



“Who are we in Europe?”

Challenges and Perspectives of the European Community of Values

DECLARATIONS BY THE PARTICIPANTS
OF THE INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOLS



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INTRODUCTION

Dear reader,

The refugee crisis, high youth unemployment within the Eurozone, an armed conflict in the Ukraine and the ongoing debt crisis of some of its Member States – these are but a few pressing problems the European Union is confronted with at the moment. Common European challenges can only be successfully overcome within a framework of European solidarity. Yet the public debates on the “Greek crisis”, the European Foreign and Security Policy or the approach toward immigrants and asylum seekers seem to be dominated once again by national egoisms. Arguably, the much evoked founding values of European citizens and states are often difficult to discern.

Against this backdrop the question about the so-called European identity gains urgency. What constitutes Europe? Do the common values truly lie at the core of the European community? What actions could and should be taken in order to solve the pressing challenges within and in the neighborhood of the European Union? How should the European project develop in the long term?

The Summer Schools 2015 “Who are we in Europe? Challenges and Perspectives of the European Community of Values” in Lithuania, Romania and Greece set out to discuss these important questions. The events, organized by the Main Department Scholarships and Culture in cooperation with the foreign offices in Riga, Bucharest and Athens, have brought together over ninety scholarship holders as well as students and young professionals from seven European countries. The declarations of Attica, Braşov and Trakai adopted by the participants of the Summer Schools constitute the main results of the week-long debates. In these documents the participants state their views on the identity, the historical achievements, the current problems and the future of the European project. Furthermore, the declarations contain specific demands in regard to current political challenges of the EU such as refugee and debt crises, rise of anti-systemic parties, or the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

The main message conveyed by the three declarations is unequivocally in line with the view of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung:

“The European Union is our chance to a common life in peace, freedom and democracy. We have to defend it.” (Declaration of Attica)

We wish you a stimulating read.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Backovsky
Project Coordinator, Main Department Scholarships and Culture

Declaration of Trakai

We Europeans share a common history, common political and economic standards and common values. The horrors of World War II and its consequences created the strong will to ensure lasting peace and security in Europe. Being European means being united in diversity! Every single European culture is unique and being European does not mean neglecting one's national identity. The Member States of the European Union are connected through various influences such as Christian values and the Enlightenment and they are committed to promoting freedom, solidarity, tolerance, democracy, security and human rights.

However, the European Union is facing strong challenges today and some Europeans are currently questioning the reality of security and solidarity in Europe. It is therefore the most pressing challenge for the European Union to ensure its values in the future and to prove their inviolability. Europe is a community of values as well as a community of interests. Common interests are a necessary condition for a community to form, but without common values and a sense of belonging together that exceeds these interests, this community cannot persist in the long run. Therefore we think that the creation of a European society that strongly identifies with the values of the community must be the priority of the European Union. If national interests prevail over common interests, pressing issues such as the migration crisis cannot be solved.

We strongly support the promotion of educational programmes and are convinced that this is the key to creating a strong sense of community and solidarity among the citizens of the EU. Exchange programs have to be linked to discussions about European issues in order to increase political awareness. It is crucial that these programmes are available to everyone and include all social and age groups. We also believe the history of Europe and the European Union should become a major part of national curriculums. Our common European identity must be stressed and


current issues should be incorporated into the national education agendas.

The European project is a unique example of overcoming historical rivalries and integrating 28 European countries into one community. The economic, political and social integration expanded peace, prosperity and human rights within the Union. In less than a century we built a strong community defined by common standards, interests and values.

We have identified several main challenges within the European Union. The first challenge we would like to recognize are the economic imbalances that can undermine the unity of Europe. In order to tackle this challenge we demand a harmonization of economic and fiscal policies. Secondly, we criticise a democratic deficit in the European politics and the institutional framework. We demand an increase in legitimacy, transparency and speed concerning the decision-making process in order to improve people's trust in and identification with the European Union.

We firmly believe that the European integration process will be deepened by increasing the scope of cooperation. With a priority on important areas such as the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the European cooperation has to be enhanced in order to strengthen the international appearance of the EU as a community. We believe in the importance of sovereign states within an integrated European Union with their ability to tackle current and future challenges.

We recognize the importance of the EU's successful role as a civil actor in applying soft power within the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Nevertheless, destabilizing factors regarding digital data, energy security and asymmetrical warfare are a reality in Europe. Moreover, the decentralised and intergovernmental structure of the CFSP has led to a lack of coherency, efficiency and autonomy. Therefore a more integrated and supranational approach must



be developed and implemented. The position of the High Representative and the operational structure of the European External Action Service must be strengthened considerably. Embassies of the EU could ensure a focal access point for other countries and enable the Union to use distinct communication channels for diplomacy and negotiation. The introduction of qualified majority voting will increase the efficiency and the capability to act more rapidly. A common security policy needs a treaty based codification of this further integration and cooperation, containing security and support guarantees for the Member States.

Regarding a common European security policy the suggested system will ensure a pooling and sharing of military resources in order to increase efficiency and interoperability. In a long-term perspective we identify the possibility of establishing a Common European Army (CEA). The CEA would stand in close cooperation in an integrated framework with NATO.

Despite some positive development, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia have failed to implement the necessary reforms to establish stable market economies, fight corruption, as well as to secure and strengthen the rule of law due to major internal and external challenges. Therefore, the option of a membership in the near future can neither be considered as a realistic approach from an EU perspective nor as a credible solution for the countries in question. Nevertheless, the EU recognizes and encourages their willingness to further modernize their societies by extending and developing mutual cooperation on an economic and civil society level. We suggest a more individual approach to every country of the Eastern Partnership.

Great numbers of refugees are trying to enter the territory of the European Union in search for a safer and better life. The European Union and its Member States have not yet shown sufficient commitment to constructively addressing this pressing issue, although every day refugees are facing dangers and difficulties,

with many of them paying the ultimate price on their way to the EU. Trying to provide a safe harbor to the refugees, the Member States face several challenges, especially the implementation of adequate and common standards in reception and accommodation, the acceptance of refugees within societies as well as the distribution of responsibilities amongst the Member States.

Acknowledging that the root causes need to be addressed first and foremost, we propose an enhanced cooperation with countries of origin and transit, particularly in terms of political dialogue, economic improvement and financial support. In this regard it should be taken into account that migration is a cross-cutting issue that should be considered throughout the Union's affected policies.

Regarding short-term measures, search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea need to be reinforced. To ease the burden for both third countries and particularly affected EU Member States, relocation and resettlement should be introduced according to a fair, flexible and compulsory distribution key. To prevent further tragedies, refugees should receive the possibility to apply for asylum in countries of transit at special access points, potentially located in national embassies. Moreover, humanitarian visas could be issued for the purpose of secured access to an asylum procedure.

Above all, common standards need to be implemented and integration measures should be strengthened, for instance through specific education programs. Furthermore, it is important to frame migration in a more differentiated way, i.e. emphasizing the societal and economic benefits that arise.

Declaration of Brașov

As a community of identity, we, the people of the European Union, have the chance to live together. Emerged from a Greek and Judeo-Christian philosophical background, our perspective on humankind was sharpened in the age of enlightenment. Due to the different cultures, we are in the process of developing a multinational identity. This unifies us in diversity. Centuries of violent experiences taught us the importance of engagement for peace. Therefore, it is now our responsibility and opportunity to shape Europe for the better.

As a community of values, we share more than interests. From our cultural heritage we derive our fundamental common values. Therefore we believe there is no dignity of the individual without solidarity, no liberty without subsidiarity. Through democracy and rule of law, we have reflected these values in our policies and managed to achieve peace and prosperity.

As a community of destiny, we do not take our values for granted. Hence, the best way to overcome crises is by focusing on what unifies us. We do not consider the award of the Noble Peace Prize as recognition for our merits in the past, but more importantly as a guidepost for the future. So we must live our values instead of just talking about them. That is why we have to enlarge our successful engagements like mobility and exchanges programmes vastly. In order to strengthen the EU, we are inviting all Europeans to contribute to creating our home.

As Europe's young generation we consider peace, stability, prosperity, democracy and freedom as the main achievements of the European Integration. Facing current challenges, it is our duty and wish to preserve and foster these pillars. Promoting the European idea and developing a common vision for Europe is our main task. We believe that great benefits can be achieved for our community by prioritizing our common European values over national interests.


We cannot risk that people feel insufficiently represented and connected to the institutions of the European Union. Solidarity and shared responsibility can only be lived if we overcome the lack of trust in the institutions and between the Member States. We are committed to a common path towards the democratic character of our institutions including more transparency and an increased involvement of the citizens in decision-making.

We are committed to working toward a future of stronger cooperation while acknowledging the national identity and the diversity of our cultures. While respecting the national sovereignty and the principle of subsidiarity, we believe that major issues are to be treated by the European Union with its institutions and procedures.

In order to strengthen the efforts that have kept Europe peaceful and secure for the past decades, the development of an integrated approach to European security and defense deserves special attention. To that end, we call upon the Member States to recognize the crucial importance of the European institutions and enable them to realize their full potential.

Therefore, the High Representative should be truly empowered to pursue the objectives of the European Union in an interest-driven and value-oriented foreign and security policy. This would include the ability to contract with third-state parties, which would only need to be ratified by the European Parliament.

Thus, the European Union needs to further promote peace, democracy, liberty, rule of law and prosperity. At the same time, the interests of both our neighboring countries and our strategic partners should be taken into consideration.



We realize that the challenges of an ever-changing international environment can only be tackled with an integrated and pro-active military approach. Common European security efforts shall complement the defense architecture of NATO and focus on the tasks set out in the Petersberg Declaration and the Treaty of Lisbon.

Furthermore, we need to develop policies specific to the circumstances of the countries in our neighborhood. Only sustainable approaches can guarantee an effective development policy in the long term. Right now, we must live up to the values to which we have committed, especially by protecting the human rights of refugees arriving at the European borders.

We are concerned by how serious the problem of corruption is, which is defined as an abuse of power for private gain. The EU-Anti-Corruption Report (2014) shows that the use of bribery is seen as the most efficient means to obtain personal gain by 73 percent of Europeans. Corruption has its effects in all areas of European life and results primarily in the loss of trust in the public sector, decreased competitiveness, and the undermining of the democratic system.

To fight corruption we have to enforce effective supranational measures. This includes the further promotion of a common set of values instead of national interests through the educational system in the long run. However, for the short run, an institution should be established with the aim of deterring corrupt actions. This institution needs to be independent from both national governments as well as from other EU bodies.

Seeing the success of the Co-operation and Verification Mechanism for Justice (CVM) and willing to establish further co-operation, the EU member states should stay united in the fight against corruption and this mechanism would help them combat this issue. The CVM would be the main component of the proposed institution and would be implemented in each member state. In addition, a common EU anti-corruption law is necessary in order to fight this issue at a European level. This enables the EU to further develop into a community of justice and of equal opportunity.

Declaration of Attica

We, the people of Europe, have a common history, a common present and we are destined to share a common future.

We build upon our cultural origins and we are committed to learning from our history of conflicts. Our community is based on democracy and the rule of law, and these principles unify us in diversity. We are striving for peace and we will be united when facing global challenges.

We are committed to tolerance, equality, freedom, solidarity, human dignity and welfare.

These values are interpreted differently, but shared by all Europeans. We have to bring them to life and continue pursuing them. We build our common future upon human rights and our shared values.

Our goal is to strengthen our community of Europeans through exchange, dialogue, mutual understanding and respect.

We stand up for exchanges in economy, education, research and civil society. We insist on strengthening cultural dialogue: this includes travelling, learning languages and guaranteeing access to information on European issues. We are devoted to fighting disparities. We will continue to strive for democracy on the European level by fostering the standing and the transparency of EU institutions.

Europe becomes visible through our common symbols and our achievements in European integration. European unity is our future.

Throughout history, Europe suffered from instability and wars, but we, the Europeans, overcame the past, achieved peace and established democracy. Progressing from an economic cooperation to an institutional system, creating a single market and a monetary union, we strengthened the unification of Europe.

We are proud of our contribution to solving global challenges.

As the European Union, we strive to combine different visions for a common future. We are committed to diversity, thus we encourage each and every Member State to participate in and take responsibility towards European projects.


The European Union recognizes and respects the differences in economic structure between Member States. Nevertheless, we aim for a higher level of socio-economic equality and prosperity.

Believing in democratic principles, we consider a strengthening of the European Parliament to be crucial in order to enhance legitimacy and transparency.

Facing multiple severe crises, the necessity of institutional and democratic deepening of the European institutions has become evident.

The crucial need for hope, confidence and particularly a perspective for the young generation strongly calls for stability and the reestablishment of trust between the European Member States. In an ever-changing world, for the European Union to have a sustainable impact, it has to be united and act as a role model for peace, democracy and prosperity.

The refugee crisis poses great challenges to the European Union. It has found itself unprepared to address this crisis. So far, EU members have approached the refugee crisis from a national level, whereby reaching unanimous action has proven increasingly difficult. Moreover, limited funding and the lack of a commonly adopted asylum policy have led EU Member States to treat the conditions inefficiently. Furthermore, the lack of a common safe country concept has proven precarious while addressing the main causes of refugee distribution in times of crisis.



We hereby suggest adopting measures in order to prevent an escalation of the humanitarian catastrophe in the Mediterranean. As short-term measures, we suggest establishing refugee task-force missions that include anti-smuggling and rescue missions. This includes informing refugees of their rights upon arrival and providing humanitarian aid. As long-term measures, we suggest the implementation of established and legal ways of immigration. At the same time, development of cooperation in order to support states in crisis and diplomatic efforts involving neighbouring states have to be strengthened. Upon implementation of the above proposals, the European Union will offer a safe and legal way via which refugees can arrive.

We argue for refugee policy to become part of the EU's competency. Therefore, we see the need to establish a European refugee agency, coordinating divergent national interests. Most importantly, a unified asylum policy is required, which includes a common list of safe countries for all EU Member States. With regard to local conditions, a flexible quota-mechanism for distributing refugees among EU Member States is vital. Each Member State has to contribute to EU-level refugee policy and can rely on the solidarity of the other Member States.

The economic crisis and rising populism and extremism in the Eurozone are significant European challenges. Versatile national policies and different economic structures deepen the consequences of the worldwide economic crisis. The situation in many crisis countries, including Greece, is characterized by a corrupted political system, tax evasion and the mismanagement of EU-funds. We highlight the alarming social and political consequences such as increased unemployment, political conflicts and loss of trust in the institutions.

In Greece there is a reluctance to take responsibility and to implement reforms. This leads to the loss of citizens' and investors' trust. Moreover, there is no adequate production base in Greece and the commercial deficit is high. Hence, it is up to the national government to set up a clear roadmap for the next legislative period in order to restore stability and trust. Furthermore, Greece needs an improvement and enlargement of its tax base and labor market alongside fiscal consolidation. Additionally, prudent management of EU-funds fosters the efficiency of bailouts and breaks the vicious circle.

The national-populist parties have gained ground in most EU Member States and on the supranational level. These parties have entered parliament, resulting in more people adhering to their ideology. This is the reflection of some people's needs and fears, such as the loss of social security and the fear of erosion of national identities. The parties provide simplistic answers to complex questions.

The democratic parties, the media and society should convincingly address the underlying problems and show the benefits of the European Union.

In turbulent times, our values are the lighthouse that leads us to an ever closer union. The European Union is our chance to a common life in peace, freedom and democracy. We have to defend it.

IMPRINT

Editor and Contact

Simon Backovsky
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.
- Promotion of Students From Abroad -
Rathausallee 12
D-53757 Sankt Augustin
Phone: +49-2241-246-2361
simon.backovsky@kas.de

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