



# BALTIC EU CONVERSATIONS 2019

*Awaiting Political Change*

## RIGHT OR WRONG EUROPEANS: WHO WILL TAKE THE LEAD?

A PROLOGUE TO THE BALTIC EU CONVERSATIONS 2019

5 APRIL 2019, RIGA

AUTHOR:  
**VINETA KLEINBERGA,**  
RESEARCHER AT THE LATVIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

## Introduction

“I've been wondering what that special place in hell looks like, for those who promoted #Brexit, without even a sketch of a plan how to carry it out safely”<sup>1</sup>, tweeted Donald Tusk, the President of the European Council, at the moment Theresa May, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (UK), was on her way to renegotiate the exit deal, rejected by the UK Parliament. Though addressed exclusively at the Brexiteers it is an example of rhetoric, which has become increasingly dominant in recent years. By blaming and shaming each other the European leaders have entered a devastating debate on who knows best.

But does anyone? Was it right or wrong for the British people to vote for leaving the European Union (EU)? Was it right or wrong for the European countries to object the EU immigration policy? Was it right or wrong to elect the populist parties in the parliaments of the EU Member States? Many would claim that they know the answer; yet the real answer seems to be more complicated than just “yes” or “no”. Europe is facing serious challenges ahead: socioeconomic inequality is growing; international business and security environment becomes more complex and the post-1990 global consensus on liberal world order is fading away. All challenges require comprehensive and deliberate solutions - such ones that are agreed upon equally treated partners in a cooperative manner, and meet the expectations of the EU citizens.

In view of the Baltic EU Conversations, taking place on April 5, 2019, in Riga, and with a more forward-looking intention to contribute to the debates about the future of Europe in light of Latvia's fifteenth anniversary as the EU Member State, this paper provides an insight into several fields the EU should navigate through in order to move forward. Firstly, it is a normative field, namely, what would be the values all can agree upon as the basis of further integration. Secondly, it is socioeconomic matters, highlighting the challenges of growing inequalities and shrinking middle class in the European societies. In the afterword few recommendations will be provided for further deliberation.

## Normative Challenges: Who is Right?

Recent years have witnessed an increasing tension between the supporters of values of liberal democracy, on the one hand, and the protagonists of more protectionist and nationalistic vision, on the other hand. In many EU countries right or left wing populist parties have gained a considerable representation in parliaments and governments. Hungary with its Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Italy with its Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini are the most extreme examples; yet political parties or candidates calling for “gaining back control” from Brussels and being openly anti-immigrant have gained support of millions of people in such countries as Austria, Estonia, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and Sweden.<sup>2</sup> Brexit is an outstanding example of ultimate consequences the populist calls can bring for the EU. Yet further EU integration process may be hampered also by opposition to the EU migration and asylum policies, protectionist vision on economic policies, as well as fragmentation and alternative alliance formation within the EU.

So far the opposition to neofunctionalist type of integration has not reached the ears that hear. Incoming right or left-wing political actors are stigmatised as populists, and their activities in majority of cases are considered harmful to the solidarity and unity of the EU. Though it may be true that they are populists - and in many cases they are, indeed - and that their activities fragment the EU, the question is not about this. Like it or not, it is millions of people who are behind these political parties. Millions of people voted for them knowing that they are populist, nationalist, protectionist and/or openly anti-immigrant.

In France alone it was 10.6 million people, who supported Marine Le Pen, the Eurosceptic head of the “National Front”, during the second round of the 2017 French Presidential elections.<sup>3</sup> The nationalistic right-wing “Alternative for Germany” got 5.9 millions of votes in the 2017 German Parliamentary elections.<sup>4</sup> In Italy it was 16.4 million of people who voted for both anti-establishment political parties - the “Five Star Movement” and the “League” - in 2018 Parliamentary elections.<sup>5</sup> “Fidesz”, the political party of Viktor Orban received support of 2.8 million Hungarians for the third successive time during the 2018 Parliamentary elections in Hungary<sup>6</sup> - even after Orban was carrying out suppressive reforms against the media and civil society organisations, expelled the Central European University and named his country as “illiberal democracy”. Last but not least, in Sweden the anti-immigrant “Swedish Democrats” won the support of 1.1 million of people in 2018 Parliamentary elections.<sup>7</sup>

If just the before-mentioned five countries are counted it is already 36.8 million of people, who back far right or left-wing populists – it is eighteen times more than the population of Latvia or 7.2%<sup>8</sup> of the EU population. Have the people been wrong? In democratic regimes very few would dare to claim that. But why people choose radical, protectionist, nationalistic and authoritarian leaders then, using the tools of democracy? And what to do with it – shame people for their choices, restrict democracy or punish leaders for their activities, backed by huge proportion of the people? It is exactly the dilemma the EU is facing today.

It seems to be a pattern already that people discard traditional right and left-wing political parties and opt for ones that promise reduced controls from Brussels and more national autonomy in setting the policies. At the same time, they do not openly reject the EU. People support their countries’ membership in the EU and for many years already the trust to the EU has been higher than that to the national parliaments and governments.<sup>9</sup> Yet election results suggest that the EU is expected to respond more to the local needs, increasing its accountability. According to Jack Snyder, by “gradual transfer of authority from national governments to Brussels” the functions of elected representatives have been largely taken over by “unelected technocrats” thus leaving the people with just one way “to impose democratic accountability” – namely, through local politicians.<sup>10</sup> Following Snyder’s logic it is understandable, why in current situation, exacerbated by 2008 financial and 2015 refugee crisis, people vote for politicians, who promise to renew controls over national borders, be they physical or refer to a broader sovereignty of action.

What have the EU responses been so far? Not too promising. Instead of empathy towards the reasons, which underlie the disappointment of the people, temptation can be observed to shame those who disagree with the mainstream politics. Take, for example, migration. There has been an obvious clash of views about decisions taken right after the refugee crisis in 2015, especially the so called immigrant quotas. Latvia was one of the

countries standing against them, yet quotas were adopted in spite of opposition. What are the consequences? Though not more than half-thousand migrants were settled in Latvia and almost none of them stayed there, it is revealed that more than 80% of people are against immigration from the third countries.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, Latvian parliament is one of nine EU countries that refused to join the United Nations' Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The rise in the anti-immigrant sentiment in Latvia largely correlates with hasty and improperly discussed decisions, especially such ones that awaken painful historical memories about immigration. Though the immigrant quotas have been removed in the meantime the European Commission has come up with new ambiguous proposals, for example, to include the migration as a condition in the EU funding policy. Namely, the EU multiannual budget proposal for 2021-2027 envisages more funding to the Member States if migration-related activities are carried out. In short, you either take migrants or pay to those who do it. In terms of solidarity it is not a bad idea; the problem is that it comes out at a peak of the anti-immigration sentiment thus providing the anti-establishment political forces with new arguments of the EU "ignoring" the national specifics.

Not listening but constant shaming may accelerate the feeling of anger, potentially resulting in even higher support to the populist parties. In Sweden, long-lasting rejection of peoples' concerns over immigration resulted in traditional ruling parties – social democrats and moderates losing majority in the Parliament after 2018 elections. The tensions between Rome and Brussels over Italy's budget deficit helped to raise the support for the "League" from 17.4% in March 2018 elections to 34.7% in November 2018.<sup>12</sup> The popularity of "Fidesz" remains stable, notwithstanding the Article 7 procedure, initiated by the European Parliament against Hungary, and the people's protests regarding the overtime work or the so called "slave law".<sup>13</sup>

How to react to that? Fortunately accountability is an indispensable feature of democracy. The leaders of the EU institutions have a privilege to come up with "grand strategies" for EU integration and consolidation. They do not have voters to be accountable for; moreover, they have fixed-term contracts of employment, which gives them free hands to suggest anything, be it the Fiscal or the Defence Union, or immigrant quotas. Member States' governments are bound by the mandate given to them by their electorate, even if it is given to them in a protest vote against the previous ruling parties; these politicians risk being out of the power if their electorate is ignored. This is a simple truth.

Take, for example, Emmanuel Macron, the President of France. He has risen on the national and EU political stage as a promising star – a truly convinced European, supportive of further EU integration in fiscal, social and defence matters, counteracting the nationalist and protectionist forces. But his detachment from every-day problems of French middle and lower-income class, named as "arrogance" by media, led to spontaneous rise of the yellow vests movement in France, highlighting numerous social and economic aspects of French domestic policy Macron had not paid adequate attention to.

This leads to the real problem of the EU, which is not new and has been discussed for years - detachment from the "real" needs of "real" people.<sup>14</sup> The EU bureaucratic apparatus has risen enormously over time, with the EU treaties transferring new functions to the transnational level and every enlargement adding a new Commissioner and

respective Directorates-General. Trying to overcome the accountability gap, the European Parliament has been given additional powers and national parliaments are more and more involved directly in the EU decision-making process. Numerous legal acts and policy documents are being drafted, numerous working parties meet every day in Brussels, numerous bilateral and multilateral consultations are being held. Citizens' initiatives and citizens' dialogues have been introduced to make "Europe closer to its citizens" and to involve people in the EU decision-making and deliberation. Yet people increasingly more choose leaders that promise to "take control back". What has been left unheard?

## **Socioeconomic Challenges: Growing Inequalities and Shrinking Middle Class**

The EU is not doing badly in economic terms. Notwithstanding prudent growth projections, the EU is one of the largest economies in the world, accounting for almost 22% of the world's gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>15</sup> Four of its Member States are in the top ten of the world's biggest economies – Germany, the UK<sup>16</sup>, France and Italy.<sup>17</sup> Five of its members rank among ten the most competitive countries in the world – Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, Sweden and Denmark.<sup>18</sup> Euro is the second biggest currency in the world. The EU is a global leader in fighting the climate change and providing development aid. It devotes huge intellectual and financial means to become the most innovative economy in the world. Finally, its citizens have one of the longest life-expectancies at birth in the world – 81 year on average at the EU-28<sup>19</sup>, and all EU countries are among 58 world countries of "very high human development" according to the United Nations Human Development Index.<sup>20</sup>

Yet people are turning away from those that have followed the liberal line, largely responsible for the above-mentioned achievements. Why? Ian Kearns argues that "both economic insecurity and identity politics have been influential in damaging and in some cases destroying what might be described as pre-crisis mainstream politics".<sup>21</sup> Indeed, it is both the 2008 financial crisis and 2015 refugee crisis, and the respective policy responses that have increased the vulnerability of the European citizens. During the financial crisis the EU's GDP dropped by 4.4%<sup>22</sup> and unemployment rose up to 10.9% in the EU-28 at its peak, in Greece and Spain reaching 27.5% and 26.1% respectively.<sup>23</sup>

Bail-outs, austerity policies, tax rises with simultaneous cuts in wages, social benefits and health budgets left many people out of the comfort zone they had been in for years. It increased the level of inequality and threw a large proportion of the population into poverty from which it has not managed to get out of since. The 2015 refugee crisis arrived just in time for the far-right populists to come out of the box with culture and identity arguments, which, alongside the economic insecurity, equipped them with tools for advocating more protectionist national policies. Refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants quickly stood next to the globalisation and multinational corporations, together embodying the so called "them", which threaten the existence of "us" and therefore need to be constrained.<sup>24</sup>

Rich and poor people have always existed in societies, yet the resilience of a particular socio-political formation has depended on those who are in the middle – or the so called middle class. The bigger and more stable it is the lesser surprises to ruling

political elites arise. There are many definitions of the middle class but most frequently it is measured by income. In such definition middle class embodies the households, whose net income is between 0.75 and 2 times of the median.<sup>25</sup> The European project since its outset has contributed distinctively to formation and well-being of the middle-class, which, in turn, has ensured the support to further EU integration. Yet the process has not always been smooth and unequivocal.

The period from the 1960s up to the 1980s is considered as the period of stagnation in the then European Economic Community (EEC). Initiated by the “empty chair crisis” in the mid-1960s by the French president Charles de Gaulle, nationalist and protectionist sentiment in the EEC countries flourished in the 1970s facing the collapse of the international gold standard and the emerging global oil crisis. These challenges worked as catalysts of a more prudent approach towards integration and resulted in primacy of intergovernmentalism, not least because of the impact of global events on the well-being of the middle class.

Nowadays, certain parallels can be drawn from that time. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has reported an increasing socio-economic divide in Europe over last three decades, and particularly since the beginning of the financial crisis. It has been asserted that income inequality “was generally lower one generation ago” and, represented by Gini coefficient, has risen from 0.28 in 1980 to 0.30 in 2014.<sup>26</sup> In 2017, almost one fourth or 22.4% of the EU population lived at risk of poverty or social exclusion<sup>27</sup> and in-work poverty affected 8% of the working-age population in the OECD countries<sup>28</sup>. Changing employment patterns and increasing gap in earnings between high demand sectors, for example, information technologies, and low-demand, traditional jobs, amplified by high dependency on household debts have reduced capacity of the middle class to act during the crisis. Altogether, despite the fact that the unemployment has fallen and real wages grow, the incomes of people have not reached the pre-crisis levels and inequality has not diminished.<sup>29</sup>

One can observe that the before-mentioned rise in inequality happened in times of intense trans-nationalisation. Indeed, since the millennium both widening and deepening of the EU has taken place in previously unprecedented pace. During last fifteen years the number of EU Member States has almost doubled. Since 2002, the EU’s common currency – euro – is in circulation. After ambitious attempts to draft a Constitution for Europe a more modest Lisbon treaty was signed in 2007, yet providing new competences, new institutions and new voting methods for the Union. Reacting to terrorist attacks the Member States have strengthened their cooperation on justice and home affairs. The 2008 financial crisis has led to more integration in economic and financial matters, resulting in an almost completed process of establishment of the Banking Union. Since the Lisbon treaty an enhanced role has been given to the EU in global affairs, even more strengthened after 2014 occupation of Crimea by the Russian military forces. Last but not least in 2015 the EU faced an unprecedented refugee crisis, depicted by one million refugees coming to Europe, requesting more integrated and coordinating approach to EU border management and asylum policy.

It could be argued that decades of integration have resulted in integration fatigue now, which manifests itself both in popularity of far right and left political parties and rise of nationalistic and protectionist sentiments. Besides, active widening and deepening has not managed to meet the initially high hopes of people in ensuring equal rise of welfare

for everyone. For many decades it has been reforms, reforms, and reforms. No wonder that people are tired, especially those, who do not feel the results at personal level. However, it is not to argue that people are blind to the added value of the EU. They do appreciate it and majority of EU citizens clearly indicate the priorities the EU should focus on. The latest Eurobarometer reveals that Europeans consider immigration, terrorism and state of Member States' public finances to be the most urgent challenges at European level.<sup>30</sup> There is a large support for further consolidation of EU external action by going as far as discussing the necessity of common Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>31</sup> As well, 76% of the Europeans are supportive regarding common EU defence and security policy.<sup>32</sup>

People recognize that Member States alone are not able to fight with these challenges, therefore prefer common, European-level solutions. At the same time, the issues that relate to the personal well-being of people are seen as national-level competences. Among the most urgent issues facing the Member States at the moment unemployment, rising prices, inflation and the costs of living, immigration, and health and social security issues are mentioned.<sup>33</sup>

This could suggest that people actually request a more active role of state in regulating economy. The EU has its "growth and jobs" strategy<sup>34</sup>, yet people either do not see a direct link between it and improvements at national level, or personally do not feel positively affected by reforms. As a result their eyes turn at national governments, requesting them to protect their citizens. The Citizens' Dialogues and Citizens' Consultations, initiated by the European Commission in view of the future of Europe debate in Sibiu on May 9, 2019, reveal that majority of people would like to see more protection in future, not least in strengthening the social dimension of economy.

It is mentioned that 85% of the people would like to see free-market economy go "hand in hand with a high level of social protection".<sup>35</sup> Health is an especially worrying topic with 72% of people underlining that the lives of next generations in the matters of health will be more difficult than the lives of the current ones, which requires more forward-looking health policies.<sup>36</sup> Even in Latvia, which has always been among keen supporters of *laissez-faire* economy, consultations on the future of Europe revealed that people consider reducing inequality and promoting of social inclusion as more urgent issues than fostering of growth and welfare.<sup>37</sup>

To sum up, inequality fuels political and social instability of the EU countries; yet it can also be a serious impediment to security. Discussing the reasons of victory of the current President of the United States of America (USA) Donald Trump, Michael W. Doyle warns that "an ill-founded faith in perfectly operating markets blinded the US policy elite to the potentially adverse effects of trade, technology, and immigration on the less skilled and those in industries directly competing with imports".<sup>38</sup> This could be referred also to Europe, which has invested decades in establishment of the Single Market, the Eurozone and the mechanisms to put in place sound economic policies, at the same time devoting comparatively minor efforts to elaboration of its social pillar.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, international security, concludes Doyle, referring both to the USA and Europe, "will not be achieved without first rebuilding the economic foundations of liberal democracy at home".<sup>40</sup>

## Afterword: Who Will Take the Lead?

The world is changing and confrontation is much more the keyword nowadays than the cooperation. Yet, in the best scenario, the confrontation will bring the isolation, into which certain political leaders may turn out to be winners, yet “real” people will hardly benefit from that. In the worst scenario, however, confrontations end up with wars and human catastrophes. It is not something people would expect either from their national governments or the European leaders. Instead, the system, which protects and provides a sense of security, is awaited.

Fifteen years ago the countries of East and Central Europe did not join the EU to destroy or to experience the collapse of it; they did it to prosper together with the EU and to be within the system that protects. Europe is still one of the best places in the world to live in; to preserve it Europe has no other chance than to overcome its divisions – and to take the lead. It can do it if it reconciles the interests of “neofunctionalists” and “intergovernmentalists” on behalf of the “real” concerns of the people. Internally strong Europe with wealthy and self-confident people can continue to be a paradigm, inspiring other people and countries to follow its path.

Few recommendations are provided here for future orientation of Europe, intended as food for thought for further debates and deliberations:

***Charismatic but neutral leaders.*** In 2019 the institutional setup of the EU will change. After the European Parliament elections a new President of the European Commission and new Commissioners will be appointed, among them also a new High Representative for External Affairs and Security. The President of the European Council will also be replaced. In short, Antonio Tajani, Donald Tusk, Jean-Claude Juncker and Federica Mogherini will leave and new leaders will come in their place.

Europe needs charismatic and decisive leadership. Next years will be crucial in determining the future orientation of the EU both by setting the priorities, providing appropriate funding to them and getting things done. European citizens need leaders that inspire, yet at the same time respect the limitations imposed on them by the Treaties. The source of legitimacy of the EU is the national governments and parliaments still; they are the ones the citizens approach when they disagree with the politics done at the European level. Therefore the most immediate task of the European leadership is not to come up with its own autonomous agenda, representing a certain school of thought, but to become a mediator in reconciling divisions between the Member States.

The Citizens’ consultations revealed that the EU was perceived as a peace project and that its greatest asset was its respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law.<sup>41</sup> At the same time people emphasize remoteness and bureaucracy of the Union. In Latvia, the consultations disclosed the uncertainty of the people regarding capacity of the EU leaders and institutions to find adequate solutions to contemporary global challenges; people had doubts if the EU had a strategic vision, leadership and abilities to implement the vision.<sup>42</sup> Such pessimism was grounded in bad personal experience with regard to the decision-making and bureaucratic procedures of the EU, as a result of which people questioned the EU’s overall capabilities.

Complexity and sluggishness of the EU decision-making process, indeed, is the challenge the new leaders should pay more attention to. There is an obvious functional and intellectual disproportion in capacity of national and European administrations, not to

mention the people. In Latvia, for example, 13 national ministries have to react to legislation acts and policy proposals of 28 Commissioners. People have difficulties to name 13 national ministers, so what kind of hopes should we have for 28 Commissioners? Another issue is the budget of the EU. People had to tighten the belts during the crisis; the Cohesion funds of the EU are going to be reduced; there are still different levels of direct payments to the farmers in the EU. At the same time, the Members of the European Parliament continue travelling between Brussels and Strasbourg. Needless to say that the inability to trace the decision-making process of the EU and the sense of injustice regarding the budget may ruin any well-intended reforms.

***Liberalism and nationalism – not mutually excluding concepts.*** European countries are the most democratic countries in the world, yet the democratic decline has been observed, leading the Economist Intelligence Unit to conclude that the “democratic malaise of the past decade has been felt most keenly in Europe” and the Eastern Europe is the region that has deteriorated the most since 2006.<sup>43</sup> It is basically the functioning of the government, including its transparency, accountability and corruption, and performance of political parties, which has disappointed people the most.<sup>44</sup> Thus, like it or not, trust to democracy, democratic values and impact of democratic systems on greater economic prosperity goes hand in hand with performance of ruling elites. It is in their hands to renew the credibility of democracy in the eyes of the people.

Slowdown in democratic performance has taken place alongside the emergence of nationalistic and protectionist forces, and declining trust in liberalism. Yet wise leaders should be able to reconcile the long-standing Western tradition of liberal order with emerging national sentiments without hurting democracy. Nationalism is not anything that should be demonised or be opposed to. It has been a source of inspiration of many revolutions and has underlined establishment of democratic countries and liberal world order in the twentieth century. What is needed is the strategy how to reconcile the liberal international order with the growing fear of the people over the consequences of globalisation, increasing inequality and loss of their cultural identity.

Jack Snyder argues that liberalism and nationalism are not mutually excluding but rather complementary concepts. In his view, after the Second World War the liberalism has gone hand in hand with national political controls on the markets, yet “over the past 30 years, liberalism has become disembedded” by shifting the policy-making to “unaccountable bureaucracies or supranational institutions such as the EU”.<sup>45</sup> He insists that “the proper response to populism [...] is not to abandon liberal internationalism but to re-embed it”, thus re-inventing the policies “that once allowed national governments to manage capitalism”.<sup>46</sup> It could, indeed, be the way out of currently juxtaposing positions between the liberals and the nationalists on who is right, also at the European level.

It is time not for the populists but also for the mainstream parties to wake up and to take stock of people’s needs. Instead of blaming the populist parties, which people have chosen as their representatives, they should come out with constructive ideas and programs to regain their lost electorate. Instead of focusing on criticising the policies of populist governments they should concentrate on what they can do better to convince people to follow them, not the populists. Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt draw attention to the disastrous consequences of the so called “fateful alliances” of the interwar period, and suggest that “in extraordinary times, courageous party leadership means putting democracy and country before party”, meaning that instead of allying with populists in

order to win votes, the mainstream parties should form a united front against the populists, even if they are ideologically distant.<sup>47</sup> In this regard, the examples of the European People's Party suspending the action of the Orban's "Fidesz" in the group and of Hungary's Visegrad Four partners (Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic) distancing themselves<sup>48</sup> from the aggressive rhetoric and intimidating steps of the Hungarian Prime Minister can be already seen as signs of hope.

Yet isolation of extremists may not be enough; something else should be put in place. Instead of punishing, for example, Italy, Hungary and Poland for their moves to restrict democracy, the European countries and EU institutions should present better and more inspiring alternatives to the people, in which both democratic and liberal values peacefully co-exist for the sake and benefit of all people, not just the elites and the most privileged ones. It is obvious that for the EU the scenario of deeper integration is not working properly. Why not to discuss Juncker's scenario, which envisages "doing less but more efficiently?"<sup>49</sup> It could meet not only the expectations of people but also of sceptical Member States of the EU. Indeed, the Visegrad Four countries and Italy have joined the PESCO, though this is a kind of agreement the Member States can opt out. It indicates that these countries are not fully against the integration. They simply follow the logic of intergovernmentalists that the integration can be supported in areas, the countries see added value, while not putting national interests at stake.

Security and defence in general seem to have many supporters, who would vote "for". The EU has acknowledged that and takes steps to respond to emerging security needs both in terms of its policies and funding. Calling for building up of a "true European army" to protect Europe from Russia, China and even the USA, the French President Emmanuel Macron has even managed to anger the USA President Donald Trump. Nevertheless, the role of the NATO in European defence is and will be decisive, notwithstanding the EU attempts. In a foreseeable future Europe will neither be able to enhance its military capabilities to the level of NATO, neither should it. Here as well cooperation not confrontation is needed. America is a key partner for Europe not just in terms of security. Elizabeth C. Economy warns of China's ideological attractiveness to the countries of the world that feel "disenchanted with Western-style market democracy".<sup>50</sup> Yet notwithstanding Trump's initiated trade war with China, a clearly bigger majority of states would prefer "a world in which the United States was the leading power".<sup>51</sup> It suggests that actually the EU together with the USA can "take the lead" in support of a more "embedded liberalism" in the world.

## Conclusions

"You should be open to a long extension, if the UK wishes to rethink its strategy. 6 million people signed the petition, 1 million marched. They may not feel sufficiently represented by UK Parliament but they must feel represented by you. Because they are Europeans"<sup>52</sup>, tweeted Donald Tusk, appealing to the European Parliament shortly before the envisaged exit date of the UK from the EU. It is another tweet of Donald Tusk, which, in contrast, praises not shames the UK people. Contrary to the tweet indirectly, with which this article started.

Words are important, especially in the age of information and technologies, when the news spread faster than they are being written. European citizens wish to be heard

and protected, and vote for those, who promise to do it, even if it goes against the established order. Words alone, of course, will not change anything. Jobs that match words are necessary to retain the trust of people. Yet, in tense atmosphere, words can be the first to start with. So let us all start the conversation.

---

ENDNOTES:

<sup>1</sup> Donald Tusk (@eucopresident), "I've been wondering what that special place in hell looks like, for those who promoted #Brexit, without even a sketch of a plan how to carry it out safely," Twitter, February 6, 2019, 3:42 a.m., <https://twitter.com/eucopresident/status/1093112742293266435>.

<sup>2</sup> See more in Vineta Kleinberga "Through Restless Winds: Latvia in the European Union in 2018 and 2019", ed. Andris Sprūds, Elizabete Vizgunova, Sintija Broka, *Latvian Foreign and Security Policy. Yearbook 2019* (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2019), 80-83.

<sup>3</sup> "In Numbers: How the French voted (and how they didn't)", *The Local*, 08.05.2017.,

<https://www.thelocal.fr/20170508/in-numbers-how-the-french-voted-and-how-they-didnt>.

<sup>4</sup> Arnett Von George "How voters switched parties at the German election – visualised", 25.09.2017.,

<https://www.welt.de/english-news/article169009689/How-voters-switched-parties-at-the-German-election-visualised.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Alfio Mastropaolo "Is it a revolt? No, it's a revolution. The Italian general election of March 4, 2018" (Paris: *Politika*, 19 September 2018), <https://www.politika.io/en/notice/is-it-a-revolt-no-its-a-revolution-the-italian-general-election-of-march-4-2018>.

<sup>6</sup> Marton Dunai "Booming economy, anti-migrant stance help Orban tighten grip in Hungary", *Reuters*, 23.05.2018., <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-orban/booming-economy-anti-migrant-stance-help-orban-tighten-grip-in-hungary-idUSKCN11O2I3>.

<sup>7</sup> Bo Rothstein, Sven Steinmo "“Us Too!” – The Rise Of Middle-Class Populism In Sweden And Beyond", *Social Europe*, 03.10.2018., <https://www.socialeurope.eu/me-too-the-rise-of-middle-class-populism-in-sweden-and-beyond>.

<sup>8</sup> Author's calculations out of the total number of the EU population of 512.6 million in 2018.

<sup>9</sup> In November 2018, 42% of the European inhabitants trusted the EU, while just 35% trusted the national parliaments and governments. In "Standard Eurobarometer 90", European Commission, November 2018, 5, <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/standard/surveyky/2215>.

<sup>10</sup> Jack Snyder, "The Broken Bargain: How Nationalism Came Back", *Foreign Affairs* 98, no. 2 (March/April 2019), 58.

<sup>11</sup> "Standarta Eirobarometrs 90. Nacionālais ziņojums", European Commission, Autumn 2018, 12,

<http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2215>.

<sup>12</sup> Emmet Livingstone "Italy's League grows in popularity as 5Star support falls", *Politico*, 03.11.2018.,

<https://www.politico.eu/article/matteo-salvini-luigi-di-maio-league-5star-italy-grows-in-popularity-as-5star-support-falls/>.

<sup>13</sup> "Post Election Popularity: Fidesz Up, Opposition Down" (Budapest: Nézőpont Intézet, 22 December 2018),

<https://nezopontintezet.hu/en/2018/12/22/post-election-popularity-fidesz-up-opposition-down/>.

<sup>14</sup> "Real" in this sentence is used as a reference to "real" people, whom the populists promise to represent and who are portrayed usually as people, disillusioned with the mainstream politics .

<sup>15</sup> "The EU in the world - economy and finance", Eurostat, April 2018, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/The\\_EU\\_in\\_the\\_world\\_-\\_economy\\_and\\_finance#National\\_accounts](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/The_EU_in_the_world_-_economy_and_finance#National_accounts).

<sup>16</sup> In this paper, if not mentioned otherwise, the EU is revealed in its *status quo* – with the UK as part of it.

<sup>17</sup> Rob Smith "The world's biggest economies in 2018", *World Economic Forum*, 18.04.2018.,

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/04/the-worlds-biggest-economies-in-2018/>.

<sup>18</sup> Kate Whiting "These are the world's most competitive economies", *World Economic Forum*, 16.10.2018.,

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/10/most-competitive-economies-global-competitiveness-report-2018/>.

<sup>19</sup> "Mortality and life expectancy statistics", Eurostat, July 2018, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Mortality\\_and\\_life\\_expectancy\\_statistics#Life\\_expectancy\\_at\\_birth\\_increased\\_in\\_2016](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Mortality_and_life_expectancy_statistics#Life_expectancy_at_birth_increased_in_2016).

<sup>20</sup> "Human Development Indices and Indicators. 2018 Statistical Update", United Nations Development Program, 2018, 8, [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018\\_summary\\_human\\_development\\_statistical\\_update\\_en.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018_summary_human_development_statistical_update_en.pdf).

- 
- <sup>21</sup> Ian Kearns, *Collapse. Europe after the European Union* (Great Britain: Biteback Publishing, 2018), 60.
- <sup>22</sup> Giuseppe Piroli “Are we richer or poorer than before the onset of the crisis?”, European Commission, 09.12.2015., <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=791&newsId=2412&furtherNews=yes>.
- <sup>23</sup> “Unemployment statistics”, Eurostat, January 2019, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment\\_statistics#Longer-term\\_unemployment\\_trends](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics#Longer-term_unemployment_trends).
- <sup>24</sup> The conceptual framework of “us” and “them” is widely used in identity (ethnic, national, social, etc.) studies by arguing that one can only be aware of oneself by confronting oneself to the other.
- <sup>25</sup> “The squeezed middle class in OECD and emerging countries – myth and reality”, OECD & The World Bank, 01.12.2016., 2, <https://www.oecd.org/inclusive-growth/about/centre-for-opportunity-and-equality/Issues-note-Middle-Class-squeeze.pdf>.
- <sup>26</sup> “Understanding the Socio-economic Divide in Europe. Background Report”, OECD, January 2017, 8, <https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/cope-divide-europe-2017-background-report.pdf>.
- <sup>27</sup> “People at risk of poverty or social exclusion”, Eurostat, January 2019, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People\\_at\\_risk\\_of\\_poverty\\_or\\_social\\_exclusion](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion).
- <sup>28</sup> Understanding the Socio-economic Divide in Europe. Background Report”, 13.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid, 9.
- <sup>30</sup> “Standard Eurobarometer 90”, European Commission, November 2018, 14, <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/standard/surveyky/2215>.
- <sup>31</sup> “Citizens' Dialogues and Citizens' Consultations. Progress report”, European Commission contribution to the European Council, 11 December 2018, 26, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/eu-progress-report-consultations-111218\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/eu-progress-report-consultations-111218_en.pdf).
- <sup>32</sup> “Standard Eurobarometer 90”, 29.
- <sup>33</sup> “Standard Eurobarometer 90”, 18.
- <sup>34</sup> “Europe 2020. A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”, European Commission, 03.03.2010., <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLETE%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>. Since 2010 the strategy has been updated, and its implementation enhanced with various instruments, such as, for example, the European Semester.
- <sup>35</sup> “Citizens' Dialogues and Citizens' Consultations. Progress report”, 20.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>37</sup> See comment of Aldis Austers in “Ziņojums “Dialogi par Eiropas nākotni””, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, 2018, 11, [https://www.mfa.gov.lv/images/-relizes/Pilsonu\\_konsultaciju\\_zinojums\\_LV.pdf](https://www.mfa.gov.lv/images/-relizes/Pilsonu_konsultaciju_zinojums_LV.pdf).
- <sup>38</sup> Michael W. Doyle “A New Cold War?”, *Utpaper*, no.2 (2018), 9.
- <sup>39</sup> For more about the EU social pillar see Elizabete Vizgunova, Sintija Broka, Karlis Bukovskis “European Pillar of Social Rights and Latvia’s Choices” (Riga: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2018).
- <sup>40</sup> Doyle, 9.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid, 28.
- <sup>42</sup> “Ziņojums “Dialogi par Eiropas nākotni”, 5-6.
- <sup>43</sup> “Democracy Index 2018: Me too? Political participation, protest and democracy”, the Economist Intelligence Unit, 9, [http://www.eiu.com/Handlers/WhitepaperHandler.ashx?fi=Democracy\\_Index\\_2018.pdf&mode=wp&campaignid=Democracy2018](http://www.eiu.com/Handlers/WhitepaperHandler.ashx?fi=Democracy_Index_2018.pdf&mode=wp&campaignid=Democracy2018).
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid, 4.
- <sup>45</sup> Snyder, 54.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>47</sup> Steven Levitsky, Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York: Broadway Books, 2018), 30-31.
- <sup>48</sup> Matthew Karnitschnig “The end of Germany’s Orbán affair”, Politico, 04.03.2019., <https://www.politico.eu/article/germany-viktor-orban-love-affair-over-fidesz/>.
- <sup>49</sup> “White Paper on the Future of Europe. Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025”, European Commission, 01.03.2017., [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/white\\_paper\\_on\\_the\\_future\\_of\\_europe\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/white_paper_on_the_future_of_europe_en.pdf)
- <sup>50</sup> Elizabeth C. Economy “The Problem With Xi’s China Model. Why Its Successes Are Becoming Liabilities”, *Foreign Affairs*, 06.03.2019., [https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-03-06/problem-xis-china-model?utm\\_medium=newsletters&utm\\_source=twofa&utm\\_content=20190308&utm\\_campaign=TWOFA%20030719%20The%20Problem%20With%20Xi%E2%80%99s%20China%20Model&utm\\_term=FA%20This%20Week%20-%20112017](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-03-06/problem-xis-china-model?utm_medium=newsletters&utm_source=twofa&utm_content=20190308&utm_campaign=TWOFA%20030719%20The%20Problem%20With%20Xi%E2%80%99s%20China%20Model&utm_term=FA%20This%20Week%20-%20112017).
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid.

---

<sup>52</sup> Donald Tusk (@eucopresident), “Appeal to EP: You should be open to a long extension, if the UK wishes to rethink its strategy. 6 million people signed the petition, 1 million marched,” Twitter, March 27, 2019, 1:20 a.m., <https://twitter.com/eucopresident/status/1110818745474314240>.