

STATE OF  
EUROPE

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EVENT REPORT

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2023

State of Europe  
The festival of politics and ideas

# 10 policy choices for a Renewed Social Contract for Europe



Co-hosted by



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# Friends of Europe



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Friends of Europe is an independent think tank with a difference. ‘Connect – Debate – Change’ is central to the way we work. We have a unique toolbox at our disposal to connect stakeholders, foster debate and generate the change needed to create a more inclusive, sustainable and forward-looking world.

## CONNECT

Through our whole-of-society, whole-of-economy approach, we engage and connect critical thinkers, unusual voices and those who are ready to challenge the status quo. We believe that pioneering ideas and effective policies stem from breaking down of silos between policymakers, business leaders, civil society representatives and individual citizens.

We bring together stakeholders from across Europe and beyond and offer Europe’s citizens an opportunity to take an active, transformational role in shaping their environment. We do not represent any national, religious or political point of view and ensure that all viewpoints are represented in our activities.

## DEBATE

We foster open, insightful and provocative debates to stimulate fresh ideas and creative thinking. Our portfolio of activities means that Friends of Europe contributes ideas and leads the debate on a wide range of EU-related issues, including:

Climate, Energy & Sustainability | Peace, Security & Defence | Global Europe | Health | Digital & Data Governance | Democracy

Our European Young Leaders (EYL40) programme connects Europe’s most promising talents, and our Board of Trustees brings together the knowledge and experience of European leaders, including presidents, prime ministers, European commissioners and presidents of the European Parliament.

Our Balkan Journey, Global Europe programme and the Africa-Europe Foundation build bridges to foster global partnerships. With our High-Level of Personalities and Strategy Groups, we help craft a new narrative for a modernised and prospect-oriented Africa-Europe relationship.

Our citizen engagement unit, Debating Europe, contributes to reimagining a democracy fit for the 21st century by connecting citizens and policymakers, and nurturing a healthy public space to enable democratic change to happen.

## CHANGE

We believe that real change is achieved through inclusive policies and actions. Through our activities – from debates, summits and working groups, to publications and podcasts – we craft bold and innovative recommendations to revitalise the European Project and shape a renewed 21st-century social contract that is based on peace, prosperity, inclusion and sustainability.

# A Renewed Social Contract

As Friends of Europe embarks on a journey for a Renewed Social Contract for Europe, our 20th annual State of Europe high-level roundtable – the festival of politics and ideas – brought together over 250+ influential figures including entrepreneurs, politicians, legislators, corporates, NGO leaders and CEOs from more

than 40+ countries to discuss 10 policy choices for a Renewed Social Contract for Europe six months ahead of the European elections. These policy choices are built upon the voices and concerns of European citizens consulted by way of focus groups and debates and will be published in early 2024.

## A perfect day to be brave

Bringing faith, dignity and joy into politics for a new social contract



Ece Temelkuran

## A perfect day to be brave

Friends of Europe thanks award-winning novelist and political commentator Ece Temelkuran for agreeing to our request to provide a powerful and emotional context for the need for a Renewed Social Contract ahead of State of Europe. A primal scream and elegy to our times, this piece of work speaks to the current state of our unpredictable, uncertain and unstable world.

***“A new social contract in Europe cannot only aspire to survive. It must set the rules to survive beautifully.”***

# Executive summary

The 2023 State of Europe high-level roundtable, held on 9 November 2023, sent clear messages on the urgent need to renew Europe's social contract in a way that redefines the roles, relationships and responsibilities of governments and institutions, businesses, civil society and citizens to build a solid democratic base from which Europe can confront the array of threats and challenges it faces today.

**Debate among over 250 policymakers and opinion-formers focused on the '10 policy choices for a Renewed Social Contract for Europe' that Friends of Europe is drafting based on year-long multisectoral and multi-stakeholder consultations across the continent.**

The aim is to disseminate those ideas ahead of next year's European Parliament elections and the appointment of a new European Commission, providing guidelines for the new mandate and laying the foundations of that Renewed Social Contract by 2030.

Those policy choices cover areas ranging from carbon reduction to strengthening democracy; fighting inequality; fostering sustainable and inclusive growth; using fiscal and monetary policy to advance social good; building security resilience; and protecting European values at home and abroad.

Given the turbulent domestic and geopolitical environment, **discussant after discussant stressed the importance of changes that strengthen the continent's democratic and social base to overcome divisions and**

**construct a solid foundation for Europe to confront contemporary challenges**, including climate change and threats to biodiversity, political populism, wars and other security threats, the cost-of-living crisis, healthcare emergencies, migration, ageing populations and accelerated technological change.

Externally too, Europe must have the tools to cope with manifold dangers. Russia's war on Ukraine represents an unprecedented threat to European security and has developed as the frontline in a global conflict between democracy and authoritarianism. The latest deadly flare-up of violence in the Middle East risks enflaming regional instability and dividing Europe.

As political change threatens established alliances, authoritarian powers expand their worldwide influence and shifting supply chains upend global trade patterns, Europeans are being forced to rethink their military, diplomatic and external economic priorities.

**All that underscores the need for a renewed and reinforced social contract at home that can underpin democratic values and political stability, marry economic strength with social equality and give new vigour to the European project at a time when unity is needed more than ever.**

# A social contract fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

State of Europe heard how the current social contract, forged after the Second World War, requires reform to make it fit for purpose in an age struggling with the challenges of climate change, conflict, migration, inequality, accelerated technological advances and an ageing population.



Karien van Gennip

***“Our social contract, that lies at the base of our prosperity, is at risk”***

**Karien van Gennip**, Dutch Minister for Social Affairs and Employment

“The new social contract is essential to the discussion we are having [...] in Europe,” **Karien van Gennip**, Dutch Minister for Social Affairs and Employment, told the roundtable. “We need a strong and a united Europe [...] but we also need a strong and cohesive society to be able to deal with all those challenges.”

Van Gennip shared her four priorities for the new EU mandate aimed at generating a healthy European workforce and empowering citizens: fair labour mobility; safe, healthy and fair workplaces for all with modernised labour laws; lifelong learning; and equitable opportunities.

Without changes that make democracy relevant and inclusive, citizens who feel marginalised by current economic, social and political structures will be tempted by the siren songs of populist extremism, discussants cautioned.

“Our social contract, that lies at the base of our prosperity, is at risk,” van Gennip added. “We see structural inequalities. We see fault lines in our societies [...] people feel left behind. People feel that their interests are not taken into account.”

The roundtable heard several practical measures that can be taken to overcome the sense of alienation felt by voters, including reforms of outdated labour legislation to take account of technological and market changes; promotion of equal opportunity legislation and diversity; and improved connectivity in rural areas to promote equality of opportunity with those in big cities.

An updated social contract must address



those concerns and, at the same time, improve government accountability to ensure graft and malpractice do not further undermine voter trust in democracy.

“Is the organism of government rotten? Is it beyond repair? Have we any possibility of being able to bring it back to a place where public service, integrity, authenticity matters?” asked **Dharmendra Kanani**, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Spokesperson of Friends of Europe.

**“It is evident that we need a more competitive economy, but, from our point of view, it is vital that [the] economy will be fair”**

**Mariá Lledó Laredo**, Spanish Secretary General for the European Union

“We need to shift our system from a 1950s model of thinking and working to a 2050 model. How do we make that leap? That’s the exam question and the leadership challenge for all of us.”

Several discussants at the roundtable underscored how a European economy that is able to compete on the world stage must be balanced with the maintenance of the European social model that is working to fight poverty and inequality.

“It is evident that we need a more competitive economy, but from our point of view it is vital that [the] economy will be fair,” said **Mariá Lledó Laredo**, Spanish Secretary General for the European Union. She stressed the commitment of the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU to develop more collaborative European solutions to such issues and ensure nobody gets left behind during the race to improve economic competitiveness.

The private sector is increasingly aware that its role in a healthy democratic society has to go beyond generating profits and shareholder benefits.

**Marco Piccitto**, Director at McKinsey Global Institute (MGI), spoke on the importance of

businesses empowering citizens through fair wages and contributions to societal well-being with the promotion of education, training, healthcare, welfare and housing.

He stressed, however, that businesses need to work in an environment that enables them to flourish. “How can we help people to become empowered? One way is growth. We spoke before about redistribution, which I think is very important, but if we don’t generate value, we cannot distribute,” Piccitto told those in attendance.



**“How can we help people to become empowered? One way is growth”**

**Marco Piccitto**, Director at McKinsey Global Institute (MGI)

Agreement on the positive role of industry came from **Agnieszka Lukaszczyk**, Vice President of Government Affairs for Europe, Middle East and Africa at Planet, a leading provider of satellite imagery and insights. “Industry can be positive; you can make money and look yourself in the

mirror every day,” she said. “You don’t have to choose whether to be profitable or be a good citizen.”

The prerequisite for a balanced approach from business was highlighted by **Alessandra Cardaci** from Debating Europe, Friends of Europe’s citizen engagement unit. “The biggest economic challenge today is combining profit-making with moral duty,” she said. Debating Europe engages with the public on issues of democratic concern, most recently through its 2024 Voices initiative. The initiative is aimed at gathering pressing issues, concerns and recommendations of citizens related to the economy, security, democracy and the green

transition through focus groups. The outcomes of these focus groups will be published ahead of the European elections, along with Friends of Europe’s ‘10 Policy Choices for a Renewed Social Contract’.

Other discussants in the debate called for a shift in work-life balance, the development of a more social approach to the EU’s Green Deal and a more outward-looking emphasis for EU social and environmental policy that seeks greater collaboration with global players in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Migrants cannot be forgotten in the Renewed Social Contract, insisted **Isabelle Durant**, former deputy secretary-general at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), former Belgian deputy prime minister and Trustee of Friends of Europe.

“Migration is a part of the social contract, Migration means dignity, access to work,” she said. “What is happening everywhere in our cities in Europe today is something that has to be changed.”

On the question of strengthening the democratic toolbox under the social contract, there was broad support for the idea of citizens’ assemblies and greater direct democracy, while highlighting the need to balance this with the existing role and relevance of elected representatives.

“The solution is more politics,” argued **Oana-Silvia Țoiu**, Chairwoman of the Romanian Commission on Education, Science, Youth and Sport and European Young Leader (EYL40). “Politics is not perfect, but I think it is also dangerous to say politicians may be replaced by citizens.”



Oana-Silvia Țoiu

***“Politics is not perfect, but [...] it is also dangerous to say politicians may be replaced by citizens”***

**Oana-Silvia Țoiu**, Chairwoman of the Romanian Commission on Education, Science, Youth and Sport, EYL40

Discussants also stressed the importance of Europe standing by its values in a difficult geopolitical context, both to maintain credibility and influence in the world and to underpin democracy at home. Without a democracy that responds to voters’ concerns, Europe risks a slide towards fascism, warned **Ece Temelkuran**, award-winning Turkish novelist and political commentator.

“The central problem of Europe and global politics today is loss of faith in humanity and loss of faith in politics itself,” she said. “Either we are going to have a better democracy or we are living in a barbarian age.”

Those concerns were echoed by **Conny Reuter**, Global Coordinator at the Progressive Alliance, who expressed alarm over the rise of far-right parties in countries from Spain to Finland. “We do not speak enough about the real risk of a new of fascism in Europe,” he warned. “How can we organise citizens and understand that we have to defend democracy? We do not speak enough about how to defend democracy.”

**“The central problem of Europe and global politics today is loss of faith in humanity, and loss of faith in politics itself”**

**Ece Temelkuran**, award-winning Turkish novelist and political commentator



Cartoon by Tonu



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1. **Jana Havlíková**, Czech Deputy Minister of Science, Research and Innovation
2. **Sari Arho Havrén**, futurist, China analyst, lead of the Finnish government's strategic and foresight work in Asia Pacific, and Associate Fellow at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)
3. **Cristina Vanberghen**, Senior expert at the European Commission and Professor at the European University Institute (EUI)
4. **Isabelle Durant**, Former deputy secretary-general of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), former Belgian deputy prime minister and Trustee of Friends of Europe; **Elsa Gayle Zekeng**, 'Sciencepreneur' and Founder of SökerData Ltd.
5. **Jamie Shea**, Senior Fellow for Peace, Security and Defence at Friends of Europe and former deputy assistant secretary general for emerging security challenges at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)



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# Values challenged

Temelkuran also warned that the EU faced a “moral crisis” over the war in Gaza. “Strange times we are going through when even the voices saying children should not be killed are marginalised,” she remarked.



Jasminko Halilović

***“The inability of the EU to speak with one voice will have long-term consequences for the EU’s standing”***

**Jasminko Halilović**, Founder & CEO of the War Childhood Museum, EYL40

Several introductory discussants warned that the EU risked discrediting itself by failing to speak out more forthrightly against what they called Israeli violations of international humanitarian law. Denouncing ‘double standards’, **Ana Gomes**, former member of the European Parliament and Trustee of Friends of Europe, said the EU appeared hypocritical when it stood up for Ukraine’s rights while “at the same time allowing Israel to make a mockery of international law.”

A civil society activist warned that Europe is losing the support of low- and middle-income countries in Africa and other parts of the world by failing to be more critical of Israel.

**Jasminko Halilović**, Founder & CEO of the War Childhood Museum in Sarajevo and EYL40, brought and presented two pieces from the museum, one from Ukraine and one from Gaza. Halilovic lamented the EU’s failure to demand an immediate ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war to save the lives of children in Gaza. “The inability of the EU to speak with one voice will have long-term consequences for the EU’s standing,” he said. “Every time the EU fails to deliver, part of this idea dies.”

Discussants at the roundtable contrasted the unity Europe had mustered in response to Russia’s war on Ukraine with divisions within the EU over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the 7 October Hamas-led attack on Israel. They noted that, despite its position as a major aid donor to the Palestinians, Europe has little diplomatic clout in the region.

“On Ukraine, there was a sense that the EU was moving forward, now on the Middle East it’s gone back to the old EU: disunited, voting in different ways in the United Nations, different messages, pulling back on some of the statements of its own officials,” noted Jamie Shea, Senior Fellow for Peace, Security and Defence at Friends of Europe and former deputy assistant secretary general for emerging security challenges at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

**Federica Mogherini**, Rector of the College of Europe, former high representative of the European Union for foreign affairs and security, and Trustee of Friends of Europe, said the EU could speak with multiple voices provided they delivered a coordinated and consistent message. She argued that the EU’s central challenge was to counter the systematic dismantling of the rules-based multilateral system.



Federica Mogherini

To be able to carry weight in the world on issues of justice and the rule of law, the EU first had to put its house in order in Europe and take effective action on Russian war crimes including the greatest of all – aggression, said **Didier Reynders**, European Commissioner for Justice.

He pointed to the Commission’s growing actions to call out and sanction backsliding on judicial independence and the rule of law among the 27 EU member states but said Europe needed to go further to uphold its values effectively.

Amongst the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and fears of the conflict spreading to other parts of the region, discussants expressed hope that some good could come out of the conflict, perhaps through the formation of an Israeli government more willing to seek a negotiated settlement and the emergence of an alternative Palestinian leadership to replace Hamas in Gaza. To that end, the EU was encouraged to engage more with civil society on both sides.

The State of Europe event began with a series of roundtable discussions on international issues, including one on Europe and the Middle East that examined possible roles for the EU in the Israel-Hamas war, through diplomacy and humanitarian support, as well as involvement in an eventual post-conflict settlement. Other roundtables discussed Europe’s relations with Africa, China, India and North America.

The latter group focused on how to preserve the transatlantic relationship if ‘trying friend’ Donald Trump or another hardline Republican is elected as the US president in 2024. Discussants warned that Trump would likely try to make good on his threats to withdraw from NATO and to impose across-the-board tariffs on imports from Europe.

Discussants at State of Europe talked about strengthening the resilience of the relationship by reaching out to next-generation leaders in state legislatures, cities and governors’ offices in North America.

However, discussants with experience in diplomacy, academia and journalism questioned whether that would offer sufficient security. “We are too attached to the structures of the past,” cautioned **Xavier Damman**, Founder & CEO of OpenCollective, Co-Founder of Storify and EYL40. “How can we decentralise power so that when things collapse it’s not all at once?”



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1. **Dharmendra Kanani**, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Spokesperson of Friends of Europe
2. **Giedrius Surplys**, Vice-Chair of the Lithuanian National Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs; **Birgit van Hout**, Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Liaison Office in Brussels
3. **Marius Matijošaitis**, Deputy Chair of the Lithuanian National Parliament Committee on European Affairs; **Jamie Kelsey-Fry**, Co-Founder of Global Assembly and initiator of Cultural Wave; **Laura Sullivan**, Executive Director of We Move Europe
4. Discussants voting in favour or against lowering the voting age
5. **Oana-Silvia Țoiu**, Chair of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies Committee on Youth and Sports and European Young Leader (EYL40); **Brian Eno**, Musician, producer, visual artist and activist; **Loubna Bourfa**, Founder & CEO of OKRA.AI and European Young Leader (EYL40); **Jamila Aanzi**, Member of the Dutch Appeal Advisory Committee on Childcare Allowance and European Young Leader (EYL40)
6. **Stelios Kypourpoulos**, Member of the European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL)



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# Reforms for enlargement

Unlike the previous edition of State of Europe in 2022, which was dominated by Russia's invasion, the discussion on Ukraine at this year's event mostly concentrated on the country's prospects of joining the European Union, along with other candidates in eastern Europe and the Western Balkans.

The meeting was held a day after the European Commission recommended the opening of membership talks with Ukraine and Moldova and also said Georgia should become a candidate if it passes reforms.

***“The EU “must see its values and interests as one, both internally and externally”***

**Christian Danielsson**, Swedish Secretary of State for EU Affairs

Friends of Europe's Board of Trustees held an in-depth debate on whether to advocate strongly for further EU enlargement to embrace Ukraine, Moldova and Western Balkan countries as a geopolitical necessity.

Most trustees supported the geopolitical imperative of moving forward with eastward enlargement at a time when Ukraine is fighting for its survival as an independent, democratic state and other countries are threatened by Russian imperialism. One said, “We have to make the EU Trump-proof, China-proof and Russia-proof.”

However, several voiced deep concerns about the ability of an enlarged EU to continue to function under its current rulebook and insisted that institutional reform must either precede or run in lockstep with the accession process. Discussants also highlighted the need to simultaneously support a domestic agenda that supports the citizens in their current struggles, from the cost-of-living, climate and healthcare crises, to political populism, security threats and demographic change. Another trustee and former commissioner said that EU rules were no longer being properly upheld in the single market or on the rule of law, nor infringements sanctioned, arguing that the real choice was whether we wanted an EU that played by the rules or one that was politically directed.



**María Lledó Laredo**, Spanish Secretary General for the European Union



Supporters of a strong enlargement drive, especially from countries that endured Soviet-imposed Communist rule, argued for Friends of Europe to highlight the issues at stake and rally ‘hearts and minds’ to the cause.

That issue was also taken up by discussants in other sessions. Spain, which currently holds the EU’s rotating presidency, supports enlargement, said Lledó from the country’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, the expansion will require EU reform. “You cannot have the same rules with 30+ countries,” she said. “It’s [...] impossible, so we have to discuss that.”

Trustees suggested reforms would have to include radically reducing the scope for national vetoes of EU policies. Some also warned that the EU was raising unrealistic expectations on the timeline for enlargement and paving the way for disillusion among the candidate countries, notably when European Council President Charles Michel mentioned 2030 as a timeline to be ready for new members.

They also insisted that in its eagerness to support Ukraine, the EU should not neglect the Western Balkans, where the risk of armed conflict had risen after 20 years of waiting for the EU to make good on the region’s European perspective.



**Didier Reynders**, European Commissioner for Justice

Swedish Secretary of State for EU Affairs **Christian Danielsson** also highlighted the imperative of the EU strengthening its own

standards and the rule-of-law enforcement of member countries as the Union moves towards admitting new members. The EU “must see its values and interests as one, both internally and externally,” he said.

In its race to embrace Ukraine, the EU should not forget Belarus, said **Hanna Liubakova**, Belarusian Journalist in exile, democracy activist and Non-Resident Fellow at the Atlantic Council, who joined Danielsson on the panel on ‘a Europe of security and values for the 21st century’.



**Hanna Liubakova**

She explained how the pro-Russian regime of dictator Alexandr Lukashenko uses torture, imprisonment and intimidation to suppress free media in Belarus. “We cannot allow Putin to take over Belarus as a consolation prize for losing Ukraine,” she insisted.

Friends of Europe should examine how to reform the EU to make the geopolitical necessity of enlargement feasible without endangering the functioning and survival of the Union. That reform should run in parallel with accession negotiations and ensure candidates effectively implement the rule of law and avoid state capture. “There can be no enlargement without a package that we can sell to the public,” a discussant added.



1. **Alessandra Cardaci**, Lead Partnership Manager at Debating Europe
2. **Frank Vandenbroucke**, Belgian Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Public Health and Social Affairs, and Trustee of Friends of Europe; **Nicolas Schmit**, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights
3. Parallel session in the Conservatory
4. **Zuzana Fretas-Lopesova**, Czech Deputy Minister for Labour and Social Affairs; **Marek Havrda**, Czech Deputy Minister for European Affairs
5. **Thomas Harwell**, Head of Diversity Recruiting, EMEA at Google Campus London; **Sabin Sărmaş**, Chairman of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies Committee for Information and Communications Technology (IT&C) and former president of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Plenipotentiary Conference; **Chen Qiu fan**, Science fiction writer, columnist, scriptwriter and author of "AI 2041: Ten visions for our future"; **Cristina Vanberghen**, Senior expert at the European Commission and Professor at the European University Institute (EUI)

# Climate crisis action

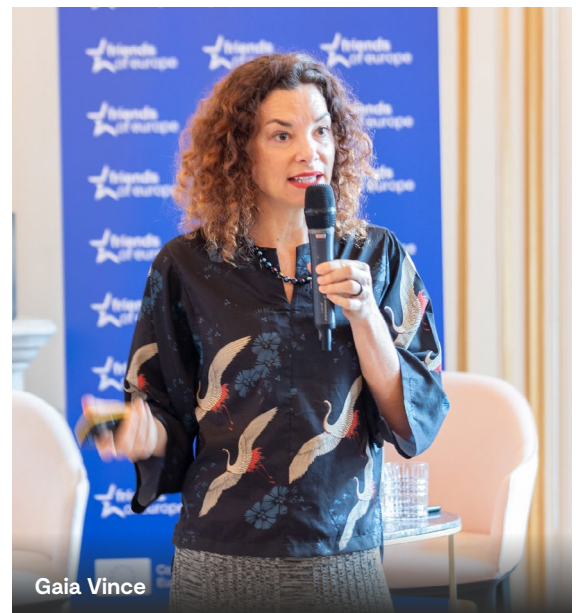
As State of Europe 2023 prepared to debate Friends of Europe's Renewed Social Contract policy recommendations for promoting sustainable growth and accelerated decarbonisation, they heard a stark warning from **Gaia Vince**, award-winning science writer, journalist, broadcaster and author of "Nomad Century".

"We are moving into a place where parts of the world are becoming increasingly unliveable [...] this is a planetary problem," she cautioned. "Nowhere on Earth can now escape the negative impact of climate change."

With a high possibility that the Earth is set to register temperatures 3°C to 4°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century, governments everywhere should invest heavily in adaptation to the new reality, including adapting migration policies to cope with the vast population movements that climate change will generate.

"We need to be honest and we need to be pragmatic: this is a post-climate change world," Vince said. "We are now living with that, but mentally, we haven't reflected that in our policies."

**Bella Lack**, environmental activist and author of "The Children of the Anthropocene", added her voice to the call for urgent action. She recalled the experiences of people she met on research trips including the last, elderly inhabitant of one of the Solomon Islands, which is sinking under the rising Pacific Ocean.



***"Nowhere on Earth can now escape the negative impact of climate change"***

**Gaia Vince**, award-winning science writer, journalist, broadcaster and author of "Nomad Century"

"Despite all that, I am very hopeful right now, and it's not a blind kind of optimism because we are going to have to work hard, very, very hard," Lack said. "I see all of us a bit like a bunch of desperate hunter-gatherers, but instead of hunting for berries, we are hunting for fragments of a different future."

A session on ‘maintaining climate ambition and fostering green industry’ looked at how to take forward the green transition while sustaining public support for change and securing supplies of the necessary raw materials without making Europe dependent on external supplies controlled by geopolitical rivals.



Bella Lack

***“Despite all that, I am very hopeful right now, and it’s not a blind kind of optimism”***

**Bella Lack**, environmental activist and author of *“The Children of the Anthropocene”*

“We have to really diversify our partnerships,” said **Franziska Brantner**, German Parliamentary State Secretary for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, Trustee of Friends of Europe and EYL40. “It is important never to become reliant on one or a few partners.”

**Stientje van Veldhoven**, Global Vice President and Regional Director for Europe at the World Resource Institute, said Europe could reduce its dependence on imported raw materials by developing the circular economy and recycling key elements needed for renewable energies, as well as by improving energy efficiency and cutting energy demand.

“There is a lack of critical minerals that we will need for our transport and energy transition,” she explained. “We live on a finite planet. There is no infinite supply of those resources.”

Van Veldhoven outlined a range of measures that can be taken in response. “We need much more efficient mechanisms and infrastructure like collection systems,” she said. “We also need incentives so that it becomes uneconomical not to recycle. We also need a huge change in how we actually design things.”

The backlash against climate measures that citizens perceive as unfair or costly – from the French *gilets-jaunes* revolt against fuel-price hikes, to German voters’ anger over the planned introduction of heat pumps or recent Portuguese protests over a proposal to raise taxes on older vehicles – shows that authorities must find ways to keep voters on board and address inequality in policymaking to ensure a just transition to a more sustainable society.



Stientje van Veldhoven

***“There is a lack of critical minerals that we will need for our transport and energy transition”***

**Stientje van Veldhoven**, Global Vice President and Regional Director for Europe at the World Resource Institute

Taxation should only be used to target those who are better off, while subsidies and support for lifestyle changes will be needed for those who are currently unfairly burdened by rising fuel and food prices.

“The challenge is huge. It’s not just the green transition. It’s also that we have to become more resilient as Europeans and we have to do both by staying democratic,” said Brantner. “I’m not ready to lose our democracy over the transformation.” Brantner added that politicians should develop “a new patriotism for infrastructure” that would help win multi-generational support for long-term environmental projects.



Franziska Brantner & Ricardo Mourinho Félix

***“The challenge is huge. It’s not just the green transition. It’s also that we have to become more resilient as Europeans and we have to do both by staying democratic”***

**Franziska Brantner**, German Parliamentary State Secretary for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, Trustee of Friends of Europe and EYL40

Discussants during the session said market mechanisms and public financing were required to ease financial pain triggered by the green transition, as well as improved communication to sell the message of clean energy to sceptical sections of society. However, putting off difficult decisions will only store up trouble for the future.

“We need to face this challenge and do the transition while preserving democracy,” agreed **Ricardo Mourinho Félix**, Vice-President of the European Investment Bank (EIB). “The only way to preserve democracy is to do this transition together. If we don’t do this transition, if we think we can continue with the same unsustainable way of living, we’ll face democratic challenges.”

During the debate, **Wouter Vermeulen**, Senior Director for Sustainability and Public Policy at the Coca-Cola Company, urged the incoming European Commission and Parliament to give a higher priority to nature-based solutions such as reforestation and restoration of ecosystems which, he said, can mitigate 37% of climate impact. He pointed to a project supported by Coca-Cola in conjunction with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) to promote the conservation and restoration of wetlands in the Danube basin. “We know from experience that it works,” Vermeulen said. “The issue is how to scale this up.” This notion highlights the importance of a collaborative approach between government, the private sector and civil society.

**MAINTAINING CLIMATE AMBITION**



Taru



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1. **Malcolm Byrne**, Irish Senator for the Cultural and Educational Panel and European Young Leader (EYL40)
2. **Joaquin Almunia**, Visiting Professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and Sciences Po Paris, former vice-president of the European Commission and Trustee of Friends of Europe
3. **Mary Fitzgerald**, Non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute and Trustee at Friends of Europe
4. **Franziska Brantner**, German Parliamentary State Secretary for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, Trustee of Friends of Europe and European Young Leader (EYL40); **Ricardo Mourinho Félix**, Vice-President of the European Investment Bank (EIB); **Stientje van Veldhoven**, Global Vice President and Regional Director for Europe at the World Resource Institute



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# Austerity versus democracy

The green transition is just one area where fast-paced economic change is raising voter concerns. Unequal wealth distribution, social exclusion, rising living costs, declining job security, sky-high housing prices, weaker social services, stagnating incomes and the impact of rapid technological advances are all adding to public unease.



Paschal Donohoe and Mario Monti, former Italian Prime Minister

***“I’m in favour of very, very well-funded social insurance systems that redistribute wealth”***

**Paschal Donohoe**, President of the Eurogroup and Irish Minister for Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform

To confront those challenges, State of Europe brainstormed on Renewed Social Contract policy choices looking to create conditions for inclusive and sustainable growth; reduce inequality and improve social mobility; reconcile economic competitiveness with effective social safety nets; engage the private sector for social progress; and harness fiscal policy for society.

Despite the gloomy backdrop, **Paschal Donohoe**, President of the Eurogroup and Irish Minister for Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform, said it was imperative for politicians to make the case for optimism by offering citizens pathways to a brighter future.

“If all we have to offer as democracies and all we have to offer voters is pessimism, we shouldn’t at all be surprised at the votes and decisions they go on to make,” he said. “If all the political centre has to offer our democracies is a sense of perma-crisis for the future ahead, we should not be disappointed about the decisions [voters] make.”

Donohoe highlighted positive economic data, notably the sharp reduction in inflation across the eurozone over the past year and pointed to recent and upcoming European policy decisions designed to boost economic well-being. They include the post-pandemic NextGenerationEU recovery fund, proposed fiscal rules to allow public finances and borrowing to be better mobilised for boosting investment, efforts to harness the investment power of savings, carbon-cutting climate policies and policies to counter the economic impacts of Russia’s war on Ukraine.

“Economy by economy, measures have been brought in to help with that turmoil,” Donohoe said, voicing his support for broader social support measures. “I’m in favour of very, very well-funded social insurance systems that redistribute wealth and I’m in favour of the roll-out of systems that are needed to provide wider pension coverage to that cohort of workers and citizens, at the moment, who neither own a home nor have a pension.”

## ***“How can we continue to put the question of corporate taxation under the rug?”***

**Ana Gomes**, former member of the European Parliament and Trustee of Friends of Europe

On the 85th anniversary of the Kristallnacht attacks on Jews in Nazi Germany, **Ann Pettifor**, author of “The Case for the Green New Deal” and Director at Policy Research in Macroeconomics (PRIME), responded to Donohoe arguing that fiscal policies taken by European governments to curtail debt and deficits were recreating an economic environment similar to that which led to the rise of fascism.

“What I worry about is that we in the West have recreated the conditions for the next Kristallnacht, those that led to the rise of authoritarianism and Nazism [...] we did this by replicating the economic policies of the 1930s,” she said. “We should not be replicating an economy which leads to the rise of fascism. The problem with the European Union is that the ideology of austerity is deeply embedded in the psyche of European politicians.”

As an alternative, she argued for increased taxation of the wealthy, more state spending and a move away from a “fixation” on international competitiveness to focus more on domestic markets. Such moves would overcome problems of overproduction and underconsumption in today’s “unbalanced” economies, the British economist argued.

Pettifor was among a number of discussants who criticised Donohoe over Ireland’s generous

corporate tax regime. Former Portuguese MEP Gomes complained that the lack of a common European approach to tax issues leads to unfair competition and loopholes exploited by unscrupulous operators.



## ***“We should not be replicating an economy which leads to the rise of fascism. The problem with the European Union is that the ideology of austerity is deeply embedded in the psyche of European politicians”***

**Ann Pettifor**, author of “The Case for the Green New Deal” and Director at Policy Research in Macroeconomics (PRIME)

“How can we continue to put the question of corporate taxation under the rug?” Gomes asked. “There’s a real industry of tax evasion and indeed corruption and money laundering



that is being fuelled by our neglect [...] this absolutely needs to be regulated.”

## “The consumer cares about sustainability”

**Rami Sabanegh**, Vice President of Strategy for Europe at The Coca-Cola Company

Donohoe insisted Ireland is taking tough action against tax evasion and defended tax increases on those sectors of the economy that harm the environment. He pointed to the EU’s post-Covid spending package and ongoing efforts to manage the cost-of-living crisis to indicate that Europe had moved on from the tight fiscal policies of the past. “It’s a long way away from austerity,” he insisted.

**Malcolm Byrne**, Irish Senator for the Cultural and Educational Panel and EYL40, supported Donohoe’s optimism on the European economy. He signalled record levels of employment, education and life expectancy. “We have a lot of great positives out there,” Byrne said. “If the European Union wasn’t succeeding at a macro but more importantly at a local level for citizens, do you think countries would be wanting to join us?”

## “It would be a smart idea to listen more to the local level”

**Katrin Stjernfeldt Jammeh**, Mayor of Malmö and Vice President of Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI)

Bringing a corporate voice to the debate, **Rami Sabanegh**, Vice President of Strategy for Europe at The Coca-Cola Company, noted how consumers were driving the switch to sustainable business practices and the circular economy. “The consumer cares about sustainability. It’s at the heart of what they believe in. That was true before Covid; now post-Covid, it’s coming back even more strongly.”

Sabanegh explained how Coca-Cola aims to become carbon-neutral by 2040 and outlined various environmental projects that the

company is engaged in within Europe – from reversing biodiversity loss along the Danube, to building more recycling plants and developing increased use of refill bottles.

Several discussants underlined the important role of regional and local authorities in ensuring a fair transition to sustainable and inclusive growth models. “For all national governments and also for the European Union, it would be a smart idea to listen more to the local level,” said **Katrin Stjernfeldt Jammeh**, Mayor of Malmö, Sweden’s third-largest city, and Vice President of Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), a global network of more than 2,500 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development. She argued for a change in the policymaking process in the next mandate to better include local-level perspectives in European legislation and not only see the local level as responsible for the implementation of policies. Stjernfeldt Jammeh also urged to find financial solutions to make the investments necessary for the green transitions more inclusive of citizens of all socioeconomic backgrounds.



While welcoming the Platform Work Directive that the EU is currently negotiating to expand protection to workers in the gig economy, **James Farrar**, digital rights activist and Founder & Director of Worker Info Exchange in the United Kingdom, highlighted that governance has been slow to wake up to the problem and more steps

are needed to expand labour rights to the sector, generally calling for a recognition of the social model of employment.

The current gig economy not only allows global companies to deny workers their basic labour rights by misclassifying them as independent contractors but also builds pressure on welfare and entrenches economic efficiencies.

***“[Workers] are not paid for their waiting time, even though the courts have recognised that they should be”***

**James Farrar**, digital rights activist and Founder & Director of Worker Info Exchange in the United Kingdom

“Technology should bring good things to life, but here we have an oversupply [...] we have about 50% more people working in the industry than it can sustain. [Workers] are not paid for their waiting time, even though the courts have recognised that they should be. So, this magic of technology is not technology at all. It’s

transaction-layer innovation and it’s a use and abuse of labour.”



“You are locking in underproductivity into the economy by choosing policies that support that kind of economic activity,” Farrar contended. “It isn’t fair, it isn’t reasonable, and it is bad for all of us.”



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1. **Conny Reuter**, Global Coordinator of Progressive Alliance; **Ana Gomes**, Former member of the European Parliament and Trustee of Friends of Europe
2. **Paschal Donohoe**, President of the Eurogroup and Irish Minister for Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform; **Mario Monti**, Italian Senator for life, Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, former Italian prime minister, former European commissioner and Trustee of Friends of Europe
3. **Jana Havlíková**, Czech Deputy Minister of Science, Research and Innovation; **Zuzana Freitas Lopesová**, Czech Deputy Minister for Labour and Social Affairs; **Adem Kumcu**, President of the New European Business Confederation (UNITEE); **Ann Pettifor**, author of "The Case for the Green New Deal" and Director at Policy Research in Macroeconomics (PRIME)
4. **Jamila Aanzi**, Member of the Dutch Appeal Advisory Committee on Childcare Allowance and European Young Leader (EYL40); **Ivan Štefanko**, Founding Chairman of Progresívne Slovensko, Member of the National Council of the Slovak Republic and European Young Leader (EYL40)

# Building healthcare resilience

Using the old adage, “good health is true wealth”, **Mary Fitzgerald**, Non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute and Trustee at Friends of Europe, kicked off a panel debate on ‘building resilience: strengthening the social agenda and health for societal progress’.

Fitzgerald noted that the Covid-19 pandemic underscored the interconnection between public health and resilient societies, and highlighted the significance of healthcare for social cohesion, justice and a robust economy.

***“We know from the Covid experience that to address such a large-scale crisis we need resilience, the welfare state, resilient health systems and action at a regional level”***

**Frank Vandenbroucke**, Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health and Social Affairs

Nevertheless, healthcare systems are in crisis across the continent and the sector needs reforms that take into account shifting demographics and new technological advances with the potential to radically reshape the healthcare sector.

Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health and Social Affairs **Frank Vandenbroucke** and Trustee of Friends of Europe welcomed changes at the national and European levels

since the pandemic to prepare for health emergencies.

“We are slightly better prepared for some types of crises,” he said. “We know from the Covid experience that to address such a large-scale crisis we need resilience, the welfare state, resilient health systems and action at a regional level, but you need also collective action at a higher level, international collective action.”

He said Europe must go deeper to build healthcare resilience. “You cannot disassociate health security, preparedness for emergency in a narrow sense, from the overall quality of your health and healthcare systems. “



Vandenbroucke outlined plans for the upcoming Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union to build resilience by clustering themes such as healthcare preparedness, security of medical supplies, technology, health workforce issues including mutual recognition of qualifications and possible changes to the EU's budgetary rules.

## ***“We are now confronted in the Union with the general problem of labour shortage”***

**Nicolas Schmit**, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights

“We have to invest sufficiently in healthcare,” he said. “There is a particular difficulty at EU level because the economic and fiscal governance of the EU, as it is being discussed right now, does not give sufficient leeway to this kind of investment. It is simply counted as a cost and not as a productive investment.”

The problem of workforce shortfalls in healthcare was highlighted by **Nicolas Schmit**, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights. “We

are now confronted in the Union with the general problem of labour shortage. This is becoming one of the biggest issues for the future of our economies,” he stated. “The healthcare sector is especially affected.”

In response, authorities have to rethink healthcare policies. “We have gone through a period where cost-effectiveness in the care sector in general and also in the healthcare sector was a priority,” Schmit said. “We have reduced the workforce more or less everywhere and working conditions have worsened, sometimes dramatically.”

He suggested a widening of educational opportunities to expand the qualification of healthcare professionals and increased flexibility in the tasks and responsibilities assigned to doctors and nurses. Care must be taken in bringing in healthcare professionals from outside so as not to undercut wages in Europe or create shortages in labour-exporting countries.

Embracing the latest technological advances could also have a big impact in countering labour shortages and increasing healthcare productivity. “Artificial intelligence helps us a lot



Andrea Rappagliosi, Nicolas Schmit, Frank Vandenbroucke & Loubna Bouarfa

and is much more efficient,” Schmit said. “We have really to go that way – that’s indispensable – not just to save the workforce but also to make our system much more efficient and also to increase the preventive aspects of our health system.”

The policymakers heard an impassioned appeal for European authorities to fully unleash the positive impact of AI in healthcare from **Loubna Bouarfa**, Founder & CEO of OKRA.AI, an AI for healthcare company based in England, and EYL40.

## ***“Sharing health data is fundamentally about patient empowerment and we should explain it like that”***

**Loubna Bouarfa**, Founder & CEO of OKRA.AI and EYL40

Powering rapid advances in detection, diagnosis and early warning of illness, AI is essential to creating “a healthcare system that does not wait for people to get sick,” she said.

“AI is already outperforming humans in these sectors because it has the ability to learn from thousands of data sources,” Bouarfa said. “Why don’t we already have those systems as standard in our hospitals?”

She urged European authorities to unite and create an EU-wide regulatory framework to allow AI to flourish as an essential tool for healthcare professionals. Without action, she warned, private operators – mostly from outside Europe – would impose their own standards with potentially harmful impacts.

Europe should create ‘sandbox’ hospitals, where AI can play a greater role. To ensure AI systems access the necessary critical mass of data, Bouarfa suggested citizens be given the opportunity to donate their data in much the same way as they donate blood or organs.

Vandenbroucke suggested going further by making data-sharing the default option at the

European level, while allowing patients the possibility of opting out. “Sharing health data is fundamentally about patient empowerment and we should explain it like that.”

**Andrea Rappagliosi**, Senior Vice-President of Public Affairs for Europe, Middle East, Africa, Canada and Latin America at Edwards Lifesciences, agreed that the roll-out of new technologies was essential to allow European health services to cope with growing demand, as populations age.



## ***“What the private sector is able to do is to produce innovation, our technological know-how and our contribution to society”***

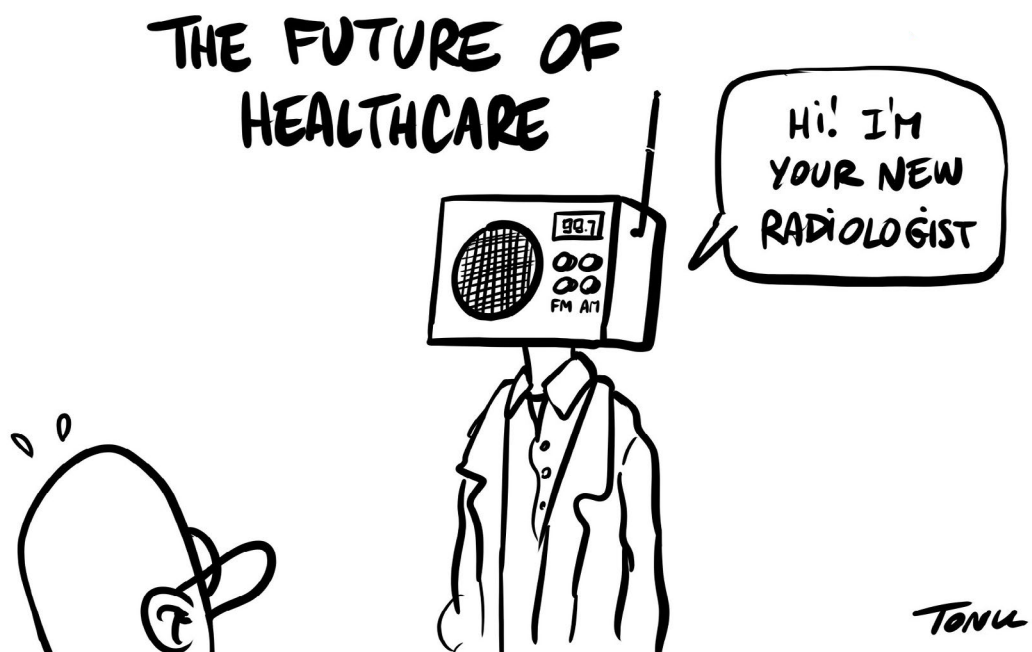
**Andrea Rappagliosi**, Senior Vice-President of Public Affairs for Europe, Middle East, Africa, Canada and Latin America at Edwards Lifesciences

In the Netherlands, he noted, one in seven workers is currently employed in the healthcare sector. To maintain current levels in the years ahead, that will need to increase to one in four. Since that is not sustainable, technology will have to step in to provide “innovation of products and also innovation of processes”, Rappagliosi suggested.

“Today, it is really a necessity to reform the healthcare sector,” Rappagliosi said. “It is there where innovation should impact.” Industry has a key role in bringing about the necessary change, he added. “What the private sector is able to do is to produce innovation, our technological know-how and our contribution to society.”

Suggestions from the floor included greater EU promotion of long-term healthcare investments; increased investment in community care, particularly to manage increasing frailty as populations age; and greater patient involvement in healthcare decisions and the development of healthcare solutions, such as the use of data and AI.

A discussant from Argentina raised the idea of seasonal exchanges of healthcare professionals from the northern to the southern hemisphere and back to plug gaps during peak winter seasons.



# Doing digital right

Access to digital infrastructure, digital literacy and widespread connectivity will enhance our societies' resilience in the face of change and crises. Yet, Europe often lags behind in the development and application of digital solutions. Europe's digital single market remains fragmented and policymakers should strike a balance between freeing up digital innovation and limiting the harmful impacts of digital dependence.

Ahead of a State of Europe debate on "rolling out critical digital infrastructure for a digitalised and resilient Europe", **Chen Qiufan**, science-fiction writer, columnist, scriptwriter and author of "AI 2041: Ten visions for our future", issued a warning on the risks of blinkered adherence to digital echo chambers.

"Here, we are in a world where knowledge is at our fingertips, but the challenge is not the speed of acquisition but the wisdom to navigate the vast sea of data," he said. "We are surrounded by evidence that reinforces our bias, social media that magnifies our egos and information silos that echo our narrowest views back to us. That is what I call algorithmic slavery."

Picking up on the risks of digital-driven polarisation, **Ben Wreschner**, Chief Economist at Vodafone, recognised the value of regulation. "We're seeing the threats of polarisation playing out in our lives day after day," he noted. "We have to have a sensible and grown-up approach to digitalisation where there are rules, there are responsibilities that every actor in this space has to comply with."



***"We are in a world where knowledge is at our fingertips, but the challenge is not the speed of acquisition but the wisdom to navigate the vast sea of data"***

**Chen Qiufan**, science-fiction writer, columnist, scriptwriter and author of "AI 2041: Ten visions for our future"

However, he said European authorities also have created the conditions for big companies



to compete in the global digital marketplace and for small companies to thrive and expand. That includes “unleashing the power” of the European single market. Wreschner stressed the positive potential of digitalisation and its impact in areas, from supporting sustainable growth, to transforming public services or connecting neglected communities.

“Digitalisation will be a force for good if we embrace it in the right way,” he told the session. “We need governments to think transformational – to think big. In the end, digital connectivity is going to transform everything that we do.”

Wreschner said the EU should aim for universal 5G coverage and fibre connectivity for all homes and businesses, emphasising that digital connectivity will transform all sectors of the economy and society. He argued that Europe is falling behind other regions in 5G availability due to overregulation and called for bolder digital targets in Europe alongside a more stable regulatory environment to attract investment and meet citizen and business expectations. The session included a lively debate about whether politicians and officials in the EU and at the national level really understand the fast-moving technologies that they are regulating.

“There is a lack of understanding in policymaking of the speed of digital innovation. We don’t just have a gender gap, we have a generational gap,” cautioned **Denis ‘Jaromil’ Roio**, Founder & CTO of Dyne.org, a Netherlands-based digital community, and EYL40.

**“If we are going to enact legislation in a manner that is going to kill innovation, then we are going to be lagging behind other regions in the world all the time”**

**Sabin Sărmaş**, Chairman of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies Committee for Information and Communications Technology (IT&C)

**Timo Harakka**, Member of the Finnish Parliament Committee for the Future, begged to differ. “I disagree. I’m a politician who does understand technology.”



**“Digitalisation will be a force for good if we embrace it in the right way”**

**Ben Wreschner**, Chief Economist at Vodafone

Policymakers must work hand in hand with industry at an early stage of the legislative process to provide the right regulatory framework, argued **Sabin Sărmaş**, Chairman of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies Committee for Information and Communications Technology (IT&C) and former president of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Plenipotentiary Conference.

“We are asking them to join us at the beginning and to say which are the objectives. Can we use technology for good? Can we use technology to be more resilient?” he said. “This is how we should behave in the future if we really want to achieve the goals of the European Union.”

If it gets the balance right, Europe can place its “core values at the foundation of technology”

and “export democracy through technology”. However, Sărmaş warned: “If we are going to enact legislation in a manner that is going to kill innovation, then we are going to be lagging behind other regions in the world all the time.” Other discussants pondered whether the private sector is taking risks for speed and efficiency, or whether companies are risk-averse and lean on the public sector to be bold and on taxpayers to de-risk them.

“I want to challenge the ideology that the private sector is risk-taking, cheap and fast,” contended British economist **Ann Pettifor**. “The internet was not devised by the private sector [...] the private sector is risk-averse.”

**Simonetta Cheli**, Director of Earth Observation Programmes at the European Space Agency (ESA) and Head of the ESA Centre for Earth Observation (ESRIN), highlighted the importance of digital technology in the debate on a Renewed Social Contract.

“In a reflection on the new social contract in Europe, a reflection on how to use the available technology, including digital and space technology, is certainly a very important element and a strategic one for Europe,” she said. Cheli spoke about how space technologies can support the green agenda and digital agenda, which are two main objectives of the European Union.

Europe is a world leader in terms of data and infrastructure in space to support digital and environmental challenges, from the management of natural resources, to monitoring extreme weather and supporting food production. Yet, the public is often unaware of the benefits of European funding for space projects.

“We need also today to make citizens more aware of the potential of those technologies, not space seen as a faraway domain, but space seen as something that really impacts everybody’s life,” Cheli concluded.

Cheli’s overall message was that space technologies have an important role to play in addressing challenges like tackling climate change, managing natural resources and supporting a more sustainable future.



Simonetta Cheli

***“We need also today to make citizens more aware of the potential of those technologies, not space seen as a faraway domain, but space seen as something that really impacts everybody’s life”***

**Simonetta Cheli**, Director of Earth Observation Programmes at the European Space Agency (ESA) and Head of the ESA Centre for Earth Observation (ESRIN)

# Conclusion

State of Europe recognised the crucial role a Renewed Social Contract can play in revitalising the European project by setting out a new relationship between citizens and government, the private sector and civil society. That enhanced relationship is vital to confront the challenges facing Europe today, from inequality and social exclusion, to climate change and the domestic and external threats from authoritarian populism.

The debate backed Friends of Europe's aim of circulating its 10 policy choices for a Renewed Social Contract for Europe in the run up to the 2024 European Parliament elections and the formation of the next European Commission to form the basis of a Renewed Social Contract by the end of the decade.

Those new guidelines can buttress Europe's democracy, point the way to sustainable and equitable economic strength, while defending the traditions of the European social model at a time with the European project needs unity and decisive action to face up to unprecedented threats from within and beyond its borders.

# President's Gala Dinner



**Mariá Lledó Laredo**, Spanish Secretary General for the European Union

On the eve of State of Europe, **Etienne Davignon**, President of the Board of Trustees of Friends of Europe, and **Thomas Leysen**, President of the Governing Board of Friends of Europe, invited several hundred high-level guests to the President's Gala Dinner. Co-hosted with the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU, it was an informal, yet intellectually stimulating, opportunity for guests to connect ahead of the next day's event.

This year, Friends of Europe welcomed remarks on peace from **Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**, the first democratically elected female head of state in Africa, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Honorary Co-President of the Africa-Europe Foundation.

**Brian Eno**, world-renowned artist, music producer and activist, and **Jamie Kelsey-Fry**, Co-Founder of the first Global Assembly and initiator of Cultural Wave, shared their thoughts and ideas on the role of culture in addressing the crisis of democracy and governance.



1. **Petra De Sutter**, Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Civil Service, Public Enterprises, Telecommunication and the Postal Services, and Trustee of Friends of Europe
2. **Timmy Dooley**, Irish Senator and Acting Co-President of the ALDE Party
3. **Louise Mushikiwabo**, Secretary General of Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) Headquarters and High-Level Group Member of the Africa-Europe Foundation
4. **Etienne Davignon**, President of the Board of Trustees of Friends of Europe, former Belgian minister of state and former European Commission vice-president
5. **María Lledó Laredo**, Spanish Secretary General for the European Union





**Brian Eno**, world-renowned artist, music producer and activist; **Jamie Kelsey-Fry**, Co-Founder of the first Global Assembly and initiator of Cultural Wave

Brian Eno and Jamie Kelsey-Fry engaged in a thought-provoking discourse that intertwined culture, activism and the imperative need for global change. Eno illuminated the limitations of statistics in effecting change, emphasising the need to integrate culture into discussions about reshaping the world. Despite acknowledging the discouraging statistics, Eno expressed optimism, drawing attention to groundbreaking scientific innovations such as concrete functioning as a battery and moisture extraction technology.

Eno passionately described the monumental global movement dedicated to saving the planet, likening it to mycelium growing under a forest floor – vast, interconnected, yet largely unseen. However, he highlighted significant barriers like inertia, wealth control and governance issues that hinder the realisation of innovative ideas despite widespread momentum.

Kelsey-Fry delved into the crux of governance challenges, elucidating the constraints faced

by politicians entrenched in a system heavily influenced by lobbyists and public opinion. Proposing a transformative solution, he advocated for a citizens' assembly based on sortition, a method designed to facilitate impartial decision-making devoid of lobbying influences. Drawing from his experience in facilitating a global citizens' assembly on climate, Kelsey-Fry highlighted its success in generating inclusive and impactful policies, showcasing the potential for an alternative decision-making model.

Both speakers underscored the critical necessity for systemic changes in governance structures to confront multifaceted global crises—ranging from climate change to economic instability and resource allocation challenges. Their dialogue resonated with a resounding call to reimagine decision-making processes, emphasising the urgency of addressing imminent challenges by fostering unbiased, inclusive and impactful governance models.



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1. **Vsevolod Chentsov**, Ambassador of the Mission of Ukraine to the EU
2. **Brian Eno**, world-renowned artist, music producer and activist; **Chen Qiufan**, Science fiction writer, columnist, scriptwriter and author of "AI 2041: Ten Visions for our future"; **Ece Temelkuran**, Award-winning Turkish novelist, political commentator, author of "How to Lose a Country" and "Together: 10 Choices for a Better Now"; **Jamie Kelsey-Fry**, Co-Founder of the first Global Assembly and initiator of Cultural Wave; **Thomas Van Vynkt**, Programme Manager of State of Europe and the Renewed Social Contract at Friends of Europe
3. **Elsa Gayle Zekeng**, 'Sciencepreneur' and Founder of SökerData; **Thomas Harwell**, Head of Diversity Recruiting, EMEA at Google Campus London
4. **Joakim Reiter**, Chief External and Corporate Affairs Officer at Vodafone and former deputy director general of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); **Mario Monti**, Italian Senator for life, Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, former Italian prime minister, former European commissioner and Trustee of Friends of Europe; **Etienne Davignon**, President of the Board of Trustees of Friends of Europe, former Belgian minister of state and former European Commission vice-president



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**Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**, former president of the Republic of Liberia, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Honorary Co-President of the Africa-Europe Foundation; **Mary Fitzgerald**, Non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute and Trustee at Friends of Europe

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf highlighted the world's challenges, focusing on threats to democracy, increasing exclusions, populism and the disruptive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. She stressed the urgent need for global cooperation, effective multilateralism and the youth's demand for inclusion and leadership roles in society.

Johnson Sirleaf addressed structural reforms, advocating for equitable representation in global financial institutions and Africa's seat on the UN Security Council. She emphasised the significance of people's inclusion in decision-making processes, underlining the importance of not only youth involvement but also the active participation of civil society and marginalised groups.

The conversation delved into intergenerational dialogue, where Johnson Sirleaf stressed the importance of youth participation in policy formulation, warning against the consequences of denying them opportunities for leadership, potentially leading to rebellion against established governance structures.

On the topic of women's leadership, Johnson Sirleaf acknowledged progress but lamented the slow pace toward gender equity. She attributed this delay to entrenched power structures favouring men and called for accelerated changes to enable more women to assume leadership roles, breaking the existing constraints. Johnson Sirleaf highlighted the simultaneous battles for gender equity and addressing global threats, noting the setbacks faced by Africa in recent years due to crises and the challenges posed to international cooperation and multilateralism.





1. **Nathalie Furrer**, Director at Friends of Europe; **Erik Wiersema**, Architect at Wiersema Architecten
2. **Geert Cami**, Co-Founder & Secretary-General of Friends of Europe and Co-Founder & Co-Secretary-General of the Africa-Europe Foundation
3. **Goran Buldioski**, Executive Director of Open Society-Europe and Central Asia (ad interim); **Michael Meyer-Resende**, Executive Director of Democracy Reporting International
4. **Sylvie Goulard**, former deputy governor of the National Bank of France; **Loubna Bourfa**, Founder & CEO of OKRA.AI and European Young Leader (EYL40)
5. **Joakim Reiter**, Chief External and Corporate Affairs Officer, Vodafone and former assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)



# List of discussants

## **Jamila Aanzi**

Member of the Appeal Advisory Committee on Childcare Allowance, Ministry of Finance, The Netherlands, European Young Leader (EYL40)

## **Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen**

Director General, European Commission Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM)

## **Nick Aiossa**

Deputy Director, Head of Policy and Advocacy, Transparency International EU Office

## **Alberto Alemanno**

Jean Monnet Professor of EU Law, HEC Paris Founder, The Good Lobby, France, Trustee of Friends of Europe, European Young Leader (EYL40)

## **Thomas Allvin**

Executive Director, Strategy and Healthcare Systems, European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA)

## **Joaquín Almunia**

Visiting Professor in Practice, London School of Economics and Political Science European Institute, former European Commission Vice-President and Commissioner for Competition Policy, United Kingdom, Trustee of Friends of Europe

## **Laszlo Andor**

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

## **Guillem Anglada-Escudé**

Councilor for economic promotion & innovation, City Council of Ullastrell, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), Spain, European Young Leader (EYL40)

## **Sari Arho Havrén**

Futurist, China analyst, lead of the Finnish government's strategic and foresight work in Asia Pacific, Associate Fellow, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)

## **Petras Austrevicius**

Chair, European Parliament Delegation for relations with Afghanistan

## **Christian Baracat**

Director, Government affairs EU/Brussels, AbbVie

## **Natalie Barkei**

Head of EU Affairs, DocMorris, The Netherlands

## **Etienne Bassot**

Director, Members' Research Service, European Parliamentary Research Services (EPRS)

## **Brando Benifei**

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

## **Nienke Beuwer**

Director of External Communications, McKinsey Global Institute

## **Vladimir Bilcik**

Chair, European Parliament Delegation to the EU-Montenegro Stabilisation & Association Parl. Committee

## **Laure Blanchard-Brunac**

Director of Policy & Partnerships, European Development Finance Institutions (EDFI)

## **Antonio Blandini**

Chair, Association of European Space Research Establishment (ESRE)

## **Jocelyn Bleriot**

Executive Lead, Institutions, Governments and Cities, Ellen MacArthur Foundation

## **Timmy Boerjan**

Director Public affairs, Edwards Lifesciences European Headquarters

## **Alex Borg**

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

## **Loubna Bouarfa**

CEO and founder, OKRA.ai, United Kingdom, European Young Leader (EYL40)

## **Franziska Brantner**

Parliamentary State Secretary for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK), Germany, Trustee of Friends of Europe, European Young Leader (EYL40)

**Nicolas Brien**

Entrepreneur, Chairman of the European Startup Network, France, European Young Leader (EYL40)

**Camilla Brückner**

Director, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Representation Office in Brussels

**Goran Buldioski**

Executive Director, Open Society-Europe and Central Asia (ad interim), Open Society Foundation, Germany

**Malcolm Byrne**

Senator, Seanad Éireann, Ireland, European Young Leader (EYL40)

**Geert Cami**

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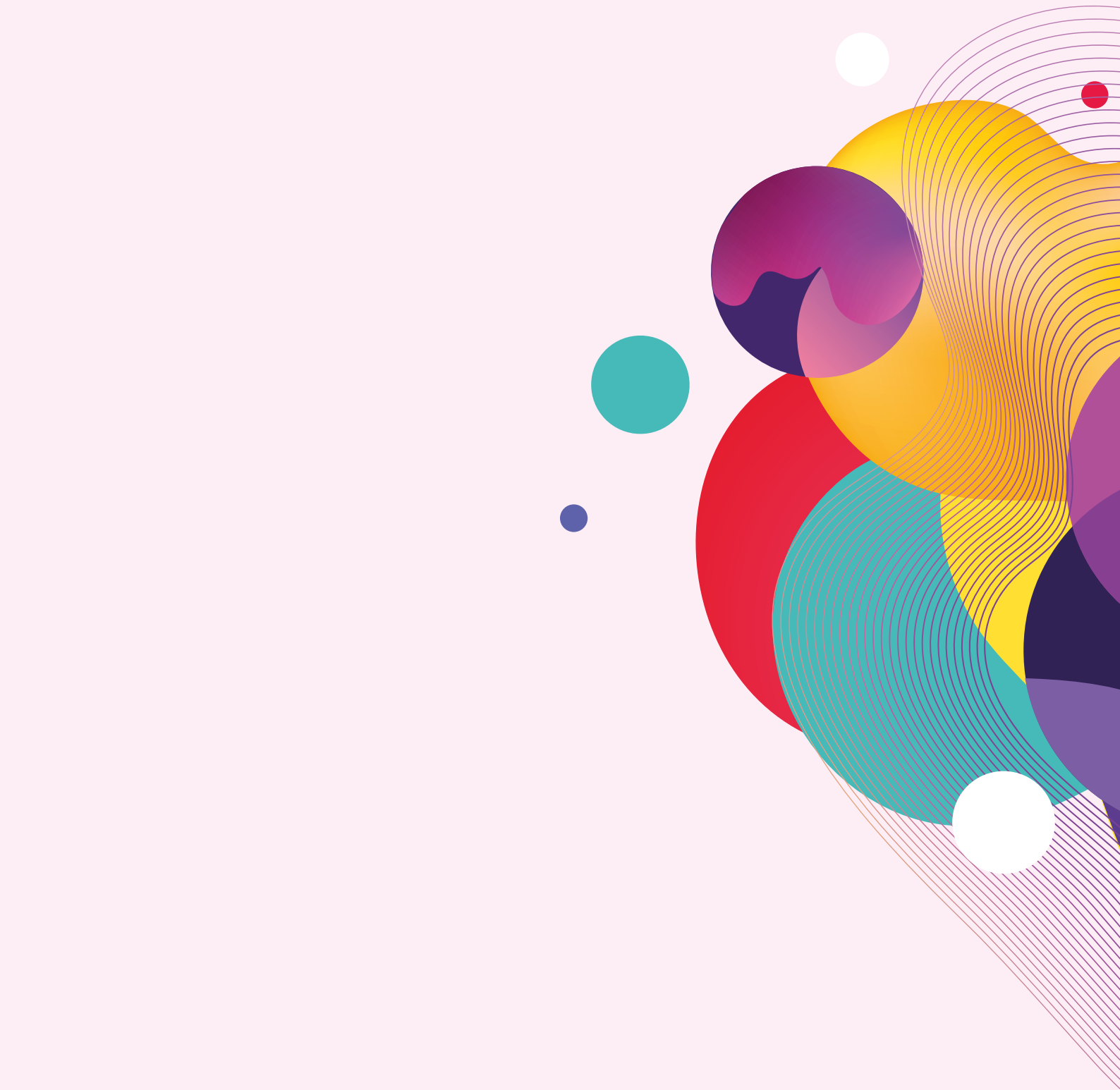
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