

ACADEMIC PREPARATION KIT

Project Forum Henriettenplatz 2018

European Youth Parliament Austria

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The European Union Explained: An Overview

You have probably already gotten in touch with the institutions, the procedures and the competences of the European Union. As it is quite a complicated system, this section aims at refreshing your memory with a short explanation of the most important institutions, followed by an overview of the competences to outline what the EU can and cannot do.

EU Institutions

European Council

The European Council consists of the heads of state or government and the President of the European Commission and thus represents the interests of the Member States. The president of the European Council is elected for 2.5 years and is currently Donald Tusk from Poland, who must report to the European Parliament after each meeting. The European Council gathers in Brussels four times per year in order to discuss general goals. It therefore does not propose actual legislation, but rather sets the general political direction of the EU and programme framework for the other institutions to act.

HERE THE GENERAL DIRECTION
OF EU LEGISLATION IS DECIDED
UPON

European Commission

Consisting of 28 Commissioners (one from each Member State), the European Commission is the institution that aims to represent the interests of the EU as a whole, independent of the national governments. It is the only institution empowered to initiate legislation. Nevertheless, the European Parliament, as well as Member States and citizens can ask the European Commission to submit a proposal.

AFTER LISTENING TO ALL SIDES,
THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DRAFTS (PROPOSES) LEGISLATION

The European Commission furthermore manages the EU budget and allocates the funding and is also in charge of monitoring the implementation of EU legislation in the Member States.

The staff members working in the European Commission in support of the Commissioners are organised in departments known as Directorates-General, each responsible for a particular policy

area (e.g. education and culture, budget, agriculture and rural development) and headed by a Director-General. The current president of the European Commission is Jean-Claude Juncker from Luxembourg.

Council of the EU

The Council of the EU consists of the ministers of every Member State, according to the topic of the meeting, which is why it is also referred to as the “Council of Ministers”. It represents the interests of the EU Member States. It is not presided by a person, but by a state that rotates every six months. Currently this is Bulgaria.

Among the Council of the EU’s tasks is to pass EU laws jointly with the European Parliament (see below) – the Council of the EU is thus a co-legislator in the EU’s policy-making system. Furthermore, it approves the EU budget, coordinates the broad economic policies of the EU Member States, signs agreements between the EU and other countries, develops the EU’s foreign and defence policies and coordinates cooperation between courts and police forces of Member States.

European Parliament

The European Parliament consists of 751 Members. It is the only directly elected institution of the EU and therefore represents the interests of the EU citizens. The Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are democratically elected every five years. The European Parliament’s work is organised in Parliamentary Committees.

FINALLY, LEGISLATION IS VOTED ON IN THE COUNCIL OF THE EU AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The MEPs gather into different factions according to their political stance. Since the last election in 2014, the European People’s Party (Centre-Right) has the most seats, followed by the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (Centre-Left).

As mentioned above, the European Parliament is the second co-legislator in the EU policy-making process. It has equal legislative power with the Council of the EU in a majority of cases. Furthermore, the European Parliament supervises the work of the European Commission and scrutinises the work of the other institutions in general, to ensure that they work democratically.

EU Competences

The EU and its Member States have agreed to pool some of their sovereignty, shifting some (legislative) competence away from the individual Member States to the EU level, in order to gain strength in the benefits of size. These competences of the Union are laid out in the EU Treaties (Art. 2-6 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union, TFEU).

Three types of EU competences can be distinguished:

Exclusive competence: Only the EU is able to legislate and adopt binding acts.

Shared competence: Competences are shared between the EU and its Member States – the Member States can act where the EU has chosen not to

Supporting competence: Areas where the EU cannot adopt any legally binding acts that would require Member States to harmonise their laws. The EU can however support, coordinate or supplement.

The table below gives examples for each category of competence:

Exclusive Competence	Shared Competence	Supporting Competence
Customs union	Internal market	Culture
Competition rules	Social policy	Industry
Monetary policy	Agriculture and fisheries	Tourism
Common commercial policy	Environment	Education, vocational training, youth and sport
	Consumer protection	Civil protection
	Transport	
	Energy	
	Area of freedom, security and justice	

Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET)

Considering the significant changes in policy decisions of the United States since the Trump Administration came to power, how can the EU ensure mutually beneficial diplomatic relations with the US?

by Darina Kulaha (UA)

Introduction of the topic

The European Union and the United States of America have a long history of mutually beneficial cooperation on the global scale, with values such as democracy, liberty and international aid being important keywords. They have also been important trading partners, which only stresses the importance of further cooperation in the future. However, since Europe openly supported current president Trump's rally Hillary Clinton, **Brussels now faces new challenges in EU - US relationships.** This has only been made more complicated by drastic changes in the workings of the Trump Administration. Some of the most alarming policy changes that directly affect the European Union include **the USA's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement,**¹ and **new tariffs on steel and aluminum,**² something that goes directly against the importance the EU puts on global free trade. There seems to be a difference in ways of dealing with diplomatic etiquette, something that has made cooperation even more difficult.³ There is no doubt that the United States previously have been working along with the EU to jointly achieve economic growth, support the environment, and further democratic developments. Keeping this in mind, and considering new challenges coming from the current American administration, **how can Europe find new ways to continue this cooperation?**

Key conflicts

With the environment becoming more and more of a prominent topic in EU politics, **one of the key conflicts between the EU and the US today regards the Paris Agreement.** While 97% of scientists believe that global warming is caused by human activity, American president Donald Trump chose

¹ New York Times – Trump will withdraw US from Paris Climate Agreement (2017)

² New York Times – escalating trade fight, Trump threatens higher taxes on European cars (2018)

³ An example of this can be found here Business Insider – Trump appears to ignore requests for a handshake with Angela Merkel (2017)

to not agree with them and resigned the United States from the Paris Agreement, which the Obama administration had signed in December 2015.⁴ The goal of this global agreement is to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to below 2°C. This action plan is being implemented using the financial contributions from the 55 countries who signed the agreement. The collective goal is to mobilise USD 100 billion per year by 2020 and extend this until 2025, after which a new and higher goal will be set. The United States were one of the major contributors in this global environmental effort, and their participation in the project was an additional mechanism to encourage other major emission contributors to also start making financial contributions. The USA resigning therefore creates a conflict that **reverberates beyond EU-US relations.**

Furthermore, the European Union is a great promoter of global free trade, something that has previously been mirrored in US trade policies. However, **in March 2018 the Republican cabinet imposed new tariffs on European steel and aluminium**, 25% and 10% respectively. Donald Trump stated on his twitter that he would like to have as much steel in the country as possible, but he also wants to protect the local workers. His actual goal is doubtful, since the tariffs did not touch other importers of this material such as Canada and Mexico, but it did accentuate a clear conflict of interest - **should local concerns be prioritised over international cooperation?** No matter the answer, **EU officials are furious** and have threatened retaliation through their own set of import tariffs. That didn't sit well with the US President who later tweeted: "If the E.U. wants to further increase their already massive tariffs and barriers on U.S. companies doing business there, we will simply apply a tax on their cars which freely pour into the U.S."

Key actors

The European Union is a long term trade partner of the US, thus it is very possible that its economy will be partially damaged through a possible trade war with the United States. The Union is looking to create beneficial trade agreements for all its Member States, but it is important to keep in mind individual differences between these states as well, and not just the EU as a whole.

On the other side of this conflict is the **United States of America**, which is seen as a crucial actor within international relations and one of the most important trading partners of the EU, as well as one of the major contributors to global CO₂ emissions. The international diplomatic approach of this country has been noticeably changed after the current President, Donald Trump, came in office.

⁴ Global Change Institute – the research agrees: humans are causing climate change (2016)

The **World Trade Organisation (WTO)** is an intergovernmental organisation that regulates international trade. The WTO deals with regulation of trade in goods, services and intellectual property of participating countries by providing a framework for negotiating trade agreements and a dispute resolution process aimed at enforcing participants' adherence to WTO agreements, which are signed by representatives of member governments and ratified by their parliaments. The WTO has claimed that they are convinced that trade wars always damage the economies of both countries.

The **Earth System Governance Project (ESGP)** is a research project that focuses on the human impact on global change. The goal of the ESGP is to publish research on the science concerning the difficulties of regulating global environmental change, hoping to better understand the roles and responsibilities of governments, institutions, and organisations in issues of global commons and pollution.

Measures in place

Seeing as the Trump Administration has been in power for just over a year, there has not been many direct measures put in place by the EU in order to deal with the new policy changes. However, the EU has already had the time to develop a few new strategies, such as the **Towards Energy Union Act II**⁵ from March 2018. This act puts forward a five-year ambition-plan with commitments to achieve energy-climate goals. It explicitly outlines measures to be taken in response to the US and their stance against the Paris Agreement, stating that the EU now "has the opportunity to transform climate constraint into industrial leadership."

Furthermore, there is the **The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)**⁶, a proposed trade agreement between the EU and the US. It has the aim of promoting trade and multilateral economic growth, and though the negotiations halted after Trump was elected in 2016, they presumed again mid-2017. TTIP is considered by the US a companion agreement to the **Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)** from 2016. It is the main trade regulation between the two governmental unities.

⁵ The act itself can be read here: European Issues and Interviews – Towards Energy Union Act II: a new European energy-climate leadership (2018)

⁶ The TTIP agreement can be read here: The European Commission – The transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) – State of Play (2016)

Key questions

- What measures could the EU implement in response to American tariffs?
- What stance should EU take towards the current US government?
- How should this stance relate to American businesses?

Link for further research

- *Trump's War on Europe Is Revving Up* – an opinion piece from the magazine Foreign Policy on the developments on EU-US relations <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/09/trumps-war-on-europe-is-revving-up/>
- Trump, Europe and one year into the US Presidency – an article on how Trump spent his first years as president dealing with the EU and several of the European heads of State http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_en/contexto?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_in/zonas_in/Commentary-Llaudes-Trump-Europe-one-year-into-US-presidency
- *Will other states join California's International Climate Pact?* – outlines the United States's role in international climate policy in the wake of the Paris Agreement <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/08/california-emissions-cap-trade/536430/>
- *14 states: We're on track to meet Paris climate goals, despite Trump* – an update on how several American states are trying to work in favour of the government, despite the restrictions Trump has put on his country <https://insideclimateneWS.org/news/21092017/states-paris-trump-climate-change-alliance-leadership-jerry-brown-cuomo-inslee-nrdc-2050>

Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI)

Combating climate change: seeing as the emission of greenhouse gases has increased by 90% since the 1970s, what actions can the EU take in order to reduce these environmental threats?

by Veronika Šemrov (SI)

Introduction of the topic

The greenhouse effect is a natural process that warms the earth's surface. When the sun's energy reaches the earth's atmosphere, some of it is reflected back to space and the rest is absorbed and re-radiated by greenhouse gases. The problem arises when humans with their activities such as burning of fossil fuel, agricultural processes and land clearing are increasing the concentration of greenhouse gases. **The highest source of manmade greenhouse gas emissions are power plants.** Generating electricity and heat by burning fossil fuels like coal, natural gas and oil produces more greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions than any other human activity, **accounting for at least one quarter of all global emissions.** CO₂ emissions from electricity and heat have increased, as coal has been the fastest growing energy source since 2000.⁷ The second source are residential buildings, which demand heat as well as electricity for the increasing numbers of electrical devices used in homes. The greenhouse gases produced by road transport have increased by over 50% since 1990 - despite improvements in vehicle fuel-efficiency - and now account for about three quarters of transport emissions.⁸ Other reasons behind the rise of greenhouse gases include deforestation, live-stock, industry, agriculture, waste and wastewater, coal mining and aviation.⁹

These man-made emissions create what is known as the **enhanced greenhouse effect**, which is contributing to global warming. Without actions to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, global warming is likely to exceed 2°C above pre-industrialised levels, and could even be as much as 5°C by the end of the century. **This would have a huge impact on the world's landscape and man-**

⁷ <https://www.iea.org/topics/coal/>

⁸ <https://www.iea.org/topics/transport/>

⁹ https://www.allianz.com/en/about_us/open-knowledge/topics/environment/articles/140912-fifteen-sources-of-greenhouse-gases.html#!m4432cf0e-cb70-4ff1-bc0e-5e5c2797e856

kind. It may cause melting glaciers, early snowmelt, and severe droughts, rising sea levels, deforestation and desertification. Disruption of habitats could drive many plant and animal species to extinction. Furthermore, many health problems are likely to arise: allergies, asthma and infectious diseases due to pollen-producing ragweed, higher levels of air pollution, and the spread of conditions favorable to pathogens and mosquitoes.

Key conflicts

The European Environment Agency (EEA) reports and analyses actions already taken or planned by EU Member States to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These actions mostly concern reduction of fossil fuel and promotion of renewable energy. However, **what is often neglected is that agriculture and land cleaning also are major contributors to emissions of greenhouse gases.** In 2011, farms emitted 6 billion tonnes of greenhouse gases, or about 13 % of total global emissions. That makes the agricultural sector the world's second-largest emitter, after the energy sector (which includes emissions from power generation and transport). With the EU and its Member States focusing so much on fossil fuels and renewable energy and so little on other sources of emissions, it has become difficult to address the problem fully. **The lack of reliable measuring and reporting of greenhouse gases makes it difficult to determine how to reduce the impact.**

Member States have yet to coordinate their efforts amongst themselves. As it is today, most fields related to the environment, such as electricity networks, are regulated on an individual Member State level, rather by the EU. This offers a potential trade-off conflict: collecting such regulations under EU governance could help achieve its climate and energy goals more efficiently, but could it possibly function as an infringement on the Member States' sovereignty?

The visions of each and every Member State also have a tendency not to overlap. Though the EU in 2014 proposed a 2030 Climate and Energy Framework with binding targets in order to cut emissions in EU territory by at least 40%, the various Member States have taken on very different positions in relation to this. An example of this is that the United Kingdom and some other Member States want to target greenhouse emissions and form a single market for electricity and gases, whereas another group of countries would rather target the 2030 Climate and Energy Framework. France supports a greenhouse gas emissions target of 40% reduction by 2030 and favours renewable and energy efficiency targets, but would at the same time like to back a renewable energy target at a later date based on a partial harmonisation of renewable support schemes. **Lastly, some Member States do not want any obligations at all on an EU level.**

Key actors

The European Commission (EC) committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and formulated the legally binding 2020 Climate and Energy package, as well as the 2030 Climate and Energy Framework, and the 2050 low-carbon economy.

The European Environment Agency (EEA) is an agency of the European Union, whose task is to provide independent information on the environment. The EEA aims to support sustainable development by improving Europe's environment, through the provision of timely, targeted, relevant and reliable information to policy making agents and the public.

The Joint Research Centre (JRC) is the European Commission's science and knowledge service which employs scientists to carry out research in order to provide independent scientific advice and support to EU policy. The JRC is a Directorate-General of the European Commission, and one of their research activities is environment and climate change.

European Topic Centre on Air Pollution and Climate Change Mitigation (ETC/ACM) is a consortium of 14 European organisations that supports the collection, data organisation, development and dissemination of information about Europe's environment. This information is then used to assist the European Environment Agency (EEA) to report on the progress of EU's environmental policy and to support the harmonisation of European monitoring networks and reporting obligations.

Measures in place

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the main international treaty on fighting climate change. Its objective is to prevent dangerous man-made interference with the global climate system. In this context, industrialised countries need to prepare and submit regularly updated annual inventories of greenhouse gas emissions. The EU and all its Member States are among the 197 Parties of the Convention.

The Kyoto Protocol is an international treaty which legally binds the State Parties to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It runs over two commitment periods; the first started in 2008 and ended in 2012, whereas the second started in 2013 and will end in 2020. The Kyoto Protocol was adopted December 1997 and entered into force in February 2005. The Protocol has been ratified by 192 of the UNFCCC Parties, including the EU and its Member States. However, because many major emitters are not part of the Kyoto Protocol, it only covers about 12% of global emissions.

European Climate Change Programme (ECCP) was launched by European Commission in 2000. The goal of the ECCP is to identify and develop all the necessary elements of an EU strategy to implement the Kyoto Protocol. The development of the first ECCP (2000-2004) involved all the relevant groups of stakeholders working together, including representatives from the Commission's different departments (DGs), the Member States, industry and environmental groups. The **second European Climate Change Programme (ECCP II)** was launched in October 2005.

The 2020 package is a set of binding legislation to ensure that the EU meets its climate and energy targets for the year 2020. It requires the Member States to cut their greenhouse gas emissions by 20%, to produce 20% of their gross energy consumption from renewable energy sources and to reduce their gross primary energy consumption by 20% compared to a reference scenario. It represents an integrated approach to increase the EU's energy security and strengthen its competitiveness. The targets were set by EU leaders in 2007 and enacted in legislation in 2009. They are also headline targets of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The EU has also adopted an objective of a 40 % reduction by 2030 under the **2030 Climate and Energy Framework**. This objective is consistent with a cost-effective pathway towards long-term domestic reductions of 80 % by 2050.

The EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) is the EU's key tool for cutting greenhouse gas emissions from large-scale facilities in the power and industry sectors, as well as the aviation sector. The ETS covers around 45% of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions. In 2020, the target is for the emissions from these sectors to be 21% lower than in 2005.

The Paris Agreement is an agreement within the UNFCCC from 2015 dealing with greenhouse gas emissions mitigation, adaptation and finance starting in the year 2020. As of February 2018, 195 UNFCCC members have signed the agreement, and 175 have become party to it. The Agreement aims to respond to the global climate change threat by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Key questions

- What actions can the European Union and its Member States take in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?
- How can the European Union act in order to promote renewable energy?

- What are the biggest opportunities to reduce agricultural emissions?
- Considering the skewed focus in the field of greenhouse gas emission, how can the EU ensure that there is sufficient awareness about all emission sources, such as agricultural emissions?

Links for further research

- *Greenhouse gas emissions* - an article by the European Environment Agency, outlining the basic facts of greenhouse gas emissions <https://www.eea.europa.eu/airs/2017/resource-efficiency-and-low-carbon-economy/greenhouse-gas-emission>
- *Climate change impacts in Europe* - a video on possible climate changes and the impacts they will have on Europe specifically <https://www.eea.europa.eu/media/audiovisuals/climate-change-impacts-in-europe/view>
- *2020 climate and energy packet* - the EU document outlining the goal and strategy of this set of binding legislation
https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/strategies/2020_en
- *Energy and climate policies beyond 2020 in Europe* - official report by the Danish Energy Agency on the state of affairs regarding policies in Europe (it is only necessary to look at the executive summary) https://ens.dk/sites/ens.dk/files/Globalcooperation/eu_energy_and_climate_policy_overview.pdf
<http://www.theenergycollective.com/david-k-thorpe/2411704/european-union-losing-way-climate-change>
- *Everything you need to know about agricultural emissions* - a Q&A article on the basics of agricultural emissions <http://www.wri.org/blog/2014/05/everything-you-need-know-about-agricultural-emissions>
- *Leading global action to 2020 and beyond* - the official EU document outlining EU actions aimed at keeping the temperature rise at a minimum https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/ardb/evt/1_avrupa_birligi/1_6_raporlar/1_3_diger/environment/climate_change_global_action_post_2012_en.pdf

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE)

In light of the recent rise of nationalist and anti-immigrant movements across the EU that are hindering the proper integration of refugees into society, what should the EU and its Member States do to help the successful integration of refugees?

by Inès Rejraji (FR/AT)

Introduction of the topic

Political instability and war in certain countries, such as Somalia, Afghanistan and the conflict in Syria, have forced civilians to leave their homes in order to flee from the conflicts which threaten their lives and their most basic fundamental rights. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), during 2015, 65,3 million individuals worldwide were forcibly displaced by conflicts within their home countries, with this figure increasing by 34,000 more people every day.

Europe is witnessing the biggest human migration crisis in history while poor knowledge or misunderstanding of the crisis, hate speech, fear and uncertainty are expanding in Europe.

While some people leave home to get a better job or education – so-called migrants - others are forced to flee from human rights violations, such as torture and persecution, from an armed conflict or another type of crisis - so-called refugees. Because their own government cannot or will not protect them, they are forced to seek protection outside their home countries' borders. There are currently over 22.5 million refugees in the world.¹⁰ The Syrian conflict, which began in 2004, forced Syrians to flee to different countries, with around 7 Million people relocating to countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan or North Africa and around 800 000 fleeing to European countries.¹¹

The arrival of the refugees had Europe caused various types of reactions.

Key conflict

In a context where more than 70 percent of people in ten EU countries surveyed said multiculturalism made their country either a “worse” place to live, or made “no difference” at all¹² and where

¹⁰ <http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>

¹¹ <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria>

¹² <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/12/europe-rejects-multi-cultural-society-says-survey/>

some national governments such as Hungary assume their choice to close their borders, rejecting what they consider as “intercultural mass migration”¹³, the distrust in refugees is increasing.

The reasons which urge Europeans to be suspicious about the arrival of the refugees are numerous, certain studies established a link between the measures taken by the governments and the attitude of European citizens.

Beyond the distrust, voices got up against the arrival of the refugees, and groups and movements were organised. “Defend Europe”, a network of young anti-immigrant and anti-Islam activists and “the Identitarian movement”, which is a European and North American nationalist movement, are the most active and well-known anti-refugee groups in Europe. Gathering members from all over Europe, they organise actions on all the European territories.

Beside these movements, acts of intimidation, violence and hate speech against migrants and refugees on the grounds of their national or ethnic origin or their religion, xenophobic slogans are intensifying during the last years. Increasingly, migrants and refugees are seen as an economic drain and are perceived as unable to adapt to customs and life in receiving societies. They are sometimes associated with fears of terrorist attacks. Their positive contribution to our societies is not explained and therefore rarely understood.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to open up Germany to people fleeing conflict and persecution has earned mixed reactions and been followed by an increase in hate crime. The interior ministry figured that in Germany there were nearly 10 attacks on migrants every day in 2016.¹⁴ The government and the police are worried about these xenophobics attacks since two-thirds of the attacks were conducted by local citizens who had no previous criminal record.¹⁵ These attacks make the integration of refugees into society very difficult.

While analysing these behaviors, which further complicate the integration of refugees, the United Nations Alliance of Civilization (UNOAC) noticed the influence of the media in shaping public opinions. The media has the ability and the power to challenge preconceived perceptions and to become a channel for new ideas and perspectives. With balanced, accurate news coverage, journalists and editors can contribute to reducing tensions between cultural and identity groups. However, journalists who report on migration too often exacerbate tensions and contribute to polarization by

¹³ <https://www.voanews.com/a/central-europe-sees-anti-immigration-fervor-no-migrants/3527120.html>

¹⁴ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39096833>

¹⁵ <http://www.straitstimes.com/world/europe/extremist-attacks-on-refugees-soaring>

basing their narratives on sweeping, misleading generalizations and stereotypes about migrant communities.

Key actors

The **Council of Europe**, with its Secretary General Special representative on migration and refugees and the Commissioner on Human Rights is an important actor. Recently they were the authors of an important article on risk of sexual exploration of refugee and migrant children¹⁶

At European level asylum and immigration issues were transferred to the competence of the European Union by the Member States in the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam.

Therefore the **European Commission** plays a big role; it has taken a comprehensive approach to tackle the refugee crisis in Europe with its **European Agenda for Migration**¹⁷, drawing on various instruments available at EU level and in the Member States. The Commission's humanitarian and civil protection department¹⁸ supports refugees and their host communities in four ways.

Faced with increasing violence and groups against the integration of the refugees in Europe, more and more **Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs)** are working with EU institutions or with others NGOs in order to understand, prevent, and fight this situation. **The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)**¹⁹ is a pan-European alliance of 90 NGOs²⁰ in 38 countries, protecting the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and displaced people. Its diverse members range from large international NGOs with global scope to small organisations of dedicated activists; members work on humanitarian relief, social service provision, legal assistance, litigation, monitoring policy and law, advocacy, and campaigning.

Another important NGO is the the **European Network Against Racism (ENAR**²¹) which is a pan-European anti-racism network that combines advocacy for racial equality and facilitating cooperation among civil society anti-racism actors in Europe.

¹⁶ <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/world-refugee-day-council-of-europe-head-calls-for-renewed-effort-to-protect-migrant-children-from-sexual-abuse>

¹⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/index_en.htm

¹⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/echo/refugee-crisis_en

¹⁹ <http://www.ecre.org/>

²⁰ <http://www.ecre.org/mission-statement/alliance/members/profiles.html>

²¹ <http://www.enar-eu.org/About-us>

The contribution of **Amnesty International**, another NGO, is to make sure governments honour their responsibility to protect human rights, condemning any policies and practices that undermine them.

Within the European Union, its **Member States** created its own agency against discrimination, also in charge of the protection of refugees, such as the **Ombud for Equal Treatment** in Austria²², the “**Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency**”²³ in Germany or the “**The Defender of rights**”²⁴ in France.

Measures in place

In the 20th century, a number of human rights instruments were provided in addition to the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, namely the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, specifying further standards for the treatment of refugees and migrants, especially regarding discrimination. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) and the 1990 International Convention for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families provide a comprehensive legal framework for the protection of migrants against all forms of racist and xenophobic hostility.

It is important that the fundamental human rights of refugees are protected and recognised under international law, therefore actions to prevent discrimination and xenophobia and to promote equality of opportunities for the everyday lives of refugees are a shared responsibility of all social partners, including governments, associations, workers’ organisations and other civil society associations.

Different actions and initiatives taken by NGOs and by international actors are designed to promote and commemorate the strength, courage and perseverance of millions of refugees and families forced to flee, such as the such the World Refugee Day created by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and held every year on June 20²⁵.

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) launched the #SpreadNoHate initiative in 2015, with the goal to provide global media with a platform to engage in international dialogue on hate

²² <http://www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.at>

²³ <http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de>

²⁴ <https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/en>

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Gm8AK5r9f0>

speech against migrants and refugees and to share good practices to promote positive narratives. In the framework of the #SpreadNoHate initiative, the European Union and the UNOAC decided to organise a one-day symposium on Hate Speech Against Migrants and Refugees in the Media in Brussels on Thursday 26 January 2017 with the purpose to prevent negative narratives against migrants and refugees, and examining means of improving the quality of media coverage about migrants and refugees.

Germany is one of the countries in Europe which faced the most disturbing increase of online hate speech in recent years. Racist propaganda and sensationalist reports of criminal and rapist immigrants have spread on social media. In 2016, for example, the number of criminal investigations into online hate speech in Berlin rose by 50%²⁶. Germany decided to take the issue seriously and passed a law in force since the 1 January 2018. With this law, any internet platform with more than 2 million users is forced to implement more efficient and effective ways to report and delete potentially illegal content. Facebook, Twitter, Google, YouTube, Snapchat, and Instagram will all have to implement the new law, though professional networks like LinkedIn and Xing are excluded, as are messaging services like WhatsApp. The companies are also obliged to produce a yearly report detailing how many posts they deleted and why.²⁷

Europe is waiting for the effect and results of this law, especially since a new study called “Fanning the Flames of Hate: Social Media and Hate Crime”²⁸ with Germany as topic of research finds that anti-refugee rhetoric on Facebook correlates with physical attacks on refugees.

Key questions

- Who should be responsible for the prevention of violence against refugees?
- Should all EU Member States follow the example of Germany and legislate against hate speech in social media?
- What actions should the Member States take towards anti-immigrant groups?
- What role does the media play in the current context?

²⁶ <https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21734410-new-social-media-law-causing-disquiet-germany-silencing-hate-speech-cannot-define-it>

²⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/05/tough-new-german-law-puts-tech-firms-and-free-speech-in-spotlight>

²⁸ <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/staff/crschwarz/fanning-flames-hate.pdf>

Links for further research

- Attitudes towards immigration in Europe: myths and realities https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/findings/IE_Handout_FINAL.pdf
- Identity, Activism and Hatred: Hate Speech against Migrants on Facebook in the Czech Republic in 2015 https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c3/a2089/f28/NS16-1_Identity,%20Activism%20and%20Hatred-Hate%20Speech%20against%20Migrants.pdf
- Current migration situation in the EU: Hate Crimes 2016 <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/current-migration-situation-eu-hate-crime?cldee=ZWxpc2FiZXRoLnNjaG1pZHQtGIIYmVyQHBpY3VtLm9yZw%3D%3D&recipientid=contact-18822bf59bf4e4119de700155d040d18-1e6940d09d9c4a3cabd63080d8576b66&esid=ef69adc2-08b0-e611-80ce-00155d040a3b&urlid=0>
- Measuring the Reliability of Hate Speech Annotations: The Case of the European Refugee Crisis 2016 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307456661_Measuring_the_Reliability_of_Hate_Speech_Annotations_The_Case_of_the_European_Refugee_Crisis
- List of videos about the refugee crisis and their integration in European countries
 - Understanding the Refugee Crisis in Europe, Syria, and around the World https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVV6_1Sef9M
 - Going Dutch. Holland's refugee integration success story- RT Documentary - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8KR4Bry2kA>
 - Helping Refugees Integrate | Irem Ergun | TEDxWarwick <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpk7haVIJD0>
 - Integrating refugees in Germany | DW Documentary https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNSunDx5S_g

Committee on Security and Defence (SEDE)

Sovereignty, security, prosperity? Keeping in mind the protection of common values and interests, what steps should the EU take to strengthen the defence cooperation between Member States and foster the EU's resilience against external threats?

by Fiona Rechberg (AT)

Introduction of the topic

In Eastern Europe, Russia is radically violating the sovereignty of the EU's neighbouring countries²⁹, as well as constantly intruding the airspace and territorial waters of EU Member States. The war in the middle east and the spread of terrorism is threatening the stability of Europe, while cyber-attacks are increasing and major geopolitical shifts across the world are ongoing. All of this is generating the most complex and resilient European security landscape since the end of the Cold War.

The EU is the second largest military spender of the world³⁰ when adding up the different states' expenses. However, it is far away from being the second largest military power. This can be seen as a consequence of inefficient spending. Furthermore, while most defence budgets in Europe are being cut down, other nations such as China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia have been increasingly arming themselves.

With Europe being exposed to numerous hybrid security threats, voices demanding a common European defence alliance are ascending. How can the European Union meet the necessary standards and enhance and improve the defence cooperation of the Member States, especially when it comes to differing opinions among the diverse nations of the Union?

Key conflicts

The claim for "more Europe" in defence is strong³¹, yet some factors prevent it from becoming a reality: missing political will for cooperation, the traditional reliance on the NATO and the fragmentation of military cooperation.

²⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/epsc/publications/strategic-notes/defence-europe_en

³⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/epsc/sites/epsc/files/strategic_note_issue_4_en.pdf

³¹ <https://euobserver.com/opinion/127958>

The lack of cooperation in the field of security and defence among EU Member States has already badly affected the Union in the past, for example during the refugee crisis in 2016, when a common crisis management in order to tackle the occurring issues could not be set up and the countries were unable to define a shared position. To tackle this crucial problem the EU has established the Permanent Structured Cooperation on security and defence (PESCO)³², however, the newly created framework is lacking the possibility of direct military input and already facing severe challenges concerning the differing opinions of Member States. This is making it increasingly hard to implement concrete projects and to reach strategic autonomy concerning an international approach towards security and defence. It should also be kept in mind that some EU Member States are unwilling to implement more military cooperation, as it would collide with their neutrality (Austria, Sweden, Finland, Ireland).

Another arising issue is the increasing threat originating from Russia for eastern European states, as well as the EU's partner countries, as it is violating their sovereignty and increasing its military presence at the borders. Many eastern states are deeply concerned about the superior power of the Russian army.

The majority of Member States are currently relying on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)³³ when it comes to defence. Especially now, after the election of US president Donald Trump, voices stressing the importance of lessening the dependence on the US, also because of their uncertain stance towards Russia, are growing louder.

Many people are also demanding a common European army as part of defence integration, in order to stand up as a military superpower and be able to act globally in the field of defence and peace-keeping.

Key actors

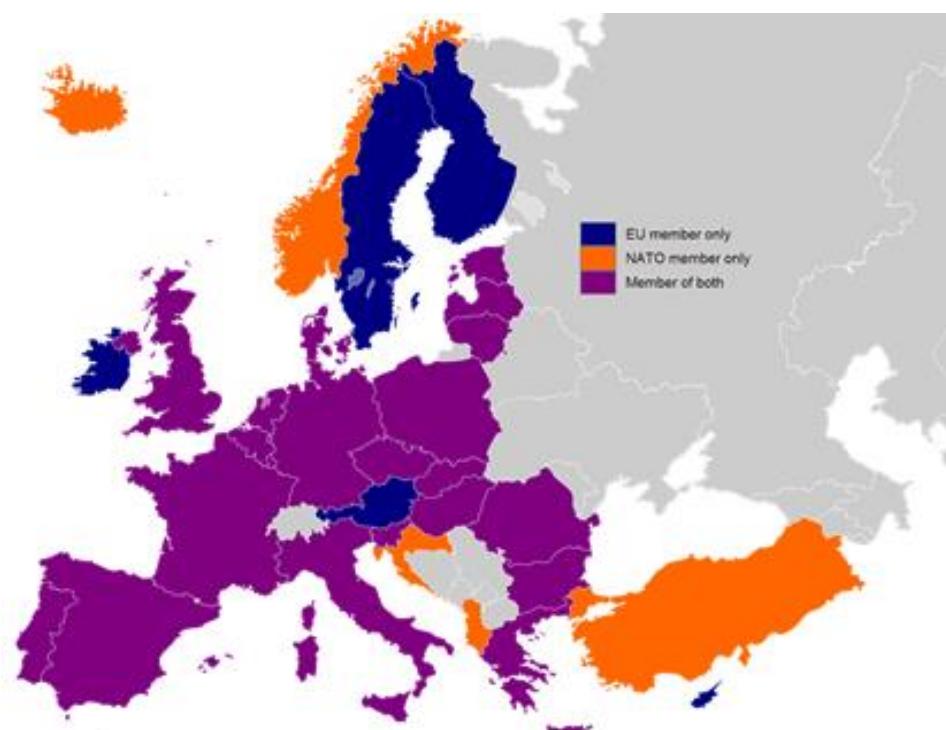
EU - In the field of defence the EU mostly relies on national armies for protection and crisis management. Many Member States however are not able to meet today's military standards, as they are often cutting down defence budgets. The majority of Member States are part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which should provide them with mutual protection.

³²https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/34226/Permanent%20Structured%20Cooperation%20%28PESCO%29%20-%20Factsheet

³³ <https://www.nato.int/>

Russia - Many perceive Russia as a threat to the sovereignty of the eastern EU Member States, as well as Eastern Partnership countries (e.g. Ukraine, Georgia). With the current situation in the Ukraine, Russia is trying to assert its dominance over the post-soviet states by increasing its own military presence in the area, as well as indirectly, in the case of Crimea also directly, threatening its partner's sovereignty.

NATO - A large number of NATO troops and bases are currently stationed in Europe. Its goal is to defend the countries which are part of NATO. As some EU Member States are not part of the alliance, they are being excluded from the planning of the European security strategy. Another arising issue is the uncertain stance of the US towards Russia, which is threatening some of the Member States.



Picture: A map of Europe indicating EU Member States and NATO Member States

Measures in place

- **Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)**

The Common Security and Defence Policy³⁴ enables the EU to take action in peace-keeping operations, conflict prevention and in strengthening the international security. The CSDP is an essential unit of the EU's comprehensive concept concerning crisis management.

- **Permanent Structured Cooperation on security and defence (PESCO)**

The Permanent Structured Cooperation on security and defence is a framework ratified by 25 Member States to deepen defence cooperation amongst EU Member States who are capable and willing to do so. The main goals of PESCO are to encourage Member States to increase their respective defence budgets, launch operational projects and to serve as a platform of communication. However critics have already raised concerns about the framework, as it is lacking direct military input and there are already clashing opinions on the fundamental aims of the cooperation.

- **European Defence Action Plan**

The European Defence Action Plan³⁵ aims to set up a European Defence Fund to support investment in research in the military field and the joint development of defence equipment and technologies. It should also foster and support suppliers to the defence industry and strengthen the single market for defence.

- **Battlegroups**

Since 2007 the battlegroups³⁶ are part of the EU's military portfolio. They are often based on contributions from a coalition of Member States and consist of a battalion-sized force (1500 troops). These troops rotate actively, so that two are ready for deployment at all times. However, although the battlegroups have been formed 11 years ago, they have never been employed.

³⁴ https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/common-security-and-defence-policy-csdp_en

³⁵ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-4088_en.htm

³⁶ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/33557/EU%20Battlegroups

Key questions

- How can the EU deal with the lack of cohesion among Member States, concerning defence cooperation especially in the field of crisis management?
- Should the EU implement a common European army to lessen the dependency on the US and to stand equally against military superpowers such as Russia?
- Which stances should the EU take in order to meet the different opinions of Member States on security and defence management on the already existing frameworks?

Links for further research

- European defence integration, current situation: https://ec.europa.eu/epsc/publications/strategic-notes/defence-europe_en
- President of the European Commission on security and defence integration https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/40100/president-juncker-munich-security-conference-eu-become-more-capable-world-politics_en
- The Common Security and defence policy https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/common-security-and-defence-policy-csdp_en
- Permanent Structured Cooperation on security and defence https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/34226/permanent-structured-cooperation-pesco-factsheet_en
- Security threats
<https://www.riskhedge.com/post/security-threats-are-splitting-eu>
- Voices on PESCO <http://www.gmfus.org/blog/2017/11/14/inclusive-pesco-moves-forward-despite-remaining-concerns>
- Explanation PESCO
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsjp1uJgeAc>



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