

Preparation Kit



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

WORDS OF WELCOME	2
THE EUROPEAN UNION EXPLAINED	3
COMMITTEE TOPICS	9
COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS (AFCO)	11
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS (AFET)	16
COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT (DEVE)	20
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS (DROI)	25
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AND MONETARY AFFAIRS (ECON)	29
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY (ENVI)	33
COMMITTEE ON INTERNAL MARKET AND CONSUMER PROTECTION (IMCO)	38
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE (INTA)	42
COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AFFAIRS (JURI)	46
COMMITTEE ON CIVIL LIBERTIES, JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS (LIBE)	50

WORDS OF WELCOME

Dear reader,

Here you can find the Preparation Kit that has been carefully drafted by the Chairs' Team of Lahti 2019. These hard-working and visionary individuals have done thorough research for you and put together an overview of each academic issue we will discuss at the session.

At Lahti we will have ten committees and by the time you read this, you have been allocated to one of them. This committee will be like your family and closest friends at the session and you are likely to have some similar interests in life and if you are lucky, some of them might still be your closest friends years after the session. To make the most out of this unique opportunity, I warm-heartedly encourage you to prepare beforehand and familiarise yourself with not only the topic your committee has but also reading the other Topic Overviews.

Furthermore, this Kit has been made to inspire further research on your topic with key words, actors and links for you to be able to make an educated stance and view by the time of the session. The Chairs' Team has put lot of effort and commitment to draft you this Kit with care and will continue answering you on academic questions, inquiries and tips for research. With this in mind, we are hopeful that you will take this chance and make use of the Kit and its provided tips to challenge yourself academically and prepare well for the session.

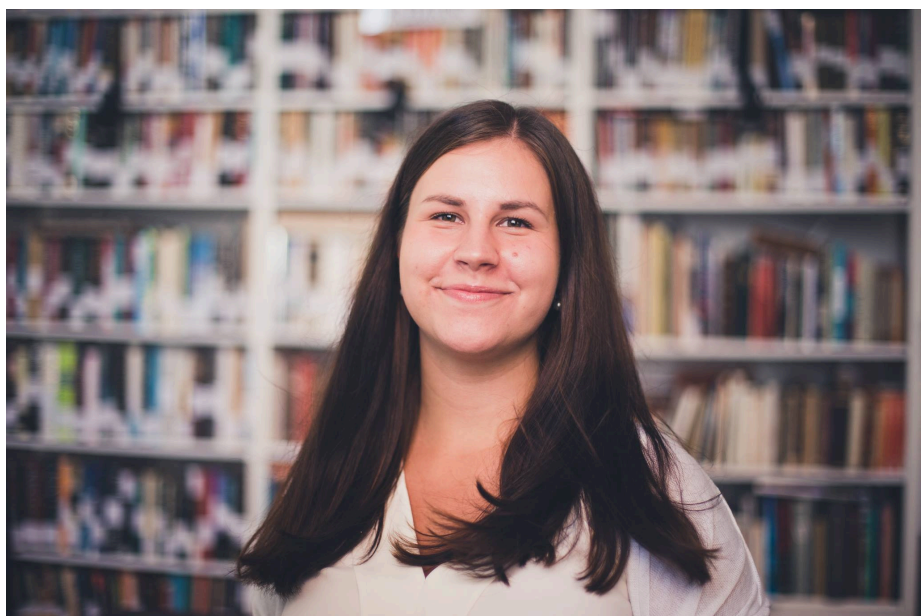
The Topic Overviews have been structured to four distinctive chapters, starting with 'Topic at glance' that wishes to bring the topic closer to the reader and outline the general issue. Secondly, 'Key Actors and Stakeholders' of the topic views the different participants to the issue and their internal relationships. Thirdly, the 'Key conflicts' chapter the challenges are viewed with care, framing the complexity of the issue. Fourthly, 'What has been done so far?' - section outlines past attempts and actions to solve the issue from which we can learn to construct a new strategy. Lastly, 'Further links' have been provided to motivate your exploration of the topic.

The topic selection has strong objectives behind it and we are hopeful that you will yourself realise the importance of the given issues in our lives, and thus encourage you to work hard to solve them.

With warm regards,

Juuli Salonen

President of Lahti 2019



THE EUROPEAN UNION EXPLAINED

I. WHAT IS THE EU?

The European Union (EU) is a unique economic and political partnership between 28 European countries which, together, cover much of the continent. The EU was created in the aftermath of the Second World War. The first steps were to foster economic cooperation: the idea being that

countries who trade with one another become economically interdependent and so more likely to avoid conflict. The result was the **European Economic Community (EEC)**, created in 1958, and initially increasing economic cooperation between six countries: Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Since then, a large single market has been created and continues to develop toward its full potential.

From economic to political union

What began as a purely economic union has evolved into an organisation spanning policy areas, from development aid to environment. A name change from the EEC to the European Union (EU) in 1993 reflected this. The EU is based on the rule of law: everything that it does is founded on treaties, voluntarily and democratically agreed by all the Member States. These binding agreements set out the EU's goals in its many areas of activity.

Mobility, growth, stability and single currency

The EU has delivered half a century of peace, stability and prosperity, helped raise living standards and launched a single European currency, the euro. Thanks to the abolition of border controls between EU countries, people can travel freely throughout most of the continent. And it has become much easier to live and work abroad in Europe. The single or 'internal' market is the EU's main economic engine, enabling most goods, services, money and people to move freely.

Another key objective is to develop this huge resource to ensure that Europeans can draw the maximum benefit from it.

Human rights and equality

One of the EU's main goals is to promote human rights both internally and around the world. Human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights: these are the core values of the EU. Since the 2009 signing of the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights brings all these rights together in a single document. The EU's institutions are legally bound to uphold them, as are EU governments whenever they apply EU law.

Transparent and democratic institutions

As it continues to grow, the EU remains focused on making its governing institutions more transparent and democratic. More powers are being given to the directly elected European Parliament, while national parliaments are being given a greater role, working alongside the European institutions. In turn, European citizens have an ever-increasing number of channels for taking part in the political process.

II. HOW DOES THE EU WORK?

The institutional structure of the EU cannot be compared to that of any other international organisation (e.g., the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or the United Nations). It is neither a centralised unity like a nation state, nor does it imitate a relatively loose structure, such as the Commonwealth of Nations or a confederation like the United States of America. The structure is unique and continuously developed. The Treaty of Lisbon marks the last big step in this process.

A. MAIN INSTITUTIONS

1. Within the institutional triangle

European Commission

The European Commission (EC) is the 'executive' power of the EU. One Commissioner is appointed by each Member State. The Commissioners are appointed by their respective Member States, approved by the European Parliament and put in charge of specific issues. The EC monitors the Member States' and the Union's adherence to the *acquis communautaire* (the ensemble of all EU legislation), represents the Union in its foreign relations and has the exclusive Right of Initiative.

European Parliament

The European Parliament (EP) is the first part of the EU's legislative branch and consists of 766 Members of Parliament (commonly, MEPs), who are elected for five-year mandates by all EU citizens (over 18 years old, in Austria over 16). The EP is divided into seven large fractions plus several independent MEPs. The biggest three fractions are the European People's Party pooling Christian Democrats (EPP), followed by the Party of European Socialists (PES) and by the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats Party (ALDE). It works either in a big plenary or in its 20 different Committees, each responsible for specific issue areas. The EP shares its legislative competences with the Council of the European Union.

Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers)

Also known as 'the Council', the Council of the EU is structured in issue-specific groups (councils), comprising the respective Ministers of the Member States (e.g., the Council for Justice and Home Affairs, with all Ministers of the Interior/Home Affairs). The presidency of the Council changes every six months and the 'president' in office supplies the different councils with a Chairperson, with the exception of the council on Foreign Affairs, which is presided to by the High Representative. The issue areas are mirrored in those of the EP (e.g., environment, education, economy, budget), with whom the Council shares its legislative competences. Additionally, the Council also has executive powers.

2. Outside the institutional triangle

European Council

The European Council (no standard abbreviation is used) is an EU institution comprising the heads of state or heads of government of the Member States, along with the council's own President and the President of the European Commission. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy takes part in its meetings. The European Council was established as an informal body in 1975; it became an official EU institution in 2009, when the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force. While the European Council has no formal legislative power, it is charged under the Treaty of Lisbon with defining "the general political directions and priorities" of the Union. It is thus the Union's strategic (and crisis-solving) body, acting as the collective presidency of the EU.

European Central Bank

The European Central Bank (ECB) is the central bank for the euro and administers the monetary policy of the euro area, which consists of 18 EU member states and is one of the largest currency areas in the world. It is one of the world's most important central banks. The bank was established by the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1998, and is headquartered in Frankfurt, Germany. The owners and shareholders of the European Central Bank are the central banks of the 28 Member States of the EU.

Court of Justice of the European Union

The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) is an EU institution that encompasses the whole judiciary. Seated in Luxembourg, it consists of two major courts and a number of specialised courts. The institution was originally established in 1952 as the Court of Justice of the European Coal and Steel Communities (as of 1958 the Court of Justice of the European Communities (CJEC)). In 2009, with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, the court changed to its current name. Its mission is to ensure that "the law is observed (...) in the interpretation and application" of the Treaties. The Court reviews the legality of the acts of any EU institution, ensures that the Member States comply with obligations under the Treaties and interprets EU law at the request of the national courts. It consists of two major courts: i) the European Court of Justice (created in 1952), the highest court in the EU legal system; ii) the General Court (created in 1988; formerly the Court of First Instance);

3. Not an EU body!

Council of Europe

The Council of Europe (CoE) is an international organisation promoting cooperation amongst all countries of Europe in the areas of legal standards, human rights, democratic development, the rule of law and cultural cooperation. It was founded in 1949, has 47 Member States with over 800 million citizens, and is an entirely separate body from the EU. The CoE cannot make binding laws. Its best known bodies are the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which enforces the European Convention on Human Rights, and the European Pharmacopoeia Commission, which sets the quality standards for pharmaceutical products in Europe. The Council of Europe's work has resulted in standards, charters and conventions to facilitate cooperation between European countries. Its statutory institutions are the Committee of Ministers (comprising the foreign ministers of each of its 47 Member States), the Parliamentary Assembly (composed of MPs from the parliament of each Member State) and the Secretary General.

B. WHAT CAN THE EU DO?

1. Exclusive competences – as per Article 2 (1) and Article 3 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)

In these areas, only the EU may legislate and adopt legally binding acts. Exceptions are possible if the EU empowers Member States to act or with regard to the implementation of Union acts.

- The customs union, including an internal free trade area with common customs tariffs (Art. 31 TFEU).
- The monetary policy of the EU for the Member States whose currency is the euro, overseen by the European Central Bank and with certain precepts formulated in the Stability and Growth Pact (Art. 129 (3) and (4), Arts. 132, 138, 219 TFEU).
- Competition rules controlling state aid from national governments and the actions of companies necessary for the functioning of the internal market.
- A common international trade policy, e.g., a common position in international trade negotiations (Art. 207 TFEU).
- The conclusion of certain international agreements (Art. 3 (2) TFEU).
- Common commercial policy.
- The conservation of marine biological resources (part of the Common Fisheries Policy, Art. 38 (1) TFEU).

2. Shared EU competences – as per Art. 2 (2) and Art. 4 TFEU

These are policy areas on which the Member States have agreed to act individually if the EU has not exercised (or planned to exercise) its competence. If a policy area is neither exclusive nor falls under supportive actions, it is a shared competence. Some examples are:

- Internal market;
- Economic, social and territorial cohesion;
- Agriculture and fishing (except the conservation of marine biological resources);
- Social policy;
- Transport;
- Environment, pollution and energy;
- Consumer protection;
- Area of Freedom, Security and Justice.

3. Supporting, coordinating or complementary competences – as per Art. 2 (5), Art. 6 TFEU

The EU can financially support the actions of the Member states that have agreed to coordinate their domestic policies through the EU. However, it does not entail harmonisation of regulations. These areas include:

- Education, vocational training, youth and sport;
- Tourism;
- Administrative cooperation;
- Civil protection;
- Protection and improvement of human health;
- Industry;
- Culture.

C. LEGAL ACTS OF THE EU

While the EU can issue several types of legal acts, not all are fully binding for its Member States. These acts are named according to their legal strength and are divided into:

- **Regulations** – have to be strictly adhered to in all Member States and leave no room for adjustments during the implementation process;
- **Directives** – provide a framework and give a certain policy direction, leaving the states with more flexibility and room for adjustments;
- **Decisions** – always address certain recipients and are only valid for those specific countries/people/institutions;
- **Recommendations** – without legal force, but negotiated and voted on according to the appropriate procedure, they are not binding for the Member States;
- **Opinions** – similar to recommendations in that they have no legal force, but not voted on, simply emitted.

The European legislative procedure runs considerably longer than those of most Member States. In brief: the EC (which has the exclusive Right to Initiative), the Council and the EP decide if the proposal becomes a legal act after having discussed relevant details. General policy guidelines and statements, especially from the EP, are formulated in Resolutions. They can entail instructions for future procedures, as well as regulations, which are formally valid in the Member States. Legal acts passed by the EP and the Council enter into force once the national governments have transposed them into national law. The combined legal heritage of the EU, including all legal acts, contracts and treaties is known as the *acquis communautaire*.

III. FURTHER RESEARCH

To learn more about the EU, its institutions and instruments, please visit their respective websites, below.

1. European Union

http://europa.eu/index_en.htm

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book:European_Union

2. EU Institutions

<http://eu2012.dk/en/EU-and-the-Presidency/About-EU/EU-Background/EUInstitutions>

3. European Neighbourhood Policy

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index_en.htm

4. Enlargement

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/index_en.htm

5. Common Foreign and Security Policy

http://europa.eu/pol/cfsp/index_en.htm

http://europa.eu/agencies/regulatory_agencies_bodies/security_agencies/index_En.htm

6. Lisbon Treaty

http://europa.eu/lisbon_treaty/index_en.htm

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6901353.stm>

<http://www.robert-schuman.eu/doc/divers/lisbonne/en/10fiches.pdf>

7. Treaty on European Union (TEU)

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:115:0013:0045:EN:PDF>

8. Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:115:0047:0199:en:PDF>

9. TFEU with explanations

<http://en.euabc.com/upload/books/lisbon-treaty-3edition.pdf>

10. Europe 2020

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>

11. Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf

COMMITTEE TOPICS

Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO): page 11

The voting rate in the European Parliament elections in 2014 was the lowest so far, only 42,61% or the EU citizen used their right to participate. **Should EU countries follow the Swiss example and expand their tools of direct democracy?**

Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET): page 16

Rivaling Russia? Considering the tensions between the EU and Russia in recent years, mainly caused by Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, **what stance should the EU take when developing their diplomatic relations with Russia in the future?**

Committee on Development (DEVE): page 20

Poverty Eradication: from rhetoric to results? The first of United Nations (UN) Agenda 2030 sustainable development goals (SDG) is to end poverty. **How could the EU best utilise its resources to eliminate poverty among Member States?**

Committee on Human Rights (DROI): page 25

The rule of Erdogan and non-existing human rights: Turkey lifted a two-year state of emergency in July 2018 but still not much has changed. During the last two years over 100 000 people have been fired from different fields, university personnel and politicians have been imprisoned and there is not freedom of the press. **How could Europe put pressure on Turkey to improve human rights in their country?**

Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON): page 29

In light of recent incidents of companies transferring their money through Panama and other tax havens in order to avoid paying taxes. **What measures could the EU take to prevent money laundering and tax havens in future?**

Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI): page 33

With the arctic ice rapidly melting new shipping routes are opening up that could drastically reduce the time it takes to ship goods between continents. **How should the EU best utilise this new economic opportunity while keeping in mind the environmental sustainability and fragility of the arctic region?**

Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO): page 38

In light of the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), **what further steps can the EU take to ensure the safety of citizen's data?**

Committee on International Trade (INTA): page 42

The future of trade: With parts of China's World Trade Organisation (WTO) accession protocol having expired, **what approach should Europe take to tackle unfair trade practices with regards to its trade defense instruments (TDIs)?**

Committee on Legal Affairs (JURI): page 46

Managing the refugee crisis: Considering that the EU-Turkey deal has not provided a long-term solution to the refugee crisis, **what measures should the EU take to create workable policies that would ensure that responsibility is shared whilst also protecting the rights of refugees?**

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE): page 50

People with disabilities form the biggest minority in the world. According to Eurostat approximately 80 million EU citizen have a disability of some sort and the number is estimated to grow to 120 million by the year 2020. **How could the EU better ensure the integration of people with disabilities into society?**

COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS (AFCO)

The voting rate in the European Parliament elections in 2014 was the lowest so far, only 42,61% of the EU citizen used their right to participate. **Should EU countries follow the Swiss example and expand their tools of direct democracy?**

Chairperson: Tim Benjamin van Woezik (NL)

The topic at a glance

With populist extremism still on the rise in Europe and [citizens growing ever distrustful](#) of their governments, it is time for the EU Member States to act. One way to increase citizen's trust in governments is to increase citizens participation and expand tools of **direct democracy** in politics. There are several ways to implement mechanisms for direct democracy. However, despite all its upsides, direct democracy does also have some downsides. **Giving people more power to change legislation**, for example, **might give small populist movements more power to directly affect government policies** by influencing the public. One thing is sure, if direct democracy is to be implemented, it will have to be implemented with careful consideration of its inherent downsides while maximising its upsides.

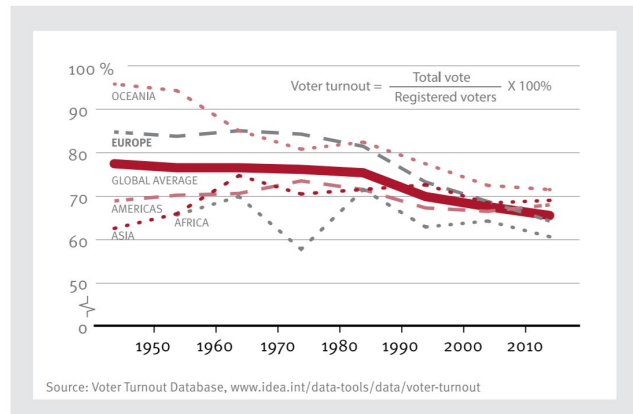
Key Actors and Stakeholders

- **Member States:** Although **some MS allow for binding referenda** to be held, **most MS have shied away from them** due to the people voting differently from the outcome the MS' governments are seeking such as the [2005 Dutch European Constitution referendum](#) or the [Brexit referendum](#). Another example would be the [1978 Austrian nuclear power referendum](#) where the Austrian people voted against the opening of the newly built nuclear power plant. Besides that, **in some Member States binding referenda are prohibited per their constitution**.
- **Venice Commission:** The Venice Commission is an advisory body of the Council of Europe, composed of independent experts in the field of constitutional law such as judges, academics and parliamentarians. This Commission **can advise Member States** on how to change their constitution to allow for referenda to happen and help organise and oversee future referenda.
- **Populist movements:** Are **making use of the general dissatisfaction and lack of political involvement** of the citizens of the Member States to push their nationalist and anti-EU agenda. Examples for such parties are the AfD in Germany or Geert Wilders' PVV in the Netherlands.
- **European Citizens' Initiative (ECI):** Introduced in 2007, the European Citizens' Initiative **aims to more directly involve EU citizens by allowing them to invite the European Commission to create new legislation**. However, the Commission is not obliged to act. In order for the initiative to pass, it needs to gather 1 million votes spread out over at least one-quarter of Member States. Citizens' Initiatives differ from referenda in which citizens only can accept or reject a law or policy proposed by parliament. Also, it has been stated by the European Commission that an ECI can only be the subject of acceptance/creation of a law, but it cannot ask to reject a law.
- **European Commission:** Under the current treaties of the EU, the European Commission is the only body which can create legislation at EU level. After the Commission has created a new bill, it will go to The Council of the EU and the European Parliament which in turn will either accept the bill and turn it into law or they will put forth their criticisms and recommendations for the Commission so that they can revise their bill after which they send it back down to the Council and the Parliament again. **The European Commission can only legislate**, however, **in certain areas in which the Member States have given the Commission the power to do so**. This is also known as the [Division of competences within the European Union](#).

Key Conflicts

When democracy was invented in ancient Greece there was only one form of democracy, direct democracy. The citizens of ancient Athens would come to the assembly to debate and legislate. Athenian citizens saw it as their duty to participate in these assemblies. Much has changed since then, and democracy has changed too. Today most countries are representative democracies because it became impossible to fit all citizens into one assembly. This, however, has led the **citizens of EU Member States to involve themselves less and less into politics** and has resulted in an ever decreasing voter turnout.

Figure 4. Global voter turnout by region, 1945–2015



Notes: Data is for Legislative (Lower House) Elections that took place across the globe since 1945 and covers 1,833 elections in total.

Due to low voter turnout rates, **governments and parliaments have been increasingly less representative** of the populations they govern. They less and less accurately mirror the norms, ideas and values currently held by society because some parts of the population opt not to vote. This has led to an **increased level of citizens' dissatisfaction** with Member States' governments. This dissatisfaction, coupled with an often uninformed or misinformed public, has led to the **rise of populist movements across Europe**. These movements have been making expert use of the dissatisfaction within society to push for more nationalism and an exit from the EU. One way to curb these populist movements is to try to involve citizens into politics. Some have proposed the introduction of a more direct democracy in order to let citizens have a more direct impact on laws, legislation and society. There are three main types of mechanisms that facilitate direct democracy:

- **The Referendum:** Referenda fall into one of two main categories: the mandatory referendum and the optional referendum. Referenda can also be binding, which means that if the referendum succeeds the proposed law is passed, or non-binding, which means the government will take the outcome of the referendum into consideration, but it does not mean the proposed law is immediately turned into law if the referendum succeeds.
 - *Mandatory Referendum:* A mandatory referendum is a referendum that must be held in certain circumstances, or in relation to certain issues. Most of the time, **the outcome of a mandatory referendum is binding**. In relation to certain issues, Mandatory referendums are required to be held by law. Typically, these are issues of major national significance, for example joining a supranational organisation (as in Switzerland).
 - *Optional Referendum:* The second category of referenda is the optional referendum. These are referenda which do not by law have to be held but can be initiated by the government, and in some cases by other parties. **Optional referendums may or may not be binding**. When a major political issue comes up, the government may decide to hold an optional referendum. It might do so because public pressure for a referendum forces it to hold one, or it might choose to hold a referendum because it is divided on the issue at hand. These referenda may not be legally binding, although it may be politically difficult for a government to ignore the outcome.

Now, **the effect of these referenda in Switzerland is that the government is forced to seek a wider consensus** about the statutory (and constitutional) measures that it seeks to introduce than is

the case in a purely representative system. In a representative system, the government may have to develop cross-party consensus on an issue in order to ensure that the measure is approved. In the Swiss system, the possibility of an optional referendum forces the government to ensure consensus with groups outside of Parliament so as to prevent the possibility of such groups seeking to overturn the new legislation. Conversely, the significance of direct democracy in the Swiss system is often cited as the reason for the weakness of Swiss political parties and the relatively [low significance](#) attached to normal elections.

- **The Citizens' Initiative:** Allows for constitutional or statutory proposals from citizens to be put to a referendum if enough signatures for such a referendum are gathered. Depending on how the initiative process is set up, if the proposed law is passed in a referendum, and the required number of people have shown up to vote, the proposed law may become part of the country's law. **The Citizens' Initiative thus allows citizens to come up with their own laws** by which they have to adhere in society.

It is argued that the simple existence of the initiative mechanism **acts as a check on the activities of the legislature**. This is because legislators are more likely to introduce certain reforms and measures if the initiative mechanism exists, because it is likely that if they do not, an initiative on the issue will be launched. One indication of this is the number of initiatives that are [introduced but subsequently withdrawn](#) in Switzerland because the introduction of the initiative has in itself forced the legislature to address the issue. It is therefore claimed that the initiative process makes legislatures more responsive. However, an often cited disadvantage of Citizens' Initiatives is that they **result in badly drafted law** as [citizens often do not know how to word law](#) as well as lawyers and lawmakers do. Another argument against Citizens' Initiatives is that **citizens simply do not have the time to read up on the details of all these initiatives**, unlike elected officials and experts whose job it is to research new law. Lastly, Citizens' Initiatives are also criticised for **enabling the "tyranny of the majority"**, as [citizens could create laws that inhibit the rights of minority groups](#). For example, [Taiwan recently voted in a referendum to keep gay marriage illegal](#).

- **The Recall:** is a mechanism that allows voters to **prematurely end an elected official's term** in office. Proponents of a recall are required to attain a certain percentage of votes by which the elected official was elected in the first place in order to start the recall process. When the recall petition acquires enough signatures a vote is held whether the official needs to be recalled and if so who should replace that official. This mechanism is most often only implemented at the provincial/state level in for example Switzerland and the U.S. but in Venezuela this mechanism can be used to oust any elected official. No EU Member States currently have a recall mechanism in place.

Proponents of the recall mechanism argue that **it acts as a discipline on elected officials**, in that elected representatives will be less likely to make unpopular decisions if it may make them more likely to be the subject of a recall campaign. However, the same argument is also used against the recall: opponents argue that **the recall mechanism completely undermines representative government by making elected officials afraid to make unpopular but necessary decisions**. A further argument in favour of direct democracy is that it provides voters with the continued opportunity to **make a democratic decision about who governs them**, since they do not have only one opportunity every three to five years to elect the people who will represent them, but retain a degree of control over the decision for the duration of the office. However, opponents of the recall claim that the mechanism could be used irresponsibly and that **it could be used by political parties as a political weapon against their rivals**. The claim that the recall mechanism was being used as a political tool was made by many Democrats against Republican party activists in relation to the [2003 California Recall](#).

What has been done so far?

At an EU level, **the only step that has been taken up until now has been the European Citizens' Initiative**. However, since its introduction over a decade ago, only 4 initiatives have passed. Critics state that the number of 1 million required signatures to be gathered is too high. **Another criticism of the ECI is that it is non-binding** and that the European Commission thus does not have to act upon it. **Various Member States have, however, implemented some type of direct democracy**. The Netherlands, for example, have just repealed their non-binding Citizens' Initiative mechanism as it resulted in populist initiatives that went against the direction that the government wanted to head in. **Switzerland, although not a Member State, has the most direct democracy in all of Europe**. Switzerland makes heavy use of referenda when forming new legislation. However, **turnout for these referenda has been steadily decreasing**. Over the second part of the twentieth century, turnout at federal referendums fell from around 50-70% to an average of around 40%. However, this may be due to the increase in amount of referenda held. It is argued by many that [a far higher proportion of the population is politically active](#) than appears so from the figure of 40% since it is not always the same 40-45% of voters who vote at each opportunity.

Further links

<http://aceproject.org/ace-en/focus/direct-democracy/citizen-initiatives>

This link goes further into how direct democracy could work.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5W45Va0cPE>

A YouTube video explaining how democracy works in Switzerland.

<http://www.democracy-building.info/switzerlands-parliament-legislation.html>

This link goes further into depth on how the political system in Switzerland works.

<https://www.dw.com/en/pros-and-cons-of-the-swiss-referendum-model/a-17643284>

This link goes further into depth on the pros and cons of Swiss democracy.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS (AFET)

Rivaling Russia? Considering the tensions between the EU and Russia in recent years, mainly caused by Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, **what stance should the EU take when developing their diplomatic relations with Russia in the future?**

Chairperson: Martin Örn (FI)

The topic at a glance

Since the official legal basis for international relations between the European Union (EU) and Russia was formed, via the signing of [the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement \(PCA\)](#) in 1994, both the EU and the Russian Federation have changed their views and attitudes towards each other multiple times. With different international disputes stemming from Moscow's decision making and the EU's consequent actions following these disputes, relations between the two have never been so unstable and dreadful as they are now. The EU has condemned Russia's actions and is using economic sanctions to respond to Moscow's behaviour on the geopolitical stage. Considering Russia is even after all the sanctions the EU's 4th largest trade partner, it goes without saying that trade between the two holds a significant role in their respective economies. In addition to economics, security and energy are serious areas of concern for the EU that stem from Russia. Seeing stability in these sectors would put at ease all Member States, especially the ones neighbouring Russia.

Key Actors and Stakeholders

- **Russian Government** - Decides how Russia conducts itself in terms of geopolitics, thus having the power to affect both how international disputes advance and its foreign relations
- [European External Action Service \(EEAS\)](#) - The diplomatic service, foreign and defence ministry of the EU.
- **Member State governments** - Have the power to affect their independent relations with Russia, which can differ from that of EU-Russia relations.
- **Media outlets** - Have heavy influence over people's views, especially in terms of international disputes. This is especially relevant when the media outlets are not private.
- [The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation \(NATO\)](#) - At the moment it is the core of the defence for a lot of Member States. Includes non-EU countries such as the United States of America, which have enjoyed heavy influence over conflicts.
- [European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs \(AFET\)](#) - The branch of the European Parliament which deals with EU-Russia relations.
- **Non-EU countries directly tied with Russia over international disputes which also concern European security and stability such as Ukraine and Georgia** - Conflicts and disputes between these non-EU countries and Russia affect EU-Russia relations since they are either happening in Europe or go against the EU's interests.
- **Regional Cooperation Organisations** - Organisations such as the Arctic Council, Barents' Council and the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) can act on regional issues regarding both the EU and Russia.

Key Conflicts

The areas of conflict between the EU and Russia mainly stem from Russia's aggressive foreign policy practises over the past ten years. The **2008 Russo-Georgian** war showed signs of Russian aggression. The EU financed an '[Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia](#)'. The conclusion was that the underlying blame on the war itself fell on the Georgian government, their attack was provoked by Russia and in addition Russia's response to the Georgian attack went beyond legal justification. The conflict has not come to a close since Russian troops are [still stationed in Georgia](#), specifically Abkhazia and parts of South Ossetia.

Another example of Russia disrespecting international law and other countries sovereignty in the ongoing crisis in Ukraine which began in late 2013 with the [Euromaidan](#) protests. The following year **Viktor Yanukovych** won a second term in office as the president of Ukraine with 54.7% of votes going to him. This again cause mass demonstrations and protests due to a multitude of factors such as police brutality, corruption accusations and the pulling out of the **Ukraine-EU Association Agreement**. Russia had backed Yanukovych due to his pro-Russian outlook so when he was driven out of office via protests, Russia did not recognise the change of power since it believed it was done illegitimately. Russia then began sending troops into **Eastern Ukraine** and annexed **Crimea**. [The EU objected Russia's actions due to Russia breaking international law and violating Ukraine's national sovereignty](#). Russia on the other hand felt that its actions were justified. It annexed Crimea because of the majority of ethnic Russians and it did so by holding a [referendum](#). This does not comply with international law but nevertheless it was the argument Russia used.

The conflict between the EU and Russia on these cases is based on the EU following liberal and democratic values in addition to respecting international law. While Russia does not respect international law nor does it find it important to respect democratic and liberal values in both domestic or foreign affairs. The security tension between the EU and Russia has led to an [increase in military exercises around the area of the EU-Russian border](#) which has only increased tensions. A good example of the result of increased tensions is the recent incident in the Kerch Strait. A small naval collision lead to the Russian coast guard seizing three Ukrainian ships and arresting the crew. The bottom line of the dispute being a territorial one since what Russia claims as Russian waters, Ukraine contests since it does not recognise Russia's claim to the areas at hand.

What has been done so far?

In relation to the crisis in Ukraine, Russia signed the [Minsk II agreement](#) in 2015 with Ukraine, France, Germany and Belarus. The goal of the agreement was to reduce fighting in conflict zones. The Minsk II agreement came after the collapse of the **Minsk Protocol** which was an agreement between Ukrainian rebels who are backed by Russia and the Ukrainian government. The aim of which was to, as with the Minsk II agreement, defuse the conflict and lessen fighting in the conflict zones. This completely failed due to the rebels reinitiating fighting which then lead to fighting increasing on all frontlines of the war. Minsk II has successfully reduced fighting to an extent but has been criticized for being too fragile in terms of collapsing just as the previous agreement did.

The EU has responded to Russia's annexation of Crimea and its involvement in the fighting in Eastern-Ukraine with [economic sanctions](#) that are reviewed every 6 months. The aim of the sanctions is to showcase the EU's values on such foreign policy measures.



It is easy to see that the sanctions have had a serious effect on the Russian economy. The GDP of Russia in 2013 was 2.297 trillion USD, this was the year prior to the annexation of Crimea. While in 2017 it was 1.578 trillion USD. Yet while it is clear the sanctions are affecting Russia's economy, it seems like Moscow has taken few steps to actually addressing the issues the EU see as the ones that require fixing.

Further links

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qiBJmhibxJs> (EU-Russia relations -- Swedish Institute of International Relations)

https://eu.boell.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2017/07/eu-russia-relations_towards-an-increasingly-geopolitical-paradigm.pdf (EU-Russia relations)

https://eu.boell.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2017/07/eu_russia_relations_from_a_russian_point_of_view.pdf (EU-Russia relations from Russia's standpoint)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CuY8hTWDqYw> (How to Think About Putin's Russia - Christopher Caldwell)

https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/35939/european-union-and-russian-federation_en (A general overview of EU-Russia relations in multiple areas)

COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT (DEVE)

Poverty Eradication: from rhetoric to results? The first of United Nations (UN) Agenda 2030 sustainable development goals (SDG) is to end poverty. **How could the EU best utilise its resources to eliminate poverty among Member States?**

Chairperson: Joonas Mäkinen (FI)

The topic at a glance

Poverty is something much talked about when it comes to developing countries. Living in Europe, people usually though forget that it is a big problem in the Member States as well. Of course, it is much different from the third countries as the EU only has **relative poverty**. [In the EU 118 million people, equivalent to 23.5 % of the population, were at risk of poverty or social exclusion \(AROPE\) in 2016.](#) Poverty can arise from several factors, e.g. unemployment, low paid or precarious jobs, low level of education and skills, the size and type of family, gender, disabilities, being a part of a minority group, or living in a remote community. The European Union (EU) and its Member States already have many means to tackle these issues, but they still have a long way to go in meeting the [Sustainable Development Goal 1 \(SDG\)](#) set by the United Nations (UN), that all the EU-28 have signed.

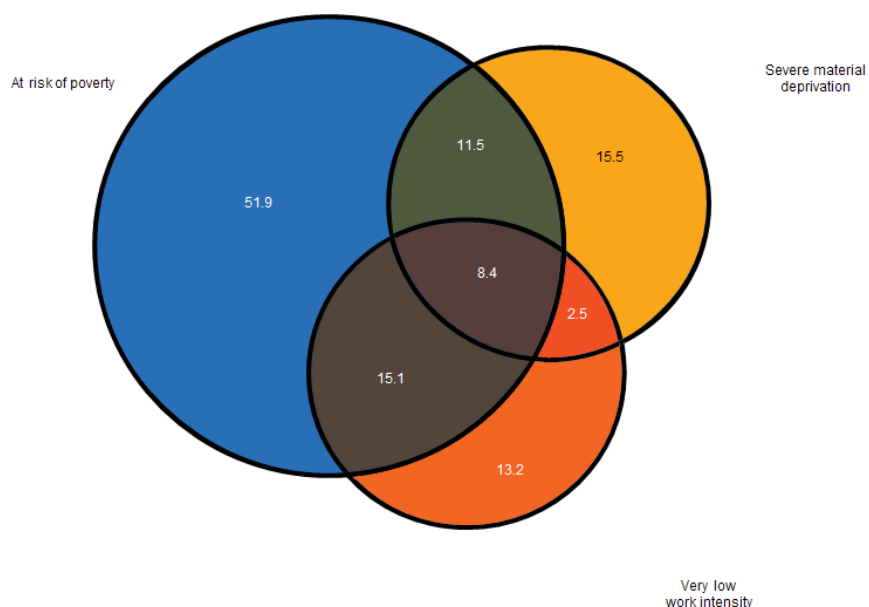
Key Actors and Stakeholders

- [European Social Fund \(ESF\)](#): supports creating jobs and citizens in need of employment, in particular those who find it difficult to get work.
- **The United Nations (UN)**: an intergovernmental organisation that tackles poverty by setting shared goals for world's governments, e.g. the SDG, and by creating funds and programmes, e.g. the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).
- [The European Anti-Poverty Network \(EAPN\)](#): a network for organisations, e.g. European Consumer Debt Network (ECDN), European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA), European Federation of Food Banks (FEBA), Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM), ATD (All together in Dignity) Fourth World, EMMAUS Europe, Eurochild, EURODIACONIA, that aims to ensure collaboration at EU level aimed at the eradication of poverty and social exclusion.
- [The European Microfinance Network \(EMN\)](#): a member-based organisation that promotes microfinance as a tool to fight social and financial exclusion in Europe through self-employment and the creation of microenterprises.
- **Bulgaria, Romania and Greece**: the Member States with the highest percentage of people AROPE. Both Bulgaria and Romania having a large [Roma community](#) which is more AROPE. Greece has struggled after its government-debt crisis having the highest unemployment rate in the EU The unemployment rate in Greece was [19.5 % / May 2018 and the youth unemployment shocking 39,7%.](#)

Key Conflicts

Poverty can be very hard to define, and that is why the EU has a common definition for the word. According to the EU people AROPE were in at least one of the following situations: at risk of poverty after social transfers (income poverty), severely materially deprived, or living in households with very low work intensity. Income poverty refers to people whose disposable income was below their **national at-risk-of-poverty threshold**, which we have to keep in mind varies greatly between Member States. Not being able to afford at least four of the following leads to severe material deprivation: having arrears on mortgage or rent payments, utility bills, hire purchase instalments or other loan payments, being able to afford one week's annual holiday away from home, a meal with meat, (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day, being able to face unexpected financial expenses, being able to buy a telephone (including mobile phone), a colour television, a washing machine, a car, being able to afford heating. The last of the three, work intensity, refers to citizens under the age of 59 years living in households where the adults worked less or exactly 20 % of their total potential during the previous 12 months. [The key factors for poverty and social exclusion in the EU](#) are low level of education, unemployment, the family size and type, gender, disability, being part of a minority as well as living in areas where access to services is limited.

Number of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion analysed by type of risks, EU-28, 2016
(million)



Population:
 — neither at risk of poverty,
 — nor severely materially deprived,
 — nor living in a household with very low work intensity
 = 384.5 million

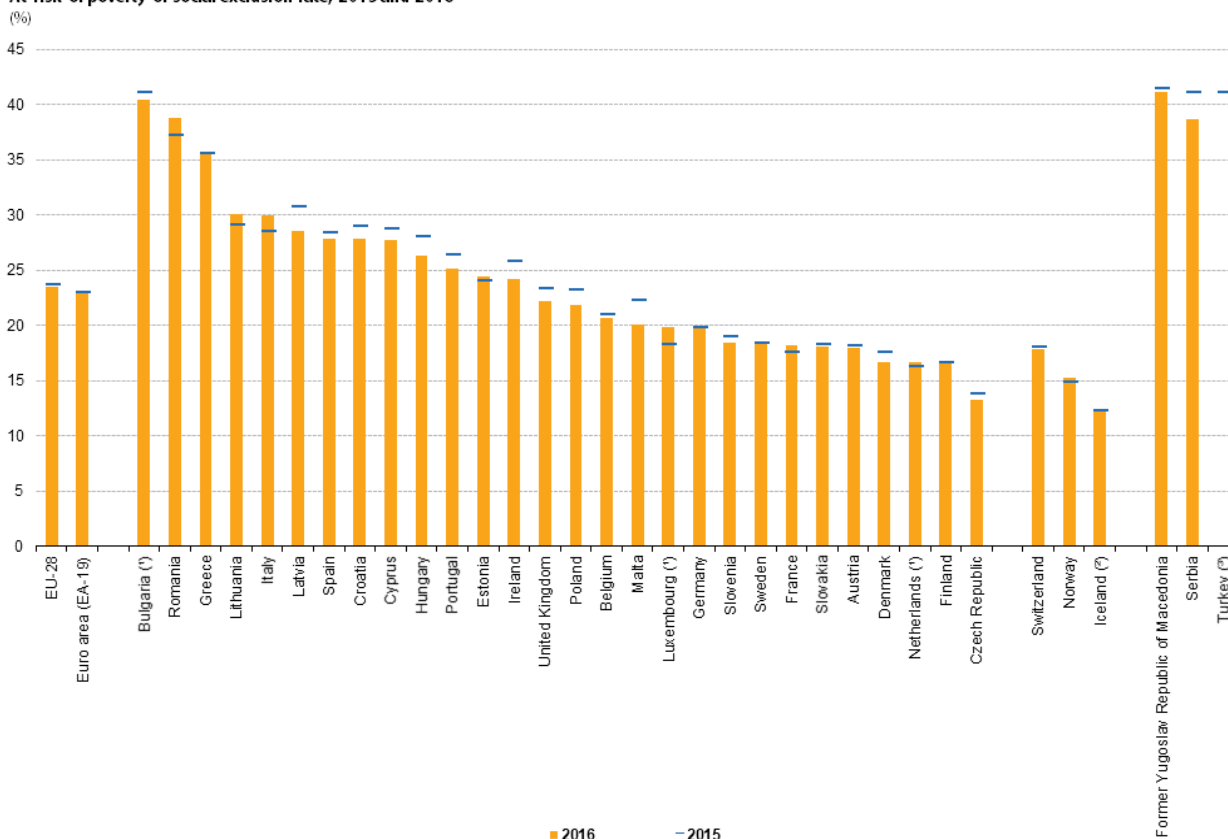
Note: the sum of the data for the seven groups at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion differs slightly from the total (published elsewhere) due to rounding.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ilc_pees01)

eurostat

There is a big difference between eastern and western Member States as the Member States where the population is most AROPE are [Bulgaria \(40.4 %\)](#), [Romania \(38.8 %\)](#) and [Greece \(35.6 %\)](#), whereas at the other end of the scale one can see [Denmark, the Netherlands \(both 16.7 %\)](#), [Finland \(16.6 %\)](#), and [the Czech Republic \(13.3 %\)](#). Between 2015 and 2016, the AROPE rate decreased 0.3 point. The largest decreases were reported for Latvia, Malta, Hungary and Ireland. By contrast, this rate rose in seven of the EU Member States: Estonia, the Netherlands, France, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Italy and Romania.

At-risk-of poverty or social exclusion rate, 2015 and 2016



(*) Break in series.

(*) 2016: provisional.

(*) 2016: not available.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ilc_peps01)

eurostat

It also is worth mentioning that with an AROPE rate of 26.4 % in the EU-28, [children were at greater risk in 2016 than the total population \(23.5 %\)](#). Child poverty has many factors with the main ones being the labour market situation of their parents (which is linked to their level of education), the composition of households, and the effectiveness of governments' income support systems and the availability of services. Child poverty is connected to **intergenerational transmission of poverty**, which is a big problem in many developed countries. [Children's parents' income has an impact on the children in their later life](#), and research shows e.g. that they are less successful in school as well as in the labour market.

What has been done so far?

The United Nations has established the SDGs, which has been adopted by all the UN Member States. The [SDG 1](#) concentrates on erasing extreme poverty as well as poverty as its respective national definition, equality and giving people access to basic services and financial services.

The EU and its Member States already have many policies in place to tackle poverty e.g. social security systems, health care, and many funds and programs. In 2010 the EU started its **Europe 2020 strategy** in order to set targets to decrease the number of unemployed persons, early school leavers and people living AROPE, among other things. [The EU is still planning on a new strategy for after the year 2020](#). With many policies in place the EU can urge its Member States to act, e.g. in 2006, after a complaint against France the European Committee of Social Rights found France in violation of the right to housing provided for in [Article 31 of the Revised European Social Charter](#). Of course, Member States have their own policies in place, and many of them have a national strategic policy for poverty reduction and for social inclusion, e.g. [Malta launched one in 2014 and the strategy](#) presents over 90 recommendations spanning employment, education, social security and welfare, health, and culture to be implemented by 2024.

Further links

[European Social Fund](#)

[Europe 2020 strategy](#)

[EU's decision on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States for 2015](#)

[Poverty in the EU](#)

[Sustainable Development Goals](#)

[Video 1 \(Poverty in the EU\)](#)

[Video 2 \(Poverty in the EU\)](#)

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS (DROI)

The rule of Erdogan and non-existing human rights: Turkey lifted a two-year state of emergency in July 2018 but still not much has changed. During the last two years over 100 000 people have been fired from different fields, university personnel and politicians have been imprisoned and there is not freedom of the press. **How could Europe put pressure on Turkey to improve human rights in their country?**

Chairperson: Nawal Solh (DE/LB)

The topic at a glance

In July 2018, Turkey lifted the [state of emergency](#), a reaction to the failed **coup attempt** by part of the military. The European Union, which immediately condemned the coup, restated its full support for the democratic institutions of the country and recognised Turkey's legitimate need to act quickly and appropriately in the face of such a serious threat. However, the mostly disproportionate measures taken since the attempted coup under the state of emergency continued to give rise to serious concern. The **human rights** situation has deteriorated exponentially within the last years, as mainly three groups of people have been targeted: anyone suspected of belonging to the [Gülen movement](#), elected officials and supporters of [Kurdish movement](#) as well as leading voices and activists from civil society organisations critical of the current government especially journalists and authors such as the German citizen **Deniz Yücel**. The [report](#) published in 2017 by the **European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)** has stated that Turkey has violated human rights in at least 2998 cases and is among the countries with the most human rights violations in Europe, just after the Russian Federation.

Key Actors and Stakeholders

- **President Recep Tayyip Erdogan:** President Erdogan leads the **Justice and Development Party (AKP)** that was founded by him in 2001 and drives the political agenda of the country. **The 2017 Turkish constitutional referendum** has created a de facto presidential system while abolishing the office of the Prime Minister and entrenching the one-man rule of President Erdogan.
- **Turkish Institutions:** There is decreasing impartiality and independence of the Turkish judiciary due to an increase in the influence of the executive, especially after the creation of a presidential system following [the constitutional referendum](#). For instance, the President is able to issue decrees to form and regulate ministries and appoint and remove senior civil servants without the approval of the parliament.
- **European Institutions:** Apace with the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of Ministers, the [European External Action Service \(EEAS\)](#) plays an important role as the diplomatic service and foreign and defence minister of the EU.
- **European Court of Human Rights:** Article 46 of the [European Convention on Human Rights](#) states that all countries that are party to the Convention must abide by and implement the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), which was ratified by Turkey in 1954.
- **European Committee for the Preventing of Torture (CPT):** The CPT was set up under the Council of Europe's "[European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#)"; which was ratified by Turkey in 1988. It especially deals with the prevention of ill-treatment of detainees within countries that are members of the European Council.
- **Non-governmental organisations:** NGOs such as [Amnesty International](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#) play an important role in reporting human rights abuses in Turkey.

Key Conflicts

In June 2018, the [EU's General Affairs Council stated](#) that 'the Council notes that Turkey has been moving further away from the European Union'. This seems not surprising bearing in mind that only [1 out of 33 chapters of Turkey's accession](#) talks to the European Union have been completed since 2005. The main issue is especially Turkey's human rights record that has historically been problematic around several areas including coup d'états in the 1960s and 1989, rights of religious minorities and ongoing violence in the Kurdish southeast region.

The ongoing violence in the Kurdish southeast region can be explained with the ceasefire between the Turkish government and the **Kurdistan People's Party (PKK)**, which is on the EU's terrorist organisations lists. At the core of this problem between these two parties lies a fundamental moral question of whether it is acceptable for the EU to turn a blind eye on the ongoing violations of human rights in the fight of the PKK. While the government has a legitimate right to fight against terrorism, it is also responsible for ensuring the respect for human rights, rule of law and fundamental freedoms. Besides Turkey status of not being an EU Member State is restricting the EU's legal capacities and forces them to only use soft power, mainly funding and diplomacy, to bridge the gap between Turkey's worsening human rights status and its accession efforts. Despite rising tension between the EU and Turkey as a result of conflicting statements from Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan such as his plan to reinstate the 2004 abolished death penalty, the country stays an indispensable actor in the [refugee crisis](#).

Since the introduction of the state emergency, over 150 000 people were taken into custody, 78 000 were arrested and over 110 000 civil servants were dismissed. Besides, there is an increasing number of [reports of torture](#) and ill-treatment of detainees perpetrated by Turkish public authorities.

Lastly, the **centralisation of power** achieved by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's constitutional reform contributed to the dissolving separation of powers and concentrated the power in the hands of a single official.

What has been done so far?

Turkey is a member of the European Council, which requires that it follows **the European Convention on Human rights**. In relation to the EU, there has been an ongoing dispute between Turkey and Cyprus with 14 European Convention on Human Rights Article violations against EU citizens in Cyprus and International Conventions such as the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR), a multilateral treaty adopted by the United Nations assembly in 1966, was not signed by Turkey until 2000. Moreover, Turkey has not signed yet the [UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination](#) and [the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities](#).

On a European level, there are different measures taken in order to improve the human rights situation in Turkey. As a result of Turkey's candidate status, there is a **Delegation of the EU in Turkey**: which works closely with the Turkish government in achieving progress domestically. Programs such as the [Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance \(IPA\)](#) provides funds to establish freedom of expression of citizens and the media. Besides, the European Parliament has adopted different resolutions in which it condemned the current human rights situation in Turkey, for instance, the [Motion for a Resolution on the current human rights situation in Turkey \(2018/2527\(RSP\)\)](#).

Further links

Turkey's Internet Freedom scores of 2017 by Freedom House

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2017/turkey>

Turkey's Freedom scores of 2018 by Freedom House

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/turkey>

European Commission Annual Progress Report for Turkey 2018: details the progress Turkey has made in key areas of EU policy including the rule of law, democracy and human rights.

<https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-turkey-report.pdf>

European Parliament resolution on the current human rights situation in Turkey (2018/2527/RSP))

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2018-0040+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

Protocol No.13 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and fundamental freedoms concerning the abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances

https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Library_Collection_P13_ET5187E_ENG.pdf



Freedom in the World 2018



Turkey Profile

FREEDOM STATUS:

NOT FREE



Freedom in the World Scores

Freedom Rating



Political Rights



Civil Liberties



(1=Most Free, 7=Least Free)

Aggregate Score: 32/100 (0=Least Free, 100=Most Free)

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AND MONETARY AFFAIRS (ECON)

In light of recent incidents of companies transferring their money through Panama and other tax havens in order to avoid paying taxes. **What measures could the EU take to prevent money laundering and tax havens in future?**

Chairperson: Aarni Rantanen (FI)

The topic at a glance

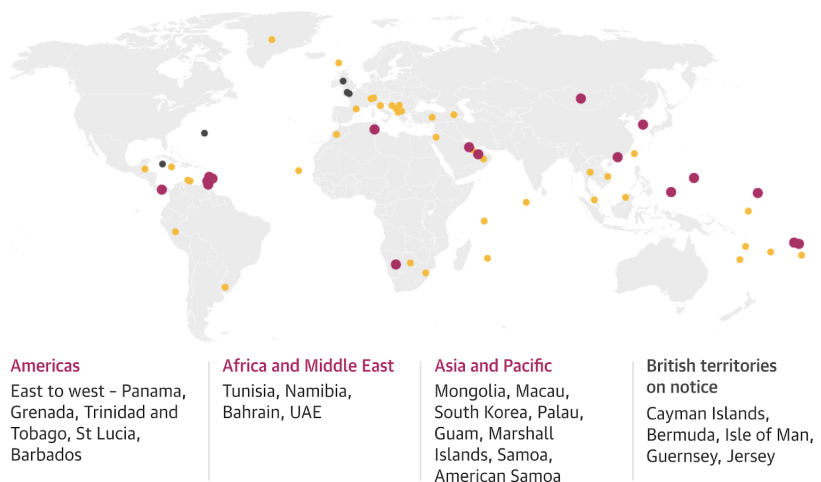
Ever taken a look at the tax rates of the richest people in your country? You might find that most middle-income people pay higher taxes than people who have seven figure salaries. This is often due to something called [aggressive tax planning](#), which goes under the umbrella term of [tax avoidance](#). The illegal counterpart of this is known as [tax evasion](#). Every year [up to 190 billion euros](#) are lost because of people and corporations utilising loopholes in legislation to dodge taxes in the European Union (EU). It is estimated that [one in five euros](#) of corporate tax is lost due to such activity. Lost tax revenues cause problems as budget estimates are not met and less resources may then be used on public services, for example.

Avoiding taxes is often done by transferring money to places called [tax havens](#). These are broadly speaking non-cooperative offshore tax jurisdictions which lack transparency, fail to comply with international standards such as the one on **Exchange of Information On Request** (EOIR), and have minimal taxation. In addition to havens making it remarkably easy to establish [shell companies](#) to hide assets, this enables [illicit financial flows](#) (IFFs) to take place through these countries. Drug cartels, human

traffickers, terrorist organisations and corrupt public officials are able to introduce illegally obtained money to the economy in secrecy through [money laundering](#). Therefore, this is not only a question about protecting the economic development of the EU or the tax rates but also about public safety and welfare.

The EU-named tax havens

● 17 blacklisted territories ● 5 British territories/ dependencies on notice ● Other territories on notice



Guardian graphic | Source: European Council

Key Actors and Stakeholders

- **The European Commission (EC):** It is the EU institution that has the ability to propose new taxation legislation and to uphold these laws. Following its official agenda, it has adapted [the Anti Tax Avoidance Package](#).
- **The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD):** It is an intergovernmental economic organisation that [provides statistics](#), [facilitates conversation](#) and prepares [innovative projects](#) and [policy agreements](#) between its member states.
- **Non-governmental organisations (NGOs):** Projects such as [the Tax Justice Network](#) (TJN), [Oxfam International](#) and International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) can ease the workload of governmental organisations in informing the public and doing statistical research.
- **International organisations (IOs):** Such as G20, [the United Nations](#) (UN), [the International Monetary Fund](#) (IMF) and [Financial Action Task Force](#) (FATF) together reach a significant amount of countries around the world and with cooperation can create strong international agreements.

- **Multinational corporations (MNCs):** These corporations utilise tax havens in a large scale causing the biggest dent in the tax revenues. Because of their size, they are able to carry out notoriously efficient tax planning.
- **Tax havens inside and outside the EU:** Reaching cooperation with [these countries](#) is key. Each state facing their own hardships, different approaches must be adopted to help them adhere to possible regulations.
- **Law firms, banks and financial advisors:** ‘Offshore legal service providers’ like [Mossack Fonseca](#) and [Appleby](#) make it easy to purchase shell companies and take part in tax avoidance. All types of companies that provide financial secrecy such as banks and professional middlemen currently make it extremely demanding to audit the economic activity in tax havens.

Key Conflicts

There is not a lot of accurate statistical information on what concrete effects tax evasion has on the world. Even though research is being done, the estimates are vague and cannot be compared. This is because there is no common agreement on what a tax haven is and because international cooperation to unify this definition is not taking place.

Reputation costs are assured for doing extensive investigation on taxpayers as this is often interpreted as invasion of privacy by the public. The cost for these proceedings and for litigation of tax evasion is also very high. Questions are raised about what information on individuals should the government be allowed to access. Additionally, most activity in tax havens might be morally dubious, but still legal. It may be argued that the government is overstepping its boundaries if it hampers legitimate business. Furthermore, the secrecy in havens offers protection for people living in countries with authoritarian regimes, for example. Therefore, it would be irresponsible to allow everyone to access this data.

Not all countries are willing or able to comply with tax agreements. On one hand, tax havens like the Caribbean countries often have very modern cities, because of all the businesses that are attracted there. People are unwilling to give up this prosperity just to increase transparency. The economies of these countries would suffer if they were to lose their tax haven statuses. On the other hand, countries like Hungary, Poland and Malta are still developing and have more urgent problems to deal with than money laundering. They simply do not have the resources to fight the tax havens. There is also too much corruption or red tape blocking the implementation of tax agreements. Oftentimes there is also internal political division in the Member States between those who want less and those who want more government intervention.



What has been done so far?

The EU has been taking action for decades now. [The Anti Tax Avoidance Directive](#) of the EC is set come into force in 2019 and it introduces five new legally-binding measures to tackle the avoidance problem inside the Member States. There have previously been four Anti Money Laundering Directives which have already established some of the grounds for this directive, but they have not been very successful. This new legislation promises to, clarify the question on [true beneficial ownership](#). In addition, one of the [special committees](#) of the European Parliament (EP), the Committee on Money Laundering, Tax Avoidance and Tax Evasion (PANA), has done research in cooperation with [The European Parliamentary Research Service](#) (EPRS) on tax avoidance. This information has been useful in designing the aforementioned Anti Tax Avoidance Directive.

The OECD has taken steps to increase transparency in taxation by introducing the [Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes](#). The organisation has emphasized the strategy of [Automatic Exchange of Information](#) (AEOI), but this is still yet to be fully implemented. The FATF has its headquarters alongside OECD and has greatly contributed to establishing anti-money laundering laws with its [Mutual Evaluation Reports](#), which increase compliance with international legislation.

Many IOs and NGOs have compiled lists untrustworthy tax jurisdictions and they actively follow the activity of EU institutions. For example, the discovery of the '[Panama Papers](#)' by ICIJ has provided tax official all over the world [more data](#) to understand common methods of tax evasion. Additionally, Oxfam International and the [Financial Secrecy Index](#) prepared by the TJN have helped the EU more efficiently do its work.

Further links

A YouTube playlist of videos about tax evasion, tax havens and the 'Panama Papers' leaks:
<https://bit.ly/2BcXLCh>

A curated Mix content page that has articles, research papers and legal documents about EU and tax havens:
<https://bit.ly/2B9jD1b>

The website of Süddeutsche Zeitung, the German newspaper that originally leaked all the 'Panama Papers':
<https://bit.ly/2AoNrFO>

A document published by the NGO Global Financial Integrity, listing past initiatives that have tried tackling IFFs:
<https://bit.ly/2RU2gc2>

Download link for a fact sheet published by the EC on the anti-tax avoidance package:
<https://bit.ly/1StGlnH>

A study on offshore activities for the PANA committee published by the EP:
<https://bit.ly/2LdVWcw>

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

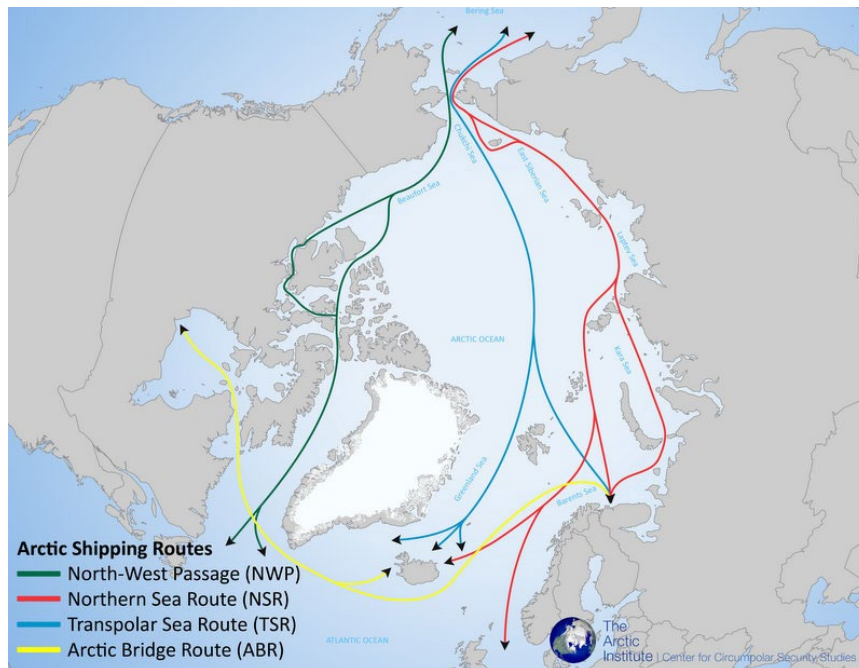
With the arctic ice rapidly melting new shipping routes are opening up that could drastically reduce the time it takes to ship goods between continents. **How should the EU best utilise this new economic opportunity while keeping in mind the environmental sustainability and fragility of the arctic region?**

Chairperson: Mats Jensen (NO)

The topic at a glance

With **global warming on the rise**, the rising air and sea temperatures and the melting of the sea ice has affected the Arctic at a rate almost twice of the global average. With the ice cap rapidly shrinking and withdrawing, huge **economic possibilities** have arisen in the fragile arctic region in the form of [new navigable routes](#) for cargo ships, such as the **Northwest Passage** and the **Northern Sea Route**. These developments open up for substantial [reductions in travel distance and fuel consumption for ships](#), thus possibly making these “highways of the sea” economically viable options to their current southern counterparts. [The EU has significant interest in the resources of the Arctic](#), as it is the principal destination for goods from the region, such as fish, with ⅓ of fish from the region ending up on the European market.

However, the dynamic growth in opportunities for the shipping sector is being met with a **static and incomprehensive legal framework for the emerging maritime activities** in the area, in addition to a **lack of a common political agenda** for the future development of the Arctic. Furthermore, there is also a fine line regarding balancing the economical exploitation of the area and the **preservation of the vulnerable and unique ecosystem of the Arctic**. The EU and the Arctic States will have to tackle this growing conflict of interest, but faced with fragmented policies and legislative- frameworks, it looks like the **contrasting interests** are on a collision course.



Key Actors and Stakeholders

- **The Arctic States** consisting of Russia, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Canada and the US, are all to some extent claiming land or sea in the Arctic. They are the most central stakeholders of the region, as they all have sovereign jurisdiction over their own territories.
- **The Arctic Council** is a high level circumpolar intergovernmental forum, established by the eight Arctic States, with the objective of fostering cooperation, interaction and coordination between the various actors in the region, including the Arctic States, the indigenous communities and other inhabitants. The Council emphasises the importance of issues linked to sustainable development and environmental protection in their work, but it cannot implement or enforce any of its guidelines. The working group on the Protection of the [Arctic Marine Environment \(PAME\)](#) is an important actor in the Arctic Council regarding shipping as it addresses activities related to the protection and sustainable use of the region's marine environment.
- **European External Action Service (EEAS)** is the European Union's diplomatic service. Its main priority is to ensure that the voice of the European Union is heard on the global stage. The EEAS actively works with other EU institutions who play an important role in the development of the EU's foreign policy. The EEAS has also created a overarching [arctic policy](#) with the intention of stimulating a [blue economic growth](#) in the region, nevertheless, many see the EU's Integrated Arctic Policy as a work in progress facing structural challenges.
- **International Maritime Organisation (IMO)** is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) and it acts as the global standard-setting authority for the security and environmental performance of international shipping. The IMO's main role is to create a legal framework for the industry to be internationally adopted and implemented. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ([UNCLOS](#)), was developed by the IMO and is the current legal framework for international maritime activity.



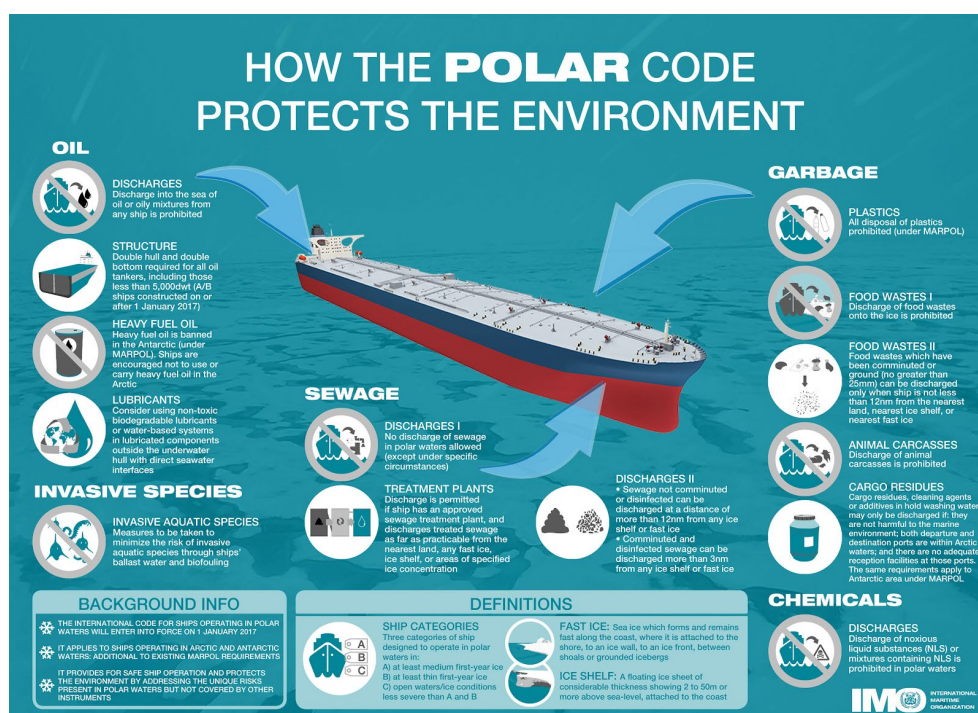
Key Conflicts

One of the main conflicts within the field is the debate on **conservation vs development** of the Arctic territories. The Arctic is geographically and ecologically unique, with features such as significant seasonal temperature variations and the harbouring of **unique species of mammals and seabirds**. Heavy traffic of cargo vessels through the Arctic waters could pose several threats to its already fragile environment, including a major **risk of oil spills** which would be incredibly difficult to clean up, due to factors like [slower biodegradation and the ice's prevention of oil dispersion](#). Furthermore, large ships are **contributing to air pollution** and the emission of ["black carbon"](#) reducing the reflective abilities of the polar ice, hence **exacerbating global warming**. Lastly, [sonar pollution from ship engines is posing a threat to marine mammals](#) that are reliant on acoustic signals to navigate. It's important to keep in mind that the degree of severity of these scenarios heavily depends on the **profitability of the trans-arctic routes**, which currently face major **infrastructural obstacles** like the lack of [Liquified Natural Gas \(LNG\) ports](#) and they will require financial investments and further development before being fully opened.

The European Union has substantial **potential profit** to gain from more cost efficient shipping routes, as the union has a large export of natural resources from the area, with for example [88% of the EU's iron ore output](#) coming from the Barents Region. However, the current role and **influence of the EU in the Arctic is limited**, being closely related to the fact that none of the EU Arctic states (Finland, Denmark and Sweden) have a **direct coastline** in the area. This is effectively limiting the Union's **jurisdiction under the UNCLOS**, as well as its rights of legislating or taking enforcement measures in the area and hence weakening its **political negotiating power**. Furthermore, the **lack of a coherent EU Policy** for one of the most dynamic surrounding regions of the EU is not in line with the Union's general foreign policy and its basic principles of [promoting sustainability and "shaping global economic and environmental rules"](#), and could eventually **jeopardize its economic interests** in the region. Furthermore, the EU's relations with the Arctic Council are strained, as its attempted request for observer status was declined by the council, making it harder for the EU to gain influence in the area.

What has been done so far?

As outlined in the key conflicts section, the EU has little jurisdictional power in the Arctic, limiting its direct impact in the region. Furthermore, the European Union has showed a lack of will to establish an ambitious and possibly controversial Arctic Shipping Policy, as the Union often [prefers global solutions regarding shipping](#). However in 2016 the EU adopted an **Integrated EU Policy for the Arctic**, outlining a [strategy on international cooperation](#) and [sustainable development](#). The strategies focus on matters such as **multilateral- and regional cooperation, infrastructure, logistics and a blue economy**. The Arctic has no international regulatory body, meaning that **international forums and organisations play central roles** on the arctic stage. The Arctic Council is the region's primary intergovernmental forum and has been the key **norm-creating and advisory body** in the fields of environmental protection and sustainability. Both the [FEAS](#) and the Arctic Council (PEMA) strongly [support the implementation of the IMOs Polar Code](#), which entered into force on the 1st of January 2017 and **seeks to safeguard the unique environment of the polar areas** and increase shipping safety. This dual support showcases one example of vital coordination between two key stakeholders. In addition, the [EU possesses partial legal competences regarding regulations](#) on ships flagged under the EU flag and utilising EU ports, allowing the Union to promote maritime safety and environmental protection in the Arctic shipping sector through **various directives**.



The EU has through the [European Maritime Safety Agency \(EMSA\)](#), vastly contributed to **research on ship movements and maritime safety in the Arctic**, in addition, the EMSA has created the satellite-based oil spill and vessel detection service [CleanSeaNet](#) aiming to **trace and monitor oil pollution in the sea**. Through the EMSA, the EU also operates a small **fleet of oil recovery vessels as a possible emergency response measure**. Moreover, the Arctic Council's working group on Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR) and the EMSA have established a [close collaboration](#) on environmental emergency prevention, illustrating the **future importance of strong cooperation** between two of the major actors in the field.

Further links

[Article from the New York times](#) - concerning different shipping routes with high quality infographics

[EU Arctic Policy](#) - The current integrated Arctic Policy of the EU and its main policy proposals and focus areas.

[EU Arctic Policy summary](#) - A short video explaining the EU's Integrated Arctic Policy

[The European Union and The Arctic](#) - Scientific Paper on the EU and The Arctic, relevant chapters include chapter 9 and especially the sub-chapters 2.2.1, 2.2 and the introduction.

[Video about the Northwest Passage](#) - This interesting video tackles multiple aspects related to Arctic shipping.

Links and description of the photos used:

1 - https://e360.yale.edu/features/cargo_shipping_in_the_arctic_declining_sea_ice

Various shipping routes opening up to cargo ships due to the melting of the summer sea ice.

2 - <https://arctic-council.org/index.php/en/our-work2/8-news-and-events/474-sao-oulu-2017-01>

Members of the Arctic Council

3 - <https://www.pame.is/index.php/projects/arctic-marine-shipping/the-polar-code>

Explanation of the environmental benefits of the implementation of the Polar Code.

COMMITTEE ON INTERNAL MARKET AND CONSUMER PROTECTION (IMCO)

In light of the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR),
what further steps can the EU take to ensure the safety of citizen's data?

Chairperson: Linda Vaher (EE)

The topic at a glance

The European Union has enjoyed recent success regarding the rights of the consumers, especially so in the digital realm, with **the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** that was implemented in May 2018 further solidifying the high protection standards for personal data in the European Union, alongside **ePrivacy Directive**, the other pillar in data protection legal framework in the EU. [Results of a study from 2017 show](#) that more and more European citizens shop online than they did in the past. Taking into consideration that up to a **60% of the EU citizens shop online every month** despite the rather large (56%) concerns for the possibility of fraud, the EU needs to look over the currently existing legislations regarding consumer protection and reconsider parts of it, where needed, to ensure the best possible protection for its citizens, balancing between the sanctity of personal data and the interest of businesses and industries alike.

Critics argue that **the Digital Single Market (DSM)**, despite the advances made, [has yet to reach its full potential](#), as many regulatory barriers leave it fragmented and incomplete. A question has also been raised whether or not the economic benefits could be equally distributed amongst the Member States. [Free Flow of Data Regulation](#), also called the [Fifth Freedom](#) of by some, while receiving [vast support](#) from the European Parliament, [has faced its share of criticisms as well](#), citing negative consequences for mandatory data localisation that the Member States are allowed to demand and [unclear line between the definition](#) of personal and non-personal data, as the latter can change into the former at any time.

Key Actors and Stakeholders

- **[The Council of the European Union](#):** The institution representing the Member States' governments, it is where national ministers from each EU country meet to adopt laws and coordinate policies. The Council of the EU negotiates and adopts legislative acts in most cases together with the European Parliament through the ordinary legislative procedure, also known as 'co-decision'. Co-decision is used for policy areas where the EU has [exclusive or shared competence](#) with the Member States, of which both consumer protection and data security are.
- **[The European Commission](#):** The European Commission is the EU's politically independent executive arm. It is responsible for drawing up proposals for new European legislation and implementing the decisions of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. In 2012, the Commission outlined [the European Consumer Agenda](#), which outlined the key measures for empowering consumers in four pillars, which includes integrating consumer interests into key sectoral policies amongst others, and is seen as an essential contribution to [Europe 2020 strategy](#) by the Commission.
- **[The Member States](#):** [As both internal market and customer protection fall under shared competences](#) of the EU and the Member States, the latter also have right to exercise their own competences regarding the said subjects on the National level. All Member States, in addition to European Economic Area countries of Iceland and Norway, have European Consumer Centre (ECC), alongside their [national consumer protection agencies](#), which are part of the [European Consumer Centre Network](#).
- **The EU citizens:** The consumers and 'data subjects', who, [in accordance with GDPR have the right to be informed, right to be forgotten and right to restrict processing of data amongst others according to the regulation](#). The definition of 'consumer' varies on national levels and [is not consistent in the EU law](#), similarly to data ownership, [which has neither EU-level nor Member State level legislations, with exceptions to latter with case-laws in some Member States](#).

Key Conflicts

Obstacles to the free movement of data, in addition to possible opposition from the Member States, include [a lack of trust in cross-border data storage and processing](#) as well as lack of legislation applicable to the aforementioned. [Differences also arise as the countries have different understanding of what qualifies as 'sensitive data'](#), as some consider health and accounting-related data to be sensitive, whereas others require storage of gambling or communication-related data locally. The forced localisation of data is also costly, especially for young companies and start-ups, with them having to rent server capacities in all Member States.

[Another side of things to consider is the emerging notion of Internet of Things \(IoT\)](#). Experts argue that before asking the question 'who's liable?' for IoT security, common standards for the connected devices, which will reach up to 75 billion by 2025, should be enforced and based on the European values - [more precisely high standards for the protection of personal data and security](#).

The IoT has also brought along a debate regarding data ownership, as to [whether the 'data subjects' should fully own their data](#) and whether or not it is possible and to separately define 'personal data' and 'personal information' instead of having one encompassing term; that of 'personal data'. It is important to note here, [that there is no EU-level law that defines the concept of ownership](#).

[The movement of data has also brought end-to-end encryption back into discussion](#), with the focus being on the argument whether or not the 'backdoor access' should be given to authorities. Compelling arguments are coming from both sides on the benefits and lack thereof for it, as law enforcement agencies and other groups argue for increased threat arrives with it as criminals can use it for concealing their activities.

The opposition, in turn, argues that 'backdoors' can be used for malicious activities and might decrease citizens' trust in the safekeeping of their data. **European Commission Vice President Andrus Ansip**, among other politicians, has been vocal in their support for strong encryption, which comes as no wonder since their native country of Estonia has used [encryption](#) for years, even in public sector services.

What has been done so far?

While enforcement of GDPR is definitely one of the most important accomplishments regarding personal data, the recent years have been in favour of the EU consumers. Already, massive strides have been made for the improvement of the consumer rights - in January 2018 [the surcharges for debit and credit cards were prohibited](#) and in December, [the regulation on the unjustified ban on geo blocking was enforced](#). Of course, perhaps the [most tangible achievements](#) for the EU citizens has been the end of roaming charges in 2017, followed rather quietly by [the cross-border parcel delivery rules](#).

The Digital Market is entering into its final phase as [17 of the 29 legislative proposals](#) by the Commission have since been agreed upon by the European legislative bodies and **the Consumer Protection Cooperation Regulation**, [the new version applicable from January 2020](#), has been reformed to better enforce EU consumer law, especially as the digital sphere is evolving daily. In October 2018, [the free flow of non-personal data was approved by the European Parliament](#) and will be applied by May 2019 latest, provided that the European Council approves of it.

All in all, the regulations that concern the EU consumers and their personal data have been updated or further secured recently or are in midst of doing so. The few concerns that remain should be taken into consideration and discussed thoroughly, but for now - the start has been underway.

Further links

GDPR: What Is It and How Might It Affect You? - <https://youtu.be/j6wwBqfSk-o>

EU Citizens Rights Under the EU GDPR - <https://bit.ly/2Eu7Ej5>

Timeline for Digital Single Market Policies - <https://bit.ly/2EdJ84G>

How It Works: Internet of Things - <https://youtu.be/QSIPNhOiMoE>

Consumer Protection in the EU (Policy Overview) - <https://bit.ly/1hToQyH>

COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE (INTA)

The future of trade: With parts of China's World Trade Organisation (WTO) accession protocol having expired, **what approach should Europe take to tackle unfair trade practices with regards to its trade defense instruments (TDIs)?**

Chairperson: Lira Mikayelyan (AM)

The topic at a glance

On the 15th anniversary of its accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) China was waiting for one thing to happen, gaining **market economy status (MES)**. Market economy is an economic system in which decisions and pricing are guided by the interactions of citizens and businesses with little or no governmental intervention. In 2001 China became member of the WTO and according to accession agreement it was supposed to gain MES 15 years later which was the time necessary for implementing reforms. However, the European Union (EU) believes that because of Chinese **dumping practices**, due to which exported Chinese products abroad are cheaper than in its domestic market, China should still have non-market economy status. Otherwise other members of WTO will incur sufficient losses because of unfair competition from China.

Key Actors and Stakeholders

[World Trade Organisation \(WTO\)](#) – An organisation composed of nations, which negotiate trade agreements, solve trade-related disputes and create regulations on a global level.

[The European Commission](#) – is the executive body of the EU, the European Commission proposes legislation and implements decisions regarding trade. The EU combats unfair trade practices through [trade defence measures \(TDIs\)](#) employed by the European Commission.

[People's Republic of China \(PRC\)](#) – Government of China highly intervenes into pricing decisions of the economy and implements dumping policy. As a result, China is considered as a non-market economy.

EU companies – Companies across the EU are affected by dumping policy causing unfair competition from China and protests among employees.

EU civil society – Citizens of the EU who are directly impacted by pricing fluctuations across the EU.

[G20 Trade and Investment Working Group \(TIWG\)](#) – is an [international](#) forum for the members of the Group of Twenty (G20), whose aim is to strengthen the G20 cooperation in trade and investment.

[United Nations Conference on Trade and Development \(UNCTAD\)](#) – UNCTAD is a permanent intergovernmental body established by the United Nations General Assembly which aims to maximise the [trade, investment](#) and development opportunities of [countries](#) and assist them in efforts to integrate into the world economy.

Key Conflicts

In terms of trade in goods and services, the EU is the most important partner for China. It is the number one seller of goods and services to China and the EU is the second biggest importer from China. Trade flows are significantly increasing year by year. Hence, for the EU is important to establish trade balance and keep harmonious trade relationship with China.

Members of the European Parliament have already expressed opposition to the upgrade of China into MES. The opposition was caused by the number of protests by employees across the EU who faced unfair competition from China. [In 2016, the report from the European Commission demonstrated protesting responses of more than 5000 employees, mainly from the steel industry.](#) The protestors are afraid of losing 3,5 million jobs in the EU and the 1-2% drop in the GDP.

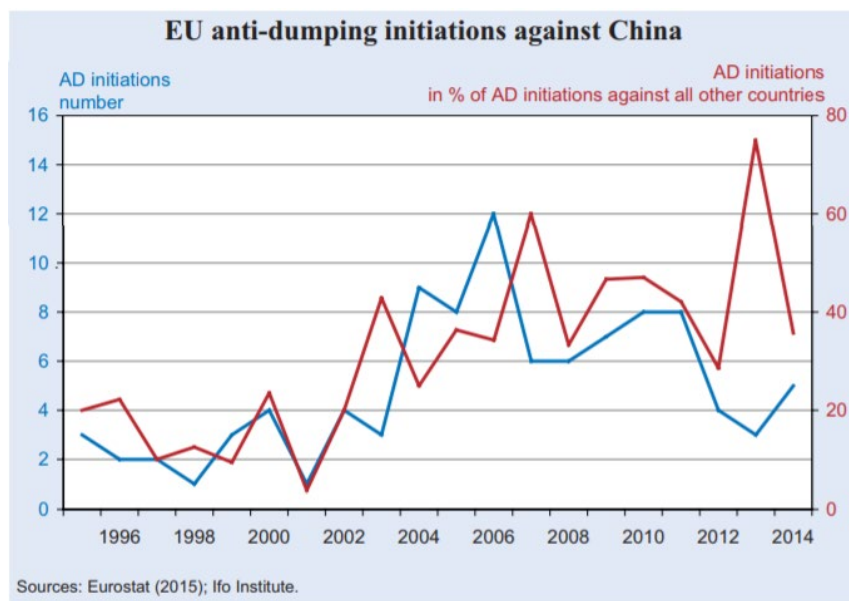
China aims to acquire market economy status in order to gain advantages such as higher revenues, as global trade regulators will have to compare Chinese export prices with prices in Chinese domestic market. In the aftermath, importing countries, who are members of the WTO, will have limited ability to impose tariffs, which is the opposite of what was done in [anti-dumping cases](#). An anti-dumping duty is a protectionist tariff that a domestic government imposes on foreign imports as it considers that products are priced unfairly low compared to market value.

Currently, **the Communist Party of China (CPC)**, ruling political party of the People's Republic of China, increases supervision on financial sector by changing regulations. Furthermore, **Premier Li Keqiang** asked the National People's Congress to approve a plan that would combine China's banking and insurance regulators in an effort to boost their ability to monitor financial institutions.

The formulation of the protocol for China's accession to WTO is a reason for misunderstanding. The position of the Chinese Government was that its WTO accession protocol provide automatic application of MES after 11 December 2016. Commissioners argue that Section 15 of China's Protocol of Accession is subject to interpretation.

It is worth mentioning that one of the concerns of the EU is the fact that China still does not meet the criteria for being referred as a market economy. [The EU has five criteria against which it assessed whether or not a country is a market economy](#). In 2003 China met only one out of five criteria which is the fact that it removed barter trade. However, China still does not fulfill the requirements as it does not allocate economic resources, lacks compliance in relation to corporate governance and property rights, lacks proper rules on bankruptcy and competition and does not have open financial sector.

The EU first imposed anti-subsidy measures for Chinese solar panels, wafers and cells in 2013 together with anti-dumping measures and extended them by 18 months in March 2017. Subsidisation is when a non-EU government provides financial assistance to companies to produce or export goods. [Chinese manufacturers are now allowed to sell solar products in the EU free of duties at minimum price](#). China's commerce ministry welcomed the end of restrictions and described it as a "model for successfully resolving trade frictions through consultations."



What has been done so far?

The Commission proposed a reform of **the EU's trade defence instruments (TDIs)** in 2013. The compromise was reached in December of 2016 as on 9 November 2016 the European Commission presented a proposal of a new method for calculating dumping on imports. The European Parliament and the Council reached agreement with the Commission's proposal on 3 October 2017.

The aim of the new legislation is to make sure that the EU has TDIs that are able to deal with notable distortions in the international trading environment such as dumping policy, while fully respecting the EU's obligations in the legal framework of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Dumping was usually calculated by **comparing export prices with domestic prices or costs in the exporting country**. The Commission would not take the prices into consideration if domestic prices or costs were distorted. Instead, it would **use diverse methods to understand real costs of production**.

[The new method of calculating dumping](#) is applied to any WTO member. Before applying the new methodology, it will be mandatory to represent the existence of distortions in the economy of the exporting country as a result of state interference. The Commission will examine all the evidence presented in the course of an investigation, including by the EU industry. The new rules will shorten the 9 month investigation period to 7 months for the imposition of provisional measures and make the system more transparent.

EU may be able to impose higher duties for all anti-subsidy cases, as well as antidumping cases concerning imports produced.

Further links

China fights for market economy status (You can access the article by copy pasting the name ("China fights for market economy status Financial Times" to Google search)

<https://www.ft.com/content/572f435e-0784-11e6-9b51-0fb5e65703ce>

European Commission regarding China and trade relations with China

<http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/china/>

EU Trade Defence

<http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=1859>

MES for China after 2016?

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/535023/EXPO_STU\(2016\)535023_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/535023/EXPO_STU(2016)535023_EN.pdf)

New methodology of calculating dumping

<http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=1774>

The European Parliament and the Council about the New Strategy on China

http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/china/docs/joint_communication_to_the_european_parliament_and_the_council_-_elements_for_a_new_eu_strategy_on_china.pdf

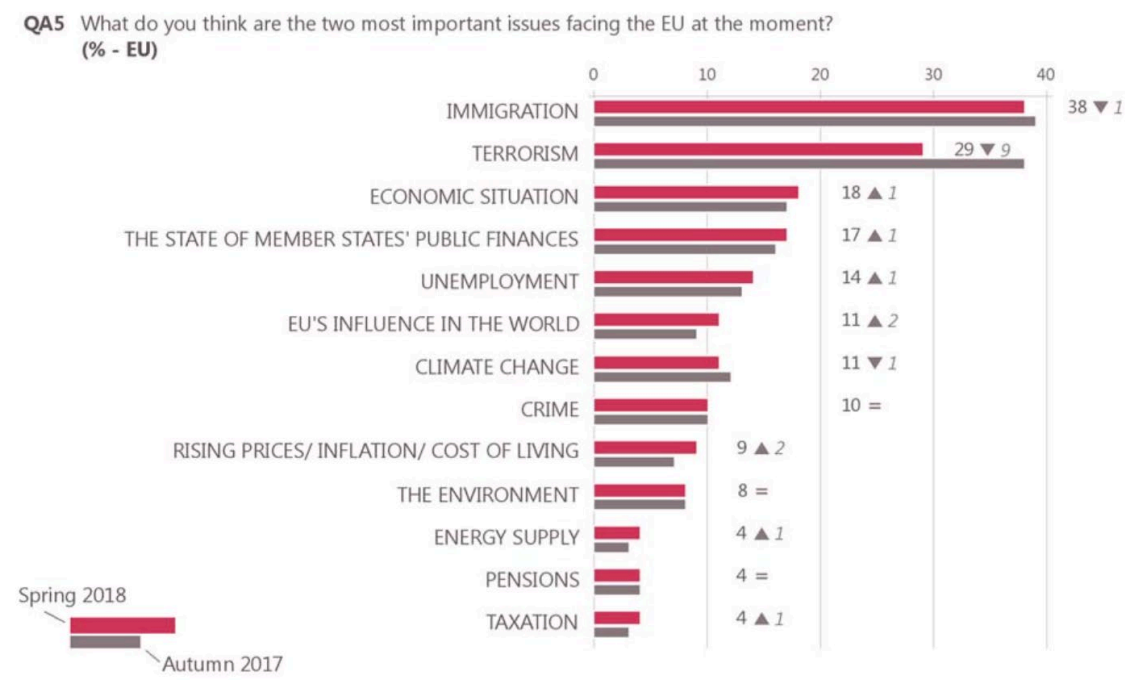
COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AFFAIRS (JURI)

Managing the refugee crisis: Considering that the EU-Turkey deal has not provided a long-term solution to the refugee crisis, **what measures should the EU take to create workable policies that would ensure that responsibility is shared whilst also protecting the rights of refugees?**

Chairperson: Justyn Brockmeyer (DE)

The topic at a glance

Since 2015 more than [1.6 million refugees](#) arrived in Europe, with a significant peak of more than 1 million arrivals in 2015 alone. Whilst the [heavily criticized EU-Turkey deal](#) contributed to a [decreasing number of new arrivals in Europe](#) since 2015, the EU's Member States have yet to find a common ground on a reform towards a fair as well as sustainable asylum policy. Very recently the UN Migration Compact put [the European rift on Migration](#) back in the spotlight. The political deadlock has not remained unnoticed, with surveys indicating that [Europeans still consider immigration the EU's biggest issue](#).



Key Actors and Stakeholders

- **European Commission:** The European Commission holds the legal competence in the fields of immigration and asylum. The European Commission's proposals are at centre of any new regulation. However, approval by both European Parliament and Council of the EU is required. In his latest speech on the State of the EU the Commission's president Jean-Claude Juncker emphasised [the importance of finding long term solutions](#). The European Commission recognized the need for reform and proposed a [package of new legislation](#), intending to reform **the Common European Asylum System (CEAS)**.
- **The Council of the EU** consists of representatives from each Member State, who adopt laws proposed by the Commission and coordinate national policies. In the Council the Member States' interests come into play and often, especially on controversial topics, like immigration, compromises have to be made. A timeline of the Council's actions in the field of migration can be found [here](#). Since the Member States leaders [couldn't agree on a common migration policy](#) during their last summits, reaching compromises within the Council of the EU appears especially hard. However, progress can be seen in the reform of the CEAS, where the [negotiation of several reforms are at advanced stages or concluded](#).

- **European Parliament:** The European Parliament represents the interests of European citizens and is not bound to a country's or institution's opinion, allowing the parliament to express its own opinion through resolutions. In 2016, the Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) stressing the importance of solidarity and arguing for the introduction of a common resettlement policy. Since 2009 the Parliament is calling for effecting relocation mechanisms to overcome the unequal distribution of asylum seekers through [the Dublin III regulation](#). Accordingly, the Parliament also calls for a reform of the Dublin III regulation.
- **Member States:** Being present in the European Council the Member States are able to influence the general aim of the Unions politics. Furthermore, their interests are represented by the Council of the EU. Therefore, a reform of common asylum regulations will not be possible without backing by most of the Member States. The Member States are deeply divided in their opinions on migration, as the recent UN migration compact showed. Several Member States refused to take part in the compact, arguing that migration is a matter of national sovereignty. This stance also translates to EU policy making, where some [Member States call for more solidarity](#), while others declare their [unwillingness to accept any relocation quota](#).
- **The European Asylum Support Office (EASO):** The EASO is an agency founded by the EU in order to ensure the implementation of the CEAS. It aims to achieve coherent asylum processes in all Member States by offering permanent as well emergency support.
- **UNHCR:** [The UNHCR](#) is the United Nations' Refugee Agency and a global organisation that aims to protect human rights, to save lives and to build a better future for refugees. Besides delivering humanitarian aid, the UNHCR regularly publishes data and research on the most pressing matters. Sometimes states or stakeholders are directly addressed in recommendations or calls for action by the organisation. In 2016 [the UNHCR urged the European Union to reform the Common Asylum System](#).

Key Conflicts

During the refugee crisis the different opinions and approaches towards the **right on asylum** and the treatment of those who seek asylum became visible. The most important regulation within the [CEAS](#) is the well-known [Dublin regulation](#). The Dublin Regulation determines the country responsible for processing the respective asylum claim, which is the first country of entry. However, the high influx of refugees in 2015 led to an immense **pressure on the EU's border states**, whilst other Member States were not as much affected. These events sparked a debate about the **fair distribution of refugees** within the Union. A proposed reform of the Dublin regulations was blocked by several states - for different reasons. Italy and other southern states [call for more solidarity](#), whereas Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic [oppose any solution that includes mandatory quotas](#). Following [Austria's approach](#), [Germany has announced plans](#) to set an **upper limit** to the intake of refugees per year.

Another problem is centred around [the Reception Conditions Directive](#), which outlines minimum standards for Member States to ensure an **adequate standard of living** for persons awaiting a decision on their claim for asylum. Due to vague regulations in the directive the standards vary a lot within the EU, leading to mistreatments and to a higher attractiveness of some Member States. If another country is more attractive than the country of first entry, asylum seekers might decide to move in the hope of higher chances to be granted asylum, which is also referred to as ['Asylum Shopping'](#).

What has been done so far?

In 2013 the [Dublin III regulation](#) entered into force. The regulation determines the Member State of first arrival as the state responsible for the respective request for asylum. In response to the high influx of refugees the regulation has been, heavily criticized, among other aspects for putting a heavy and disproportionate burden on the EU's border states. Therefore, the European Commission proposed a [reform of the regulation](#) in its effort for a renewed ECAS.

In response to the emergency situations the European Union agreed on [emergency relocation mechanisms](#), planning to relocate 160.000 persons. Although the number of relocations has been considerably lower than expected, the Commission plans to continue the program and has proposed an EU [resettlement framework](#).

Furthermore the Commission came up with a plan to [reform the CEAS](#), which is based on 7 legislative proposals. Among the proposals are a [reform of the Reception Conditions Directive](#), the creation of a [European Asylum Agency](#), a new [Resettlement Framework](#) as well as a [new Dublin Regulations](#) and [guidelines for asylum procedures](#). Overall the Commission's plans are in a late stage, with 5 of 7 proposals adopted.

Very recently the non-binding **UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration** has been accepted by more than 150 states but caused a divide in European politics. Many European states did not participate in the pact and political landmark, arguing that [migration is a matter of national sovereignty](#).

Further links

[Understanding Europe: The Common European Asylum System](#). This is a short video that provides basic information on the Common European Asylum System.

[An analysis of the Common European Asylum System conducted for the LIBE committee in 2016](#). Although the document does not include the most up to date references to the European Commission's reform plans it illustrates key problems within the CEAS that is still in place.

[Study on the proposed Reform of the Dublin III Regulation](#).

[What has the European Union done in the field of migration since 2014?](#) Please note that only part on the Reform of the CEAS is relevant to this topic.

[European Parliament's resolution of 12 April 2016 on the situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration](#). This resolution provides a nice overview of the Parliament's standpoints on the EU's approach to migration.

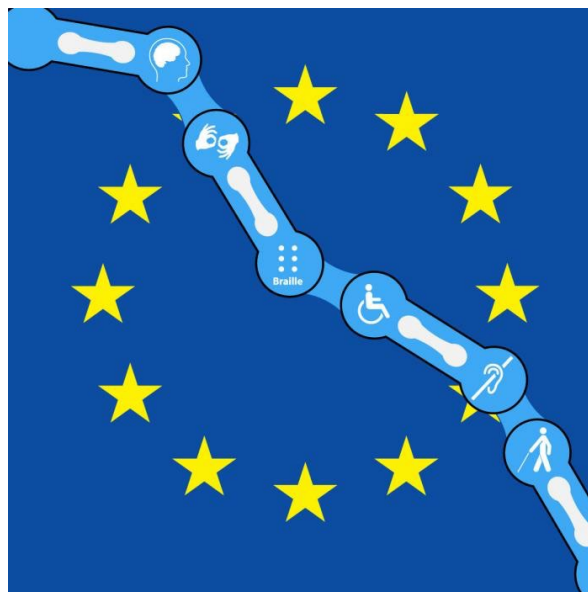
COMMITTEE ON CIVIL LIBERTIES, JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS (LIBE)

People with disabilities form the biggest minority in the world. According to Eurostat approximately 80 million EU citizen have a disability of some sort and the number is estimated to grow to 120 million by the year 2020. **How could the EU better ensure the integration of people with disabilities into society?**

Chairperson: Clara Gaughan (IE)

The topic at a glance

17.6% of the EU population aged 15 or over have some form of disability. Despite disabled persons representing such a sizeable portion of the EU population, it is reported that **30% of people with a disability are at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU**, compared to 21.5% of people without disabilities. The 2012 European Health and Social Integration survey determined multiple areas of life where people with disabilities reported barriers to participation as a result of their disability. **Mobility and leisure pursuits** were the two areas where [the largest number of people with disabilities reported barriers to their participation](#), with 52.9% and 60.9% respectively. A variety of other areas still pose challenges for those with a disability, with finding employment, accessing buildings, transport and access to education and training, all affecting over 25% of disabled persons in the EU.



Strides have been made to improve the rights of people with disabilities, and their overall integration into society. On 22 January 2011, [the United Nations Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UNCRPD\) entered into force in the European Union](#). This Convention pledged the EU to uphold and protect the rights of disabled persons, which are of paramount importance when it comes to ensuring people with disabilities can fully integrate into society. The strategy that gives effect to the commitments made by the EU in the UNCRPD is the **European Disability Strategy 2010-2020**.

Key Actors and Stakeholders

- **High Level Group on Disability:** This group is composed of representatives of the European Commission, the Member States, Norway, the Council of Europe and several EU-level NGOs. It exists to establish **close cooperation** between the institutions of the Member States, the Commission, and the civil society on issues relating to disability and to facilitate the exchange of information, experiences and good practices. It issues an annual report on implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- **UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:** This is a group of experts who **monitor the implementation** of the UNCRPD by all countries that ratified it. All countries involved, including the EU, as a bloc, must send reports, every four years, to this committee for review. The committee then issues recommendations on the report in the form of its [Concluding Observations](#). This committee is also responsible for examining individual complaints of **alleged breaches** of the [Optional Protocol of the UNCRPD](#).
- **EU Framework for the UN Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities:** This group consists of members of the European Parliament, European Commission, the European Ombudsman, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights and the European Disability Forum. This group monitors implementation of the UNCRPD on an EU level and complements **national monitoring mechanisms**. The members strive to promote, protect and monitor the UN Convention.

Key Conflicts

One of the key factors relating to social inclusion is **employment**, yet only 48.7% of people with disabilities have a job compared people without disabilities (72.5%). Lack of employment contributes to poverty, and as this poverty limits a person's ability to participate in activities, people with disabilities often find themselves **excluded** from society. Linked to the issue of employment is access to **education**; in the EU, [the rate of early leavers from school or higher education is 31.5%](#), compared with 12.3% for people without disabilities. Further examples of things restricting the ability of people with disabilities to participate in society include problems of **accessibility** to **transport**, buildings and **websites**.

Much of the efforts made by the EU to promote the integration of people with disabilities into society relies on the **national policies** of the individual Member States. For example, while in Finland, [the number of disabled persons who have difficulty accessing transport is quite low, it is a comparatively high figure in Italy](#). It is important to note that people with disabilities in different Member States face **different issues** and although various pieces of legislation improving the condition of disabled persons has been passed on an EU-level, the issue still remains that much of the work to be done for disabled persons must be on a national level.

What has been done so far?

European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 - [This strategy](#) commits the EU to working to improve the lives of people with disabilities under the following eight headings: accessibility, participation, equality, education and training, social protection, health and external action. This is the strategy that provides examples of the concrete action that the EU plans to take to achieve the aims of the UNCRPD.

Employment Equality Directive 2000 - This directive prohibits employers from discriminating against employees/potential employees on grounds such as religion, age, sexual orientation and disability.

Web Accessibility Act - [This 2016 directive](#) is the first web accessibility directive, making the public sector websites of all Member States accessible to those with disabilities. This can be done by various means, such as providing subtitles for videos for the hearing impaired, or being able to listen to text for the visually impaired.

European Accessibility Act - [This directive](#) was recently agreed upon by the Council and Parliament in November 2018. This proposed directive aims to harmonise accessibility requirements for a number of products and services across the EU. It would oblige Member States to ensure selected products and services comply with the **accessibility standards**. Such products and services include smartphones, ATMs, and banking services.

EU Disability Card - [This card](#) is meant to combat the barriers people with a disability face in participating in **leisure pursuits**. This card is to be used in activities in the domains of culture, sport, and leisure. The card offers advantages such as lower prices, adapted tours, easy-to-read booklets etc. Another purpose of the card is to facilitate **mutual recognition** of disability across Member States as what is recognised as a disability in one Member State, sometimes is not recognised as one in another State. This card has been introduced in 8 pilot countries.

Access City Award - [This award](#) has been awarded to cities across the EU since 2010 for efforts made to improve accessibility and for their willingness to continue this work into the future. The aim of this award is to **raise awareness** of the need for accessibility.

Inclusion and Diversity Strategy - [This addition](#) to the Erasmus+ programme has helped to ensure that young people with fewer opportunities can also access programmes funded by Erasmus+. Under this strategy, young people with disabilities can participate in all Erasmus+ programmes but also can participate in **inclusion and diversity projects**, aimed specifically at involving them and addressing the issues they face. Programmes highlighted as being particularly beneficial to youth with fewer opportunities are **Youth Exchanges**, **European Voluntary Service** activities, and **Transnational Youth Initiatives**.

While great strides have been made in the fields of education under the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy and recent improvements have been made related to accessibility with the adoption of the Web Accessibility Act and the European Accessibility Act, much of the **day-to-day problems** facing people with disabilities remain. Very little concrete action has been taken to help with accessibility of buildings, for example. Under Article 9 of the UNCRPD, there must be accessibility to the physical environment. Unfortunately, according to a [2011 report](#) on the built environment, legislation surrounding accessibility standards of buildings is ignored and **inadequately enforced** among the Member States. Part of this problem may be due to the fact that there is **no definition of accessibility** within EU legislation. It is hoped that the [European Accessibility Act](#) will be the legislation needed to change this as it will provide a clear definition of accessibility to clarify what it is that Member States should be working towards.

Further links

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoN1XZcgKdg> This video explains some of the challenges people with disabilities face, as well as what the EU has already done to improve their situation.

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2725> This contains a link to the Progress Report of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, listing key actions taken by the EU.

<http://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/people-disabilities> EU Agency of Fundamental Rights information on people with disabilities.

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