers, bought by oligarchs, report only good news about their proprietors, especially during election campaigns. Bulgaria has slipped to 111th place on the Reporters without Borders World

Press Index.

As investors can find cheap labour, but not skilled workers, foreign investment has begun to decline, as it has in Romania too. Skilled workers have apparently already left the country, with 67 000 of them, or 1% of the population, heading for Germany alone.

The dissatisfaction of Bulgarians with their parties and politicians - corruption proceedings - can be reflected in the fact that 33% of them voted in favour of founding a new party.

That being so, the European Commission should carefully consider any further EU enlargement that would include the West Balkans. The Bulgarians also take a very critical view of Serbian accession.

The proposal to admit Bulgaria into the Euro Zone is even more controversial because of its preparedness for the euro. Without sustainable convergence, going beyond meeting the nominal criteria, there should be no further consideration of admission; and that includes joining the Banking Union beforehand, which would act as a supervisory body - something that the Bulgarian Government rejects. On an excursion to Plovdiv, with its Roman amphitheatre, there was speculation as to whether cultural links are not more important than involvement in every single EU undertaking.



A moment of the meeting with Iliana Jotova, Vice-President of the Republic of Bulgaria

Ursula Braun-Moser
EPP-ED, Germany (1984-1994)
braunmoser@aol.com

WHEN LESS CAN BE MORE

Despite many successes over the years, the EU faces exceptional difficulties: in some parts democracy seems attacked; refugees and economic migrants cause tension about immigration; the Eurozone could be unstable; Putin's Russia poses a threat; and the Trump presidency is unpredictable. Yet opinion surveys indicate the EU is in fair shape. Late in 2017, opinion polls showing EU membership is a "good thing" attained 90% in Ireland. Even Czechia, Greece and the UK showed over 55% positive views. But wait a moment! Did not the UK in 2016 vote narrowly for BREXIT? Are not Far-Right, Eurosceptic parties gaining ground in ten Member States from Finland to Hungary? Public support cannot be taken for granted. In the UK most MPs are pro-EU but took the advisory Referendum as mandatory. With withdrawal negotiations resembling an acrimonious divorce, UK companies are increasingly protesting at looming economic damage. All is uncertain and, though unlikely, it is not

impossible that circumstances may arise in which the UK Parliament will insist that the Article 50 letter is withdrawn.

As one of the first elected MEPs in 1979, I reflect nearly as much on the future of the Union as on the massive wound which Britain seems about to inflict on itself and its partners. Politicians and Commission alike should pay very close attention to the patches of growing dissatisfaction with the EU in various States. These trivial 'infections' can grow, as the UK found to its cost. As with the ageing of the human body, over the years there can be an accumulation of small errors which eventually proves fatal.

A former Bulgarian Foreign Minister reminded us during the recent FMA visit to Sofia that the *raison d'être* of the EU is to secure peace, stability and prosperity for its Member States. The EU is indeed an amazingly successful achievement. Yet we see the risks. What should the Union do secure the support of its citizens in all Member States?

In 1984 Parliament agreed my

amendment, supported by Altiero Spinelli, to include subsidiarity in the Draft Treaty on European Union. It was later included in the Single European Act, but despite efforts over the years it has proved difficult to apply. One reason for this lies with the EP.

Parliament normally goes along with the decisions of its specialist committees, quite naturally full of members deeply concerned with the issues covered by those committees. The rest of us, always busy, normally shrug our shoulders and vote obediently to support our experts' recommendations. But this has a cost.

Without better mechanisms to enforce subsidiarity and proportionality than exist today, the EU suffers from an accretion of detailed laws, some with unexpected consequences. A distinguished British Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, years ago complained that the EU irritated its citizens by interfering too much in the 'warp and weft' of daily life. It remains a fair point. In any democracy power should be left as close to local people as possible. We should use subsidiarity and proportionality more strongly, ensuring the EU acts in a minimalist manner with its existing powers; but also including new fields, notably defence, where we can more effectively act together. Perhaps thus we can retain public support in all Member States, and keep the Union strong.

Christopher Jackson

EPP-ED, United Kingdom
(1979-1994)

cmurrayjackson@btinternet.com



The FMA Delegation during the visit at the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria

BULGARIA: 'CHALLENGES AND POTENTIAL'



A moment of the recital with the soloist Svetlana Ivanova in Plovdiv

Before departing, we were received by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Sofia. This foundation is close to the German CDU, mainly financed by the German Parliament, and is represented on all continents. It maintains social networks and organises conferences, seminars and workshops in order to promote European and Christian Democratic values. The director, Thorsten Geissler, has an extensive knowledge of the Bulgarian society. We were very pleased that he was willing to share his interesting insights with us. According to Thorsten Geissler the population and the political class are generally very much pro-European. As a EU member Bulgaria wants to participate in the Schengen Agreement and claims to meet all criteria. The country is a mixture of European and traditional Bulgarian values. Of course, foreigners working with local people have to deal with all kind of cultural differences. Political

life is in our perception very direct and confrontational; the people are polite, but straight forward and against aggressive arguing. In Bulgaria there are less powerful NGOs as in Western Europe, thus civil society can still improve. Bulgaria is a democratic country and media freedom is not restricted by law. However, the press is controlled by some tycoons, who strongly influence political debates. Most people receive their information by watching television, which is dominated by entertainment programs with hidden political messages. At the same time social media are popular and WIFI is everywhere. The young generation does not depend on information from traditional media. Surveys underline that corruption is widespread, hindering economic development and structural improvements. Parliament has recently passed a new anti-corruption law, and a Council to combat corruption has been set up. But the Council remains certain that they will tackle the problem with concrete results. They should be supported. Also, the Bulgarians tend to refer to the situation in Italy, Greece and Spain. "Why do you blame us more than them?" Especially Sofia and some other big cities have good job opportunities, but salaries are still lower than in Central or Western European countries. In the past ten years, about one million Bulgarians have left the country; these mostly well educated people are now missing. They could form the critical mass, which is indispensable.

Since as a FMA-delegation we met several women in top positions, we were curious to learn if this was the reflection of the overall situation of women in politics and society. According to our interlocutor things are changing for the better, but the most powerful political positions are still in the hands of men. In the economy women have almost no top positions. At the family level domestic violence is still a great problem, like in many other Balkan States. Many Bulgarians are still grateful to the Russians because they liberated them from the Turkish occupation. The Orthodox Church of Bulgaria maintains strong ties with her sister church in Russia and usually follows its positions. Overall, despite of all the challenges, Thorsten Geissler remains optimistic about the future because "Bulgaria has a high potential of ambitious young people". Also Bulgarian's Presidency has successfully set the agenda. Especially by drawing the attention of other governments to the Western Balkans. Moreover, all the meetings and conferences were professionally chaired.

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

Bob van den Bos
ELDR, Netherlands (1999-2004)
bravandenbos@planet.nl

GEORGI RAKOVSKI MILITARY ACADEMY



Georgi Rakovski Military Academy

Extracts of the speech by Henrik Lax during the visit of the FMA to the Georgi Rakovski Military Academy on June 5th 2018.

"The evolution of the EU [...] has much been carried by its ability to further the economic interests of its member states and enhance peace and stability on our continent. Prosperity has allowed the union to become the world leader in promoting and defending human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

The ability to deliver security and prosperity to its citizens will also be crucial for the future of the union. We are, however, facing challenges of magnitudes not seen before, problems which no single Member State is able to solve on its own.[...] The union can be successful in

reforming itself to address these challenges only if it has the support of its citizens. Support, however, can be generated only if the problems are brought up to an honest and serious debate in each and every Member State. To put it mildly, our national leaders have been much reluctant to foster debates on the future of the union with their electorate. [...] The European elections next year provide a golden opportunity to make the European citizens aware of the most critical threats to our common future, and how these dangers could be met. I urge you all to demand that your leaders and candidates in the elections commit themselves to find sustainable solutions on the European level. [...]"

The full article is available at www.formermembers.eu

'Georgi Stoikov Rakovski' Military Academy

The 'Georgi Stoikov Rakovski' Military Academy is the oldest military college in Bulgaria. It was created by virtue of an act adopted by the Bulgarian National Assembly on 1 March 1912. It has contributed not only to the formation of the Officer Corps, but also to the building of the new Bulgarian State in the spirit of European values.

The Academy gives military personnel and students the possibility to study for Master's degrees in the career fields of national security, psychology and military affairs.

The Academy's primary task is to provide training in line with the processes under NATO's comprehensive transformation and the Common Security and Defence Policy being developed in Europe, and with the application and implementation of modern interdisciplinary joint training norms and standards at strategic and operational level for officers (employees) in the security and defence system.

The 'Georgi Stoikov Rakovski' Military Academy has been a key pillar of military education and a guarantor of Bulgarian statehood for 106 years now. The Academy is not only Bulgaria's oldest military college, but also the country's most authoritative centre for the training of future military and civil leaders in the security and defence field.



FMA Delegation with Dimitar Tashkov, Deputy Commandant of RNDC, during the visit to the Georgi Rakovski Military Academy

EP TO CAMPUS PROGRAMME

EP TO CAMPUS VISIT TO DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY

Within ten minutes of my arrival at de Montfort, the clock went back over fifty years: I found myself sitting in the front row at a lecture on the mathematics of fiscal stabilisers. Was I –oh, Lord! – having to prepare for an economics exam again? And then I was up myself to answer questions on the subject.

Contacts between students studying a topic academically and those who have had to apply what they have learnt in the practical world are useful to both sides. The problems of the Euro Area in combining a centralised monetary policy with devolved fiscal policies were clearly relevant to the fiscal policy class; and also to the next one on monetary policy. Attending academic lectures can also remind ex-MEPs of fundamentals which may have been forgotten over the years. I had, as requested by the Former Members Association office in Brussels, prepared a written paper on the history and problems of the Euro. But it was not needed. Unsurprisingly, the focus of all the discussions, and in particular the general question-and-answer sessions, was Brexit. What was going to happen if and when the UK left

the EU? Doris Pack and I struggled to find satisfactory answers. Almost all the students and staff appeared to be Remainers, and it was difficult to deny that no arrangement outside the EU could possibly be as good as not leaving in the first place. But then there was a bewildering array of options, ranging from EEA membership plus Customs Union (probably, in due course, leading to an EU return), to a cliff-edge crash-out next year. It was necessary to explain that nearly everyone else, and almost certainly the UK government, were as much in the dark as we were.

The university had issued us with an envelope-full of vouchers for use in the various canteens on campus, which I mostly spent on coffee. But we were also entertained to two excellent dinners in town, after the first of which we went to the site of Richard III's burial and saw something of the old, now partly pedestrianised city. The de Montfort campus itself extends over quite a large area; and if there is one complaint we had it is that the local taxis seemed at a loss when trying to drop us off at the right building.



Ben Patterson during his intervention ©De Montfort University

My visit ended, as it had begun, with attendance at two classes on special policy fields, both under the supervision of Professor Alasdair Blair, the university's Jean Monnet Professor of International Relations, and overall organiser of the event. The first was on the CAP, a subject that has been endlessly debated and reformed over the years. I was able to recall the days of butter mountains and wine lakes, and even, before that, of the UK's expensive deficiency payments system. Now we have the Basic (formerly Single) Payment Scheme, based on how much land you own. What, we wondered, was coming next?

Finally, after a short session on the British political situation – a subject for three days' discussion in itself – I headed off back down the M1 to London.



Ben Patterson, Doris Pack and Professor Alasdair Blair ©De Montfort University

Ben Patterson

United Kingdom

ED (1979-1992)

EPP (1992-1994)

gb.patterson@btinternet.com

TARAS SHEVHENKO NATIONAL ACADEMY

The Kiev based Taras-Sevchenko-University in co-operation with Erasmus and their common Jean Monnet-Project organised a two days' International conference on "European Integration Processes in 21st Century – Key Trends, main Challenges and new Perspectives" on 26/27 March. Speakers from universities of United Kingdom, Portugal, Canada, Poland and Italy have been invited. I have been invited on behalf of FMA. About 70 students, mainly involved in European Studies, took part in the first afternoon debate on March 26th. I was asked to give an introduction into history and relevance to the current situation of European integration. My first challenge was to find some examples avoiding the danger to be too shallow. I choose the following two: "EU's international trade policy" was the first, followed by "the rule of European law and common values in democracy". Since the students have been very aware of EU's problems with Ukraine's direct neighbour Poland, they asked many questions on the rule of European law, decision making processes and European understanding of democracy. I

explained that one of the basic experiences in European Policy is to accept the necessity to compromise (even in one's own political family). Here the students ask the grave question, hanging like a black cloud above all debates in Ukraine: How to find solutions for the war in East-Ukraine and for Crimea. I couldn't give an answer to this 1-Million-Euro question, but at least there has been no negative reaction when I mentioned that in the end there would be the need to find compromises. Another issue raised by the students was nationalism. Since EU-law rules above national law, the students felt inclined to ask if there is not the danger that citizens may loose their national identity? This led to discuss the principle of subsidiarity and the chance to develop a genuine European identity – not dominating national identity but changing it and adding a new dimension of common values and goals. The difference between national identity and aggressive or even violent nationalism was underlined. All in all the more than three hours discussion showed the deep desire of the students to become part of the European Union. At the international conference on

27th participated a lower number of Ukrainian students and more CEOs from EU related organisations and professors from universities. The conference concentrated on different fields of European Politics, especially Environmental Policy, Law-making processes and questioning the Competence of Europe in actual conflicts. A specific part of the session was dedicated to the presentation of results of an inquiry in UK on letters in shaping the mass media before the referendum on Brexit. The inquiry shows 97% yes to Brexit in populist media while only 46% could be found in more neutral papers. Unfortunately this inquiry was carried only after the referendum. Two young researchers from the Ukrainian "Content Analysis Centre" gave a lecture on "the role of EU in the events highlighted by the major Ukrainian press". My role in this part of the conference was to talk about the heavy storms which are threatening the Union since the outbreak of the Financial crisis in 2008. I referred to the refugee crisis, the deep internal conflicts with some member-countries not willing to accept European rule of law and the upcoming international trade conflicts proving so far the rather robust survival capacity of the Union. My closing remarks emphasized some aspects of new ideas actually developed by the EU-Commission and also by the French President Emanuel Macron.



Birgit Daiber during her intervention at the Taras Shevchenko National Academy of Education Sciences of Ukraine

Birgit Daiber
G, Germany (1989-1994)
bir.dai@hotmail.com

COLD TALLINN

A cold Tallinn offered a warm welcome from my hosts when I visited Estonia's lovely capital in March. Through the good offices of FMA, I was invited by the Tallinn University of Technology (TTU) to talk about EU foreign relations but also to discuss, with students and faculty, Brexit. My interlocutors clearly follow the debate on Brexit in the UK with attention; an attention tinged with concern about future relations between Estonia and UK under the auspices of EU Higher Educational Cooperation. Although the UK government has indicated a willingness to contribute financially to such programmes as a way of ensuring participation, the negative is that as in other spheres, UK will be "taking and not making rules". The UK has been a major influence on the shaping of ERASMUS and research cooperation and its knowledge and experience would be missed. Students worry that study in UK could become more difficult and staff are concerned that recruitment from UK as well as their chances of posts in the UK could

become problematic. I also gave a lecture on China's ambitious "Belt and Road" programme to Masters students of International Relations. Ostensibly, this is a giant infrastructure plan, initially based on the revival the old Silk Road, from China, through Central Asia and on into the Middle East and Europe. As such it conjures up romantic nostalgia for bygone days of explorers and traders, East to West, and West to East. However, it is also much to do with Sino/Russian rivalry for national energy resources in Central Asia. Additionally, China is worried that though the Coastal strip of China is booming, there is little evidence of a "trickle down" effect to the distant inland provinces. Lastly and not least, China now has massive over-capacity in steel, coal and cement; just the basic materials for a vast transport infrastructure programme envisaged in "Belt and Road." My hosts kindly arranged to visit some of Tallinn's much lauded e-centres, TTU own innovation



*Michael Hindley with Meeli Semjonov
Coordinator of Mektony E-centre in Tallinn*

centre, MEKTORY and the E-Residency.

Estonia has invested much energy, resources in new technology and the results are truly impressive. I well remember taking a portable typewriter for my Strasbourg and Brussels offices in 1984, only for the typewriters to become quickly redundant. Now you can get an entire communications system on your smart phone. When I expressed my own scepticism about cyber-security I was met with optimism. Estonia has suffered and still fears cyber-attack from Russia, but the participants in the e-centres enthusiastically pointed out that research and development into cyber-security was in itself a motor for economic activity. Membership of the EU has been taken up with gusto in this small Baltic nation. It was refreshing to see such optimism in Estonia.



Michael Hindley with students from Tallinn University of Technology

Michael Hindley
PES, United Kingdom (1984-1999)
info@michaelhindley.co.uk

VISITING DEUSTO

On April 18/19 I was invited to a two days series of lessons and meetings at the university of Deusto in Bilbao. Already the setting of this very prestigious university, founded by the Gesuite order in 1886 and located in front of the magnificent Guggenheim museum is an enough inspiring experience. But I was very positively impressed by the intense programme, which allowed me to deal with different issues, (environment and climate change, the future of the EU, its institutional balance and functioning, the role of lobbies, professional opportunities for young students and and young professionals ...). Also the audience was quite diverse in age, interests and nationalities, as Erasmus students were involved in one of the lessons. They were obviously well prepared and the programme had been well thought through, in order to match with both their interests and my competences. Among the most interested and informed were the youngest high school students, eager to learn and well prepared on specific questions. I also had the chance to give an open conference in the newly built library on the future challenges facing the EU and I found this opportunity

worthwhile as we should give our host the chance of "exploit" our presence to the maximum. I also had a great contact with the two main organisers of the visit, professor Maria Luisa Sanchez-Barrueco and Professor Laura Gomez Urquijo. Prof. Barrueco coordinates the Jean Monnet programme SAPIA (Student Awareness of public integrity and Accountability in the EU) and she seeks through innovating teaching methods to make students aware of the importance of democratic control of EU institutions. Professor Urquijo heads the Jean Monnet module EUCLAP (EU legal and economic integration for people) and she focuses on how positive economic and legal EU integration can enhance wellbeing and prosperity for EU citizens. I also met the Dean and the deputy dean of the University, Mrs Gema Tomas and Marta Enciso. I was by the way quite amused and glad to note that all my interlocutors and hosts were female academics and that the Bilbao Chapter of the European Law student union took part to the definition of the program. Furthermore, coming from a country, Italy, which is going through a real thunderstorm in terms of public perception of the role and



Monica Frassoni during her intervention

importance of the EU, I found refreshing and uplifting the very positive attitude, if not the real passion, that some students and the host professors expressed for the EU project, as well as for the need of an active involvement of young generations and academia in ensuring not only its survival in these difficult times, but also its further development and the strengthening of its capacity to work together and deliver results for its citizens. Among the most frequently asked questions were the possibility of access to a "European" professional and study career, which common policies could be implemented on jobs and climate change and how to ensure that member states and EU institutions are able to show more cohesion in delivering common economic, migration and foreign policies. All in all, I enjoyed this experience very much: it is really fruitful both for us and for our interlocutors. I therefore thank the organisers for the invitation and encourage my colleagues to take part to these events.



Monica Frassoni with students from University of Deusto

Monica Frassoni
Greens/EFA, Italy (1999-2009)
monica.frassoni@gmail.com

COUNT DRACULA AND THE EU FOREIGN POLICY

A trip to Transylvania in the Spring might send waves of fear through followers of Bram Stoker, but Cluj in Romania is a delightful place and Count Dracula nowhere to be seen, although one of his saying could not be more appropriate; "We learn of great things by little experiences." My "little experience" was to represent former MEPs at the University of Babes-Bolyai in Romania's third city, Cluj-Napoca. Cluj could not have been more delightful and my hosts, Alin, Mihela and Natalia could hardly have been more welcoming.

As an MEP, I served on the joint parliamentary committee for relations between the European Parliament and the Romanian Parliament for many years. Accession to the EU came in 2007 and I was proud to welcome many friends and colleagues as new Romanian MEPs. Returning to Romania after a break of several years and the changes are stark; the improvements obvious. With many signs showing support from the EU's Regio fund it's clear that the country has moved into the

twenty first century.

Cluj itself has a proud Hungarian and Romanian history – reflected in the university being named after a celebrated Romanian biologist and a Hungarian mathematician, the two original universities having merged in 1959. Babes-Bolyai University has 40000 students and runs courses in several languages in addition to Romanian.

The subject of the two-day discussions for which I was the guest speaker was, 'The EU Foreign Policy and the Global Politics of Human Rights'. My opening contribution was to first year under graduates on the role of the European Parliament and facing up to the challenge of migration. How the EU addresses the migratory pressures on its borders is one of the most important issues today.

Later my 'key-note speech' looked at the way the EU's international role has developed since the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009. Whilst the establishment of the High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy may have given new

focus, far from a united response to international crises, to many the EU has stood by. This seems as true for the Russian interventions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine to the desperate situation in Syria and Palestine; the EU has appeared impotent, not knowing what to do or say.

On the positive side, the Union has been a force of strength in promoting global democracy by its emphasis on election observation and equally attaching human rights clauses to new trade initiatives. "We are strong, each in our purpose, and we are all stronger together," to quote Count Dracula again.

A workshop on possible career opportunities in the EU institutions was demanding yet thought provoking. The talented and enthusiastic students from Babes-Bolyai have much to offer to Romanian MEPs and their government. Many questions were asked about the UK's current and future position within the EU, post Brexit. Was the UK always destined to leave the EU or was the referendum campaign just a disaster? Will David Cameron go down as the most arrogant and incompetent British prime minister in history? Will the UK live to regret its decision very soon?

After two very packed and eventful days it was time to say "la revedere" to all my new friends in Cluj. I'm sure I won't be the last former MEP to visit Transylvania and I thoroughly recommend it!

Robert Evans

PES, United Kingdom (1994-2009)
rjeevans@globalnet.co.uk



Robert Evans with the students

SZEGED WAS WORTH A VISIT

Admittedly it isn't easy to get to Szeged. If you go by plane, you land in Budapest, over 200km from Szeged, and if you take the train, the journey from Lake Constance can take some 15 hours. But it's worth it: a beautiful city with a touch of Mediterranean flair and a neat and tidy centre with lots of space for walking and cycling and time to enjoy yourself. And students from across the globe.

Right at the start there was an interview with two young ladies from northern Germany, office apprentices who were spending a month in Szeged as exchange students. Asked why they had chosen that particular place, their response was refreshingly simple: they wanted to see a part of the EU which was less well known in their own country. They said they were charmed by the city and the people.

There followed a discussion in the university's 'integration club' with young people from across the whole of Europe, with questions which were a million miles from the everyday trivia of the European institutions. Defending and improving human rights, perspectives for EU enlargement, and freedom to travel and settle abroad were among

the issues raised. As expected, the role of the Hungarian government in the EU was also discussed, as was the increasing isolation from the 27 other Member States which the country might face as a result. Participants were unanimous in their view that the EU should place the common values set out in the Treaties above the selfish national interests of individual Member States in the forthcoming negotiations on the future financing of the EU. These values were also stressed in the context of migrants seeking in the EU a safe place from discrimination and persecution.

The following day we discussed the limits of European integration and the enlargement potential of the EU. The lecture took place in the Faculty of Law of the University of Szeged. Students from third countries – in particular from the Balkans – voiced their hopes that the EU would increase its efforts to ensure enlargement takes place. At the moment it seems the EU is giving the impression of being overly concerned with itself and its internal conflicts. And we were reminded that the last major enlargement was in some ways still being digested and that there should be an internal

consolidation of the EU before any further enlargement. An initiative such as the European Convention might give some impetus both to deepening the EU and to increasing its capacity for enlargement. Expectations in this regard fall on the European Parliament. I have a particular memory of two young women from Serbia and Kosovo who asked what they could do to help their countries join the EU...

It is to the credit of the 'EP to Campus' programme that events are also held away from national capitals. This is an important difference from most EU events organised by the in-country offices of Parliament and the Commission. It may be that the atmosphere in a university town at Hungary's southern (EU) border is very different from that of the capital, for cultural and geographical reasons.

And it was clear that our young interlocutors really appreciated having a (former) Member of the EP to represent Europe rather than 'Brussels bureaucracy'.



Herbert Bösch with students from the University of Szeged

Herbert Bösch

PES, Austria (1995-2009)

herbert.boesch@bregenz.at

MEETING YOUNG AND PROGRESSIVE TURKS IN IZMIR

Izmir is a beautiful city situated along the Aegean Sea, with 4 million inhabitants. This progressive-minded city has six universities, and I was invited to the Izmir University of Economics (IUE). IUE is a private university with around 7500 students. My host was Assist. Prof. Dr. Alexander Bürgin, Head of EURAC, who has been awarded a Jean Monnet Chair by the European Commission in August 2015. (A Jean Monnet Chair is a title assigned to university professors with a specialization in European Union studies, including financial support for three years.)

I participated three different panels with 20-20 minute's introductions, and I also tried to answer the many questions of the smart and well informed students. The first topic was The Promotion of Environmental Standards in the EU external relations. I mentioned that EU has some of the world's highest environmental standards. The EU's goal is to promote these standards and global sustainable development to their trade partners. The 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change is especially crucial for us, and the EU is driving force of its implementation.

However I also mentioned that in practice there are some contradictions as well, and in some cases the Third Countries have higher environmental standards. A student immediately mentioned the example of the natural heritage on which the Turkish regulations are tougher than ours.

The second topic was Making Cities Sustainable: Achievements and the Changes in the EU and Turkey. In Turkey cities accommodate over 75% of the country's population, and the sustainable urban development is crucial for the fast-growing urban population. I spoke about the importance of public transport, clean air, renewable energies, green public procurement, heat waves and other issues. I also mentioned my own EP report on the thematic strategy on the urban environment. Following my interventions the other panelist, Mr Ümit Sahin from the Sabunci University Istanbul mentioned that the GDP growths in Turkey is mostly based on construction, and it is far from being an environmentally sustainable activity. He, as a green activist, gave a detailed picture on the environmental problems of Turkey, harshly opposing a project

of a Russian-built nuclear power station. As it normally happens, some students were against the nuclear energy, others had more tolerant approach to it. It was interesting to hear that one student even traveled to Chernobyl as a tourist to see the spot.

The third topic was The Rise of Nationalism and Populism in the EU. Due to the political situation I refrained from criticizing the Turkish government but I spoke a lot about the nationalist and illiberal tendencies in Hungary and Poland. The students were rather well informed on the problems of these two countries. But I also underlined that to criticize the "Brussels" doesn't mean automatically euroscepticism, and the integration to the Common Europe shouldn't endanger our own national cultures. We had a lively debate on the Hungarian-Turkish relations and the exact meaning of the "nationalism". Some students came from the EU countries, which also show the good reputation of the IUE. Professor Bürgin closed all the three sessions with useful conclusions. His whole course on European studies goes in English and we have to keep contact with this progressive university.

It has been really heart-warming to meet these talented, skilled young students, who share our values in Turkey. Let's hope that they overcome the troubles of their rich and brave country!



Gyula Hegyi with students from the University of Izmir

Gyula Hegyi
PES, Hungary (2004-2009)
gyulahegyi4@gmail.com

SLOVENIA – DRIFTING TOWARDS POPULISM?

In mid-May I visited Ljubljana on assignment for the European Parliament's former Members' Association. The idyllic calm of the cafés along the Ljubljanica river was overwhelming – but perhaps deceptive. My visit coincided with the run-up to a snap election on 3 June: the third since 2011 and the ninth general election since the break-up of Yugoslavia. There have also been 20 referendums on everything from EU and NATO membership to the legislation on archiving, same-sex marriage and railway building. Was it wishful thinking, then, when a major Swedish newspaper referred to the country as “Friendly little Slovenia” (Svenska Dagbladet, 15 July 2011)? When I took part in a panel debate on EU environmental policy at the Faculty of Social Sciences, I came across an opinion that is often heard in Scandinavia: the EU is needed in order to tackle cross-border environmental issues, but the action it takes is too weak. I cited Wikipedia, which commends the EU for the Paris Agreement, but

notes that the EU's leadership role in the area of environmental policy has been weakened. A briefing note drafted by the European Parliament's research service lists the social dimension, migration, security and defence as issues that are being discussed with an eye to the future of the EU post-Brexit, but the environment is not mentioned (The Future of Europe – Contours of the current debate, European Parliamentary Research Service, April 2018, PE 620.202).

I found Uroš Vajgl's contribution particularly interesting. Mr Vajgl, who has represented Slovenia in COREPER, the EU's 'secret centre of power', maintained that the EU devotes less effort to environmental issues than it does to employment, for example. At lunch with Mr Vajgl and others after the debate, I was struck by their criticism of commercialism and general left-wing attitudes. Were these representative of the Slovenian people? According to The New York Times, the election on 3 June 'tilted another European country to the right'. And it's true that a right-wing populist party won with 25% of the vote, but a new centre-left group, Marjan Šarec's list, came second, and the social democrats came third.

Despite the weak position that the Greens are in, I was asked to give a lecture based on my book, *Green parties, Green future* (Plutobooks, 2015). As a thank-you, a member of the audience gave me a book entitled *The Slovenian Greens: From early success to long-time failure* (Danica Fink-Hafner, Matej Knep and Meta Novak, Faculty of Social Sciences, 2015). Later on I showed

the book to Igor Jurišić, leader of Slovenia's Green Party (Stranka Mladih), and his response was: 'I haven't got round to reading it yet, but unfortunately the title is spot on!' In 1990, Slovenia's Greens garnered 8.8% of the vote, 8 seats in Parliament and 5 ministers. In 2018, however, they didn't manage to field any candidates under their own party name, cooperating instead with Marjan Šarec's list. Fink-Hafner, Knep and Novak cite two main reasons for the Greens' decline: first, it had been a mistake to go into government with such a new, weak party, and second, there had been too much sectarianism and factionalism, and too many defections. Slovenia is a good reminder that it is important for small parties to be very careful in choosing the right time to have a go at being in government. It also shows that the curse of sectarianism must be kept in check.

Our Slovenian hosts told us that it simply wasn't done to visit Slovenia without going to Lake Bled, so my wife and I duly went there. To prepare, I read a French novel about a couple who visit the beauty spot. The blurb on the back promises 'glimpses of a relationship which, despite the lovers' good intentions, is doomed to fail' (Clément Bénech, *L'été slovène*, 2013). I hope the novel isn't predicting the downfall of 'friendly little Slovenia', but shows, rather, that the country's future is in the hands of decent democrats after all.

Per Gahrton
Greens/EFA, Sweden (1995-2004)
per.gahrton@gmail.com



Panel of Speakers at the event of the University of Ljubljana

THE RIGHT TO SECESSION DOES NOT EXIST

During my visit to the European University of Flensburg, I took part in a colloquium on the right of peoples to self-determination.

The organisers had invited representatives from Catalonia to defend that rich Spanish province's independence aspirations.

One of the underlying issues in the debate was a complaint regarding the European Union: why had the EU institutions failed to support Catalan separatists?

My response went down like a lead balloon. How can the European Union support independence movements when the preamble to the Treaty on European Union sets out that the Member States are 'resolved to continue the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe'?

Article 50 of the Treaty provides that 'any Member State may decide to withdraw from the Union in accordance with own constitutional requirements'. The United Kingdom is currently going through that bitter experience.

But the Treaty does not in any way suggest that part of a Member State has the right to withdraw or dissociate from the Union by means of 'self-determination'. If a Member State needs to 'reorganise', it can only do so by following the country's

constitutional requirements.

The Scottish independence referendum was authorised by the UK Parliament. The dissolution of Czechoslovakia into two countries – the Czech Republic and Slovakia – took place in a context of political upheaval in Europe.

The European Union must defend the integrity of all its Member States. It cannot push for their disintegration.

All the more so in the Catalan case, as the Spanish Constitutional Court ruled that the Catalan Government could not unilaterally declare Catalan independence. Catalonians have their own culture and their own language, but neither is under threat. Under the Spanish Constitution, the Catalonians have more than enough means to defend their identity. The Catalonians are not oppressed or being subjected to a dictatorship. Their dream of independence can only come true if they negotiate with Spain's central powers. What is more, the electorate's opinion has been shown on a number of occasions to be completely divided regarding independence: almost half of Catalonians want to remain Spanish. The famous right to self-determination is a dangerous fantasy which could aggravate regional

self-interest. More often than not, independence movements are mostly driven by the desire not to share their region's 'riches' with their fellow citizens from other regions, whom they label as lazy. Italy's Lega Nord, Flemish parties in Belgium and many others have taken that stance.

The fact that the UN Charter makes no reference to the right of peoples to self-determination is a perfect illustration of the fact that it is a fantasy. The United Nations calls for the 'sovereign equality' of all states. The Charter stipulates that no provisions in it 'authorise the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state'.

It was not until after decolonisation began that a resolution, from 1952, referred to the 'right of peoples to self-determination'. But once a new state has been formed, the United Nations has always refused to allow unilateral secessions, as we saw in the attempts by Katanga and Biafra to declare their independence.

Robert Goebbels

S&D, Luxembourg (1999-2014)

robertg@pt.lu



FORMER MEMBERS NETWORK

US-FMC ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On 25-26 June 2018, in Washington, the annual meeting of the US Association of Former Members of Congress (FMC) was held. FMA Vice-President Jan Willem Bertens had been invited.

The event began with panel discussions on "The Future of Europe" and "American Democracy and Civics".

The topics for debate included the fate of Europe, with or without Brexit. In response to questions, views on the subject were expressed by the Dutch Ambassador Henne Schuwer and his Belgian counterpart Dirk Wouters, with Dr Emily Tamkin, foreign affairs reporter at BuzzFeed News, as moderator.

With just 250 days to go to Brexit, it is still not clear what it will involve. Four scenarios were identified. A Soft Brexit to simulate a customs union without internal import tariffs but with a common tariff for trade with the rest of the world. So there would be no independent trade agreements with the USA, Australia and New Zealand. A complete rejection would mean the end of May's

political career, with all the political turbulence that that entails. Bad for European business. What is crucial is that Brussels should allow scope for less than full participation in the internal market while permitting a strong relationship with a strategic partner (the USA?).

A Hard Brexit if the EU continues to insist on full participation in the internal market, without the option of a customs union. If the UK ceased to have any say in Brussels, but was still obliged to follow all the rules, a standard trade agreement would apply. The social uncertainty and economic damage would be greater. There would be substantial barriers at borders.

If no agreement is reached on the Irish border: No Deal. Nor would there be a transitional period until 2020, which would inevitably create chaos in transport and food supplies. Approval would be required from the European Parliament, the House of Commons and the House of Lords. In other words, a disaster scenario. Is No Brexit still a possibility? That would only be on the table if the

UK surrendered all its derogations: it would lose its rebate and opt-outs. British politicians, too, will only dare to press the No button if they feel that they have the support of the electorate. According to surveys, the ratio between leavers and remainers is roughly the same as in 2016.

So, on 29 March 2019, goodbye Great Britain!

The title of the panel on Democracy and Civics was 'The Republic is (still) at risk - and Civics is part of the solution'.

A Briefing Paper for the Democracy at a Crossroads National Summit is available from the FMA secretariat. The first sentence is a striking one: Americans give the political system a failing grade. 'Just one in five Americans is willing to trust the government in Washington even "most of the time", near the lowest proportion ever recorded!'

On 26 June, Mr Stearns, presented his concluding report in the House Chamber, and in doing so, at the same time stepped down from his post, being succeeded by Martin Frost. In accordance with established practice, Paul Ryan, Speaker of the House, came storming in and, during his brief visit (twenty minutes), greeted his former colleagues and made it clear that he hoped very shortly to become a member of the FMC (thunderous applause).



From left to right: Cliff Stearns, outgoing President of the FMC, Dirk Wouters, Ambassador of Belgium to the US, Henne Schuwer, Ambassador of The Netherlands to the US, Jan Willem Bertens, Vice-President FMA ©US-FMC

Jan- Willem Bertens
ELDR, Netherlands (1989-1999)
bertens@hetnet.nl

FP-AP SEMINAR AND BUREAU



FMA Delegates and the FMA Secretary General with the speakers of the seminar ©FP-AP



Christine Defraigne, Speaker of the Senate ©FP-AP



FP-AP Delegates at the Belgian Federal Parliament ©FP-AP

From 24 to 26 May 2018 Brigitte Langenhagen FMA delegate and FP-AP Vice-President and Jean-Pierre Audy, FMA delegate to the European Association of Former Parliamentarians of the Member Countries of the Council of Europe (FP-AP), actively participated in its Seminar and Bureau meeting, hosted this time by the Belgian Association of former parliamentarians, Pro Lege, in Brussels.

In view of the adoption of a declaration on "The Future of Europe", whose Rapporteur is the Former Secretary General of the Council of Europe Walter Schwimmer from Austria, the hosts had invited two outstanding speakers to the seminar: Herman Van Rompuy, Former President of the European Council and Former Prime Minister of Belgium, as well as Pierre Defraigne, Invited Professor and former Deputy Director General of the DG Trade of the European Commission. The seminar was moderated by Franklin Dehousse, Professor and Former Judge at the General Court of the European Union.



Visit to the Atomium ©FP-AP



LATEST NEWS

ACTIVITIES



28-30 October

VISIT TO AUSTRIA

Registrations are open.

28 November

EP ART COLLECTION GUIDED VISIT

From 16.00 p.m. to 17.30 p.m. in the European Parliament, Brussels.

28 November

FMA ANNUAL COCKTAIL AND DINNER

Guest Speaker: Carlos Moedas, EU Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation.
From 6.30 p.m. in the Member's Restaurant, European Parliament, Brussels.

29 November

FMA ANNUAL SEMINAR

From 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. European Parliament, Brussels. It will be followed by the Get-Together lunch, at 1p.m. in the Members' Restaurant, European Parliament, Brussels.

PARTICIPATION IN THE EUROPEAN YOUTH EVENT



©European Parliament

On 1st and 2nd June, the European Parliament in Strasbourg welcomed over 9 thousand young people from all over Europe and beyond, among participants, young speakers, partners, student volunteers. Two full days of discussions, presentations, performances, talks, and conferences took place, amounting up to 400 different activities. It was an incredible opportunity for young people not only to discover EU and to gain knowledge about the functioning of its institutions, but above all to make their voices heard. Indeed, the event aimed at strengthening the influence of the European youth, leaving to young people room to

express their thoughts and beliefs coming up with ideas for the future of Europe. We had the opportunity to meet Members of European Parliament that participated in the events discussing several issues in panels and answering many questions from young people. One of the main focus was on 2019 Parliament elections. These two days demonstrated what youth is worth to European Union; next year it will be young people's turn to demonstrate how much they (if I may, we) want to be the future of Europe, voting at the elections. As President Antonio Tajani said at the opening the event, "young people have a vital role to play in building the Europe of tomorrow". Some of the Robert Schuman trainees of the European Parliament had the opportunity to participate to the event as volunteers, carrying out different roles. I dealt with the welcome and the accreditation of participants; helping participants with information about the programme and the logistical aspects; collecting

ideas and speakers for the EYE report.

Indeed, a report will be presented to the MEPs bringing the most concrete young ideas inside the Parliament and some participants will present the best ideas to some committees getting feedback from MEPs.

Personally, I am honoured to have participated to the EYE, it was the first time I really felt the meaning of being European. One of the most impressive moment was the closing meeting in the hemicycle, where participants gathered together to discuss directly with President Antonio Tajani about selected topics. In that moment I experienced and shared the strong belief in European Union with young people from different countries, political parties and traditions, feeling lucky and proud to belong to our community.

Alessandra Perna

EP/FMA Trainee from March to July 2018

alessandraperna02@gmail.com

2019 FMA DIRECTORY

In these weeks, we have started to prepare the 2019 FMA Directory, which will be sent to all FMA Members in December. We kindly ask you to inform us if your postal or email address is changed or if you want complete or modify your profile. To access your current profile, please visit the FMA website at www.formermembers.eu, section Members' area /Members' Directory. You will need to enter your login and password. We would be grateful if you could receive your updates by Mid-October.

In accordance with the newly Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data ('GDPR'), if you don't wish to publish your contacts in the FMA Annual Directory sent to all FMA members, please contact the Secretariat at: formermembers@europarl.europa.eu.

NEW PUBLICATION

Jacqueline Grand was born and raised in Marseille. A woman of conviction, she has lived several lives (lawyer, member of the European Parliament, etc.) and today devotes part of her time to writing. Jacqueline Grand has a taste for adventure and discovery, she has the art of cultivating mystery and secrecy.

You have not dreamed (*Tu n'as pas rêvé*) is a thriller that invites you to visit an underground, mysterious and secretive Marseille where nothing and nobody is what it seems to be. Éditions Zinedi, 256 pages - 22€ in French only.



NEW MEMBERS



Alexander ALVARO
(Germany, 2004-2014, ALDE)

Alexander Alvaro was member of the Parliament from 2004 to 2014. Through his time in the European Parliament he served as Vice-President from 2012 to 2014, as Vice-Chair of the Committee on Budgets and as a member of Parliament's Bureau, of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, of the Temporary Committee on the alleged use of European countries by the CIA for the transport and illegal detention of prisoners, of the Special committee on the policy challenges and budgetary resources for a sustainable European Union after 2013 and of the Delegation for relations with the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Delegation for relations with India and the Delegation for relations with Iran.

NEW MEMBERS



Ovidiu GANT
(Romania, 2005-2007, EPP-ED)

Ovidiu Gant was member of the Parliament from 2005 to 2007. Through his time in the European Parliament he served as a member in the Committee on Culture and Education and in the Delegation for relations with the countries of south-east Europe.



Kurt LAUK
(Germany, 2004-2009, EPP-ED)

Kurt Laug was member of the Parliament from 2004 to 2009. Through his time in the European Parliament he served as a member in the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and in the Delegation for relations with the United States.



Emilia MÜLLER
(Germany, 1999-2003, EPP-ED)

Emilia Müller was member of the Parliament from 1999 to 2003. Through her time in the European Parliament she served as Vice-Chair of the Delegation to the EU-Slovak Republic Joint Parliamentary Committee and as a member of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy, of the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities and of the Temporary committee on human genetics and other new technologies in modern medicine.



Gabriele PEUS-BISPINCK (Germany, 1984-1989, EPP-ED)

Gabriele Peus-Bispinck was member of the Parliament from 1984 to 1989. Through her time in the European Parliament she served as Vice-Chair of the Committee on Petitions and as a member of the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport, of the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology and of the Delegation to the European Parliament/Portuguese Parliament Joint Committee.



Brigitte WENZEL-PERILLO
(Germany, 1999-2004, EPP-ED)

Brigitte Wenzel-Perillo was member of the Parliament from 1999 to 2004. Through her time in the European Parliament she served as member of the Committee on Budgets and of the Delegation for relations with South Africa.

ARCHIVES OF MEMBERS AND FORMER MEMBERS

Following the Bureau decision of 10 March 2014, concerning the Processing of papers Members and former Members, the Historical Archives Unit of the European Parliament acquires archives of Members and former Members.

Documents will be processed, with analysis, indexation, digitisation and/or conversion to PDF-A documents, as well as made available to the public unless documents are confidential, in accordance with the relevant legal provisions. The application form for papers to be deposited is provided on request to the Historical archives or the FMA Secretariat.

Should you be interested, please contact the EP Archive Unit:

Historical Archives Unit

Sandrine Bonnet

Tel: +352 4300 23273

email: EPRS-Archives-MEP@ep.europa.eu

EP REMEMBERS NELSON MANDELA

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear."

On the 100th anniversary of Nelson Mandela's birth the EP President, Antonio Tajani, paid honour to his memory at the opening of the July session in Strasbourg.

A concert took place on 11 July in the European Parliament's Yehudi Menuhin Hall, with the South African mission and in the presence of Mr Mandela's widow, Graça Machel.



IN MEMORIAM

† 11 July 2018

Gerardo FERNANDEZ ALBOR

EPP (1989-1999)

He served as a Spanish member of the European Parliament from 1989 to 1999. During his time in Parliament, Mr Fernandez Albor was member of the European People's Party.

At the national level, he represented Partido Popular.

