



Preparation Kit

Salo 2018 – Regional Session of EYP Finland

12–14th of October 2018

EUROPEAN **YOUTH** PARLIAMENT
SUOMI FINLAND



COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS (AFCO)

With the European elections fast approaching in the spring of next year against a backdrop of growing support for Eurosceptic parties across Member States, how should the EU respond towards growing skepticism among the European people concerning its functioning and democratic legitimacy?

Chairperson: Gvantsa Nadiradze (GE)

Key Terms

- **Democratic deficit:** a perceived deficiency in the way a particular democratic government, institution, etc., functions in relation to the principles of democracy, especially with regard to a lack of accountability and control over the process of policy-making.
 - **Euroscepticism:** a term used by people who argue that European Union (EU) institutions, and their decision making procedures, suffer from a lack of democracy and seem inaccessible to the ordinary citizen due to their complexity.
 - **Bureaucracy:** excessively complicated administrative procedure.
 - **Populism:** a political approach that strives to appeal to ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups; Support for populist politicians or policies.
1. **Eurobarometer:** series of public opinion surveys conducted regularly on behalf of the European Commission since 1973. These surveys address a wide variety of topical issues relating to the European Union throughout its member states.

1. Relevance and explanation of the problem

Since 2008, the European Union has gone through a series of unfortunate events that have destabilised the Union. Brexit, the 2015 refugee crisis, the invasion of Crimea in the Union's Eastern neighbour in Ukraine, and the economic crisis of 2008 have all led to a change in the European politics. They also led to insecurity, which has given rise to a disaffection with mainstream politics and institutions at all levels. The EU institutions, built up over six decades, are not ideally suited to responding flexibly to challenges such as the single currency, migration or foreign and security policy. The union remains vulnerable to the charges of operating with a "democratic deficit" that alienates many voters. The mistrust towards the actions of public authorities and created a vacuum too easily filled with populist and nationalistic rhetoric. The road to EU becoming more transparent and democratically accountable needs to be better defined.

2. Key conflicts

Democratic Deficit and Bureaucracy

'Elected national parliaments are overruled by faceless, faraway bureaucrats detached from the diverse realities of life around the continent.' - as described by [Debating Europe](#). The concept of the EU democracy cannot be explained as definition of "nation-state democracy" as "the government by the people" through the citizen participation. Since the European Union is not a classical establishment or phenomena, it is not easy to decide according to which democratic standards this establishment should be evaluated. There are two major arguments concerning the democracy deficit in EU. First one argues that the EU's institutional design and structure is not democratic. Second argument claims that the EU is not capable of being a "real" democracy in principle, since the structural and social prerequisites, on which democratic rule depends, are lacking at the European level meaning that there is one natural government as such.

Democratic legitimacy has been a sensitive issue. Although the **Lisbon Treaty** gave greater authority to the **Parliament** and each decision is now taken by a directly or indirectly elected public official, EU voters

feel they are not represented in the decision-making process, and this has led to disengagement with the EU institutions. This disaffection with Europe was clearly expressed during the latest European elections, which reached an **all-time low voter turnout of 42.54% in 2014**.

The question of **future integration** is a divisive issue across Europe. Further integration would see more competencies removed from the Member States and placed under the control of the EU institutions. **Taxation and greater fiscal competences** are a critical area of concern. Some feel that this creates **necessary oversight** on national governments and puts the essential **checks and balances** in place to prevent a future crisis. Others believe that national governments should retain this power as they are best aware of the public's opinion and society's needs. There is also a **lack of transparency** and resistance to introducing **lobbying regulations** and remove the **revolving door culture** between the EU institutions and industry.

These conflicts of interest call into question the motives of individual officials.

Populism and Europe's Rising Far Right

Populism as a term was coined in rural America in the late 19th century when farmers protested against predatory banks and unscrupulous capitalism. Today, though, the populists are politicians who promise simplistic solutions to complex problems.

Europe needs to counter the new populism if its damage is not to become irreversible. Unity is European citizens' chief defence against accelerating global pressures that are both economic and political; the EU's survival depends on its members' democratic institutions, and these are among political extremists' main targets.

Europe's populist and radical parties' in different countries (such as [Hungary](#), [Poland](#), [Netherlands](#), [Italy](#), [Austria](#)) share an aim: to weaken and even destroy the institutions of Europe's liberal order.

3. Key Actors

European Commission plays a vital role in shaping policy decisions and the direction of the EU. The Commission **must propose all legislative** initiatives and changes and therefore referred to as the **"government" of the EU**. Its main aim is to represent the interests of the EU as a whole. Even though the Member States propose the Commissioners, they have to act independently and in no way should they act in the interest of their respective country. Its goal is toward **closer European integration** as set out under the Five Presidents Report for a closer economic and monetary union.

European Parliament The Parliament has received greater powers in recent years. It now has the same rights as the Council with the ordinary legislative procedure, which is the most common form of enacting legislation. The twin objectives of the members of parliament are to **represent both their constituents but also the greater strengthening of European values**. However, with the rise of Anti-European groups on the extremes of the political spectrum in the 2014 European elections, there is concern that gridlock will become a feature of the parliament and calls into question what exactly are European values.

Council of the EU The Council of the EU (or differently known as the Council of Ministers) consists of a Minister from each Member State, who is responsible for the matter being discussed. It has legislative powers and in order for a legislative act to pass, both the Parliament and the Council must approve it.

European Council The European Council is the EU institution that defines the **general political direction and priorities of the European Union**. It works on a consensus basis and with growing division among the Member States fearing there will be a lack of unity on decision making thus leading to a lack of leadership and direction for the Union as a whole. It is a problematic situation as economic and political instability within Member States force political leaders to look inwards and focus on seeking political gains rather than the interest of the union.

Member States The political landscape across the many Member States is currently very **volatile** and has led to unclear mandates for national political parties who are struggling to form stable governments. This instability has resulted in a lack of engagement with the traditional political parties and move towards the extremes.

4. Key Actors Measures in Place

National Parliaments, political parties, youth organisations, in addition to a wide range of factors, play a massive role in strengthening the democracy in the EU.

The Lisbon Treaty introduced the ECI. For an ECI to be successful more than one million people have to back the initiative from at least 7 out of 28 Member States. Because of the initiative, more European citizens are included in the decision-making process, which naturally, increases the democratic legitimacy in the EU.

The most visible aspect of the EU's involvement in establishing democracy in the member states, is the support given to elections in several countries through election monitoring. For this purpose of developing and instilling democracy, the EU has been building partnerships and has been engaged in persuasion and confidence-building both locally and nationally, in order to support democracy in these countries. In order to support non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and independent media, each and every measure is taken. For the "projects for democracy", there is a special budget under the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) initiative. It is necessary to analyze the democratic legitimacy of the EU within its own structure, since democracy is a core value for the EU as understood from its activities and proceedings.

5. Conclusion

The EU is lacking trust and attention from its citizens. The main issue is that the EU is disliked because of its complexity and its lack of competence in key areas. Trust in the EU had been considerably declining, as demonstrated by the Eurobarometer. The media tends to present the European elections as an "opportunity for the citizens to unleash their anger".

In an interdependent and liberal world context, it is crucial for the EU to form a real political union and to have more weight on the international level in order to respond to the challenges of the 21st century. These environmental, economic and social challenges are significant and an individual country cannot face these alone. Hence, the only solution is to unite the Member States. Federalism remains the most desirable solution for the EU in its fight against Euroscepticism. Europe, which is too individualist and lacks humanism, can only advance by adopting a federalist approach.

Euroscepticism is dangerous for the peace between European citizens because it creates competition between the states. European citizens have to realise the importance of the survival of the EU. Unfortunately, in times of economic crisis, it is difficult to get the community vision across. Likewise, the citizens seem uninterested in the issues at stake of European politics. EU is not the problem but the solution.

FURTHER RESEARCH

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/mar/03/brexit-has-put-other-leaders-off-wanting-to-leave-says-ec-vice-president>

<https://www.economist.com/special-report/2017/03/23/how-to-address-the-eus-democratic-deficit>

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/democratic_deficit.html

<http://www.ukpolitical.info/european-parliament-election-turnout.htm>

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/world/europe/europe-far-right-political-parties-listy.html?mcubz=0>

<https://www.friendsofeurope.org/publication/how-eu-can-defeat-populism>

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/democratic-change_en

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/941976/EU-news-five-eurosceptic-countries-threaten-European-Union>

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS (DROI)

Members of LGBTI+ Community face discrimination in European countries on a daily basis. What measures should be taken on legislative and societal levels to ensure equal rights and further integration of sexual minorities?

Chairperson: by Eoghan O'Kelly (IE)

Key terms

- **LGBTI+:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex +; refers to the community to which the aforementioned groups of people and others belong to.
- **Discrimination:** the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex.
- **Transgender:** A transgender person is someone whose sense of identity and gender does not match their birth sex.
- **Intersex:** the term 'intersex' is used to refer to a variety of conditions in which a person is born with anatomy that is not traditionally considered male or female.
- **Sterilisation:** a surgery performed on a person to make them infertile.
- **Transphobia:** dislike or prejudice towards transgender people.
- **Homophobia:** dislike or prejudice towards homosexuals.
- **Normalisation surgery:** surgery carried out on intersex people to make their genitalia appear more typical.
- **Gender dysphoria:** the condition of feeling one's emotional and psychological identity as male or female to be opposite to one's biological sex.

1. Relevance and explanation of the problem

In light of the recent decriminalisation of homosexuality in India, there is no better time to examine the rights afforded to LGBTI+ Europeans. Despite great leaps towards a more tolerant and accepting society, members of the LGBTI+ community in Europe still face many obstacles on a daily basis. Currently only half of the 28 member states have legalised same-sex marriage and last year Berlin-based gay counselling and victim support centre Maneo noticed a rise in numbers seeking its services. It dealt with 800 cases last year and, of 407 it was able to analyse more closely, found that 324 fulfilled their definition of homophobic or transphobic attacks: physical attacks, verbal abuse and theft.

The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (EUFRA) is in the process of carrying out their second EU-wide survey of the LGBTI+ community; their views and their experiences with discrimination and hate crime. Transgender and intersex people are particularly vulnerable to discrimination. Transgender individuals are required in 24 countries across Europe to undergo sterilization before a change in gender identity can be legally recognised, and a worryingly high level of transgender Europeans have suffered vicious bullying, violent abuse and mistreatment at the hands of their fellow citizens. In Europe there is no comprehensive statistical data on medical treatments or surgeries performed on Intersex children. The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe has repeatedly pointed out that intersex children are often unwillingly subjected to surgery and hormonal or other medical treatments aimed at imposing a sex on them.

It is extremely important that we do our utmost to end discrimination and secure equal rights for LGBTI+ citizens throughout the European Union.

2. Key conflicts

Currently the EU protects the right to same-sex sexual activity and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation has been banned since 2000. However, it is the prerogative of each member state to create their own laws regarding greater protections such as same-sex marriage, adoptions and civil unions. As of September 2018, only 14 out of the 28 Member States legally recognise same-sex marriages.

How can we encourage Member States to grant this right to LGBTI+ people, along with other rights such as same-sex adoption, recognition of civil unions and of same-sex couples?

Transgender people often fall victim to hate crimes and discrimination. In a 2016 study across 12 countries, Transgender Europe discovered 141 cases of transphobic hate crimes, ranging from homicide to serious bodily harm and sexual assault. There are many common misconceptions surrounding transgenderism such as a lack of understanding regarding issues including gender dysphoria and transitioning which can lead to hostile attitudes towards the transgender community in many countries. Also, many countries lack the proper health services to adequately support their transgender citizens.

What can we do to remedy the aforementioned problems and promote a more tolerant attitude towards transgender people across Europe?

Intersex people suffer from a lack of recognition in the EU and worldwide. Intersex individuals' chromosomal and anatomical characteristics do not belong exclusively to either sex and this can often be a barrier preventing them from attaining equal rights. In addition, many intersex infants are subjected to 'normalisation' surgeries, which parents are often led to believe are necessary for their child to have a happy and healthy life. These surgeries can have lasting effects on a person's physical and mental health, including physical pain, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). One 2005 study found that five such surgeries were performed in the U.S. each day.

How can we increase awareness about intersex issues in order to prevent intersex people from being subjected to non-consensual, invasive surgeries?

3. Key actors

Member States

Although the EU does have legislation in place protecting same-sex sexual activity and discrimination in employment, member states have control over same-sex marriage, adoption and rights for transgender and intersex individuals.

Council of Europe

In 2015 the Council of Europe published an issue paper regarding human rights and intersex people. Founded in 1949, the Council is Europe's leading human rights organisation, and is bound to carry out and advocate the decisions of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The European Parliament's Intergroup on LGBT Rights

The Intergroup on LGBTI Rights is an informal forum for Members of the European Parliament who work to advance and protect the fundamental rights of LGBTI people. Members of the Intergroup will usually take a positive stance on LGBTI issues when they draft reports or amendments, when they vote in the Parliament, or when they deal with constituency affairs.

Transgender Europe (TGEU)

TGEU is a non-governmental organisation working towards a Europe where “each person can live according to their gender identity and gender expression without interference and where trans people and their families are respected and valued.” They are one of Europe's most important advocates for transgender rights and are responsible for coordinating efforts on national and local levels.

Organisation Intersex International Europe (OII Europe)

OII Europe is an autonomous affiliate of OII (Organisation Internationale des Intersexués), and acts as an umbrella organisation of European human rights based intersex organisations. Their aims include “full implementation of human rights, bodily integrity & self-determination for intersex people” and “promotion of self-awareness, visibility and recognition of intersex people”.

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

This is the EU's centre of fundamental rights expertise. It is one of the EU's decentralised agencies. These agencies are set up to provide expert advice to the institutions of the EU and the Member States on a range of issues. The Agency helps to ensure that the fundamental rights of people living in the EU are protected. In 2013 the Agency published a comprehensive survey detailing LGBT persons' experiences of discrimination, violence and harassment.

4. Measures in Place

Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Articles 10 & 19)

The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union is one of the two main treaties of the EU which form the basis for EU law by outlining the scope of the EU's authority to legislate and the principles of the laws in areas where the EU can legislate. Articles 10 and 19 state the EU's intent to combat discrimination on the grounds of sex and sexual orientation in all its policies and legislation.

Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Article 21)¹³

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union enshrines human rights for EU citizens and residents into EU law. The Charter became legally binding in 2009 with the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon and the EU's courts will block any legislation adopted by the EU's institutions which goes against the Charter. Article 21 prohibits discrimination based on a number of grounds, including sex and sexual orientation.

Resolution 2048¹⁴

A Council of Europe resolution which calls for, among many other things, an end to the requirement of sterilisation and to the requirement of a mental health diagnosis in order for Member States to recognise a change in gender identity.

International Gay and Lesbian Association Europe: Documentation and Advocacy Fund¹⁵

This is a fund which is used by ILGA Europe to give small grants to LGBTI+ organisations across Europe. Since 2006 they have given out over 100 grants. They do this mainly by regranting money which has been given to them by large funders.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, it is evident that we still have a long way to go in terms of LGBTI+ rights in the EU. Despite the progress that has been made in recent years there is a stigma surrounding the LGBTI+ community prevails in many Member States. Often their cries for justice, freedom of persecution and equal treatment are ignored. This silencing and smothering of the LGBTI+ community has gone on far too long and it is the duty of the European Union to put a stop to it.

VIDEO LINKS:

[Video summarising the results of the EU FRA LGBT Survey](#)

[Quick video showing some intersex people talking about their experiences](#)

FURTHER READING:

<http://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/lgbti>

<https://euobserver.com/lgbti>

<https://www.euronews.com/2018/05/14/which-european-countries-have-the-best-and-worst-lgbt-rights->

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (ENVI I)

With the inevitable melting of Arctic ice exposing unprecedented economic opportunities on the borders of the European Union, how should the EU best position itself in order to take advantage of these opportunities, whilst remaining environmentally responsible and maintaining political stability in the region?

Chairperson: Alina Solovei (UA)

Key Terms

- **The Greenhouse Effect:** The Earth's atmosphere acts like a giant greenhouse: it naturally traps some of the sun's radiation and warms the Earth. The greenhouse effect also traps heat produced on Earth, such as greenhouse gases, and reduces the amount of heat that escapes into outer space.
- **Albedo:** Dark and light surfaces absorb different amounts of this radiation. For example, the dark ocean absorbs more heat than white sea ice. Albedo is a measure of a surface's reflectivity: surfaces with high reflectivity have high albedo, and surfaces with low reflectivity have low albedo.
- **Ice-Albedo Feedback:** The Arctic sea ice's high albedo helps regulate the global climate. However, as the climate warms, the sea ice melts, and the new ice-free waters absorb more heat. These warmer waters cause more ice to melt, which opens new waters to absorb more heat, which melts more ice.
- **Pingoes:** Warming temperatures have accelerated the rate of natural underground methane leaks. When the pressure becomes too great, the ground explodes, leaving 30 to 40-meter-wide craters.
- **Exclusive economic zone:** All nations, in the Arctic and elsewhere, can claim an "exclusive economic zone," (EEZ), that extends 200 nautical miles from shore. Nations have the right to explore the waters and seabed within their EEZs—but not the surface, which is considered international water.

1. Relevance and explanation of the problem

Melting ice is not only issue that affects the Arctic, but the whole world by invoking global climate change. Global warming is one of the most disturbing environmental issues in the past few years. Melting ice leads to the major methane emissions in the atmosphere which stimulates global warming. According to the 2016 Arctic Report Card, October 2015 to September 2016, was 3.5C warmer than the early 1900s. A recent study by Nature Climate Change estimated that between 30-50% of sea ice loss is due to climate variability, while the rest occurs because of human activity. Many animals and fish are endangered because of the change in the environment; melting of the greenland ice sheet increases the risk of flooding. For northern countries, when the ice blocks melt there will be a need to apply border defence forces. However, the receding ice in the Arctic exposes unprecedented economic opportunities such as, new navigation routes, mining and fishing. New opportunities connected with melting sea ice have ignited global attention to one of the most remote places in the world, fanning the flames of the 'Arctic debate'.

2. Key Conflicts

Economic profit vs environmental responsibility

On the one hand, arctic ice melting stimulates CO₂ exposure, which due to the greenhouse effect leads to even more warming. On the other hand, ice melting allows to explore more territory and get access to major oil and gas storages as well as gives way to establish new transportation routes which would lower transportation costs. However, new weather conditions will increase the presence of icebergs floating around and vessel traffic intensification is likely to have negative effects on the marine ecosystem

The major economic benefit is new shipping route. Navigable routes **like the Northwest Passage and the Northern Sea Route** would considerably improve connections between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. On the one hand, it allows to lower transportation costs, but on the other hand, new weather conditions will increase the presence of icebergs floating around and vessel traffic intensification is likely to have negative counter effects on the marine ecosystem.

Another economic benefit is mining and access to the oil and gas storages. The Arctic harbors a rich reserve of minerals, including nickel, copper, platinum, diamonds, gold, lead, zinc and many others. However, mining is usually conducted on frozen ground, so thawing permafrost and erosion is likely to increase challenges and thus also the costs for the industry in the future.

Fishing industry would also benefit from the access to the arctic waters. However, warmer waters will increase stock productivity for some species but will also cause some others to migrate further north, whilst still others would decline, mainly due to competing species or changes in nutrient conditions due to currents.

Political tensions

Now Arctic is controlled by eight countries: Russia (controls half of the population living in the Arctic, around 2 million people), the US, Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Finland. Melting sea ice is gradually making the Arctic Ocean accessible to economic development. Before the region truly opens for business, however, sovereign governments need to figure out which of them owns what. Vladimir Putin is reinvesting in northern security as if the Cold War is coming back, and sits atop a government that, as Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said Sunday, meddled in the 2016 U.S. election.

More than 4 million people live north of Earth's Arctic Circle, nearly half of them are in Russia and the rest are scattered among the seven other northernmost countries—the U.S., Canada, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Finland. About 500,000 of these people live among one of dozens of indigenous nations whose ancestry and bonds extend beyond modern borders. Many of these communities have banded together into large regional organizations that promote their interests among the international community.

In 2011 The Arctic Council has created oil-spill readiness plans and scientific endeavors, and it has divided areas of search-and-rescue responsibilities among its member nations.

A treaty ratified by 168 countries, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, governs how they should figure out which nations have rights to what. Russia in 2001 made the first-ever legal claim to seafloor rights beyond its EEZ under the convention. After its vision was rejected, the Kremlin resubmitted it in 2015. Denmark has also filed a North Pole claim, and Canada is expected to do the same.

3. Key Actors

The Arctic Council is a high-level intergovernmental forum that addresses issues faced by the Arctic governments and the indigenous people of the Arctic. **Eight member countries** constitute the council: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States as these are the eight countries with sovereignty over the lands within the Arctic Circle. The eight council members denied all observer applicants in 2015, including the European Union. The 2017 Ministerial meeting in Fairbanks, Alaska, decided on allowing in a new national observer, Switzerland, and several organizations, including the National Geographic Society and the World Meteorological Organization.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an international environmental treaty adopted on 9 May 1992 and opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June 1992. It then entered into force on 21 March 1994, after a sufficient number of countries had ratified it. The UNFCCC objective is to "stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system".

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) is an intergovernmental organization with a membership of 191 Member States and Territories. The annually published WMO Statements on the status of the World Climate provides details of global, regional and national temperatures and extreme weather events. It also provides information on long-term climate change indicators include atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases, sea level rise, and sea ice extent.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is a scientific and intergovernmental body under the auspices of the United Nations, set up at the request of member governments, dedicated to the task of providing the world with an objective, scientific view of climate change and its political and economic impacts. IPCC provides regular reports, in accordance with WMO statements, on climate change and its consequences for the environment.

Indigenous Arctic communities e.g., Inuit, Yu'pik. Native people to the Arctic are passionate about their lands for more personal reasons. Their livelihoods and culture is directly tied to their land they have adapted to. From the way they hunt and catch food, to the way they travel is dependent on living in the unique, icy tundra they live in today.

Politicians, legislators and lobbyists Numerous **scientists** from public, private, and government institutions are studying Arctic sea ice and have expertise in fields such as climate science, atmospheric science, and geophysics. **The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA)**, published in 2005, is an extremely important report because it is the first comprehensive evaluation of Arctic climate change.

Commissioned by the intergovernmental Arctic Council and nongovernmental **International Arctic Science Committee**, it involved the work of 300 international scientists as well as other experts. It utilizes five Global Climate Models to make projections about Arctic climate change in the future.

4. Measures in Place

In December 2017, nine countries—the U.S., Canada, Russia, Norway, Greenland/Denmark, China, Japan, Iceland, South Korea, and the European Union, agreed to hold off on allowing commercial fishing in the high seas of the Arctic Ocean for at least 16 years while scientists study the potential impacts on wildlife in the far north. It was an extraordinary act of conservation—the rare case where major governments around the world decided to proceed with caution before racing into a new frontier to haul up sea life with boats and nets. They set aside 1.1 million square miles of ocean, an area larger than the Mediterranean Sea.

In the social sphere of the Arctic ice debate there are the environmentalists who want to stop the spread of industrialization into "untouched" areas of the world. Some will take drastic action to stop countries and industries from polluting the Arctic with their oil drilling and ships traveling through the newly melted open ocean routes. For example, in 2012, Greenpeace volunteers chained themselves to a Russian ship en route to a location preparing for oil extraction in the Arctic sea. Native people to the Arctic work with organizations, like the Arctic Council, and with politicians to get their voices heard.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion it is clear that there are many challenges facing the melting of the Arctic caps. This is not only seen from an environmental perspective but from an economic and political perspective. Indeed the cooperation that is needed to ensure the environmental stability of the region may be lost if solutions to the geopolitical and economic tension are not found. Overall a fine balancing act must be taken into consideration.

FURTHER READING:

[IPCC, Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change, Meeting documentation](#)

[Bloomberg, Graphic The Political Arctic](#)

[Nasa, Arctic Wintertime Sea Ice extent is Among the Lowest on Record](#)

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY (ENVI II)

The production and use of plastics have grown since 1950s, causing maritime pollution worldwide. How can the EU cooperate with other entities to change global consumption trends and efficiently tackle the environmental damage that has already been done?

Chairperson: Aarni Rantanen (FI)

Key terms

- **Plastics:** Plastics are synthetic materials that consist of large, repeating molecules, called [polymers](#). Common plastic is [produced](#) from crude oil and other substances like cellulose, natural gas and salt by linking the [hydrocarbon](#) chains of the oil together, in a process called polymerisation.
- **Microplastics:** They are small plastic pieces, that are less than 5mm long. They can be found as [microbeads](#) in cosmetics, but often they are created from larger plastic debris in the sea, that is degraded by UV-radiation and water.
- **Marine debris:** Any persistent, man-made material that has been discarded in the marine or coastal environment. Encompasses other materials in addition to plastic, but plastic does make [60 to 90 per cent](#) of debris coming from land-based sources.
- **Product life cycle:** The amount of time during which a product is conceived and developed, brought to market and later removed from the market. Can be extended with [recycling](#), for example.
- **The waste hierarchy:** It is a tool that [ranks](#) waste management options from least to most favourable, based on the sustainability of the actions. The hierarchy has been determined by the EU Waste Framework [Directive](#) alongside with the “[polluter pays principle](#)”.

1. Relevance and explanation of the problem

In 1907 a material called [bakelite](#) was developed. This and all the other types of plastics that followed opened an uncountable number of doors for industry as they were more light, durable and cheap than anything humanity had ever seen. Now in 2018, we produce over [300 million tonnes](#) of plastic annually and this number is expected [to double](#) in the next 20 years. We are faced with a problem: at some point, we collectively decided to start using this everlasting material in single-use items, that are discarded after a very short time. The consequences of this have been unpredictable.

The EU creates around [27,1 million tonnes](#) of plastic waste every year and globally the number is much larger. Essentially all plastic ever created that has not been incinerated is still somewhere on the globe in its original form. Only [30% of plastic waste](#) is collected in the EU ([9% globally](#)) and for example, [12% of the](#)

[waste](#) is burned, globally giving rise to 400 million tonnes of CO₂ annually.¹ This is equal to 3.5 billion barrels of oil wasted per year.²

Globally 5 to 13 million tonnes of plastic³ end up in the oceans, [500 000 tonnes](#) being from the EU. This is so much plastic, that it will [outweigh all the fish](#) in the ocean by 2050. In addition to this floating waste aesthetically ruining coastal areas and is affecting our ecosystems: In 2015 [90% of seabirds](#) had consumed plastic; this is becoming a huge threat for them in certain places. Many marine animals die from ingesting or getting tangled to this waste. Some of this plastic is fragmented into microplastics that are ingested by fish and go up the [food chain](#), by a process called [biomagnification](#), eventually ending up on the plates of humans. Many of the [plasticizers](#) in plastic are possibly [carcinogenic](#) and can [interfere with the hormonal systems](#) of humans, but this needs more research.

One thing is for sure: green choices can and should be made on an individual level, but new legislation and international cooperation on changing our consumption habits and developing the waste management infrastructures globally are crucial. The EU and its institutions, the United Nations and many individual countries are already taking action, but more can still be done.

2. Key conflicts

The question is, whether the EU should concentrate on cleaning the existing plastic litter in the oceans or, should it first stop the constant flow of new debris into seas. On the one hand, the plastic that is already in the ocean hurts the marine life and degrades into more microplastic. However, we do not know the exact effects of microplastics on health and on nature. On the other hand, is it useful to try to clean the oceans if they get littered again after a short while?

Many countries have taken the approach of [banning or restricting](#) the use of many plastic single-use items. This is a very efficient way to reduce waste, as packaging accounts for [39,9% of all plastic](#) waste in EU. However, this very extreme approach can hurt the economy, as we are currently extremely dependant on plastic. In addition, [one-third](#) of all food produced in the world will never be eaten and plastic is still [the best way](#) to protect foodstuff from spoiling.

Plastic debris could be cut down if it was recycled more efficiently. Microplastics can get into the oceans from dumps and burning it is also a dubious solution because of its high CO₂ emissions. Nevertheless, plastic is currently very difficult to recycle, as the myriad of different types of plastic is so vast. Cleaning old plastic is also demanding and costly, causing plastic recycling businesses to be largely unprofitable.⁴

¹ Ibid. Data refer to 2012

² A. Rahimi, J. M. García, Chemical recycling of waste plastics for new materials production, Nat. Chem. Rev. 1, 0046, 2017.

³ Jambeck et al, Plastic waste inputs from land into the ocean, Science, February 2015

⁴ French Environment and Energy Management Agency, Analyse de la chaîne de valeur du recyclage des plastiques en France, March 2015

Moreover, producers are also not convinced that recycled plastic meets the quality standards required for their products.

Many consumers do not know the impact of their choices on marine life. Even though there have been numerous campaigns on plastic pollution, an average EU citizen does not recognize this as a serious problem that will affect them directly. There has also been confusion between, [degradable, biodegradable and oxo-degradable plastics](#), as consumers do not understand the difference between these types of products and which ones are actually eco-friendly. Many have opted for other materials like canvas, that does not cause plastic pollution, but instead require significantly more energy, water and produce more CO₂ than plastic bags. This is a [question of trade-offs](#) and it is not known what approach is the greenest.

EU is not the largest plastic polluter in the world. [90% of the world's plastic waste comes from 10 rivers](#), out of which 7 are in Asia. However, international cooperation is a controversial topic. Some argue that helping developing countries and those nations that industrialised very fast with building their waste management infrastructure will be worthwhile. Wherever the plastic enters the ocean, the bad consequences are felt everywhere in the world. Nevertheless, others argue against this, that the EU ought not to spend its resources to help other nations. Discussion forums to share best practices are said to be enough to help these nations, but this may not be efficient enough.

One of the ultimate problems is that as long as there is plastic, there will be waste. There currently are no feasible alternatives for plastic, considering from an ecological and economic standpoints. Much research and development needs to be done on this, but it takes time, expertise and money. Some people are extremely convinced that plastic is an urgent problem for the humanity, but some are not. We currently do not know what effects plastic has on humans and the environment, which is unmotivating for many researchers and sponsors.

3. Key actors

European Commission: The European Commission is an institution of the European Union, responsible for proposing legislation, implementing decisions, upholding the EU treaties and managing the day-to-day business of the EU. It proposes legislation to tackle plastic waste in the EU and to reach the Sustainable Development Goals and to implement the EU Action Plan for a Circular Economy.

United Nations Environment Program (UNEP): Is an agency of the United Nations that coordinates environmental activities, assisting countries in implementing environmentally sound practices. These include their [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), that have been created to foster sustainable development, out of which goals 12, 13 and 14 are directly related to plastic and the oceans.

Member States: Environment is a [shared competence](#) of the EU, so it is the responsibility of the national governments to also implement legislation and act against plastic waste.

Businesses: They make the decisions about what materials to use in their products and packaging and how easy they make their products to recycle.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs): Raise awareness about plastic waste in the oceans and lobby for policy changes. For example, [the Plastic Bank](#), [the Ocean Cleanup](#) and [the New Plastics Economy](#) are examples of innovation and expertise used for a good cause.

European citizens: It is said that consumers can vote with their feet, as making green decisions affects the demand, also shifting the supply of products to an eco-friendlier direction. Remembering the three R rule helps: reuse, reduce, recycle.

4. Measures in place

The European Union and its Member States committed to reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations in September 2015. These include points about increasing recycling, educating people about the climate and protecting the oceans of the world.

A few steps have already been taken by the EU to reach the targets of the SDGs and international agreements like [the Paris Agreement](#) and [the London Convention](#). EU has introduced and maintained the [EU Ecolabel](#), [Our Ocean Conference](#) and [Horizon 2020](#) as ways to keep the consumers informed about their impact on the environment, ensuring communication between stakeholders and fostering innovation to tackle plastic waste in the seas. EU has also been enforcing the principles of [extended producer responsibility](#) by for example establishing the [European Platform on Life Cycle Assessment](#) (LCA).

In addition, the European Commission has created [the Circular Economy package](#), which identifies plastic as one of its priorities. The strategy lays down the foundations for a new plastic economy and classifies different kinds of legislative measures it is going to take to ensure the [circular flow](#) of plastic.

Furthermore, many Member States and other countries around the world have acted to cut plastic waste. In 2017, [China](#) banned the imports of foreign plastic waste, forcing many more developed countries to now deal with their own waste. [Kenya](#) recently introduced the toughest ban on plastic bags ever seen: producing, selling or using them will risk imprisonment for up to 4 years. Since 2015, [a law in the UK](#) has also required shops to charge 5p for all single-use plastic bags.

5. Conclusion

- What actions can the EU take to ensure that all the Member States will meet targets in the SDGs for protecting marine life?
- How can consumers in EU and around the world be made aware of the impacts of plastic waste and their choices on the marine ecosystems, and consequently the whole biosphere?
- Should stopping the creation of new plastic waste be prioritized over clearing the existing plastic debris in the seas?
- Should the EU start investing in finding alternatives for plastic or should finding more circular ways of using plastic be the goal instead?

- Should the EU concentrate in tackling its own plastic waste or help other nations outside the area develop their waste disposal infrastructures?

VIDEOS AND FURTHER READING

Videos:

Kurzgesagt – In a Nutshell: “[Plastic Pollution: How Humans are Turning the World into Plastic](#)”

A TED talk by David Katz: “[The surprising solution to ocean plastics](#)”

Articles:

[An article](#) by the British Plastics Federation (BPF) on plastic recycling

An *opinionated* but useful [article](#) written by an environmental activist Claire Le Guern.

Infographics, brochures and charts:

- An extremely useful [brochure](#) by the European commission on their strategy for plastics in a circular economy.
- Maps about [plastic waste](#), its [mismanagement](#), [mismanagement per capita](#) and its connection to [GDP per capita](#).
- [A factsheet](#) about the EU agencies that ENVI is responsible for keeping relations with
- An interesting [AskScience Reddit](#) forum on marine litter. Three ocean experts have answered questions about plastic in the seas around the world.

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY (FEMM)

What measures can be taken to ensure women in Europe have better control over their reproductive lives and consistent access to reproductive and sexual healthcare supports and services?

Chairperson: Cameron Dunn Merelle (FI)

Key terms

- **Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)** is a branch of human rights that is specifically applied to sexuality and reproduction. It represents **four separate areas: sexual health, sexual rights, reproductive health, and reproductive rights**. Distinctions between these four fields are not always made. Sexual health and reproductive health are sometimes treated as synonymous to each other, as are sexual rights and reproductive rights.
- **Women in Europe**, being the **main demographic** that we are working towards. All outcomes are for the benefit of European women or any woman currently living in a European country.
- **Contraception** (birth control) prevents pregnancy by interfering with the normal process of ovulation, fertilization, and implantation. There are different kinds of birth control that act at different points in the process, such as **the pill, condoms and injections**.
- **Reproductive and sexual healthcare**, for adolescents, in particular girls, access to reproductive or sexual health services is **crucial for their well-being and general health**. Most EU Member States regulate children's access to sexual and reproductive health services, including contraceptive methods, in the same way as other health services.
- **Female Genital Mutilation** (FGM) includes the procedure of removing partial or complete exterior of the female genitalia or non medical injury located around the same area. FGM affects 100-140 million women and overall it jeopardizes their health and integrity.

1. Relevance and explanation of the problem

Women's reproductive rights have come along way within the past half century. Although that being said, **women still face challenges** in terms of their own reproductive health, -education and -prevention. [6 jurisdictions in Europe](#) have **highly restrictive laws** on abortion and even in those states with legalized abortion women are [subjected](#) to denial of access to services, poor quality services, subjecting women's access to services to third party authorization, performance of procedures without the woman's consent: including forced sterilization, forced virginity examinations, and forced abortion. On top of all that, they are also [interrogated with questions](#) regarding their ethics, personal background relations with family members and the father and are made to believe that they are in fact the victim.

Representatives, including the **Human Rights Committee**, the **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**, the **Committee on Economic, Social and Political Rights (CESCR)** and the **Special Rapporteurs** on the right to the highest attainable standard of health, have played an increasingly visible role in calling for progressive abortion law reform.

Although violations of women's health and reproductive rights are often as unnecessary evaluation and actions take place. These rights are also especially at risk when they are objectified to [Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\) and early- or forced marriage](#).

2. Key conflicts

The UN, Council of Europe and further NGOs have all played an extremely impressive role and thoroughly fought for the chance to give women freedom over their own reproductive rights. However, many of the statistics stated aren't actually the situation on the ground.

Although [abortion is legal in 25 of 28 EU member states](#), this is not implying that abortion is readily available at the same standard. Each jurisdiction makes their own claims on abortion and they each have different terms and conditions that apply towards the actual abortion. Even if abortion is legal under a certain jurisdiction, doctors are legally allowed to deny care to anyone if it happens to go against their religion or morals. A prime example of this is Italy, as a high result of religion, even though abortion was deemed legal in 1979, a record breaking [70.9% of doctors refused to perform an abortion](#) in 2016. The remaining doctors that perform abortions are also charged with discrimination, hate and in most cases have to perform straining numbers of abortions every week. Resulting in the increasing number of declined abortions.

Religion actually plays a major role in the doctors ethics which, in the end is the deciding factor as to if an abortion is obtainable. Former communist countries with the exception of Poland follow rather liberal laws, with the Soviet Union being the first country to ever allow a legal abortion. Doctors in Poland are afraid of performing abortions with the risk that they will face prosecution by not having the qualifications or legal basis, hence abortion is often denied.

Women in Europe are also subjected to the extremely long waiting periods. [11 EU countries have mandatory waiting periods](#) that often exceed the time frame when an abortion is obtainable. Waiting periods could be anywhere between 3 days to 2 months and in extreme cases a period of 6 months has been implicated, which sets women outside of the time frame of before 10-18 weeks, depending on the jurisdiction of which an abortion is obtainable. For this reason women are then forced to spend large sums of money to travel abroad and get an abortion. It was estimated that over [7000 women travelled from Ireland to Britain for an abortion](#).

3. Key Actors

World health organization (WHO) provided legislation guidelines alongside healthcare to women who have undergone FGM and combat FGM as a whole

United Nations population fund (UNFPA) focus mainly on the improvement of reproductive health through the help of national protocol and strategies along with supplying birth control and health services to those needy. [The UNFPA launched](#) a 44 million euro program in partnership with UNICEF to fight the battle of FGM, it resulted with FGM being reduced by 40% in over 15 countries.

NGO's

European Institute of Women's Health (EIWH) established in 1996 they aim to gain support and influence from the European Parliament and the European Commission to positively ensure the health of women.

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) are a society movement aiming to ensure everyone their own control over their sexuality and sexual rights. In 2017 they provided over 50 million women specific services to combat STIs and sexual violence.

European Union

EU is a political and economic union that focus their attention primarily on the well-being of Europe. Their goal is to create a more uniform Europe. They respect human rights and democracy along with create common treaties and legislation to better the lives of all EU citizens.

European Commission

European Commission is a branch of the European Union. They are responsible for proposing and imposing new legislation along with maintaining and upholding Treaties. They have been active in the fight against reproductive rights, especially with FGM

Council of Europe

are responsible for the uphold of human rights and rule the law in Europe. Although they cannot make binding laws they attempt to influence other organisations. Their aim is to protect each woman of their SRHR through the means of eliminating discriminatory laws, providing sexual education and respect reproductive health care.

United Nations (UN)

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was an international bill adopted in 1979 and as of 2015, 189 states have agreed to the bill and implemented most of the 30 articles. The bill focused on the recognition of equal rights for men and women, along with legislations allowing women to acquire equal opportunities.

International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was held in 1994 Cairo, Egypt and resulted in the Programme of Action. This particular Programme included such topics as reduction of infant and child mortality, access to reproductive and sexual health services including family planning and reduction of infant and child mortality although it failed to address abortion in the programme at all. This was confirmed after the UN itself stated that the Reproductive Health did not include abortion.

4. Measures in Place

FGM has also been a rather big interest point especially in Europe. [FGM is prosecutable in all EU Member States](#). The Commission has in fact played a large role in the eradication of FGM. The Commission has taken it upon themselves to **ensure international protection for EU residents against FGM**, along with [offering asylum to those women](#) and children that are at proper risk of FGM or those that have a well-reasoned fear. They saw that **gender should be recognized** as a key factor in the threat of FGM and in the protection of women and children, as their fear, could be the result of their gender identity and sexual orientation. They have also reached out to other member states to increase the funding towards women suffering from FGM and to provide asylums.

The United Nations have had shown a great amount of interest in the well-being of women along with their rights concerning reproduction, health and safety. They have a substantial amount of actions towards a brighter future. A relevant case is the [U.N Fourth World Conference on Women \(Beijing 20+\)](#). They recognised women's rights as basic human rights and wanted to ensure that women could make their own decisions, in relation to childbearing, rape and genital mutilation.

The conference in question is said to be the most revolutionary breakthrough for women's rights producing the **Beijing programme for action** which is the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing women's rights. It is the joint collection of older programs and conventions with a progressional view in mind. Women's rights were split into [12 main areas of concern](#). The programme contained a strategy timetable for NGOs along with the motivation for NGOs to cooperate amongst each other to put an end to discrimination against women. Legal framework was set into place, which was to be implemented by all governmental and non-governmental organisations, as the most productive approach forward.

5. Questions to Consider

- How can the EU ensure women have a say on their own reproductive rights?
- What can be done about countries where abortion is illegal?
- How can proper education be ensured to women?
- What's the best approach for the EU in terms on the SDG?
- How can a more uniformed jurisdiction be formed?

FURTHER LINKS

- Info concerning european organisations
 - <https://www.euronews.com/2018/09/20/live-updates-austria-migration-korea-summit-and-northern-ireland-abortion>
 - <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/mapping-minimum-age-requirements/access-abortion-services>
- What organisations have done
 - <https://www.reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/documents/V4Repro%20Rights%20Are%20Human%20Rights%20-%20FINAL.pdf>
 - [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/599301/EPRS_BRI\(2017\)599301_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/599301/EPRS_BRI(2017)599301_EN.pdf)

- Current media attention

- <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/09/19/europe/ireland-abortion-repeal-intl/index.html>
- <https://www.france24.com/en/20180928-andorra-one-europes-last-abortion-holdouts>
- <https://www.euronews.com/2018/09/20/live-updates-austria-migration-korea-summit-and-northern-ireland-abortion>

- Videos

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kbl_YCAL8ng&frags=pl%2Cwn
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEXd9DMrz_o
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRauXXz6t0Y&t=233s&frags=pl%2Cwn>

“Organizations: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.” *Population Matters*, 2018, www.populationmatters.org/resources/organizations/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights/.

“Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Europe - Commissioner for Human Rights.” *Council of Europe*, Council of Europe, www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/women-s-sexual-and-reproductive-rights-in-europe.

“Which Countries Have the Strictest Abortion Laws?” *SBS News*, SBS News, 19 May 2018, www.sbs.com.au/news/which-countries-have-the-strictest-abortion-laws.

“Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995.” *United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm.

“Beijing Declaration.” *United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/declar.htm.

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL LIBERTIES, JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS (LIBE)

Bearing in mind the relevance of disinformation and propaganda, how can Member States ensure access to accurate news for everyone and to fight back in the era of information warfare?

Chairperson: Tuukka Rytkönen (FI)

Key Terms

- **Information warfare (IO)** in the post-Cold War era is a new mean of action, to directly reach and influence large masses in their own languages, by exploiting connectivity of the internet especially on social media platforms.
- **Perception management** is a practise of delivering the message to a selected individuals or groups, with a specific goal of affecting their conception of the reality.
- **Cyber security** compromises protection of the systems, networks and data in order to prevent hacking. Motives behind targeted attacks usually are; information theft, espionage and sabotage.
- **Propaganda** is a systematic advancement of information or ideas by interested party, usually with a political background that purposefully encourages or instils certain attitudes or responses.
- **Disinformation** is intentional spreading of false facts supplied by government or it's agent to a foreign power or on the media to impact policies in the receiving end.
- **Fake news** include misleading reporting and narratives, objective being to shift focus away from the real problems to conspiracy theories and confusion.
- **Media literacy** is partially present in some European countries school curriculums, and prepares youth have critical approach to the media content they consume.

1. Relevance and explanation of the problem

Throughout cold war era traditional forms of media were used as tools in information warfare to pursue national interests below level of armed conflict, but after downfall of Soviet Union in 1991 constantly developing technology reached a point where cyberspace was seen as easy, cost-effective method to target and communicate large message to large groups of people. Mainly information warfare takes place on the internet, whereas some accidentally connect it to cyberwarfare. Types of information used in IO are known as propaganda, misinformation and disinformation. After annexation of Crimea in 2014 by Russia, news were full of mysteries and conspiracies, west and east represented different views on the events that took place in their own favour. Confrontation present during Cold War was back, European Union together with United States placed economic sanctions as a counter-measures.

Vulnerable information technology and large social media platforms are easily taken advantage of, whereas international corporations have key role in further preventing the misuse of the social media sites. Recent election in the United States and in multiple European countries including in France proved that through networks of private persons and companies international players like Russia have power to impact political battlegrounds by boosting opposition parties. Growing trend of fake news and

disinformation are both used as ways to shift the focus from external challenges to internal issues as presidential election proved in 2016. From propaganda that pursues political interests to releasing of claims that are not based on facts but also distort the truth in order to divide opinions.

2. Key conflicts

In the modern era of information technology, lack of media literacy in the European societies underlines how influential misuse of world's connectivity on internet can lead to. Radical powershift in political battlegrounds around Europe during recent years, and the rise of far-end parties in the elections remarks change in people's opinions. Finding and understanding explaining factors behind this change requires a deeper look in wide range media consumption, what people actually believe and how opinions are formed. Educational systems on a national level have key role in teaching critical way of thinking to future generations into media that is so full of varying information. Individuals need to be able to make conclusions based on facts, not misleading fairy tales.

European countries and Russia share a long history, back in the day Europe was divided into West and East by iron curtain. Cold War lasted for decades, during which opposing sides were using different methods were used to fight indirectly; intelligence, arms race, propaganda delivered on state owned media, space race and proxy wars around the world. After collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia was heading towards pro-European direction, but soon after it took steps back with an aim to gain back influence and power it had lost in 1991. Form of information warfare started to shape at the same time as technology was advancing fast. Role of cyber-attacks became smaller when nations around the world in the early 2000s were seen as opportunity with little effort to interfere in other countries internally and weakening their external influence by creating confusion among citizens.

Keeping in mind different national interests, even allied states can work closely cooperate in one specific area, while in the other they might be pursuing highly beneficial short-term goal. Looking at whole picture, what is happening between different parties involved in the opposing side of information warfare raises controversial questions about the reality. Roles of the two rivals, Russia and USA, and how have they impacted European political systems in practise. Vice versa what positive effects collaboration with the NATO has brought back to European countries and to the EU.

3. Key Actors

European Union consists of 28 **member states**, which all share privileges and obligations of the membership in the political and economic areas.

European Commission proposes laws and is responsible for promoting general interest of the union, but also puts decisions made by **European Parliament** and **council of the EU** into practise.

Russian Federation is Eastern neighbour of the **European Union**, and has been accused of interfering in European states as well as presidential election in the US. Lately [opposition parties have been on the rise](#),

challenging biggest parties in the elections in Europe, while real sources of funding for the campaigns remain unclear.

United States of America (USA) is largest and the most powerful member in **NATO**, and traditionally has been close ally to some European countries, while Russia remains as the opponent in the world playgrounds. In the light of current circumstances, Europe is possibly blinded by the threat that Russia poses, meanwhile USA is also influencing in the background.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is international alliance that was originally formed to answer to the threat of [Warsaw Pact](#), respective military alliance of Soviet States during Cold War. When its member country is under attack, other members have agreed to support each other by a military response.

Council of the EU is the voice of member states, where ministers of different policy areas gather together to discuss, amend and adopt new laws, but also coordinate policies.

Leading information technology companies are aiming at making maximum profits, by cutting costs down in areas they don't have short-term interests to achieve, unlike national governments that are battling to tackle means of information warfare that social media giants as [Facebook are bending](#) too much, not coming up with immediate response to the effects false information could cause internally in Europe.

4. Measures in Place

European Council asked the EU High Representative, Federica Mogherini at the time, to present action plan on Russian ongoing propaganda and disinformation campaigns. [East StratCom task force \(EEAS\)](#) was established in 2015, but high potential to cooperate even more with EU institutions and member states is heavily limited by small budget.

Common security and defence policy (CSDP) dates back all the way to the Treaty of Brussels, which was signed in 1948. Idea of having mutual assistance and solidarity to have common understanding and agreement on defence concerns, but in practise it seems to be a weak link in the policies of the EU. So far only [34 civilian missions and military operations](#) have been launched on three continents.

[European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats \(Hybrid CoE\)](#) aims to improve common understanding of hybrid threats by providing of single dedicated location, for development of comprehensive [whole-of-government](#) response on both national and **EU-NATO** levels.

5. Conclusion

The world we live in challenges us to think critically, or to fall into path of believing false information. Some of the external powers around European Union are interfering in internally in order to destabilise capability of joint-decisions making processes, which in the eyes of the acting parties are giving them more space to work with on international level. Russia represents strong centralised power that is able to use information warfare as effective tool in the modern era, but we don't precisely know where does parties involved stand

at. Ability to manipulate public opinions on regional and national levels, with tools of information warfare like fake news are setting real value of democracy into a negative light. Implementing changes on a national level, done by your governments is the most effective way to deal with today's threats to the system is easier said than done. Steering societies back on track asks for improvements in the educational system and support for quality journalism.

Video links

- [Information warfare: It's the time EU fought back](#)
- [Russia and Information warfare: Aims, tools and implications to the West](#)

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