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EPFMA BULLETIN



European Parliament Former Members Association

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FOCUS

Urbanisation and
rural areas

Page 13



FMA Activities

Visit under the EU
Presidency - Finland

Page 32

IN THIS ISSUE

03 Message from the President

04 EP at work

CURRENT AFFAIRS

05 A mess called Brexit
(Roy Perry)

06 We need a solution
(Jean-Paul Denanot)

07 The EU's fight against disinformation
(Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea)

08 It's high time for #journalistsforfuture!
(Karin Junker)

09 Ambassadors of European diversity
(Olga Sehnalova)

10 A picture speaks a thousand words
(Brigitte Langenhagen)

11 The future of Greece
(Manolis Mavrommatis)

FOCUS

13 Smart Cities
(Bartomeu Alorda Ladaria)

15 Youth employment in rural areas
(Zoltán Balogh)

17 The role of small and medium-sized cities
(Manuel Porto)

FMA ACTIVITIES

19 Election Observation Mission Programme

20 Study visit to Georgia

32 Visit under the EU Presidency

34 Cooperation with the EUI

35 EP to Campus Programme

LATEST NEWS

36 New members

37 Latest News

37 New Publications

38 In memoriam



2019 marks the 60th anniversary of UN General Assembly Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). As the most widely ratified international human rights treaty in history, the CRC has helped to ensure better protection for the rights of children across the globe.

Cover: A FMA Delegation visited Georgia from 29 September to 4 October 2019. ©Stutterstock

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 Due to the long time lag between the call for contribution and the publication, some articles may be outdated.

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Message from the PRESIDENT

Dear members,

As 2019 comes to an end, it is now time to reflect on recent events and look forward to the year to come. On 9 November we marked the 30th anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall. I joined the celebrations in Berlin and Brussels of this historic moment that stands as a symbol of unification between the West and the East of Europe. The reunification of families and friends changed not just a country, but a whole continent. Citizens in Central and Eastern Europe experienced a new degree of freedom and individual liberty after years of communist repression. Europeans in all countries managed to overcome differences and built long-desired bridges between East and West. Just as the eastern enlargement of the EU was made possible by the fall of the Berlin Wall, I want to remember that the reunification of Germany would not have been possible without Europe as a whole. The spirit of unity and cohesion are therefore indispensable to our common social, economic and political interests across Europe and beyond.

Member States share a common history in the longest-lasting period of peace that has ever existed in Europe. The EU will continue to stand for and work towards diplomatic and peaceful solutions.

Against this backdrop, this edition of the Bulletin focuses on the topic of urbanisation and rural areas. Urbanisation has been a major phenomenon in recent decades; this Bulletin highlights the challenges and opportunities that it brings. More than half of the global population lives in cities or suburban areas, and while people move to cities in search of work, the larger populations of

urban areas generate their own economic, ecological, social and health-related issues. Until the mid-2000s, more people lived in rural areas than in urban areas. Yet the forecast emergence of more than twenty new megacities over the next few decades will call for urgent responses, in which the EU must play its part in the cities and the rural areas.

This issue also reports extensively on the successful FMA Study Visit to Georgia from 29 September to 4 October, led by FMA Vice-President Jan-Willem Bertens. The FMA, in co-operation with the Georgian Parliament, set up a very informative programme. 18 former MEPs were able to participate in high-level meetings with representatives of the government, the ruling and opposition parties in parliament, and civil society. As you will read in the report, the former MEPs collected valuable information on a variety of issues such as economic development, the entry into force of the new constitution and its impact on the political landscape, the independence of the judiciary, the occupied territories, the situation of workers and media freedom.

On 3-5 November, a delegation of 23 former MEPs participated in a remarkable visit to Finland led by Lord Richard Balfe, with stimulating policy debates on EU current affairs, inspired by the Finnish Presidency of the Council of the EU.

The FMA concluded the year with our annual events. They took place in the European Parliament and, for the first time, in the House of European History (HEH), which aims to encourage citizens to reflect on and debate the history of Europe

and of European integration. As initiator and founder of the House of European History, this was a very touching moment for me.

I am thankful for the attendance of many esteemed high-profile speakers and prestigious guests. We had vigorous debates on the role played by the European Parliament within the EU and in a global context in the field of democracy and security. Finally, I would like to thank everyone who contributed to our popular EP to Campus programme. The universities, our members and the students perceived the events very positively and we are truly appreciative of the fact that our association remains an active promoter of European values such as respect for human dignity, human rights, freedom, peace, democracy and the rule of law.

A number of experts and former MEPs contributed to this month's edition of our Bulletin and we are thankful to each of them.

I wish you and your family a merry Christmas and a happy New Year 2020.

Hans-Gert PÖTTERING
FMA President

EP AT WORK

KEY FACTS

Financial support for workers affected by no-deal Brexit (October Session - P9_TA-PROV(2019)0034)

MEPs approved change to European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) Solidarity Fund to include support for workers that would be affected by the UK's withdrawal from the EU without an agreement.

MEPs adopted a resolution to get multinationals to disclose where they pay taxes (October session- P9_TA-PROV(2019)0048).

MEPs adopted a resolution urging member states to work on long-overdue rules obliging multinationals to disclose what taxes they pay in each country.

Thomas Cook bankruptcy: Better consumer and employee protection needed. (October session - P9_TA-PROV(2019)0047)

MEPs called on EU countries to make full use of existing EU instruments to mitigate the impact of the Thomas Cook bankruptcy.

MEPs called for sanctions against Turkey over military operation in Syria (October session -

P9_TA-PROV(2019)0049)

MEPs strongly condemned the unilateral Turkish military intervention in northeast Syria, urging Turkey to withdraw all of its forces from Syrian territory.

EU investment budget for 2020: A boost for the climate (october session - P9_TA-PROV(2019)0040)

MEPs adopted their position on the 2020 EU budget. They boosted the Commission's draft budget by adding altogether more than EUR 2 billion to protect the climate. It should pave the way for the new long-term 2021-2027 EU budget, the so-called Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

MEPs call for decisive action to fight inequalities in the EU (October session - P9_TA-PROV(2019)0033)

Commission and EU countries have to strengthen social rights by delivering on the EU Pillar of Social Rights with legislative proposals and adequate funding.

Other main dossiers discussed in the plenary sessions were:

September 2019

- **Brexit:** The new European Parliament reaffirmed wholehearted support for EU position. They said that the withdrawal Agreement is fair, balanced and provides legal certainty. (18.09.19)
- Fruit, vegetables or animals obtained from **conventional breeding processes**, such as crossing, must not become patentable, MEPs said in a non-legislative resolution. (19.09.19)

October 2019

- MEPs warned that **foreign electoral interference** seriously threatens European democratic societies to the benefit of

anti-EU, right-wing extremist and populist forces. (10.10.19)

- MEPs warned of a "clear risk" that the **2021-2027 EU investment plan** will not be successfully agreed in time. It would harm citizens and businesses. (10.10.19)
- MEPs adopt a plan to keep **2020 EU funding for UK** in no-deal Brexit scenario (22.10.2019)
- MEPs approved a EUR100 million top-up support for **EU research and Erasmus**. (22.10.2019)
- MEPs sent the Commission back to the drawing board after member states watered down draft **measures to protect bees**. (23.10.19)
- European Parliament stressed that

Albania and North Macedonia meet the requirements to start negotiations on opening EU accession. (24.10.19)

- Uyghur economist and Human Rights activist **Ilham Tohti** has been awarded this year's European Parliament **Sakharov Prize** for Freedom of Thought. (24.10.19)

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

CURRENT AFFAIRS

A MESS CALLED BREXIT

As I wrote this piece at the end of September it was still not sure whether Britain would or would not leave the EU by the end of October. I fear by the time you read this article we still will not know whether we will leave at the end of January 2020. I can only say Brexit has been a mess largely of Britain's making from beginning to end. It is too painful to list all that has gone wrong.

I was a university student when Prime Minister Macmillan made Britain's first application to join. Like most of that post war generation we thoroughly backed joining the EEC as the answer to the question of Britain having lost an empire and not yet found a role.

Sadly we never made the best of our opportunity inside the EU but it would not be fair to say we achieved nothing? I think we achieved much and I am sorry we seem destined to leave.

Certainly we let opportunities slip though our hands but there are achievements for Europe and the UK from British membership.

Number one is the single market. My predecessor Basil de Ferranti as an MEP for Hampshire was a founder member of the Kangaroo Group. Their aim was to remove non-tariff

barriers and make a true single market not just a free trade area. Britain and British Conservatives in particular played a large part in that. When I joined the European Parliament in 1994 they told me "La langue des couloirs c'est français." I was fortunate in that my wife was a teacher of French so I could just get by in French. By the time I left in 2004 it was English language that dominated and I expect that will remain so. For MEPs and officials to communicate freely is an achievement.

"What is crucial is that the high ideals of the founding Fathers are sustained. We surely all want a continent that is at peace and prosperous."

A Parliament needs members who can easily communicate with each other outside the chamber. We leave you the language of Shakespeare. Some may not agree but by UK and others staying outside Schengen and the Euro zone I believe UK helped allow Europe to develop in a more pragmatic and flexible way making

it easier for the countries of Eastern Europe to join post 2004.

I could go on but the future is always more important than the past. What is crucial is that the high ideals of the founding Fathers are sustained. We surely all want a continent that is at peace and prosperous. I trust Britain will behave as and be seen as a friendly neighbour of the EU.

Like too many of my generation both my grandfathers were killed in World War I, my wife's father died in World War II. When I see the stone placed outside Rheims Cathedral to mark where General de Gaulle and Chancellor Adenauer stood hand in hand in peace and friendship I know I share the same feelings of all my French and German friends reflecting what great men they were and that Europe post 1950 is a much better place than the previous 100 years. I was ashamed and embarrassed when I saw the uncouth behaviour of the Brexit Group at the opening of the Parliament Session in July when the Ode to Joy from Beethoven's 9th was played. I never hesitated to stand in respect whenever it was played. It always gives me a feeling of pride and joy that our generation has worked for a peaceful continent and what a great continent Europe is. Be assured there remain many many Britons who wish the EU well and hope one day, if you will have us, we may be back.

That is if we ever leave. I certainly hope no other country is dragged down this exit route.

Roy Perry

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WE NEED A SOLUTION

The recent attack in Saudi Arabia has triggered yet another worrying oil crisis. It's certainly not the first, and it probably won't be the last, but it does make the need to rethink our dependency on oil even more pressing. How much longer will it be before we wean ourselves off this polluting - and clearly finite - energy source? How many more billions of tonnes of greenhouse gases are we prepared to emit and how hot are we willing to allow our planet to become? For mankind as a whole and individuals to prosper, what is needed is an abundant source of climate-friendly energy.

“ How many more billions of tonnes of greenhouse gases are we prepared to emit and how hot are we willing to allow our planet to become?”

So what solutions are available to us? We do of course have hydroelectric,

wind and solar power, which emit no greenhouse gases at all, but even if we were to invest in them heavily they would still not be able to meet our needs. Wind and solar power have the further drawback of being intermittent! Personally, I see only one climate-friendly energy source which is available in abundance: hydrogen. This element, which is everywhere around us, offers two energy-generation options: molecular hydrogen and nuclear hydrogen. The only by-product of the exothermic combustion of molecular hydrogen is water. Molecular hydrogen could well be the miracle energy source of the future, but it is trapped inside water and lots of energy is needed to extract it. That energy could be provided from the intermittent sources referred to above, and research must continue in this area. That said, for the inexhaustible energy source which the world so desperately seeks we need to look no further than fusion power. Fusion is based on Einstein's legendary discovery of the relationship between loss

of mass and energy production, the formula for which is familiar to everyone: $E = mc^2$. Unlike fission, fusion generates very little radioactive waste. Many countries across the globe are banking on its potential and have set up [ITER](#), a project of which the EU is a member and which it finances in part. I simply cannot understand why the necessary research funding is still lacking and I call on the new European Parliament to ensure that sufficient budget resources are allocated to a project which, even though a work in progress, will enable us to meet all our energy needs. We have a duty towards future generations, a duty to leave them a habitable planet by handing down to them the energy resource that will meet their needs and quite literally fuel further progress. Our task, therefore, is to encourage further research.

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ITER Project



ITER (“The Way” in Latin) is one of the most ambitious energy projects in the world today.

35 nations are collaborating to build the world's largest tokamak, a magnetic fusion device that has been designed to prove the feasibility of fusion as a large-scale and **carbon-free source** of energy based on the same principle that powers our Sun and stars.

The experimental campaign that will be carried out at ITER is crucial to advancing fusion science and preparing the way for the fusion power plants of tomorrow.

More information at: <https://www.iter.org/>

THE EU'S FIGHT AGAINST DISINFORMATION

Disinformation is, above all else, an organised frontal attack on the foundations of liberal democracy through the deliberate dissemination of false information. Its aim is not exactly to deceive, but rather to cause the public to abandon all hope of knowing what is true, so that we admit defeat and give up wanting to understand what is happening, and everyone clings to their own preconceived ideas and the biases confirming them. If we lose our common conviction that sharing factual ground is possible then there is no hope of achieving consensus on even the least of the things that make democratic co-existence possible.

There are many out there who for different reasons, and more or less consciously, are contributing directly to this end. We are dealing with a new kind of hybrid war whose goal is to take the advantages of liberal democracies and exploit them as if they were weaknesses. Hence, freedom of expression helps spread hoaxes that divide society and undermine trust in the institutions. Lies which, for example, can chip away at what science has achieved over many hundreds of years, such as preventing fatal illnesses through vaccination. Make no mistake, this is what is at stake: our health, our certainties, our model of democratic co-existence. For we know already that ignorance and malicious intent make perfect allies for disinformation.

Disinformation has played a key role in all the events that have shaken our world in the past few years. I do not need to mention that Brexit and Trump's victory would have

been impossible without its corrosive effect, and that European national populism, from north to south and east to west, feeds on it. The case of Catalonia serves sufficiently in our case for us not to need any further explanation.

“Disinformation is, above all else, an organised frontal attack on the foundations of liberal democracy through the deliberate dissemination of false information.”

After a great deal of hesitation and some delay, the European Union finally decided to take action. In December 2018 it rolled out the EU's Action Plan against Disinformation, with its four basic goals: to equip the European External Action Service with resources to improve detection of disinformation; to set up a Rapid Alert System whereby national governments must report any signs of an attack; to collaborate with digital platforms, including the signature of a Code of Good Practice; and to boost citizens' skills in using good judgment and moving safely in the digital environment. The Plan set its sights on

disinformation's most obvious target at the time – the European elections of 26 May 2019 – and although disinformation techniques were employed in a bid to influence the results and voter turnout, with most of the attacks coming from Russia, we were ready for this and equipped with resources, tools and the backing and involvement of all the national governments. We survived the acid test – destabilisation of EU democracy. However we cannot in any way say we won the final battle because, firstly, the coordination and involvement in the EU Plan of institutional, business and media players is still not sufficiently efficient or reliable, and secondly, disinformation itself is evolving (new forms, new players, new media) and this challenges our capacity to tackle it. We have to accept that in combating disinformation, trial and error will be the norm, but an organised norm, employing the weapons and determination inherent to a 21st century battle, and setting aside all complacency and fatalism.

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Factsheet: Action Plan against Disinformation © European Union External Action

IT'S HIGH TIME FOR #JOURNALISTSFORFUTURE!

Anyone who follows the way information is presented by the media, whether in print, online, or on television or radio, might well despair at the kind of world we live in and where it is taking us. Reporting on all manner of crises, from terrorist attacks, extreme weather events, financial disasters and economic emergencies to minor mishaps and misfortune, is often blown out of all proportion, even in the broadsheets. Does this help when it comes to establishing counter-movements aimed at rectifying the situation? Not really; they merely stir up fear, bolstered by social media. So why is this an issue now?

Good journalism cannot and should not ignore bad news, yet it should not simply spread blind panic and fail to report potential solutions.

Adherents of the extreme right are – fortunately – far from being in the majority in the European Parliament,

yet they have sufficient irresponsible associates who will enthusiastically set about stirring up fear in order to gain attention and coverage and garner support.

So it is time for #journalistsforfuture to set up alongside #parentsforfuture, #scientistsforfuture and #entrepreneursforfuture, shouldering their social responsibility through critical/constructive reporting and renouncing the power fixation and the urge to scandalise. Good journalism cannot and should not ignore bad news, yet it should not simply spread blind panic and fail to report potential solutions. It must also realise that horror stories in the news increase the risk of copy-cat scenarios. This is why suicides are generally not reported in Germany. Not every death should appear in the headlines! Nor should every foreign national who commits a crime. And certainly not the name of every single perpetrator of violence looking to be all over the media, particularly when they have carried out terrorist acts and shooting sprees. This was what the



right-wing terrorist in Christchurch wanted, but the New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern refused to grant his wish and pledged never to utter his name. Refusing to name perpetrators would deprive terrorism and political extremism of much of their impact. This also applies to political provocation.

I hope the new European Parliament will display real sensitivity towards this issue and widely support media representatives trying to present a multidimensional view of events in Europe and developments globally. Right-wing as well as left-wing media cultivate fear: the former of (Muslim) immigrants and the latter of economic collapse with resultant social hardship. Politicians have the task of leading the way towards social cohesion. Conveying this message is, in spite of all the problems and criticisms, the duty of not only #journalistsforfuture but of everyone engaged in media work in the European institutions.

Karin Junker

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Press conference - Fridays for Future and the European Student Climate Strike movement
©European Parliament 2019

AMBASSADORS OF EUROPEAN DIVERSITY

Being Member of the European Parliament for two legislative periods and working in this international environment brought me a lot of interesting experience. To be frank, in the course of the parliamentary work, I started to realize over, how little we actually know about each other, how little understanding is there among us, even colleagues that see each other on almost a daily basis in our committees. Starting with correct spelling of our names, (which some colleagues never even tried), to being misplaced although as Czech to Poland or to Slovakia, Slovenia, well, to somewhere in the east, where all of us speak similar languages which sound like Polish, so this translation should fit to all of us... small mistakes are understandable, but it was rather ever present. So the question I asked many times to myself was: If lacking basic facts, what kind of understanding of different culture or differences in political issues can I expect? In fact, I was quite mad, when, for instance, most of impact assessment studies did not cover new Member States, and, if so just one state is expected to speak on behalf of all the rest? And if such lack of interest can be found

among colleagues expected to have the knowledge and interest, how does it look in the general public, simply among people not engaged in politics?

This brought me to an idea, that I should start doing something about it myself. This is the idea behind my European Days, a week lasting event introducing the country currently holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU. I have started organizing the European Days as an MEP in 2010, symbolically with Belgium, one year after being elected to the European Parliament. Since then, every six month I have been organizing European Days until now, exactly eighteen editions.

The European Days were neither meant to be a VIP event nor targeted at academic environment. No. I wanted to go outside this bubble.

Our aim is to introduce European diversity and promote understanding and interest in the general public, simply among people. I am firmly convinced, that this is the way, how to approach them and attract their attention and interest in the EU.

Over the years this event has developed its audience and has become a tradition. I am glad that

its value has also been recognized by awarding me the MEP Award 2017 in category Culture, Youth, Sports for organizing European Days dedicated to Slovak Presidency.

“European Days, a week lasting event introducing the country currently holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU. [...] Our aim is to introduce European diversity and promote understanding and interest in general public, simply among people.”

After the end of my mandate I have decided to continue organizing the European Days, as I find the idea really important.

Dear colleagues, let me invite all of you, who share a similar vision and would be interested to cooperate in the project of the European Days, to contact me on the address below. My idea is to make us, MEPs, whether former or current ones, true ambassadors of European diversity and understanding in our constituencies. Imagine having hundreds of ambassadors out there. Let us help others to know about us more. That is a way for a better and caring Europe!

Olga Sehnalova
S&D, Czech Republic (2009-2019)
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European Days ©Olga Sehnalova

A PICTURE SPEAKS A THOUSAND WORDS

Bringing European diversity to life in the European Parliament's galleries.

When we talk about the European Union, we think primarily about the political and economic cohesion of the 28 Member States to date (as at November 2019). Its aims are noble and contractual and are set out constitutionally.

But there is more to it than this. We all aspire to peace, democracy, the rule of law and freedom of expression, human dignity and a livelihood for us and our children. Yet words and figures often fail to reach the hearts of our citizens. Achieving a real European identity also depends on passion, feelings and emotions. These have an impact on human togetherness, and their expression is wound up in all kinds of artworks, for example. So let's get involved and seek out similarities and perspectives beyond our own. If this can teach us to accept opposite viewpoints, then we can start talking about our cultural strength.

So the EU means not levelling-down or delimiting but supreme appreciation. In order to make this visible, in 1980 the European Parliament began compiling an art collection on the initiative of Simone Veil, the first President of the directly-elected European Parliament. Following the tradition of national parliaments, the aim is to collect and exhibit contemporary works which are representative of the art of different nations.

The DG Comm art collection (art@europarl.europa.eu) has this to say: The EP has so far purchased some 387 representative works of modern art from the Member States, with a

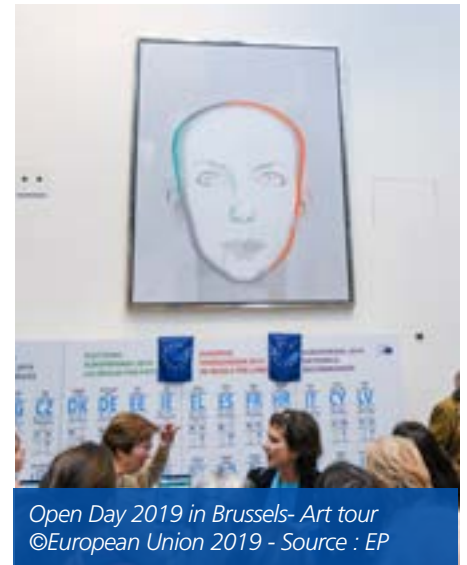
focus on works by promising young artists at the start of their careers. In addition it has received over 120 works as gifts and regularly exhibits works on short-term loan. All of this is, of course, done according to fixed criteria.

New acquisitions – mainly paintings and sculptures – are made whenever countries join the EU. The procedure begins with a pre-selection by the EP's information offices in the relevant Member States after consultation with national art experts. The works are then exhibited in Parliament's buildings in Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg.

Assisted by a specialised consultative panel of qualified officials and staff in the offices of the President and the Secretary-General covering a wide spectrum, the EP's Artistic Committee agrees on a preliminary selection before the President makes the final decision.

The former Quaestor Catherine Bearder, responsible for the FMA until 1 July 2019, was a member of the Committee. She writes: 'The collection displays how diverse the Union is and celebrates each Member State's cultural traditions whilst also showing how they intertwine the values they share.' She adds that:

'I think it is important that not only people inside the building experience the value of the art collection, but also that every citizen has the opportunity to share that experience too. That is why, together with my colleagues in the administration, I am exploring new innovative ways to share the art collection digitally with the citizens and showcase Europe's art to Europe's people.'



Open Day 2019 in Brussels- Art tour
©European Union 2019 - Source : EP

The Works of Art Service (Events Unit –DGCOMM) stresses that: "Currently DG Communication is in the process of dealing with the intellectual property rights for some of the Works of Art. Once these copyright issues have been resolved, the Works of Art Service will fully develop a catalogue of the whole collection."

The motivation behind the purchases is a recognition of the cultural richness and pride in the cultural diversity of the European Union. This is where the concept of culture and art as part of the European identity becomes visible, with few words needed.

The FMA members taking part in the art tour of the European Parliament some months ago were in agreement: personal impressions are lasting! The collection is worth seeing!

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THE FUTURE OF GREECE

Here we are again!
For some months, Greece has been displaying its strongest and most vibrant side, ready to face new developments with a new government, which above all is pro-European!

“Nea Dimokratia won the most recent national elections and the European elections, and the regional and municipal elections! [...] This makes it clear that, looking to the future, the country wanted to head in a new direction.”

For several months (since 7 July 2019), my country has had a new government. Nea Dimokratia has taken office, with Kyriakos Mitsotakis as Prime Minister.

After ten years of enormous sacrifices, we are already recovering. This is thanks to the strength displayed by the people of Greece, who have shown themselves willing to accept huge, massively restrictive burdens requiring patience and courage!

At this point in time, despite the

very hard tasks facing Greece, and the burden of the thousands of migrants on the Aegean islands and elsewhere, the Mitsotakis government has enshrined stability, including political stability, in a recovery plan for the entire nation! There is no shortage of problems. There is no lack of resources either. But above all, there is no lack of willingness and projects to make up for the time wasted while becoming alienated from Europe and the European Union!

Nea Dimokratia won the most recent national elections and the European elections, and the regional and municipal elections! By winning all of them in little more than one month in 2019, the party established an absolute record!

This makes it clear that, looking to the future, the country wanted to head in a new direction. Into a future that would free it from its recent past, a past that was not only populist but above all marked by extremism, which completely vanished from the political scene in the July elections.

Nea Dimokratia and its Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who has political experience and who studied in the USA, as well as having the advantage of coming from a political family (his father Konstantinos was a

Prime Minister), and who himself was a minister during the toughest years of the Troika crisis, is now seeking to return the country to normality and above all to bring it back into the fold of the great pro-European and international family of nations. For a time, Greece's international relations teetered between realism and fruitless heroics which harmed the country and particularly its people, who were still incapable of reacting because their strength had been sapped by the difficult years of limited and inadequate funding to provide support and promote stability.

With an economic stability plan and with maturity programmes based on investment, the new government is looking for major international companies, adopting an approach designed to boost Greece's credibility as a pro-European country open to markets around the world!

The new Prime Minister has already started a tour of capitals, visiting Paris, Berlin and The Hague and speaking in private to Macron, Merkel and Rutte to present his government's plans and the projects for the new political era in the country.

Confidence is gradually returning. Not only to the people of Greece but also, and above all, to the new and old European Union, creating around itself and its country a conviction that a new, fresh wind is blowing! With its sails unfurled, Greece is returning to our midst!

Manolis Mavrommatis
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Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Prime Minister of Greece and President of Nea Dimokratia (New Democracy) party ©Shutterstock

FOCUS

URBANISATION AND RURAL AREAS



SMART CITIES

Sustainable development of cities and regions through the use of technology.

The sustainability of the global population and the action required to reduce the impact of that population have implications for cities as spatial and human constructs in which people gather to live for a multitude of reasons. An estimated 70% of the world's population either live near to or are dependent on cities, so cities now play the pivotal role when it comes to taking various courses of action, such as optimising the use of resources in order for humans to continue as a viable species. Cities are therefore being developed into smart cities with the objective of creating a sustainable human society.

“An estimated 70% of the world's population either live near to or are dependent on cities”

In the 2014 study ‘Mapping Smart Cities in the EU’ the European Commission defined a Smart City as a city which is ‘quintessentially enabled by the use of technologies (especially ICT) to improve competitiveness and ensure a more sustainable future by symbiotic linkage of networks of people, businesses, technologies, infrastructures, consumption, energy and spaces’.

Similarly, the European Commission¹ states that the aim of a Smart City



is to streamline the use of available resources and reduce emissions using information and communication technologies. The following are identified as key areas that require improvement if future sustainability objectives are to be achieved: urban transport networks, water supply and waste management infrastructure, and the efficiency of lighting and air-conditioning in buildings. It is also vital that cities are administered in a way that is more interactive and better tailored to people's needs, with safer public spaces and action taken to meet the needs of an ageing population.

“The aim of a Smart City is to streamline the use of available resources and reduce emissions using information and communication technologies.”

The use of information technologies has encouraged and continues to encourage decision-making

based on hard data rather than personal feelings or perceptions. This means data capture through the deployment of the Internet of the Everything (IoE), with the identification of patterns through the analysis of large-scale data and the customisation of services according to tastes and preferences as the key systems to support its deployment. However, there are some key points to reflect on which, in my opinion, move away from the original objectives:

- First, in the process of deploying the technology, we have forgotten about people and how to respond to their needs. To address this, strategies have been drawn up on how to involve people in the process of creating smart solutions, on how to provide solutions for people who are digital natives and people who are not, and on how artificial intelligence will improve the responses that digital solutions provide. But are we prepared to be classified or regarded in a certain way on the basis of complex patterns? It will be interesting to see how technology deals with and

1. https://ec.europa.eu/info/eu-regional-and-urban-development/topics/cities-and-urban-development/city-initiatives/smart-cities_en

solves many societal challenges, while at the same time taking into account the fact that every human being is unique.

“[...]Strategies have been drawn up on how to involve people in the process of creating smart solutions, on how to provide solutions for people who are digital natives and people who are not.”

- The second point – which has been the subject of much debate – is the ownership, security and ethics of the digital data collected, stored and used by the various AI algorithms. Until now we have relied on our ability as humans to change and improve, but as our digital records are more extensive than those of previous generations, we are on the brink of becoming defined by our data. From an early

age, young people grow up with a digital profile that can be used to identify them worldwide. Will we be able to use this data to help reduce the consumption of resources and improve the efficiency of cities, rather than to control, influence and attack others?

- The last point concerns the uniqueness of each region. While it is true that cities are and will continue to be the main human constructs that will define the sustainability of humanity, the areas connecting cities should not be neglected.

“Education and a collective ethical awareness of the digital world will be crucial in teaching people how to use the digital infrastructure that will be put in place in digital cities in the coming years.”

For example, islands are areas that will require special attention, although they too follow the global trend of population concentration in cities. In the Balearic Islands, for example, people tend to live near major transport infrastructure and therefore decision-making in one town or city affects the mobility of people living in nearby towns or cities. On islands, therefore, certain concepts of sustainability will need to have a broader territorial scope than those focused on cities. In more isolated areas, cities and towns create networks with important territorial connections that need to be taken into account.

In the light of these points, education and a collective ethical awareness of the digital world will be crucial in teaching people how to use the digital infrastructure that will be put in place in digital cities in the coming years, and in encouraging them not simply to use the services provided, but also to be aware of the benefits and risks associated with them, so that we can continue to live in a sustainable, nuanced and fully human society. If we teach people how to write properly using a pen and paper, then why not teach people how to use digital services ethically, in the new digital language?



A man rides his bike on the bike lane along the Waterfront with a view on the old city
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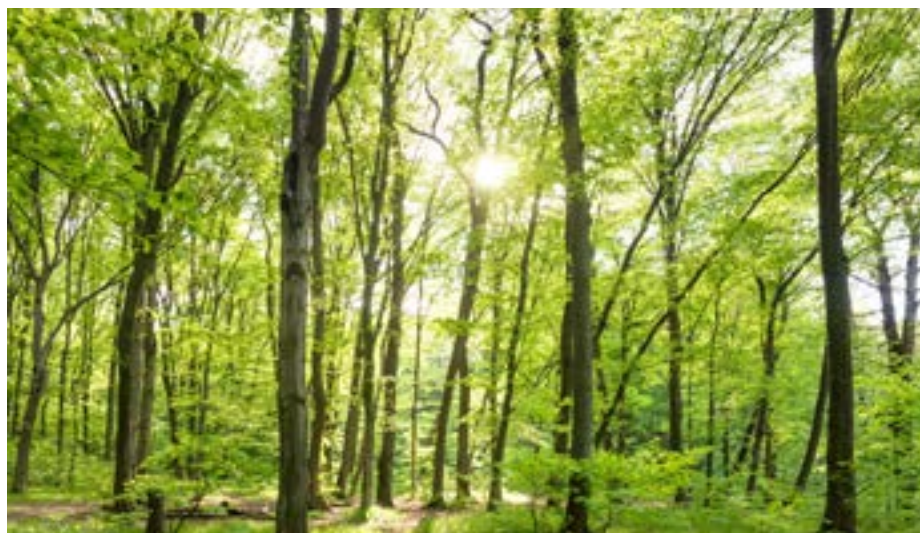
YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN RURAL AREAS

Actions of European Social Fund for young people in rural areas of Hungary.

There is a challenge in every European Union Member State how to make rural areas more attractive for young people. There is a usual opinion that young people are not ready to stay or move to rural areas as there are not sufficient employment opportunities there. But there are other factors as well which should be provided to young people in a more integrated way to see their life possible in the rural Europe.

There are three main factors of being ready to move to rural areas for young people: to have proper public services (especially health and education services mainly for the future children of young people), housing solutions and of course employment.

European Social Fund (ESF) is investing in people since more than 60 years in the EU Member States. The European Commission and EU countries in partnership set the ESF's priorities and how it spends its resources. One important priority is helping people to get jobs and develop their skills, to help people from disadvantaged groups, but



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there are projects aimed at education systems, teachers and schoolchildren, and potential entrepreneurs from all backgrounds. People are the focus of the ESF including young people. There are some 94 million young Europeans aged between 15 and 29 years old. The financial and economic crisis has led to very high unemployment levels in this group. The Youth Guarantee is a reflection by all Member States in 2013 to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of four

months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

“There are three main factors of being ready to move to rural areas for young people: to have proper public services (especially health and education services mainly for the future children of young people), housing solutions and of course employment.”

The ESF is devoting significant resources to help the implementation of the Youth Guarantee a reality in all Member States. A specific emphasis is on helping those that are currently not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs).

Extra support for youth comes through the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). This initiative makes at

Launched by the Commission, the Guarantee has helped put a dent in youth unemployment.



least EUR 8.8 billion available to the regions and individuals struggling most with youth unemployment and inactivity in the 2014-20 period. The YEI concentrates on NEETs and on regions experiencing youth unemployment rates above 25%. Hungary is one of the main beneficiary of the ESF having a budget of 4.8 billion EUR in the 2014-20 period. There are a wide variety of instruments which are available to include young people in society and help them to find the necessary education, work and public services locally. In order to serve young people there is a country-wide development of youth counselling services, but on local level there are many supported community building actions targeting them. There are also actions providing scholarships in public education and mentoring programmes in higher education, which aim to provide the necessary skills for the future for all groups including disadvantaged ones. In order to ensure proper housing solutions as well, there is an action (Esély otthon – Hope Home) to

ensure the return of young people after their studies to rural areas targeting the 18-35 age group.

“The Youth Guarantee is a reflection by all Member States in 2013 to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.”

This action includes social housing developments, mentoring activities and training for young people to find their employment or entrepreneurial opportunities in the rural areas with a total funding of EUR 35 million.



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To help the integration into the labour market there is roughly EUR 770 million EU funding (including EUR 49 million of YEI fund) available for the implementation of Youth Guarantee in Hungary. As a result c.a. 180 thousands of under 25 years old people will receive mentoring or active labour market policy services until 2020.

European Social Fund is only one tool besides many other available actions of EU and national schemes which intend to ensure a future success of young people in rural areas. In order to utilise the most efficiently these funds we have to apply an integrated strategy in all Member States. Helping young people in rural areas is not only about to be employed, but also to ensure an environment which provides all necessary public and leisure services, training opportunities and housing solutions such as in urban areas.

Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)

The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) is one of the main EU financial resources to support the implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes. It was launched to provide support to young people living in regions where youth unemployment was higher than 25% in 2012. It was topped up in 2017 for regions with youth unemployment higher than 25% in 2016.

The Youth Employment Initiative exclusively supports young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs), including the long-term unemployed or those not registered as job-seekers. It ensures that in parts of Europe where the challenges are most acute, young people can receive targeted support.

More information at: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1176>

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THE ROLE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED CITIES

The European Union offers an excellent example of the role that small and medium-sized cities can and should play.

For historical reasons, large metropolises, some with several million inhabitants, have developed in Europe and on other continents. Naturally, a great deal of effort needs to be expended to overcome or at least mitigate the huge costs (and the attendant delays) resulting from the concentration of energy and pollution in such mega-cities. (According to a Commission study, these costs amount to 1% of the EU's GDP.)

In Europe there are excellent examples of the contribution that can be made by small and medium-sized cities, which suffer from none of these drawbacks. They therefore present an alternative which also has the merit of stopping the current undesirable exodus of people towards major urban centres. Smaller cities make a major contribution to industrial output, indeed most of Europe's largest industrial companies are based in small and medium-sized cities. Extremely significantly, higher-education rankings show that almost all of the best universities in the world, many of which are in the UK and USA, are situated in small and medium-sized cities (no need to remember their names) rather than large metropolises.

In this and in all other respects, time savings in day-to-day activities are extremely important. Moreover, modern communication and information technologies have removed the need for proximity, or even direct contact, in business or academic activities, allowing us to communicate at the same price, and



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just as instantaneously, from a small city as from anywhere else. These technologies also allow access to cultural values, so people in small cities are not disadvantaged.

“In Europe there are excellent examples of the contribution that can be made by small and medium-sized cities.”

In terms of overall economic performance, notably, in the three European countries with the highest current account surpluses (among the highest surpluses in the world), Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland, Berlin alone has a population of more than 3 million inhabitants – largely for historical reasons – and is home to none of Germany's 20 largest companies. The largest cities in the Netherlands and Switzerland, countries with a balanced urban fabric, are home to far less than a million people. With a view to creating alternatives to undesirable concentrations of people and resources in large metropolises, we must pursue

a policy of promoting small and medium-sized cities by implanting national agencies (with European experience) there (as a way of showing that not all such services need to be in the capitals) and providing good transport links and all the other prerequisites for efficiency and a good quality of residential life. It is particularly important, and of topical relevance given our environmental challenges, that major airports are on national railway lines, so that they serve not only large metropolitan areas but also small and medium-sized cities.

Such an approach would cut down on undesirable costs and significantly increase our chances of extending the conditions for economic competitiveness and quality of life by means of proper urban planning. In this increasingly demanding world, inefficiencies in the use of the available resources are unacceptable.

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FMA ACTIVITIES



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



ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

30 YEARS OF ELECTION OBSERVATION

More than a quarter of a century of election observation: Retrospective and prospects for women's participation in OSCE observation missions.

On the eve of its 30th anniversary next year, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which now comprises 57 participating States, is taking stock of progress and challenges with regard to gender equality in election observation missions. This institution, originally called the Office for Free Elections, established in 1990 by the Charter of Paris for a new Europe ([Charte de Paris pour une nouvelle Europe](#)), has over time served to provide an international benchmark for election observation.

Although the institution was always committed to the values of equality and non-discrimination, it was only in the early 2000s that a systematic gender approach was incorporated into its work, including in the deployment of election observers. It was at that point that, for the first time, an expert dealing with gender issues joined the core team for the mission to observe the 2000 presidential and parliamentary elections in Romania. The expert's tasks would include looking at topics such as the gathering of statistics on the representation of women on electoral rolls, and the composition of the different levels of the electoral administration and of central and local public authorities. The reports analysed the attitudes of political parties in promoting women candidates, including as



Brigitte Langenhagen, Board member and Chair of the Working Group on Democracy Support and Electoral Observation, represented the FMA at the 14th Annual Implementation Meeting for endorsers of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, held on 20-21 November 2019 in Warsaw, Poland

lead candidates, and examined barriers and obstacles to their full participation, as well as making recommendations to improve the situation.

But it was in response to the OSCE's new 2004 Action Plan for the promotion of gender equality that ODIHR adopted a methodology for observing women's participation in elections. Accordingly, two-yearly action plans, including updates of gender equality standards and approaches to address new challenges, for example to prevent and combat sexism and discrimination, were introduced as a complement to the existing measures.

ODIHR uses a multitude of tools to promote women's participation in elections, in particular through its recommendations derived from observation reports, by proposing to the participating States that they work on legislation to eliminate all forms of discrimination, by carrying out activities targeted at national parliaments, electoral commissions and other institutions involved in

elections, and by encouraging the participating States to take account of the issue of gender in making election observers available. Statistics gathered by ODIHR since 2011 indicate that progress has been made in applying the principles of gender equality to election observation missions. The electoral recommendations regarding this aspect are concerned, as a whole, with the adoption of special measures, either legislative or directed at political parties, more effective application of legislation to safeguard the status of women, and more neutral coverage of candidates regardless of gender. ODIHR is also proud to note that in 2018 more than 43% of leadership positions for electoral activities were held by women. In the same period, 1 293 out of a total of 2 937 observer posts were held by women. The core teams recruited by ODIHR comprised 47% women.

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STUDY VISIT TO GEORGIA

GEORGIA ON MY MIND

There is one over-riding impression that strikes anyone meeting with politicians in Georgia; they all seem to be young, highly educated, competent, articulate and multi-lingual. From all sides of the political spectrum there is a prevailing sense of optimism; a feeling that Georgia has a great future and that they are determined to make it happen. That sense of confidence is reflected even in the names of the mainstream and largely pro-western political parties. Currently in power is the 'Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia' Party (affiliated to the S&D). The main opposition movement is the 'European Georgia Party' (affiliated to the EPP), an offshoot of the 'United National Movement', the former governing party originally founded by Mikheil Saakashvili, the enfant terrible of Georgian politics. Saakashvili, a former President of Georgia, was stripped of his Georgian citizenship by his arch-Nemesis Bdzina Ivanishvili, a multi-billionaire oligarch and former Prime

Minister of Georgia, who founded the Georgian Dream Party. There is huge support for further EU integration. Opinion polls repeatedly show public backing of over 80% and Georgia is now considered to be the 'front-runner' in the long list of Balkan and Trans-Caucasian countries vying to join the EU and NATO. The EU has reciprocated by spending a generous EUR 120 million annually in Georgia, where the small 3.7 million population are understandably grateful recipients. Nevertheless, 50% of the Georgian economy still relies on agriculture and there is a huge disparity between the per capita GDP of \$20,000 p.a. in the capital Tbilisi, and the paltry \$2,000 in most rural areas. Serious and successful efforts have been made to tackle poverty, corruption and electoral fraud and the Georgian economy is now growing at an annual rate of 5%. But there is a clear understanding among all of the political parties that rural, agricultural poverty will have to be confronted

and it is emerging as a key issue in the campaign for the autumn 2020 elections.

Against this predominantly positive background is, sadly, the looming dark cloud of Russian aggression. More than 20% of Georgian territory is now occupied by Russia. The regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, both scenes of violent separatist conflicts which left thousands dead and tens of thousands homeless in August 2008, are now virtual no-go areas. Putin allows limited visits to Abkhazia by the UNDP, but South Ossetia has become a Russian military camp and the ill-defined demarcation lines established by the Russians are now blockaded with tangled razor wire, guarded by military watchtowers. This illegal 'border' slices through villages, fields and gardens. Georgians attempting to cross the wire to visit friends and family or even to attend weddings and funerals, are regularly arrested, taken to court and fined.

Hundreds of thousands were forced to flee during the 2008 war. Abkhazia formerly had a population of 560,000. It is now 160,000. South Ossetia's pre-war population of 120,000 has been ruthlessly slashed to only 20,000. Georgian government ministers claim that those who remain inside the two occupied territories routinely suffer human rights abuse, a lack of freedom of expression and widespread discrimination; their children are even denied education in their own native Georgian language. Scores of Georgian villages were completely destroyed by the Russian-backed separatists, particularly in



Group picture with Tamar Khulordava, Chairperson of the European Integration Committee and Archil Talakvadze, Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia.

South Ossetia and ethnic cleansing forced hundreds of thousands to flee. Sprawling camps now house these internally displaced persons (IDPs) near the Abkhazi and South Ossetian demarcation lines. Georgian politicians say that these people have lived in a state of dependency for the past eleven years as they are still suffering from post-traumatic stress as a result of the violent conflict. They cannot return to their homes and they are reluctant to integrate into the wider Georgian society. The difficult task of keeping a watchful eye on this tense situation has fallen to the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM), an unarmed peacekeeping operation with several hundred monitors from various EU Member States. The EUMM works with an annual budget of around EUR 18 million and has its headquarters in Gori, which, ironically, was also the birthplace of Stalin! Resolving the standoff with Russia; dealing with threats from Saakashvili who says from his current home in Ukraine that he intends to return to Georgia, where he faces instant arrest; responding to claims that the oligarch Ivanishvili is pulling the



Meeting with representatives of NGO's acting in Georgia on Workers' conditions

democratic strings in Georgia; and implementing a new and radical system of electoral reform, which will see a fully proportional system introduced at the next elections. These are just a few of the challenges facing the Georgian government and its newly elected president Salome Zourabichvili, a former Green and the first woman to hold the post. But Georgia has dealt with bigger challenges in the past. It has been occupied by the Mongols, Romans, Persians, Turks and Russians; even

Jason and the Argonauts travelled there in 2,000 BC in search of the legendary Golden Fleece. Georgia is the 'cradle of wine'. Ancient amphora used for wine-making, date back to 8,000 BC. Today their wines, mainly from the beautiful area of Kakheti in the foothills of the Caucasus, are eagerly sought by connoisseurs worldwide. With a glass of rich, dark ruby-red Georgian wine made from the rare and prized Usakhelari grapes in one hand, and a copy of the EU's fabled *acquis communautaire* or book of rules in the other, it would be difficult to ignore the pleas of the Georgians for EU and NATO membership. As they say in Georgia when glasses are clinked together "gaumarjos"!



Picture of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camp in South Ossetia

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INDEPENDENT GEORGIA ON MY MIND

Georgia is very young and very old at the same time. Being an ancient nation may be one of the most important facts ingrained in the Georgian psyche. Schoolchildren read about relations with ancient Greeks and Rome, Arabs and Byzantium and every Georgian remembers his country was among the first in the world to adopt Christianity as its state religion, or that it had its Golden Age in the 11th -12th centuries. However, the country became fragmented after this period, and the first political umbrella under which the lands of contemporary Georgia were reunited, was that of the Russian Empire.

A brief interlude of independence in 1918-21 left behind a strong normative idea that an independent state is the only acceptable option. Unfortunately not underpinned by relevant political or institutional traditions, which started to emerge in the late 1980s in the twilight of the weakened Soviet Union. Political parties, independent media and genuine public associations (nobody as yet used the term "NGO") were created. The first multiparty elections

were held in October 1990. Six months later followed the declaration of independence. New state institutions started to take shape, although they were built on the basis of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, a part of the Soviet Union. Because the road that the country took these years was particularly bumpy, Georgia's record is probably more dramatic than that of any other post-Soviet State.

The new Georgia starts with the period of perestroika and glasnost, a fateful attempt to liberalize the Kremlin-regime undertaken by the last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev from 1985 on. Georgians used the new liberties to launch a national-liberation movement. The inevitable tensions with the communist authorities came tragically to a head in the early morning of 9 April 1989, when the Soviet army dispersed a huge pro-independence rally, leaving twenty people, mostly young women, dead. This tragic event represented the moral death of the communist regime in Georgia: its legitimacy was fatally injured and never recovered. The Moscow-authorities were formally in charge for another year and a half, they were never able to implement any policies on their own. The controlling hand of the Kremlin was losing its grip as well.

The October 1990 elections brought a tremendous victory for the anti-communist Zviad Gamsakhurdia. The political agenda was dominated by two ideas: nationalism and democracy. These years were marked by serious challenges to the creation of stable political institutions and had especially to do with the failure of the

different political groups and ethnic communities to reach a consensus beyond the twofold objective. On the surface disagreements were about tactics, but in essence the divisions were about personalities and ambitions of the different leaders. Gamsakhurdia had emerged as the most charismatic. His rule had a strong popular mandate but was soon denounced as too authoritarian. Many leaders failed to reach a consensus and considered each other enemies rather than competitors. Adding to the difficulties in achieving political pluralism was the problem of ethnic-territorial conflicts. The emergence of Georgian nationalism was paralleled by of counter-nationalist programmes in the autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Georgian society has demonstrated its commitment to democratic values and a firm resolution not to tolerate autocratic rule. However, several attempts at transitions have yet to lead to the creation of a system of consolidated democratic institutions. In these beginning years still a long way to go.¹

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1. This resume has been grounded on a study of The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy 2005. The writer was president of the Supervisory Board.



Exhibition of a traditional dance in Lagodekhi Region

GEORGIA: THE EU OR NATO?

The FMA's visit to Georgia from 29 September to 4 October 2019 yielded interesting insights, including for me, although I had been following the country's development since 1993 and written a good deal about the country¹.

The Georgian Dream (GD) party, which has been in power since 2012/13, has adopted a pragmatic approach towards Russia, which has led, among other things, to a resumption of Georgian exports of wine and mineral water to the north, following their suspension as a result of the anti-Russian stance of the Saakashvili regime. At the same time, it is clear that Georgia still has a long way to go to achieve stable economic and social development. The FMA group's meeting with Georgian NGOs² also showed that, when representatives of popular movements criticise the GD regime, it is not without justification. What has irritated some EU representatives is the action taken by the Georgian justice system against the Saakashvili regime. Many people, including the Minister of the Interior, Vano Merabishvili, have been sentenced to imprisonment, and former President Saakashvili is a wanted man. Sweden's then

Minister for Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt was at the forefront of the criticism of the GD regime, inter alia in a tweet of 6 August 2014 in which he accused Georgia of 'deviating from the European path in using the justice system for revenge'. Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili rejected Bildt's attack, saying that Bildt was a member of 'the club of Saakashvili's friends'. Justice Minister Thea Tsulukiani responded with a statement of the charge sheet against Saakashvili. Bildt's rejoinder could have been perceived as a threat: 'If the Prime Minister does not want to listen to the best friends of his country, that is his choice. We take note.' At the FMA's meeting with Thea Tsulukiani (still Minister of Justice), she confirmed that she had interpreted Bildt's tweet as a threat. From whom? The EU? The fact is that Bildt did not even have the backing of the Swedish Government. He has now left politics, but his private vendetta could have damaged relations between Georgia and the EU.

The Georgian representatives³ spoke about the EU and NATO as if they were different wings of the same organisation. As a representative of one of the six EU Member States that are not NATO members, I had to respond. My impression of the EU is that there is a majority that would like to see a more independent European identity

and does not favour the tendency to regard the EU as an appendage to NATO. In addition, there are perhaps lessons that Georgia could learn from non-aligned EU states, such as Finland and Sweden. In 1991, President Mauno Koivisto of Finland declined an offer from the President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, to allow Finland to buy back Karelia (which Russia had annexed in 1940) for USD 15 billion; its reconstruction would have been too expensive, costing an estimated USD 65 billion. Following the loss of Finland to Russia in 1809, Sweden decided not to attempt to recapture it militarily but (according to the poet Esaias Tegnér) 'within the borders of Sweden to win Finland back'. Finland gained its independence from Russia rather than from Sweden, which is one reason why today Finland and Sweden are each other's closest allies. A visit to the EUMM in Gori reminded the FMA delegation that the EU is an autonomous force in the region. When other international organisations fail to speak out, the EU can contribute practically to the peaceful development of everyday life in a disputed area. This makes a former MEP proud to represent the EU, as a peaceful and non-military organisation.

1. *Georgia pawn in the new great game, 2010; Är Ryssland ett hot, exemplet Georgien, 2018*

2. *International Society for fair Elections and Democracy, Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA): Transparency International, Open Society Georgia Foundation, Charter of Journalistic Ethics, Media Development Foundation, Georgian Trade Unions Confederation, Human Rights Education and Monitoring Centre.*

3. *Tamar Khulordava, Chairperson of the European Integration Committee, Archil Talakvadze, Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia, Sophie Katsarava, Chairperson of the Foreign Relations Committee, David Zalkaliani, Foreign Affairs Minister of Georgia*

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WE NEED A NEW HELSINKI CONFERENCE

Europe as a part of the Eurasian Plate has imprecise borders with both Asia and Africa.

After two World Wars, which affected nations all over the planet, there was an outcry in many parts of Europe: "Never again". This "never again" gave birth to one of the most innovative political constructions in human history, the European Union. It bases itself on the principle of sovereign equality of all its Members, but is resolved to a process of "creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe".

Seen from the outside world, the EU is widely perceived as the part of the world, where human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as social rights are best preserved. In this part of the world the Eastern Partnership links the EU to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and of course Georgia. Georgia and the EU also signed an Association Agreement. The key trade component of this Association Agreement is the Deep and



From the right to the left: Robert Goebbels, FMA member with Brigitte Langenhagen, FMA Board Member and Jan-Willem Bertens, FMA Vice President and leader of the FMA Delegation to Georgia

Comprehensive Free Trade Area since 2014. It removed all import duties on goods and provides for broad mutual access to trade in services.

Thanks to this comprehensive cooperation the EU is Georgia's largest trading partner, even if the EU should be less bureaucratic towards farmers exports. In addition, the EU grants financial assistance to Georgia.

Under the European Neighbourhood Instrument funds up to 450 million EUR are earmarked for Georgia for the 2017-2020 period.

What started as an experience, the so-called « Schengen Area » allowing now free movements of people within 26 States, encountered an enormous success with citizens all over Europe.

With the migration crisis and with the terrorist attacks in many European countries some politicians attacked the freedom of circulation in the Schengen area. But in order to abolish free circulation, the Member States would need to agree to change the EU-Treaty in accordance with Article 7 TEU.

Since April 2017, Georgian citizens with biometric passports are able to travel to the Schengen area without a visa for stays up to 90 days in any 180-day period. Within the first year more than 250.000 Georgian citizens enjoyed visa-free travel to the Schengen area.

We can be helpful. During the



A moment of the meeting with David Zalkaliani, Foreign Affairs Minister of Georgia

ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION



FMA Delegation during the visit to the EUMM office in Gori

Ossetian events in 2008 French President Nicolas Sarkozy, in his capacity as president of the EU-Council, was able to broker a ceasefire between Georgia and Russia. But up to now the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia was only able to help to prevent new incidents, not to solve the problem. Before the great EU-enlargement of 2004 the political mantra was, "deepening before enlarging". But the treaties were not adapted in order to allow a smoother functioning of the European Institutions. Neither the Nice Treaty nor the Lisbon Treaty achieved this goal. We need institutional reforms, a smaller but stronger Commission; better decision making in the Council; no more vetoes in Foreign Affairs.

Brexit is an inspiring shock for a lot of anti-Europeans from the extreme right and the extreme left. Even in France the extreme right has already abandoned their claim to leave the Euro. The lessons Europe

will learn through Brexit will hopefully pave the way for an institutional reform.

Before the European institutions will have adjusted to the needs of a much larger Union, there will most certainly be no further enlargement for the foreseeable future.

That is no enjoyable news to the many European countries that want to join the club. They will have to wait. Even Georgia.

I'm personally convinced that we need a "Common House", as Gorbachov coined it. The EU cannot be a closed shop, must be open to all serious candidates fulfilling the democratic criteria. But before any enlargement of the actual house, we first need to consolidate the foundations. And above all: We need new rules about financing the EU.

The EU has a budget, which represents less than 1 percentage point of the combined GDP of the 28 States. This is ridiculously low. The US budget is around 30% of their GDP. The budget of the Federal Republic

is above 40% of German GDP. Even the Swiss Confederation has a budget around 20% of GDP. Without a normalisation of relations with Russia, the European Union and all other independent States of our region will not be able to resolve the many conflicts that take their origin from the implosion of the Soviet Union.

It is neither possible nor desirable to come back to the "status quo ante". But only a new equilibrium will allow the desired peaceful development of our region. The security interests of all the European nations have to be guaranteed. We need a new Helsinki conference on security and cooperation in Europe.

And we have to remember the words of one of the very best diplomats the US ever produced: George Kennan. Kennan wrote in 1985 that Nations have "to admit the validity and legitimacy of power realities and aspirations, to accept them without feeling the obligation of moral judgment, to take them as existing and inalterable human forces, neither good nor bad, and to seek their point of maximum equilibrium rather than their reform or their repression."

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THE EU IS IN THE EYES OF MANY PARADISE ON EARTH

Getting to know the country in a Study Visit of the FMA delegation is a remarkable opportunity. Georgia was occupied by the Russians in 1922 and annexed to the Soviet Union and became independent on April 9, 1991. It has had several wars with Russia and still has a conflict today over the occupation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. It is a country of about 800,000 emigrants, 3.5 million citizens and one million capital Tbilisi. After independence, it was marked by individual periods of internal unrest, especially during elections. It is a land of diversity in terms of architecture and the differences between rich and poor. It is the world cradle of wine production and the invention of amphorae. According to tradition, Prometheus is said to have brought the first fire under the Caucasus. The vast majority of the population supports and wants to join the EU and NATO. The EU also reciprocally promotes integration through, inter alia, financial assistance of EUR 120 million. Economic growth is 4.7%, inflation is around 3%. Opportunities are presented to them

in historically established industries, the furniture industry and also in the military aviation industry. Favorable climate conditions call for the development of year-round local food production, which is also a hotbed for the development of culinary-related tourism. During the period of independence, the share of tourism is increasing. An interesting project supported by EU funds is the development of hiking in the Caucasus, where the biodiversity area is protected.

The government is committed to developing the country towards the gradual introduction of European standards. The ruling party and the opposition agree on two points: they support integration with the EU and NATO and advocate a peaceful resolution of the conflict with the Russians. They already have an integration agreement and a trade agreement with the EU. Georgia is a leader in the region in terms of development, with regard to Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Armenia and Moldova.

When the autonomous provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia declared independence in August 2008, only Russia recognized them and occupied them within a few days. The then President of the European Council, Nikolas Sarkozy, was able to negotiate an agreement with the Russians on a peace agreement and on the activation of the European Peacekeeping Mission (www.eumm.eu). Today, there are about 300 members who help people on both sides of the border. Even after eleven years, there is no visible progress between Russia and Georgia. In 2018, they elected Georgia

President Salome Zurbishvili, who was born in France to Georgian parents and returned to Georgia a year after studying and having a successful career. The Georgia Dreams Party, which has a majority in parliament, is politically dominant. Parliament has 150 Members, of which the ruling party has 115. There is minimal representation of women. Georgian Dreams is one of the observers of the European Group of Social Democrats and at the same time has party leader Ildiz Ivanishvili, the richest man in Georgia, estimated to have 30% of GDP, which could amount to about 4 billion euros. The opposition joining the observer in the European People's Party is small and very critical. It points to the abolition of television channels that reflect the views of the opposition, as well as to judicial bias and corruption. The government is accused of leading her from a background of Ivanishvili, who is not elected but is the leader of the DG party. More tension is also generated by the planned change in the electoral system and the 2020 parliamentary elections. Our FMA delegation was very well received, the hospitality of the hosts was above expectations. I was personally impressed by the injustice that happens to children on both sides of the borders of occupied areas that they do not have access to education. The world has remained insensitive to such injustices for far too long!

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Tamar Khulordava, Chairperson of the European Integration Committee and Archil Talakvadze, Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia during the meeting with the FMA Delegation

DREAMS, NIGHTMARES, AND A TALE OF TWO BORIS'S

After his success in Russia as an oligarch during the Russian era of privatisation, Boris Ivanishvili returned to his native Georgia with dreams of entering politics. He founded the Georgian Dream Party and became Prime Minister of Georgia. Back in Georgia he dropped the name Boris by which he was well known in Russia for his original Georgian name of Bidzina. He launched his Georgian Dream Party, became its leader, and his new party attained victory in 2012. He became prime minister of Georgia on October 2012 but in November 2013 gave up the position to return to civic life. He has now returned to politics and is chairman of the Georgian Dream Party. Ivanishvili was ranked number 153 in Forbes magazine's list of world billionaires with an estimated worth of \$6.4 billion, making him Georgia's richest person and an influential and controversial figure in Georgia politics. He was not the only Boris whose name was written large during our visit to Georgia. Each day in Georgia we were asked by our hosts about the UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Brexit and the decision to take

the United Kingdom out of the European Union. All four UK former MEPs, three Conservative and one Labour, agreed that Brexit is madness and the withdrawal of the UK from Europe led by Boris Johnson is a nightmare. It is ironic that Georgia and its influential chair of the governing Georgian Dream Party are desperate for Georgia to join the EU, whilst the UK is moving in the opposite direction with its prime leading the country out of the EU. The Georgian Dream party chief dropped his Boris name when he returned from Russia to Georgia and the current UK prime minister known as Alex as a child also used his other name Boris since attending the prestigious Eton private school. Ivanishvili has built a luxury palace overlooking the Georgian capital Tbilisi with grounds dotted with sculptures of Henry Moore, a helicopter pad, and an open air swimming pool. He has 4 children including Bera who is a well-known rapper in Georgia. Boris Johnson was educated at Eton which has provided 20 UK prime ministers, besides the royal princess William and Harry, grandsons of

Queen Elizabeth 11, and even the present Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby. His brother Joseph is also a Conservative MP described by The Times Guide to the House of Commons as "nicer and saner than his elder brother Boris" and his sister, Rachel, a journalist, and candidate in the 2019 European elections for the anti Brexit Change UK party. It is interesting that the chair of the Georgian Dream Party, then known as Boris Ivanishvili, made his wealth in Russia and now wants Georgia to look West to the European Union. Boris Johnson attended the European School in Brussels, worked as a journalist in Brussels, and his father, Stanley, is a former MEP and worked at the European Commission. And now Boris wants the UK to abandon links with Brussels and the European Union. In a world dominated by such political bullies as Trump of America, Putin of Russia, and Erdogan of Turkey, in Europe it's a tale of two Boris's, Dreams and Nightmares.

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UK Prime Minister Johnson on the late Jo Cox

The words of UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson in a recent exchange in the House of Commons that "the best way of honouring Jo Cox is to get Brexit done" are inaccurate.

Jo Cox MP who was murdered by a far right terrorist whilst attending a surgery in her Batley and Spenborough constituency in the north of England was an active supporter of the UK's membership of the European Union. Before becoming an MP, Jo Cox had worked in Brussels where the city council have named a public square in her honour as the Jo Cox Square in the centre of Brussels adjacent to a favourite music venue she frequented. I was born, brought up, and went to the same school as Jo Cox in Yorkshire where I was also a public representative and can confirm her commitment to European co-operation.

Michael McGowan

VISIT TO A GEORGIAN PRISON

Our delegation visited the Minister of Justice of Georgia, Ms Thea Tsulukiani, on 1 October. She belongs to the Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia party, led by the billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili. She too sees the Russian occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as the 'greatest challenge' for her country. The Minister regards her main tasks as being to prepare reforms of the legal system and amendments to the Constitution. The Public Prosecutor's Office has been given autonomous status and is no longer subject to the control of the Minister of Justice. Judges are appointed by the judiciary itself and no longer by politicians. Parliament has also adopted an amendment to the Constitution which will make the electoral system simpler and fairer. At present, the 'mixed system' of party lists and districts one-sidedly favours the Georgian Dream party. As from 2024, the President will also be elected indirectly and will have less power than now.

The Minister was aware of her country's poor record on corruption. She has created a special unit designed to combat unacceptable practices on all fronts. Significant results have already been achieved, particularly among the lower social classes. In response to a question from us as to whether her party's President, Mr Ivanishvili, determined her policy, she replied that she had never received any instructions from him in all her seven years of ministerial office.

During our interview, I had asked about the situation in the prisons. Afterwards she asked me whether I wanted to visit one of them. I



From left to right: Jan Mulder, FMA member with Thea Tsulukiani, Minister of Justice of Georgia and Bob van den Bos, FMA member

was certainly keen to. On Friday morning, a car from the Ministry of Justice collected Jan Mulder and myself and took us to Tblisi's largest prison. The Minister was there in person to escort us. The prison housed 3 000 detainees. We visited the department where the most serious offenders were held: those serving life sentences. An experiment had been launched there which involved allowing convicts to work in a vegetable garden for six hours a day. Seven men were doing this. They seemed to be pleased to have the opportunity to go outside, and told us that the work was not too hard. Rehabilitation programmes had been organised in those departments where prisoners were serving determinate sentences. Afterwards, unaccompanied by the Minister, Jan Mulder and I spoke to an individual prisoner who had been sentenced to 18 years. He described the situation in the prison as 'medieval'. The cells were small, and each housed six people, who were locked up together day and night. When the prison had been

built, eight years ago, no provision had been made for any outdoor exercise! The toilets were not cleaned and it was only possible to take a shower twice a week. This life in captivity was inhumane. The prisoner we spoke to said he was innocent. According to him, the judges were corrupt and it was possible to avoid conviction by offering a large bribe, but he had not been rich enough to do that. His family visited him once a year...

Faced with our findings, the Minister said that she was working hard on prison reform, but that it took money and time. Many improvements had already been made. Previously, prisoners used to be systematically tortured by the guards. She is therefore very grateful for the EU's support for the reforms of the justice system in Georgia. 'We are part of Europe'.

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TEN YEARS OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Future challenges in the region.

The 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership is a good time to both take stock of the partnership as an example of cooperation, and look ahead to see how it should develop in the future. The Eastern Partnership, thanks to the conclusion of a series of agreements, has led to closer links being forged between the EU and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. At the celebratory dinner marking the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership, President Donald Tusk said: 'This means that 10 years on, there is more Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in the EU, and – I believe – there is more EU in all of your countries than ever before. We are not only neighbours – we are members of the same European family'. And every family has to think about its future, which is why I would like to focus on the challenges that the Eastern Partnership is facing. The European Union and the Eastern Partnership countries are committed to stabilisation and security. This is natural and in every country's national interest. In this context, the ability to resolve conflict situations like those that are, unfortunately, ongoing in the majority of the Eastern Partnership countries – Donbas and Crimea, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria – will have a major impact on the future of the region. Hybrid threats, and the need to tackle those threats effectively, are a relatively new challenge, and the EU has a number of options in this regard, e.g. involving the Eastern Partnership countries in the European

Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki (Hybrid CoE), or granting them observer status within the European Union Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA).

The differing expectations of the various Eastern Partnership countries are also a challenge. Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, which have association agreements with the EU, are keen for further integration to take place, whereas Azerbaijan, Armenia and Belarus do not necessarily want that. Individual countries will therefore have to decide where they stand, for example, on an initiative for a 'two-speed partnership' known as Eastern Partnership Plus. The idea here centres around the possibility of the outstanding Eastern Partnership countries joining the Customs, Digital and Energy Union and the Schengen Area (without EU accession). The EU can increase integration with associated countries drawing on experience gained in the operation of the European Economic Area, the customs union with Turkey and the potential agreement between the EU and the UK. A number of constraints, mean, however, that none of those models can be applied directly. The EU, on the other hand, needs to resolve the extremely difficult dilemma of whether it wants at least the leading countries in terms of Eastern Partnership cooperation to one day become full EU Member States. The prospect of membership can stimulate reform and the adaptation process as long as it is perceived as a real prospect, and one that is not too far off in terms of time.

A key challenge for both sides of the Eastern Partnership is Russia's relationship with the initiative. Russia sees the Eastern Partnership as a tool to weaken its influence in the region, and therefore does not support it. And the influence that the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries have in terms of bringing about a change in Russia's stance is extremely limited. Deepening mutual cooperation among the countries most closely involved in cooperation with the EU – Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – is, however, possible and easier to achieve. As a group of associated countries, they could set up a format similar to that of the Visegrad Group. This would enable them to speak with one voice in dealings with the EU, and make them stronger politically. The internal policies of the various Eastern Partnership countries vary widely. There is no doubt that future relations with the EU will depend heavily on progress in the area of essential EU values such as the rule of law, upholding human and citizens' rights and democratic standards, the independence of the judiciary, solidarity and good governance. Among the many specific challenges, emphasis should be placed on those that relate to the facilitation of people-to-people contacts, including helping the EU institutions cut roaming prices between Eastern Partnership countries and the EU, and increasing funding for the Erasmus+ programme.

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THE EU DEVELOPMENT FUND

Ongoing efforts are being made to forge closer ties between Georgia and the European Union with a view to Georgia perhaps joining the EU in the future. Discussions between the European Commission and the Georgian Government have resulted in specific action being taken in a number of areas, including the economy, education and security. Billions have quite rightly been invested in transport projects in Georgia. I say 'quite rightly' because, owing to its geographical location, Georgia can play an important role as a transit country between Europe and Asia.

On education, more than 2 500 Georgian students were studying in the EU in 2015 as part of the Erasmus+ programme. Additional technical and financial support will also make it possible to boost the number of students, exchanges, and scientific and academic projects. Lastly, the support provided for preventing and responding to natural disasters such as forest fires and floods is absolutely vital. It is also necessary that the security of Georgian citizens is ensured, and that action is taken to combat crime and improve civil protection.

The major efforts that the Georgian Government has made must nevertheless continue, or indeed receive extensive support, if there is to be a better policy to pave the way for Georgia to join the European Union.

I am thinking in particular about the development of agriculture. The European Union wants to help Georgia improve its export opportunities, as Georgian agriculture is still developing.



©ENPARD Georgia

Since 2013, cooperatives established under the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Development (ENPARD) have provided significant support for Georgian farmers in two phases. EUR 24.5 million was provided in Phase I, between 2013 and 2017, and EUR 27 million was provided in Phase II, between 2016 and 2020. Many of the visits we made during our fact-finding trip provided us with insights into agriculture in general, such as the tour of the Wine Tunnel: hewn into a granite mountainside in the Caucasus, it is a cellar used to store 25 000 bottles of wine. The wine is stored below ground in earthenware storage vessels. This production method should be preserved and promoted in order to further develop Georgian businesses in the European Union and the wider world. The export of agricultural products such as honey through collective farms for beekeepers should be improved, as Georgian honey is distributed in EU countries via Germany. Our visit to an EU-funded rural development initiative in which

cucumbers were grown in energy-efficient greenhouses was interesting, but the use of fungicides could be problematic in the long term for Georgians' health.

At Georgia technology park we saw how 3D prints and other models were made free of charge for start-ups. The company concerned is promoted by the EU (and funded by the government) and boasts a business incubator, a printed circuit board room, iPhones, gadgets, prototype cards, etc. Businesses can stay on the site for six months. Grants and subsidies are given to companies that sell their wares around the world: currently, there are 58.

The main aspects on which the EU needs to focus its attention are: media independence, employees' working conditions, and the extent of rural poverty despite EU support, which has not achieved the desired result.

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WE NEED YOU - YOU NEED US

The World is unknown, and Georgia, as a country, has to find, where it is and where it has to go. Some may say that we already found our place - it's Europe. But, how can anyone be sure about it, when many, even in my generation, believe that we always belonged to Asia. This ideological diversity is so risky because, where there is no unity about the idea like this, there is no chance of finding a place in eternity.

Our behavior very often is the same as the people of Western Asia. For example, betraying from a husband is forgivable, because he is a man, and for a wife - it is unacceptable. I, of course, strongly disagree with them. But what about orientation, it's a little bit harder to decide. Being border between two continents makes you a multicultural centre and does not allow you to be free with your decision about culture, orientation or even behaviour. So, I, as a future journalist, want to have a huge impact on it, on this undecided course of us, and with everything. I'll do, I want to show my country, where we want and have, I repeat, have to go. I want and I'll do everything to be the one, alongside my ideological friends, to take our



FMA Delegation with students of the Tbilisi State University

country to the long-awaited home - European Union.

As I mentioned up there, my homeland is a multicultural center on the border of two continents, but don't forget that I also said, that we are still on the way of searching for the final destination. We need a better place, like the EU, to introduce to the world, sell in the world and produce for the world, our own culture, culture, and culture. The culture. This word, for me, means - music, sport, dance, love, hospitality and fresh products. Everything you read here is our own and we want to show it to the world. The only reason why the EU and the whole world needs us is that they, I think, will

never be fulfilled unless we finish this fulfilling process.

I would not be right if I miss one important detail. Many of my friends think that Georgia can't compete alongside European companies, and most of our businesses will shut down, our dance will no longer be in a spot, our music will lose its diversity, as soon as we become part of the EU. My answer to this negativity is that the European Union, as the home of diversity and equality, never tries to "kill" someone's culture. Opposite that, they will show us, how to compete, how to be better, will teach us, what are the key ingredients of success. We are children and you are our teachers, we are students and you are our lecturers. So, as one well-known phrase says "We all learn. Learn from each other and this is not the shame to learn".

We need you - you need us!



A moment of the keynote speech of Robert Goebbels at the Tbilisi State University

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VISIT UNDER THE EU PRESIDENCY

A SAGA OF LAW, MONEY, GARDENS AND WOLVES



FMA Delegation with Tytti Tuppurainen, Minister for European Affairs

The inviolability of the rule of law as the cornerstone of democratic society was a principle repeatedly driven home to our FMA delegation during our visit to the Finnish Presidency in Helsinki.

We were a 26 strong group representing 8 member states led by Richard Balfe. We were fortunate to have an intense high quality programme assembled with help from former colleague Henrik Lax. Over the three days, discussions ranged over many topics - climate change, security, populism, migration, Russia, Brexit - but we kept returning to the rule of law as the top priority of the Finnish presidency.

State Secretary Matti Anttonen showed us how Finland's history illustrated the importance of the rule of law to the Finnish character. Other speakers emphasised how vital the rule of law is to small member states, enabling them to survive and thrive alongside the big powers. Europe Minister Tytti Tuppurainen evoked the image of the rule of law as a beautiful garden where many plants can bloom. The alternative being a jungle where chaos reigns. Just how do you enforce the rule

of law in the EU? The answer ultimately lies with money. During a wide ranging and enjoyable dinner debate with former Commissioner Erkki Liikanen, the importance of a conditionality clause in the future MFF was stressed. No politician wants to tell their constituents that they are responsible for their money tap being turned off.

This visit held particular significance for me as a former chair of the EP/Finland JPC and then rapporteur for Finland's accession. I enjoyed seeing old friends and revisiting old haunts. My former co-chair of the JPC, Matti Vanhanen is now the Speaker of the Parliament having been Prime Minister in the 2006 Finnish Presidency. It was he who mentioned wolves during a discussion on the rise of populism. He explained that during the hunting season, he gets complaints about too many wolves killing hunting dogs. As Finland is tied to EU directives on the protection of wolves, no action can be taken, but people think Finland is the best judge on how to manage the problem.

Populism in Finland finds expression primarily through the Finns Party, currently the most popular party

in the opinion polls. Unfortunately, we were not able to engage with them as their leader did not turn up to our meeting.

When I was rapporteur, I had to give evidence to the Grand Committee which scrutinises Minister's activities and in particular grills them on their work in the European Council. The current chair Satu Hassi, a former colleague, explained the committee's importance as well as setting out the Presidency's priority of tackling climate change.

One fascinating visit was to the Hybrid Centre of Excellence which is a joint EU/Nato body looking at how to combat the new threats to our society including IT sabotage, interference in elections and the impact of climate change.

The delegation also held a seminar with young Finns on the future of Europe. It was a wide ranging debate, but I was struck by how much the discussion reflected the same debates during the Finnish Accession referendum campaign in 1994. Perhaps politics just goes round the same circle!

Our thanks to Finnish colleagues Lax, Virrankoski, Jäätteenmäki and Thors for their support and to our secretariat for their efforts.

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BREXIT: EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

The future of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy was one of the issues discussed during the visit of the delegation of former Members of the European Parliament to Finland. The discussions during the visit to the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats were of particular interest. The assessment of security issues from the point of view of Finland's neutrality proved equally interesting. A further topic of great pertinence was the issue of Brexit and its significance for the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy.

The current situation of uncertainty calls for a sober analysis of what Brexit will really mean in practice. Firstly, it means a reduction of nearly 20% in the EU's economic performance. Clearly, we will no longer be the biggest but only the second biggest market in the world. This will reduce our ability to negotiate with the United States on equal terms.

The English Channel will again become a customs border, as it used to be. The associated bureaucracy will be unpleasant for the European Union but all the more so for the

British. We are also facing very difficult negotiations concerning the free movement of workers and Britain's future relationship with the European single market.

Yet these economic aspects are not the most important consideration. More significant in the long term is the fact that the balance of power within the EU is shifting. Germany will find itself in even more of a leading role: one which it has not asked for and which it cannot perform alone. Cooperation between Germany and France will as a result be even more important, but this should not, however, lead to them forming a kind of executive board — small and medium-sized countries must also be involved. The new voting system in the Council provides a good basis for this, as it takes into account large and small countries in an appropriate way.

We must use the situation caused by the separation from England to reflect once again on what form this future Europe of 27 should take. More than ever before, we must focus on areas in which joint action brings clear advantages: the single market, the single currency and the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

The Europe of 27 therefore needs to become a Europe of common security. The proposals of Michel Barnier and Federica Mogherini for the next steps in this direction are on the table. It should also be noted that Ursula von der Leyen has called for the Economic and Monetary Union to be further developed into a defence union.

What we need now is a concrete project that can also serve as a symbol. We should never underestimate the power of symbols. When the single market became reality, it was symbolised by the barriers at the borders, marking the open borders within the EU and the common borders around the periphery. The euro coins which everyone carries around are the symbol of the single currency, with a European symbol on one side and symbols of our European nations on the other.

At the moment I can think of no stronger symbol for the European Security and Defence Policy than Eurocorps. For this reason, I suggested placing Eurocorps at the centre of the European Security and Defence Policy. It should be our specific aim in the short term to make this an effective instrument of European defence.

A matter of concern is the fact that in recent years the importance of the European institutions has become weaker. A strong Europe, however, can only exist if it is underpinned by strong institutions.

Karl von Wogau

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A moment during the visit to the Hybrid Centre of Excellence

COOPERATION WITH THE EUI

THE MFF AND EU POLICIES 2021-2027

The EU towards 2030

Once again, the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS), at the European University Institute in Florence has confirmed its capacity to be well connected with the political reality and at the same time offering high level reflections on various concrete themes, all on top of the political agenda of the European Institutions.

Participants invited by the seminar's scientific coordinators - the Director of RSCAS Brigid Laffan and the Professor Alfredo De Feo - were a perfect match between academics and institutional professionals, including a former Finance Minister, together with representatives of the European Central Bank and the European Investment Bank. The RSCAS, with particular attention to the FMA, invited five former members to contribute to the reflections: Monica Baldi, Reimer Böge, Elmar Brok, Ivailo Kalfin and Alain Lamassoure.

It is important to note that this workshop was scheduled at the right time, in this crucial period of



A moment of the seminar ©EUI

the future of the European project; after the new Commission and the new Parliament have taken office; considering that the definition of financial and political priorities after 2020 will be one of the major challenges of the EU institutions and Member State Governments.

The Multiannual Financial Framework is not a financial document but is the box in which all the EU Policies, with financial impact, are grouped. The outgoing Commission left its legacy of legislative proposals for the period after 2021. During the discussions, ideas were presented about how the legislative proposals could have been more ambitious while others defended the Commission's continuity approach.

The decisions will be taken by the Council and the new European Parliament, with the Von der Leyen Commission acting as honest mediator, but at the same time promoting its political agenda. The last stage of the MFF negotiations and legislative proposals represents a unique opportunity for the new Commission to mark its own imprint in the next five years of its mandate. During the two days of intense debates, suggestions were proposed

to strengthen the integration process without necessarily increasing the burden on public finances by strengthening financial instruments and increasing private / public partnerships. Before the final round table - where the lessons learned and expectations were detected - several topics were discussed such as: Ambition or Continuity; Migration, Security Defence and Neighbourhood Policy; Cohesion, Values and Natural Resources; Resources and Economic and Monetary Union; Innovation and Investments. The organizers announced the publication of an edited volume that summarizes the seminar debates. I believe that this far-sighted initiative can help reflect on the challenges we will have to face; certainly, it is a source of inspiration for all those interested in renewing EU policies as part of the relaunch of the European project.

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Alain Lamassoure during his intervention ©EUI

EP TO CAMPUS PROGRAMME

DEBATES IN CLUJ

Babes-Bolyai University (UBB Cluj-Napoca) is one of the biggest universities in Romania. Around 41000 students study there, making Cluj a flourishing, youthful city. This university, commonly known by its abbreviation 'UBB', works closely with the European Parliament and the Former Members Association (FMA). I was invited to give three lectures on 16, 17 and 18 April 2019 as part of our joint programme.

As I was invited to Cluj just before the European elections, I obviously had to concentrate on the opportunities and risks associated with those elections.

I was initially a little surprised to be asked to give three long lectures on three different topics, but the presence of so many young students (40-60 on the different occasions) and the warm welcome of the assistant professors made it a rather easy task. The title of my first lecture was 'On the importance of the European Elections'. I spoke about the importance of the European Parliament as the EU body that represents EU citizens and explained its role in the EU decision-making process. After my lecture, the students asked many questions concerning the danger of populism and the chances of the pro-European



Gyula Hegyi with students of the Babes-Bolyai University

and the Eurosceptic forces. It was very inspiring to discover that all the students were pro-European and to hear them condemn the extreme nationalist tendencies in Romania and all over in Europe. Of course, as a former Hungarian MEP I was also asked about the influence of Viktor Orbán and tried to answer correctly. My next lecture on 'Democracy without liberalism – dealing with populism in the EU' was a direct follow-up to the first one. I tried to point out that we can combat illiberal tendencies, but that it's impossible to do so without a fair and sound social policy. The main source of populism is a widespread fear of poverty and social and economic uncertainty, and the feeling of being neglected by the traditional political parties. It's not enough to condemn populism: we should also fight for a Social Europe.

Some students did, however, defend capitalism and condemn any kind of socialist tendency. We had an enjoyable discussion on the role that Member States and the European Community have to play in balancing economic freedom with social justice. On the third day, I held a workshop on 'Career opportunities in EU studies'. Given the importance of the topic, I made some slides to show the students all the websites that provide information on the various EU-related scholarships, trainee programmes, volunteering opportunities etc. I also spoke about the role of MEP assistants and the FMA's own trainee programme. The students seemed to be really interested in participating in one of those programmes to complement their European Studies degrees.

I also met Professor Mihaela Lutas, the Vice Rector of the UBB, and we agreed that our joint programmes are extremely important. I thanked him for his hospitality and we agreed to continue the partnership between the FMA and the UBB.



A moment of one of the lectures of Gyula Hegyi at the Babes-Bolyai University

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NEW MEMBERS



**María Teresa
GIMÉNEZ
BARBAT**

(Spain,
2015-2019, ALDE)

Maria Teresa Giménez Barbat was member of the European Parliament from 2015 until 2019. Through her time in the European Parliament, she served as Vice-Chair in the Delegation for relations with the Maghreb countries and the Arab Maghreb Union, and as a member of the Committee on Culture and Education and the Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean.



**Marie-Christine
VERGIAT**

(France,
2009-2019, GUE/
NGL)

Marie-Christine Vergiat was member of the European Parliament from 2009 until 2019. Through her time in the European Parliament, she served as a member of the Committee on Culture and Education, the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, the Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Delegation for relations with the Pan-African Parliament.



**Iveta
GRIGULE-PETERSE**

(Latvia,
2014, EFDD,
2015-2019, ALDE)

Iveta Grigule-Peterse was member of the European Parliament from 2014 until 2019. Through her time in the European Parliament, she served as a chair in the Delegation to the EU-Kazakhstan, EU-Kyrgyzstan, EU-Uzbekistan and EU-Tajikistan Parliamentary Cooperation Committees and for relations with Turkmenistan and Mongolia, and as a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Subcommittee on Security and Defence, the Delegation for relations with Belarus, the Delegation for relations with Israel, the Delegation for relations with the Arab Peninsula, the Delegation for relations with the United States, the Delegation to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly and the Conference of Delegation Chairs.



**Liliana
RODRIGUES**

(Portugal,
2014-2019, S&D)

Liliana Rodrigues was member of the European Parliament from 2014 until 2019. Through her time in the European Parliament, she served as a member of the Committee on Regional Development (REGI), the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM), the Delegation for relations with the Mashreq countries and the Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean.



LATEST NEWS

ACTIVITIES



March 2020

VISIT TO CROATIA

Details will be communicated at a later stage.

5 May 2020

EPRS INFORMATION SEMINAR

From 3.30 pm to 5.15 p.m.
European Parliament,
Brussels.

5 May 2020

ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE

Current and former MEPs will commemorate their colleagues who passed away in 2019-2020.

From 5.45 p.m. to 6.15 p.m. European Parliament, Yehudi Menuhin Space. Brussels.

5 May 2020

FMA COCKTAIL AND DINNER DEBATE

From 6.30 p.m. in Members' Restaurant, European Parliament, Brussels.

6 May 2020

FMA GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND ANNUAL LUNCH

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

NEW PUBLICATION

'Green Parties, Green Future. From Local Groups to the International Stage' by Per Gahrton, published by Pluto Press, 256 pages, £21.99. Available through Amazon.



CONGRATULATIONS

During the plenary session in November 2019, the European Parliament voted on Ursula von der Leyen's nomination for Commission President and the new Commissioners.

MEPs approved the new College of Commissioners with 461 votes in favour, 157 against and 89 abstentions.



SPONSORS

The FMA would like to thank for its generous contribution CANDRIAM and KBC



For sponsoring the "EP to Campus" Programme.

IN MEMORIAM JACQUES CHIRAC

† 26 SEPTEMBRE 2019

Like the various Presidents of France who preceded him, Jacques Chirac was deeply committed to Europe. His election to the European Parliament was the source of his profound respect for European democracy. I remember a visit to the European Parliament just after his election in 1995, when the resumption of nuclear testing had prompted a turbulent sitting. As we were flying home, he commented: 'Which other continent can match this one for democracy?'

The central element in his commitment to Europe was probably his belief in independence. He wanted Europe to be the lever that was needed in order to achieve our ideals – and indeed, that lever is still needed – to enable us survive in a world that is once again dominated by great powers. He did not want Europe to be aligned. He displayed his determination in response to the President of the United States

over the war in Iraq. He was a leader who worked for peace. He was committed to a relationship of trust not only with Russia but also with China. His passion for ancient civilisations caused him to develop a strong interest in Asia. Jacques Chirac always showed respect for each of the European nations, even though he attached special importance to the relationship between France and Germany and to his friendship with Gerard Schroeder.

He was pained by the steady decline in the French's ambitions for Europe. At a time of international tension, he

welcomed the renewed interest in the European ideal that had arisen in the recent past.

Jacques Chirac saw the future of Europe as being focused on the combined land mass of Europe and Africa. There too, he viewed mutual respect as the source of our common future.

I served as a minister under him for five years, including three years as Prime Minister. I got to like him: he was a generous man, attentive to other people and deeply concerned about the future of humanity and our common home, the planet. I felt that justice was done when, in the last weekend of September, I saw the people of France pay tribute to their former President with affection. I found that absolutely right and fitting.

“The construction of Europe is an art. It is the art of the possible.”

Jacques Chirac



Jean-Pierre Raffarin
France
ELDR (1989-1994)
EPP (1994-1995)
amperrier@wanadoo.fr

† 29 August 2019

María Dolores RENAU I MANÉN
PES, Spain (1986-1987)

She served as a Spanish member of the European Parliament.

At the national level, Ms Renai i Manen represented the 'Partido Socialista Obrero Español'.



† 31 August 2019

Mr Ivica TOLIĆ
EPP, Croatia (2019)

He served as a Croatian member of the European Parliament.

At the national level, Mr Tolic represented the 'Hrvatska demokratska zajednica'.



† 31 August 2019

Zbigniew ZALESKI
EPP, Poland (2004-2014)

He served as a Polish member of the European Parliament.

At the national level Mr Zaleski represented the 'Platforma Obywatelska'.



† 1 September 2019

Edouard des PLACES
ENL, France (1994-1999)

He served as a French member of the European Parliament.

At the national level, Mr des Places represented the 'Rassemblement pour la République'.



† 9 September 2019

Lissy GRÖNER
S&D, Germany (1989-2009)

She served as a German member of the European Parliament.

At the national level, Ms Gröner represented the 'Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands'.



† 5 October 2019

Francisco OLIVA GARCIA
S&D, Spain (1986-1990)

He served as a Spanish member of the European Parliament.

At the national level, Mr Oliva Garcia represented the 'Partido Socialista Obrero Español'.



† 16 October 2019

Luigi CALIGARIS
Italy, FE(1994-1995), GUE/NGL (1995-1997), NA (1997), ELDR (1997-1999)

He served as an Italian member of the European Parliament.

At the national level, Mr Caligaris represented the 'Forza Italia'.



† 23 October 2019

Jannis SAKELLARIOU
S&D, Germany (1984-2004)

He served as a German member of the European Parliament.

At the national level, Mr Sakellariou represented the 'Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands'.



† 27 October 2019

Eugenio MELANDRI
Greens, Italy (1989-1994)

He served as an Italian member of the European Parliament.

At the national level, Mr Melandri represented the 'Democrazia proletaria'.



† 6 November 2019

Bernardo BAYONA AZNAR
S&D, Spain (1986-1987)

He served as a Spanish member of the European Parliament.

At the national level, Mr Bayona Aznar represented the 'Partido Socialista Obrero Español'.

