Shifting perspectives: How other countries perceive European crises

Survey: 160 young Europeans express their anxieties and aspirations for our common future

German Minister for Foreign Affairs: "Strong centrifugal forces are pulling at Europe's foundations"
Sarah Bidoli is currently Managing Director of the Network for International Affairs (nefa), the alumni association of the Mercator Kolleg and former Stiftungskolleg, a post-graduate programme in international affairs. She previously worked in culture and talent promotion. sarah.bidoli@gmail.com

Oh, Schengen is an actual place? → page 14

Tim Cholibois, cohort of 2015/16, worked at the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group in London on financing urban infrastructure. He finished his fellowship year as a consultant to the Office of Environmental Planning and Policy Coordination (OEPPC) of the Marshall Islands. tim.cholibois@web.de

“All of a sudden, Brexit was a reality for me” → page 16

Lars Dohert, cohort of 2015/16, worked on extremism prevention strategies for the United Nations and the Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) during his fellowship year. He previously gained professional experience at the Federation of German Industries (BDI), where one of his foci was German-Brazilian relations. lars.dohert@gmx.de

Is Europe losing its appeal? → page 8

Hannah Donges, cohort of 2012/13, is a PhD candidate at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID) in Geneva. Her research focuses on protecting civilians in armed conflicts, armed violence, poaching and crime in the context of urbanisation. hannah.donges@graduateinstitute.ch

Help! Xenophobia – The results of our nefa survey → page 2

Mirco Günther, cohort of 2009/10, is Deputy Director of the OSCE Mission to Kazakhstan, seconded by the Federal Foreign Office and appointed by the German OSCE Chairmanship. He previously worked for the OSCE in eastern Ukraine and Tajikistan. mirco.guenther@post.harvard.edu

The OSCE’s importance for peace and security in Europe → page 22

Sebastian Haug, cohort of 2012/13, is a PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge where he studies the role of emerging powers in global development governance. He previously worked at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in China and Mexico. sebastian.haug@posteo.de

Trump is even bigger than Brexit → page 5

Julian Sarnes, cohort of 2010/11, is a London-based financial analyst and a research fellow at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin. She has translated several books and blogs at novelista.de. julistix@gmail.com

“This can’t be happening” → page 18

Juliane Sarnes, cohort of 2010/11, works as the ANTICORRP Communications Officer and is a PhD candidate at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin. His research focuses on the deployment of new media tools in anti-corruption movements. kossow@hertie-school.org

In TTIP we trust? → page 19

Johanna Rogers, cohort of 2010/11, is a PhD candidate at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. His research focuses on the civil war in North Yemen from a state-formation perspective. He previously worked for the NGO Saferworld in Egypt, Libya and Yemen. j.rogers@soas.ac.uk

Is Europe losing its appeal? → page 4

Loredana Sorg, cohort of 2014/15, works as a programme officer for organic farming projects in East Africa at the Biovision Foundation. During her fellowship year, she gained experience at the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture in Ukraine. loorg@yahoo.de

Interview: “I sometimes felt like an engine” → page 20

Marcia C. Schenck, cohort of 2012/13, focused on labour migration in Indonesia and Latin America during her fellowship year. Her doctoral research in history addresses the migration of workers and students from Angola and Mozambique to the GDR. mcschenc@princeton.edu

Interview: “The increasing numbers of refugees are not an aberration, They are likely to be the new norm” → page 24

Laura Timm, cohort of 2015/2016, focused on the interconnected issues of just distribution of refugees in the EU and legal migration routes to Europe during her fellowship year. She currently works at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Istanbul. L.M.Timm@web.de

Turkey Tours: Enjoy the passport privilege/ The fairy tale of improved borders → pages 9/26

Julius Wolz studied political science in Berlin, London and Toronto. He worked as an intern for nefa and is currently writing his MA thesis at the Free University of Berlin. julius.wolz@fu-berlin.de

Europe’s Generation Y Deserves to Be Heard! → page 12
Dear readers,

“I’m a born optimist and I want to be optimistic, but I’m scared by what’s happening around me” writes Sarah from Germany. What she pointed out in a survey conducted by nefia apparently reflects a feeling shared by many people in Germany as well as other European countries: namely, a growing uncertainty about the future direction of our common European home. Populist parties whose platforms question the very foundations of the European idea are gaining ground across the continent, providing a voice to those particularly frightened of the future. Could this be a sign that the continental zeitgeist is shifting? These developments, coupled with growing feelings of uncertainty, prompted us to ask our readers: What does Europe mean to you?

“Peace, freedom, culture, history, life,” written in big letters on our cover, were the most frequent responses from nefia survey participants when asked what they associate with Europe and what Europe means to them. We see these answers as cause for hope at a time when crises seem to multiply and more member states distance themselves from the European Union (EU). In a commentary for ad hoc international, German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier stresses the importance of demonstrating clear opposition to any sort of return to nationalism, by responding with “cooperation, a willingness to compromise and multilateralism, although – or actually because – some members of the Union have decided to opt out.” According to Steinmeier, right-wing populism must be exposed for what it is, namely “intentional incitement against others, anti-democratic demagoguery and murderous arson.” Similarly, migration expert Prof. Alexander Betts warns against solutions that appear overly simple: “In the context of globalisation, there are massive limitations in terms of what closing borders can achieve, because we live in an age of migration. [...] We have to adapt to that reality rather than assume we can simply close the door.”

The European Union is largely preoccupied with itself and its own problems these days. Sometimes, however, it is helpful to take a step back and look at things from a distance in order to see clearly again. That is why we deliberately chose to switch perspective in this edition and ask the question: How do other countries perceive Europe’s crises? Our authors bring exciting insights and perspectives from Egypt, Mexico, Brazil, Pakistan and Turkey. They report on the impacts the European crises are having on these countries, while also spotlighting the challenges these countries face themselves. Moreover, two alumni of the International Diplomatic Training Academy of the Federal Foreign Office (a nefia partner), contribute further insights from Russia and Indonesia.

While most of today’s headlines relate to Europe’s own internal crises, the crisis in Ukraine has not come to an end. We still need to find functional solutions to address this crisis, as former OSCE Special Envoy for Ukraine Heidi Tagliavini reminds us in an interview with ad hoc international: “unresolved conflicts that slip out of the spotlight for whatever reason possess a high potential for renewed escalation.” The OSCE had almost grown geopolitically irrelevant before the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis, but now plays a major role in the ongoing peace negotiations. Mirco Günther, an alumnus of the 2009/10 cohort, tells us about his time as an OSCE observer in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv and explains how the OSCE is redefining itself.

On behalf of the whole nefia membership, we conclude this issue with a call for donations to support the social start-up SINGA. SINGA connects refugees with local residents, helping to unlock paths towards meaningful integration of refugees. We are grateful to every reader who chooses to support SINGA in its endeavour.

We hope the selection of articles in this issue makes for stimulating reading and helps to sharpen your understanding of Europe’s crises. Enjoy!

Waleria Schüle

Julia Harrer

Please send us your comments and feedback: redaktion@adhoc-international.org, or visit www.facebook.com/adhocinternational.
Help! Xeurophobia – The results of our nefia survey

by Hannah Dönges

Xeurophobia, both neologism and eponym of our nefia survey, stands for the “fear of the foreign in contrast to the enthusiasm for a common European and cosmopolitan idea.” In our survey, we inquired further about this contrast, distributing the English-language survey beyond the nefia network through social networks across Europe, and ultimately received 168 usable responses grouped into the following thematic categories: Europe, xenophobia and discrimination, vision of the future and proposed solutions for Europe. The answers demonstrate immense concern for Europe’s future direction, but also a distinct European self-understanding, which in combination with pro-European initiatives and engagement against xenophobia and discrimination, gives us reason for hope.

I had the idea for the survey a while back when populist parties across Europe, notably the Front National (FN) in France and the Alternative für Deutschland (AFD) in Germany, first began gaining popularity. Our society appears increasingly polarised: elites engage in a discourse that is factually correct but ignores the fears of large segments of the population, while citizens in turn feel better represented by populist groupings whose emotionally charged arguments often have little if any factual basis. A similar tendency can be seen emerging in the US presidential campaign. This is why the Help! Xeurophobia survey also touched upon emotions currently associated with the EU and Europe. The survey consciously invoked an underlying conception of Europe that went beyond the individual member states to encompass the European community of values and its shared destiny. Peace, culture, freedom, human rights and history were the most frequent answers given by respondents when asked to provide a personal definition of Europe.

Sebastian writes: “I grew up in Communist Eastern Germany. Like the fall of the Iron Curtain, I can mostly identify with the idea of ‘Europe’ as a project that stands for freedom in general, the extension of my personal freedom and the chance that more and more people can enjoy or aspire to the same civil liberties and human rights.” Iason from Greece describes Europe as “a group of civilized countries with cultural differences, economic inequalities and a long history of conflict, which lately has undergone a peaceful but fragile era.” Charlotte, also from Greece, writes that for her, Europe is simply “my homeland.” Jon from Spain writes: “Europe means history and development. It means creativity and […] a safe place for thinkers.”

The survey participants strongly reflect our own networks – for this reason, as well as its English-language design and exclusively online distribution, it is neither representative nor scientific. Instead, it is a first step towards mobilising hope as well as collecting ideas and projects. 90 of 168 participants were German (one third of whom do not live in Germany), the second-largest group were French (22), followed by nine Italians. 93 percent of the participants were between 20 and 40 years old, and an overwhelming majority, 154 of 168 respondents, identified as European. We found insightful perspectives among the “other” responses as well, such as Max from Germany, who answered that he feels “rather European than German. Rather human and individual than European”, and Britta from North America, who wrote “I hope to become European.”

From fear to optimism: mixed feelings about Europe’s future

The image is more mixed when it comes to the future. Events of recent months – particularly the UK referendum, the terrorist attack in Nice, and finally the failed coup in Turkey – are reflected in the increasingly negative tone of answers until the survey concluded on 23 July. Sarah from Germany writes “I would like to feel optimistic, but it’s not so easy at the moment: the Brexit, many people not in favour of the European project, or not understanding it, many challenges, a swing to the right in many parliaments of the member states and in the European Parliament...” Marie from France believes: “I would like Europe to become more federalist and democratic, but I’m not sure we are on the right path...” The contrast between a strong European identity on the one hand and concerns about this unique project on the other are also reflected in Jules’ words: “Optimistic about the beauty and potential of Europe, fearful about whether we will learn to appreciate this beauty in time to prevent the destruction of it.”

It often seems as if those who threaten the liberal way of life with violence and right-wing populists who can see nothing but danger in the unknown are playing a dangerous game of political ping-pong. In 2006, Jürgen Habermas observed: “Here in Europe, the assertion of constitutional norms is such an unquestionable premise of living together that the hysterical call to defend our ‘values’ seems a semantic arms race against an undefined internal enemy. The punishment of violence and the fight against hatred requires calm confidence rather than agitation.” And, perhaps, a pinch of stubborn optimism.
Zaheer from Uzbekistan writes about the tension: “The future of Europe depends on the mutual understanding of Europeans and foreigners, as long as there is understanding and respect between Europeans and foreigners then we can be optimistic.” Leslie from Scotland goes beyond the questionnaire in commenting: “I also feel an urgent need for educational measures to highlight some of the moral responsibilities and obligations that we have within the EU and toward other parts of the world that are less fortunate than us.” He adds: “I hope very much that, though Great Britain leaves the EU, an independent Scotland will assume its place in the EU and continue to work with other nations and people of a similar spirit.”

Xenophobia: How do we deal with it?

The majority of survey participants have felt discrimination against themselves for one or several of the named reasons (list in the graphic above). 94 percent have witnessed discrimination and/or xenophobia in their own environment or in the media. Possible ways to prevent discrimination and xenophobia are seen mainly in education, beginning in early childhood, although other popular options included exchange programs for young people and adults beyond European borders, civil courage in the context of a serious and respectful dialogue, improved funding for infrastructure and affordable housing to prevent segregation, as well as increasing support for local initiatives. Jonathan from Great Britain sees the solution mainly in a “return to focusing on socio-economic inequality and lack of opportunity as the principle cause feeding support for right-wing political parties that scapegoat ‘outsiders’. A willingness to blame certain groups – political elites, corporations – for neglecting these issues.” He calls for holding the groups ignoring these problems, such as political elites and businesses, accountable. Íñigo from Spain shares this opinion, stating that all “axes of discrimination (gender, race, sexual orientation, socio-economic, cis/trans, etc.) are obvious and visible all around. Xenophobia is a common one, although I tend to perceive it as coupled with socio-economic status, as purely racial discrimination is not that publicly visible.”

Anna from Switzerland writes: “I think it is important to confront people. Many people think that ‘there is nothing you can do’, or ‘you can’t change their views anyways’. After the latest terrorist attacks, xenophobia against Muslim people is on the rise, and it is crucial to engage in those sorts of discussions when we encounter them. They often occur outside of our social circles, which makes it difficult to challenge these views. “Many people have never seen a refugee. Real interactions can help people to overcome their prejudices.”

The survey gives hope for a Europe that is broad-minded, open, inclusive and willing to learn. When asked to name a person or a project that promotes the European idea, Stéphanie from France writes: “Everyone I know. They all share two, three or more countries of origin. How awesome is that?” When it comes to successful integration, Habermas describes in the aforementioned speech a lesson that always rings true: “No integration without the expansion of one’s own horizon, without the readiness to endure a broader spectrum of smells and thoughts, as well as painful dissonances.” Djamila from Germany writes: “Open minded people are advancing the European idea. People who accept an opinion other than their own.”

Maybe we, the 20- to 40-year olds of “Generation Erasmus” who took this extraordinary European freedom for granted from a very young age, are now under a particular obligation to actively defend it. Europe was and remains a unique project for peace. It seems as though the moment has come to move from our current passivity into a more active phase. In doing so, we must be able to develop further, become more colourful and diverse across different levels of education and national borders, to create an inclusive home for old and new Europeans alike. A possible next step for this project of crowdsourcing hopeful European ideas and initiatives would be to pose the questions from our survey to refugees in Europe as well, to learn about Europe and growing together from and with them.←
From inside the EU, the situation looks bleak: high unemployment, low economic growth and deep cuts to social services in the southern member states of the European Union have placed the European project under significant stress. Add Brexit in the northwest and the growth of anti-EU populism and xenophobia into the mix, and it can seem as though the EU is facing a perfect storm. Europe muddled through both the Euro crisis and the refugee crisis, and now faces criticism for the millions of its citizens slipping into poverty, the dramatic rise in youth unemployment over the past years, and for the record number of people dying as they try to cross Europe’s borders.

Seen from the perspective of the EU’s “southern neighbourhood”, however, Europe’s problems appear more ambivalent: On the one hand, Europe remains a desirable destination for young people looking for opportunities. One quarter of young Egyptian men wish to emigrate, and Europe remains the second most favoured destination after the Gulf states.

This is primarily due to the fact that many Egyptians view the situation in their own country even more grimly than Europeans view Europe, and for good reason: the hopes stirred by the “Arab Spring” have given way to a new military dictatorship that has in many ways proven even more repressive than the Mubarak regime before it, repressing civil society, criminalising independent journalism, putting enormous pressure on the arts and effectively silencing any expression of dissent. Meanwhile, Egypt’s economic problems continue to mount. Tourism has come to an almost complete stand-still, investment in the “new” Suez Canal has failed to bring the desired results while, in dollar terms, the black market value of the Egyptian pound has fallen by almost half since 2011. Instead of investing in the country’s fragile and out-dated infrastructure, the government of this water-poor country has decided to build a giant new city in the middle of the desert.

Beyond highlighting the EU’s general loss of political cachet, the view from Egypt underscores that institutions can fail and social orders can collapse. After the Brexit vote, a friend told me: “It’s sad that the UK is leaving the EU, but I think they know what they’re doing. The EU is falling apart. They’re just leaving the sinking ship.” From inside the EU, this kind of disintegration remains hard to imagine, yet for someone who perhaps knew Syria or Libya before their civil wars and now struggles to recognise these societies, or for someone who participated in the Egyptian revolution only to watch it fail, a breaking apart of the EU seems entirely plausible. While we can and should hope that this gloomy Egyptian perspective remains a false prognosis for Europe’s future, it serves as a timely warning nonetheless.

One quarter of young Egyptian men wish to emigrate, and Europe remains the second most favoured destination after the Gulf states.

Thus, although Europe continues to stand for the dream of a better life for many Egyptians (understandably few care to make a distinction between Europe and the EU), views of the EU as a set of institutions are increasingly negative. Where the EU was once a point of reference and role model among politically-inclined circles in terms of Arab regional integration and the Arab League, older generations and supporters of the regime in particular now view the EU with increasing suspicion and insist on absolute national sovereignty.

The EU has lost a degree of its lustre among younger, more liberal circles in Egypt as well, largely due to their perspective from the Mediterranean’s southern shore. Seen from here, the lockdown of “Fortress Europe” against (Syrian) refugees and general anti-immigrant sentiment plays a major role. Moreover, coming from a country with a history of labour migration, many Egyptians have personal networks and connections in the countries of southern and south-eastern Europe, in which EU membership, at least since 2008, has meant fiscal austerity, unemployment, and falling wages. When talk turns to the EU, many friends and acquaintances tell me stories of the unsuccessful job searches and increasingly precarious financial circumstances of friends and family in these EU countries.

The EU’s general loss of political cachet, the view from Egypt underscores that institutions can fail and social orders can collapse. After the Brexit vote, a friend told me: “It’s sad that the UK is leaving the EU, but I think they know what they’re doing. The EU is falling apart. They’re just leaving the sinking ship.” From inside the EU, this kind of disintegration remains hard to imagine, yet for someone who perhaps knew Syria or Libya before their civil wars and now struggles to recognise these societies, or for someone who participated in the Egyptian revolution only to watch it fail, a breaking apart of the EU seems entirely plausible. While we can and should hope that this gloomy Egyptian perspective remains a false prognosis for Europe’s future, it serves as a timely warning nonetheless.

Is Europe losing its appeal?

by Joshua Rogers

Cairo, 2011: Protesters take a short break in a tent on Tahrir Square.
In Mexico, events on the European continent are followed with concern. That said, events in the bigger northern neighbour remain by far the greatest source of worry.

Many Mexican commentators are taking current shifts in the Eurozone as an opportunity to discuss their own problems. For example, social scientist Iliana Rodríguez Santibáñez seeks to draw lessons for Mexico from the Greek crisis, calling for a critical re-evaluation of structural problems in the Mexican economy and the country's dependence on international creditors. Most discussions, however, deal with the direct economic consequences that current European crises have on Mexico. Many Mexicans fear that an economically weak Eurozone will hamper Mexican economic growth in the medium term.

After the Brexit, the peso to US dollar exchange rate reached historic lows.

Over the last few months, Brexit eclipsed all other European issues in the Mexican media. Business representatives agreed that Brexit would lead to higher volatility on the markets. The direct effects of the British referendum were devastating for the Mexican currency, the peso, sending the peso to US dollar exchange rate to historical lows. Mexican firms doing business in Great Britain were also exposed to stock market losses. Mexico’s minister of finance, Luis Videgaray, cut the public budget for the current year, citing the need to prepare for future radical changes on the financial markets.

All of this worries Mexican elites. The majority of decision makers in Mexican politics, business and academia favour economic globalisation and international cooperation. The EU and its member states are important trading partners and political allies, meaning that internal divisions and chaos in Europe can only have negative consequences for Mexico as well; on this much, the “establishment” can agree.

Voices on the left see things differently. Most regard the EU as a neoliberal regime that eats away at social rights in a variety of ways, both directly and indirectly. Alejandro Nadal, for instance, writing in the left-leaning newspaper La Jornada, names in the same breath the Treaty of Lisbon and NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement between Mexico, the US and Canada that came into force in 1994. For Nadal, both instruments reinforce rigid logics of neoliberal governance. The Marxist elements of the Mexican left in particular not only view Brexit as a moment of uncertainty for global financial flows, but also as a potential point of departure for further, more drastic changes. Many hope that this change could begin to spread across Europe.

For Mexico, the potential political earthquake of the year is the possibility of Donald Trump becoming president.

Nevertheless, Europe – with former colonial power Spain leading the way – has certainly declined in relevance for Mexico over the past several decades. Although many Mexicans still cultivate a relatively Eurocentric worldview, Europe no longer serves as the decisive point of reference, given that the dominant economic, political and cultural stimuli have come primarily from the US for many years now. Mexican media has tended to emphasise the fact that more deprived segments of British society were most likely to vote for Brexit. For Mexican media, parallels to supporters of anti-establishment figures in the US presidential campaign are inevitable. From a Mexican perspective, Brexit itself loses significance when compared to some of this year’s other political earthquakes, such as the possible election of Donald Trump as President of the United States.

Trump’s promise to build a border wall is not the only issue stirring up emotions. Millions of people of Mexican descent live in the US, whether with or without a residence permit, and face an uncertain future. The Mexican middle class is concerned about its access to the shopping malls and entertainment parks of its dominant northern neighbour. Moreover, many people ask what will happen to the American production facilities that moved to Mexico in the wake of NAFTA should Trump really become president, as they have grown into a strong pillar of the Mexican economy. The importance of events on the European continent pales in comparison to the possibility of a Trump presidency. Everyone is devoting themselves to understanding what is happening in the US, while Brexit, on the other hand, appears to many as merely an ominous harbinger of even more dramatic upheavals to come.
What impact do the multiple crises of the EU have on Pakistan? More than anything, an economically weak EU is losing influence over the human rights situation in a country already known for its instability.

With Great Britain’s Brexit vote, the country with the largest Pakistani population abroad will leave the European Union. The economic effects of Britain’s exit will be felt in Pakistan as well. Pakistanis living on Europe’s largest island send around two billion US dollars per year back to their families. It is also quite likely that the UK will cut development assistance to its former colony, leaving Pakistan more dependent on the EU in developmental cooperation. On the one hand, this could give Pakistan the chance to emancipate itself economically from its former colonial master, while at the same time strengthening its ties to Europe. On the other hand, it will likely also result in a reassessment of the country’s relationship to the EU as a trading partner.

The EU uses economic incentives to encourage the protection of human rights in Pakistan.

Pakistan and the EU are economically intertwined, with EU-Pakistani trade accounting for over 30 percent of the country’s gross domestic product. The reduction of customs duties by EU authorities in 2014 was particularly crucial to intensifying economic ties. The abatement was part of the “GSP+” market access scheme, which aims to increase the export capacities of developing countries, but is nevertheless linked to conditions obligating Pakistan to ratify and implement 27 international treaties on human and labour rights, environmental protection, corruption and drug control. The EU thereby uses economic incentives to positively influence the human rights situation in Pakistan, a delicate subject with implications for the country’s national sovereignty. Without GSP+, Pakistan could not compete economically with neighbouring India or Bangladesh. The Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently affirmed its interest in prolonging the GSP+ arrangement for three more years after 2017. At the same time, export turnover is already losing momentum in the second year of the GSP+ relationship, primarily because the European economic crisis fuelled fears of weak demand for Pakistani products on the European market. Sooner or later, the UK’s departure from the Union will deprive Pakistan of the option of exporting its goods into the UK at favourable customs rates. Pakistan has also begun reorienting its economy towards other partners. Negotiations with Russia and the establishment of a Pakistani-Chinese economic corridor are indicative of a gradual shift towards alternative trading partners with less interest in human rights.

Europe, stand up for your values!

by Dederik Schopf

Mangoes are currently one of Pakistan’s major exports.
GSP+ obliges Pakistan to implement seven ratified core treaties regarding the protection of human rights. The human rights situation in the country is nonetheless precarious. Severe and systematic violations of basic rights are common, particularly for women and religious minorities. Just one year after the granting of GSP+ privileges, the Pakistani government reinstated the death penalty under the pretext of fighting terrorism. Thus far, 389 people have been executed and an estimated 6,000 to 8,000 inmates are sitting on death row in the country’s notorious prisons. Although officially pressuring Pakistan to suspend the death penalty, the EU refrained from revoking or even reducing the country’s GSP+ benefits.

As part of the deal, Pakistan has to implement both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. These core treaties do not stipulate the complete abolishment of the death penalty for serious crimes, but explicitly forbid the execution of minors or convicts whose crimes were committed as minors. Nonetheless, Pakistan has repeatedly executed minors over the last two years. According to recent estimates, up to ten percent of death row inmates were convicted as minors. Instead of drawing the appropriate consequences, the EU maintains Pakistan's favoured status out of fear of losing its last political leverage with regard to human rights in Pakistan. Yet excessive flexibility with view to the EU’s core values offers little chance of success and may eventually even backfire. Thanks to generous compensation from the United States in the fight against terrorism, Pakistan is not dependent on consensus.

Human rights are at the centre of the European community of values. Rejecting false compromises will benefit both the EU and Pakistan in the long term.

In my opinion, the EU needs to push for its core values vis-a-vis Pakistan now more than ever. This is particularly relevant for the EU today, as a way to demonstrate that the Union is not merely an economic alliance, but rather a partnership of neighbouring countries with common values striving for peace and stability. For Pakistan, trapped in escalating conflicts with its neighbours since its founding, European integration and cooperation could serve as a model for the future. Human rights are at the centre of the European community of values. Rejecting false compromises will be beneficial for both the EU and Pakistan in the long term.  

*This article was published under a pseudonym to protect the author.*
A long hangover in the birthplace of Samba

by Lars Döbert

More unites Brazil and Europe than one might expect. Many Brazilians have European roots and often turn to their old homeland when it comes to social and economic issues. Brazil is also struggling with crises on many fronts, and many Brazilians today argue for more integration between the two regions as an answer to crises both at home and on the European continent.

Many Brazilian families originally came from Europe, having either arrived from Portugal, Spain and France during the colonial era or, beginning in the 19th century, from Germany, Poland and Italy. Although religious and political motivations also played a role, the majority of European immigrants came to Brazil in pursuit of a better economic future, fleeing poverty and hopelessness in their home countries. For their descendants, Europe remains an important social and political point of reference. When Brazil looks at crisis-ridden Europe today, it does so in search of possible solutions to its own political and economic problems.

Following years of strong economic growth that made Brazil one of the most dynamic and inspiring of the BRICS states, the country currently finds itself in a deep economic and political crisis. President Dilma Rousseff was suspended from office in May 2016 by impeachment proceedings, although many Brazilians, and not only her supporters, question the constitutionality of the process.

At the same time, a predicted 2016 recession of 4.3 percent and an inflation rate of 8.7 per cent is placing a heavy burden on the country’s middle class, a predicament that is also linked to Europe’s faltering economy. Despite its devaluated currency, the Real, the Brazilian export industry suffers as European partner countries import less due to the current crisis. In addition, a decrease in European direct investment has hit the capital-intensive sectors of the economy particularly hard, contributing negatively to the already difficult labour market situation and driving up costs of consumer goods in Brazil. The various mega events originally envisaged as confident testimonies of newfound stability and global importance – World Youth Day (2013), the World Cup (2014) and the Olympic Games (2016) – instead draw global attention to a Brazil in its greatest crisis since the hyperinflation of the mid-1990s.

When speaking to Brazilians about Europe, an oft repeated concern relates to the wave of xenophobia across the continent. Architect Maria Julia de Sousa reports of experiencing open hostility in Spain from people who assumed she was Muslim: “I clearly felt that I was not welcome. That was a shocking experience for me.” Her boyfriend Fernando Figueiredo adds: “Brazil has always been a country of immigrants. Integration and the peaceful co-existence of many cultures is a cornerstone of our society. We do not understand why such a fear of foreigners exists in Europe.”

Some, however, also see opportunities in both regions’ economic crises. In an interview with the Secretary of State for Foreign Trade of the Government of the State of Goiás, William O’Dwyer, it becomes clear that Brazil can benefit from its crisis and the crisis in Europe, at least in some individual sectors. The rural agricultural economy, particularly in Brazil’s Midwest, is less dependent on the European market than other industries, while the weakness of the Brazilian currency cheapens exports, even when compared to European competitors, and thus increases the attractiveness of the domestic food industry, especially in countries with a high level of demand such as India.

When asked for suggestions with regard to Europe’s crises, Secretary O’Dwyer replies: “If there is a lesson to be learned from the Brazilian situation, then it is that social stability is the basis for economic stability.” For the relationship with Europe, it now becomes vitally important for negotiations between the EU and MERCOSUL (the Common Market of the South) to continue and be conducted with renewed vigour. Here, it is crucial that a new qualitative level of dialogue be achieved, that is, a joint effort towards concrete results and practical solutions. Facing multiple crises on both sides of the Atlantic, increased cooperation and integration could be the key to recovering damaged political confidence and sparking new economic opportunities, making closer relations between Europe and Brazil more than just a historical episode.

Our nefia fellows at the Sugarloaf: At the end of May, the 7th cohort, 2015/16, came together for their interim meeting in Rio de Janeiro to discuss with Brazilian stakeholders on commonalities between the EU and Brazil.
“Everything is alright, I’m fine” – I find myself writing on Facebook, again, in the night of 15 July 2016. I usually don’t post much, maybe an article or a political statement that I like every once in a while, but this is already the third Facebook post concerning my well-being this year. I don’t want anyone to worry about me for failing to making myself heard while in Brussels or Istanbul, two cities plagued by terrorist attacks and coup attempts. Yet my family and friends worry nevertheless. “You should come home soon,” they comment below my status.

The German media conveys an image of Turkey as a dangerous place, unsafe for anyone within its borders and wracked by mass lay-offs of civil servants, waves of arrests, and closure of schools, newspapers, and online publications. My friends, colleagues and housemates in Istanbul follow the developments with a similar degree of alarm, afraid that the government’s reprisals will eventually have an effect on their “Western” way of life. Flag-waving followers of the conservative Islamic ruling party AKP celebrate President Erdogan’s idea of democracy on Taksim Square every evening, but life in the city goes on. People go to work, sit in bars and cafes in the evenings and look forward to concerts and other events on the weekend – that is, if they are not cancelled due to the state of emergency. Uncertainty still prevails, but the anticipated violent confrontations between Erdogan supporters and the opposition have thus far failed to materialise, and a second coup seems unlikely.

Thus, the constant worrying of my friends and family is unjustified. Even if violent confrontations were to occur, I would be among the privileged few able to leave the country at the drop of a hat. I have a German passport and can fly home at any time to one of the safest countries in the world. We globetrotters take this privilege for granted far too often.

When anxiety and uncertainty bubbled up in the night of the coup attempt, my thoughts were with my Syrian colleagues, who can neither return home nor go to a country of their choice should the situation in Turkey deteriorate, as only a few countries allow Syrians to enter without a visa. In the night of the coup, one of my Syrian colleagues immediately googled the countries he could flee to. The results? Malaysia, Mauritania, Iran, Sudan and Yemen, as well as Tajikistan, Ecuador, Tanzania, Mozambique, Uganda, Togo, Madagascar, Haiti, Cambodia and several small island states. My German passport, on the other hand, allows me to travel to 177 countries without a visa or with a visa upon arrival, according to the Visa Restriction Index.

© Demonstrations against the attempted military coup on Istanbul’s Taksim Square in early July 2016.
> During the coup attempt, Turkish fighter jets flew over Istanbul at low altitude: This shop window cracked from the shock of the sound waves.
Coming together, falling apart?
Europe and the crisis

by Dr. Ivan Kravchenko

What do current events in Europe look like from a Russian perspective? *ad hoc international* asked Dr. Ivan Kravchenko for his assessment of the European crises. He is an alumnus of the Federal Foreign Office’s Training for International Diplomats, a *nefia* cooperation partner, and currently First Secretary of the General Secretariat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. This article exclusively reflects his personal opinions.

The countries of the European Union have been plunged into crisis by the massive influx of refugees from conflict-stricken areas in the Middle East and North Africa. Obviously, this is the biggest challenge of its kind in the history of the West.

The problem is multi-faceted and complex. Firstly, of course, is the humanitarian aspect: the personal tragedies of the countless individuals displaced by war, robbed of a future in their home countries, and whose livelihood has been taken away.

From an economic perspective, the situation is as follows: under German law, asylum seekers have no right to work or study, with the exception of German language instruction. The absence of these rights prohibits them from covering for their own costs of living and the costs have to be covered the German taxpayers and voters.

Viewed through a socio-cultural lens, the number of people with different religions, cultures and worldviews in Germany is growing. Being forced to live alongside and with them will awake feelings of discontent in parts of the native population and open up spaces for various radical groups.

A national security aspect must be mentioned as well: namely, the poorly controlled influx of mostly Muslim refugees could potentially include Islamist fundamentalists building clandestine networks in the EU for purposes of propaganda, recruitment and (in the worst case) acts of terrorism. Social tensions and criminality will also inevitably rise.

The mood of discontent among the dissatisfied segments of the population will consolidate and become dangerous for the political system. A clear example of this can already be seen in the German political movement “Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West” (PEGIDA).

All this aggravates old problems and brings new factors of instability into being. These systemic issues will have to be dealt with. On a political level, the main task is to find an answer to the question: what can be done? (The question of who is to blame will have to be dealt with later.)

Praxis has shown that the EU member states are happy together, but suffer through problems by themselves. Instead of approaching problems together, each state attempts to pass on responsibilities and costs to their neighbours. The current migration crisis is no exception in this regard. Everyone is building their own ark, but nobody seems to have a clear and generally accepted instruction manual.
The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN): Founded in 1967 as an organisation to foster economic growth, social progress and political stability in the region. In 2009, ASEAN heads of states and governments decided to create a common market – with the EU common market serving as the blueprint.

Member States: Apart from founding members Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore, ASEAN has expanded its membership with the accession of Brunei, Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia. In total, more than 600 million people live in the ASEAN states, roughly 100 million more than in the EU.

How does Indonesia view Europe’s current impasse? ad hoc international asked Mr. Hariyadi Soemantri for an assessment of the European crises. He is an alumnus of the German Federal Foreign Office’s Training for International Diplomats, a nefia cooperation partner, and currently works at the research centre of the Indonesian House of Representatives. This article exclusively reflects his personal opinions.

These days, every time I hear news from the European Union I am reminded of an old truism about regional integration: states only engage in international cooperation if it benefits them in economic terms. If this is not the case, a state may eventually withdraw from a supranational institution such as the EU. In this sense, it seems like British voters perceived the political and economic costs of EU membership as having outweighed its benefits.

Nevertheless, Brexit will have a significant impact on the EU as a whole, and will undermine the process of regional integration for its remaining members. Brexit has also started to revive what I call the “new old thinking about regional integration”. By that I mean a return to a mere cost-benefit calculation, while shared historical and cultural features recede into the background entirely. Of course, such an attitude with regard to European integration is not a complete novelty. However, the EU seemed to have surpassed the stage of its development in which egotism had been the main driver of the “ever closer union”. Those who argued that European integration was built on a solid basis of shared values and political convictions appear to have been proven wrong.

In my view, the challenge ahead for the EU is a twofold one: on the one hand, the EU will have to find a way to confront the ideological challenge posed by the adherents of the new old thinking. On the other hand, a new way of deepening regional integration must be found, particularly in the context of an increasingly globalised world. Here in Indonesia, political leaders do not seem to regard the Brexit vote as a world-changing event. After all, we have enough problems of our own. The country’s soaring budget deficit has made it difficult to pursue the Indonesian development agenda as originally conceived. Low oil prices resulted in the state’s inability to meet its tax revenue projections. On top of all this, electoral campaigns at district and provincial levels are in full swing. At the moment, these domestic issues are simply more pressing.

However, looking beyond our national borders, I do think that we in Indonesia can learn important lessons from Brexit. Indonesia is part of a regional confederation of states, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Although ASEAN remains a rather loose union, we have been in the planning stages of a closer integration for several years now, and have taken the EU as our major role model. At the moment, ASEAN is establishing a common market based on four freedoms – very much like in the EU. As a result, we may very well face similar challenges in the future. This is why, in my view, ASEAN countries should draw three lessons from the European crises:

1. Economic benefits arising from the integration process must be distributed equally – especially since not all ASEAN members are on the same developmental level.

2. We must work hard to avoid social tensions like the ones we are witnessing in some European countries at the moment. This is of particular importance for the ASEAN region, as our societies are very pluralistic.

3. Solidarity and non-interference must remain strong pillars of ASEAN’s self-understanding. The recent crises in Europe have shown that only having an eye for the economic costs and benefits is a grave mistake – shared values are also tremendously important.

Hariyadi Soemantri has worked at the research centre of the Indonesian House of Representatives since 1998. In 2016, he began a PhD in environmental science at the University of Indonesia. He is an alumnus of the German Federal Foreign Office’s Training for International Diplomats, a cooperation partner of nefia.

E-Mail: farahhar@yahoo.com
Europe’s Generation Y deserves to be heard!

by Julius Wolz

A deep and fundamental crisis has cast its shadow across Europe, but the current generation of young people couldn’t care less – that is, according to the pundits and politicians. Allegedly, “Generation Y” is too busy roaming smartphone reality in search of cute little Pokémon to pay attention to politics. But my generation is far more politicised than we are made out to be. And we care about Europe! Look no further than the recent referendum in the UK, where almost two thirds of Brits aged 18-24 voted to “remain.”

I am part of the so-called “Generation Y”, also known as Millennials, who were born sometime in the 1980s or 1990s. European integration has always been a reality for us, travelling without a passport and paying in euros is as much a part of our everyday life as smartphones and Facebook. That said, for the past ten years, “crisis” has been the word on everyone’s lips. This happens at a time in our lives when we are attending university, looking for our first jobs, and trying to shape our own futures.

The downward spiral began with the financial crisis of 2007, when the Irish real estate bubble burst. I had coincidentally spent my first time living abroad as an exchange student in Ireland only shortly before, in a country where my new friends now faced dim prospects. Their dreams for a bright future burst along with the real estate bubble. Next up was the “Eurozone crisis”, with a “Grexit” looming on the horizon, now overshadowed by the recent “Brexit”. Europe has limped from crisis to crisis, while in the meantime my generation is expected to be satisfied with glib excuses rather than a real perspective for the future.

After we finish our university studies, we face one temporary contract after another. It is often said that my generation cherishes personal freedom and craves personal fulfilment. But what other options do we have, other than to put lipstick on the pig that is our precarious situation?

Speaking of a “crisis” does not really make sense in today’s Europe. A quick glance at the dictionary tells us that a crisis, originally a medical term, describes “the turning point for better or worse in an acute disease or fever.” Politicians have tested a plethora of remedies over the last few years, yet the crisis has simply grown into a permanent state. The so-called “rescue” packages and measures are being cobbled together at our expense. In countries like Greece and Spain we suffer from exploding youth unemployment, while in the northern countries, endless internships and temporary contracts are the order of the day. What unites Europe’s youth is the lack of prospects for the future and a shared disbelief that the current crises will end anytime soon.

Our generation could rebuild Europe, but the older generations refuse to let us do so.

My generation, frustrated for good reason, could become dangerous for the project of European integration – that is, if it has not become so already. It could, theoretically, tear down everything that previous generations have built, but it hasn’t. My generation’s attitude is pro-European. The young Brits, who voted against Brexit in large majorities, are probably the best example. Unfortunately, they are also the ones who will have to live with the decision made by their parents and grandparents the longest. And this is exactly the problem: our generation could rebuild Europe, but the older generations refuse to let us do so. Applying the same failed remedies to a patient over and over again will not produce different results. Our generation does have ideas. Listen to us. Argue with us. Together, we can find a better way forward. Don’t ignore us – because if you do so, I fear that a large portion of my generation will turn to those politicians and groups who provide the simplest, and most dangerous, of solutions.
Our question to the German Minister for Foreign Affairs: Mr. Steinmeier, what in your view is the biggest crisis facing Europe today? And in what ways can citizens contribute to its resolution?

Frank-Walter Steinmeier: It is difficult to single out just one crisis, for in Europe we actually face a concoction of crises: there is the financial crisis that we still haven’t overcome, Brexit, Islamist terrorist attacks, the confrontation with Russia…

Many achievements that we take for granted today and have worked hard towards for decades are being put to a tough test. It is clear that strong centrifugal forces are pulling at Europe’s foundations.

These forces are stirring up popular yearning for national borders and stronger nation-states to purportedly regain control and security. And, unfortunately, populists across Europe are ready to offer simplistic answers: doors closed, foreigners out, every man for himself. In this regard, my warning is that fear is a bad political adviser. It is not only naïve, but also seriously wrong, to lead people to believe that we can find national solutions to problems like the terrorist threat, the crises in our continental neighbourhood or the management of migration.

For me, the current situation requires a clear call to action for politics and society as a whole: we politicians must show that we are capable of managing the current crises by demonstrating practical opposition to nationalism through cooperation, a willingness to compromise and multilateralism, although – or actually because – some members of the Union have decided to opt out.

What politicians do is one thing, but individual citizens bear a responsibility as well. It is more effective when, and absolutely essential, that citizens of the European Union themselves stand up for our values and our democracy. This is already happening everywhere: not only in academic discussions in schools and universities, but also through youth exchange programmes, cultural dialogue, and integration projects. We cannot spare a single centimetre in our heads for right-wing populists and their empty phrases, and furthermore we must expose the true character of their political solutions: they consist of intentional incitement against others, anti-democratic demagoguery and murderous arson.

In spite of the crises on the horizon, I remain hopeful that the European Union will continue to move forward. Should we manage to hold the EU together during the crisis, it will not be the same as before – but if we approach this endeavour in the right way, it can grow stronger!
“Häerzlech Wëllkomm zu Schengen.” Welcome to Schengen! From my home village, just five kilometres away, one can reach the village centre of Schengen by walking through an idyllic vineyard landscape. The village church, the heart of this 600-inhabitant settlement, can be seen from afar.

The Monument. Following the path downhill through the vineyards, you arrive at the European Monument to the “Accord de Schengen”, or “Schengen Treaty”. Three steel columns, each bearing a star, symbolise the first signatory states of the Schengen Agreement: France, Germany and the Benelux countries (Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg). This particular picture was taken on 25 June 2016 and shows the European flag at half-mast; the result of the UK referendum and the British desire to leave the EU had been announced just one day prior.
3 Local signage goes viral. This picture circulated across social media during the European Football Championship, as it was believed to predict the result for the semi-final match between Germany and France: Germany 1, France 2. The prediction turned out to be wrong, France won 2 to 0. The signs stand just before the bridge that separates Luxembourg from Germany and France.

4 The European Museum. In 2010, the European Museum was inaugurated to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Schengen Agreement. Unfortunately, it cannot be visited at the moment because a 40-square-metre piece of ceiling collapsed in one of the showrooms in May of this year. Some residents saw the collapse as a harbinger of the coming UK referendum. Tourists can leave a trace of their visit by placing a lock in front of the museum. This custom is especially popular with German tourists.

5 A piece of Berlin in the wide world. On 8 February 2010, these two pieces of the Berlin Wall were erected on the Luxembourg side of the Moselle river to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Schengen Agreement. In the background, you can see the bridge that separates the small country from Germany and France.

6 The village castle. 5,000 square metres of historic architecture on 1.3 hectares of property can be found in Schengen. The castle, complete with a moat, dates back to 1390. Its owner demolished most of the old fortress in 1793. Only a round tower survived, which is now overgrown with ivy. On that site, the current castle was built in 1812. The renowned French writer and Schengen guest Victor Hugo drew this sketch of the castle tower in 1871.

7 An excerpt from village life. Luxembourg loves village fairs! During my visit in June, I had the luck to attend the “Pe’eschkiermes”, a fair organised by the fishing club of one of the neighbouring villages. In addition to live music, Luxembourgish wine and beer as well as typical Luxembourg dishes were served. One of Luxembourg’s specialties is “Paschtéit”, which is the Luxembourgish translation for the French “bouchée à la reine”, known in German as “Königspastete”.
A referendum wreaked havoc in the EU last June when the majority of Brits voted for Brexit. nefsa member Tim Cholibois, who has lived in London for the last seven years, documented his personal impressions of the events leading up to the referendum for *ad hoc international*.

February 2016: “I have big news”, a German friend warns me when I meet her for coffee at the beginning of the year. She is one of the few Germans in London who I’ve known since moving to the British capital in 2009. “I’m out!” By that, she did not mean that she would vote to leave the EU in the looming referendum, which felt so distant then. No, she had decided to leave the UK altogether. She had had enough of the current political climate. Brexit or no Brexit, the growth of populist political forces was a clear signal. She told me that she would quit her job in the coming summer. All of a sudden, Brexit was a reality for me. I started thinking about what it would mean should the worst case scenario really happen.

April 2016: At Zeitgeist, a German pub in South London, the barkeeper is flirting with my colleague. “I love Germans. They’re my favourites”. When he happens to overhear our discussion about Brexit awhile later, he can’t help but comment: “I’m voting out for sure”, he says with pride. The EU’s time had run out, everybody knew that, and it was time to leave the sinking ship as soon as possible.

May 2016: A good friend explains to me that he fully supports the UK remaining in the EU. I am relieved. It’s happened too many times already that British friends have shown a complete lack of understanding for the European idea as I perceive it, but not him. He is a student, looking forward to his exchange semester as an Erasmus student, and wants to work abroad later in life. Nevertheless, he does not plan to vote. Citing the disconnect he feels towards British politicians, he aims to distance himself from the political system as much as possible. In fact, nobody in his family will participate in the referendum. They all know that the EU is not the actual problem, but a mere scapegoat to distract from the shortcomings of British politics in recent years, and thus nobody is planning to vote on it.

June 2016: Zeitgeist again: An Indian friend of mine has just registered to vote and proudly declares that she’s “in”. She reminds me, however, that many other Indians support Brexit. “As an Indian woman in the UK, I have been discriminated against my whole life. I never got the jobs I wanted and always earned less than my white, male colleagues. Many of the Indians I know think that with less Europeans in London they might finally getting the jobs they’ve always fought for.” A poll in *The Economist* shows Brexit supporters pulling ahead for the very first time.
The first piece of the EU cake cut out – does it taste good?

Early morning commuters are in high spirits; many have already cast their vote.

23 June 2016, 7:30 AM: I am volunteering for the Remain campaign in the rain on Waterloo Bridge. The regional campaign director believes that the major floods in the south of the country will reduce turnout significantly, primarily effecting Remain voters. Early morning commuters are in high spirits; many have already cast their vote. Just like me, they march to work wearing their “I’m in” stickers on their chests. Less than 10% of passers-by declared themselves Brexiteers. I feel optimistic for the first time in ages.

24 June 2016, around midnight: At night, the shock. I’m at a friend’s place. The same friend who had informed me of her personal Brexit plans in February. The living room is decorated in blue and yellow. Colourful guests watch the referendum proceedings on the screen of someone’s laptop. A journalist from the BBC is even in attendance, originally to capture the cheerful ambiance of our “EU party”, but all the camera records are shocked faces as the first regional tallies are presented and we realise that remain support is much lower than expected.

24 June 2016, 5:40 AM: The majority of guests have trouble sleeping. My iPhone vibrates: “Remain can’t win anymore. They just announced it on BBC. I don’t know how I’m going to sleep now.”

The beautiful cake bearing the EU flag just sits there for most of the day, untouched.

24 June 2016, 11:30 AM: The morning after in the office. The planned Remain party is cancelled. Many wear black. The beautiful cake bearing the EU flag just sits there for most of the day, untouched. Then, somebody reluctantly cuts themselves a piece. Later in the afternoon, our boss sends an email. He seems as clueless as his staff. “At the moment, we are unclear what this means for current and future employees.” Who knows what lies ahead. That this total uncertainty with regard to the future would soon become the national sentiment in post-Brexit UK is already palpable in the early morning hours of 24 June.

29 June 2016: At work I hear my Brazilian colleague who is married to an Eastern European speaking over the phone: “Yeah, it’s crazy, we don’t feel home here anymore… harassed... The people we speak to are heartbroken, and feel like they have dedicated the most productive period of our lives to this country... Anyway, I am tired of being depressed – how may I help you?” He and his wife just bought a house two weeks ago.

I miss the London of two weeks ago, when we were excited to learn the result of the referendum.

Early July 2016: What consequences does Brexit have for me personally? I have “fled” to Berlin by now, while the bad news from across the pond keeps coming. I miss the London of two weeks ago, when we were excited to learn the result of the referendum. I also miss my friends who are probably having a pint without me in our local pub in Lambeth, where 79 percent voted Remain. Nevertheless, I am not really looking forward to flying back. ✎
Comment on Brexit

“I can’t be happening”

by Juliane Sarnes

I have lived in the United Kingdom for almost eight years. My taxes help feed the sacred cow that is the British health care system. I volunteer in the fight against old-age poverty in London. In order to better integrate into British society, I have increased my tea consumption beyond what people would consider “normal.” My reaction to the news that the majority of Brits had voted against staying in the European Union was therefore the reaction of any half-way reasonable EU migrant: I closed my eyes and played dead. This can’t be happening.

I’m on vacation. The forecast promises typical summer weather for the southern English coast: torrential rain interspersed with occasional sunshine. Marvellous! Yesterday, during my stroll through Hastings, I counted the “Remain” posters hanging in the windows of the little town approvingly. In my mind, I belittled the few bright red “Vote Leave” posters, and found myself developing motherly sentiments for the young student explaining the benefits of EU membership to fellow citizens on the local high street. After seeing the results of initial projections, I went to bed optimistic. I was sure that the British were a critical, but pragmatic bunch. Of course they would remain. But closing our eyes won’t change anything. The reality is, the majority of my British fellow citizens want to leave the EU. In Hastings, close to 55% of inhabitants voted for “Leave.” I am shocked by the result. Like a teenager dumped by his first love, I veer from disbelief to feelings of deep pain and hurt. When my mood grows darker, towards a sentiment of “You are all going to regret this,” I decide to leave the house. I need a calming... cup of tea, pah! – Coffee. In protest. Nobody is cheering in the streets. The result of the referendum is a protest against the rigid British class system.

At first sight, Hastings – barely two hours from London – presents itself in carefree grass green and sea blue colours, garnished with sailing sea gulls and dressy visitors from the capital. Upon closer inspection, however, one notices a certain emptiness that not even the pretty streets of the old town can conceal. I barricade myself in a café and end up ordering a cup of tea after all. A short Google search later, I learn that my cosy weekend destination belongs to one of the UK’s poorest regions. Here, behind the idyllic façade of this coastal town, almost two thirds of children grow up in poverty. The health care system is below average, while unemployment, on the other hand, is far above. It’s not particularly surprising that people reach a point where they just want to escape or “leave” all of this, seeking to get out of the misery, of the downward spiral, and the only tangible alternative, the only option of “leaving” offered by contemporary political elites, was to “leave” of the EU.

I pour the rest of my tea into a recyclable plastic cup and walk down to the beach. The sky has clouded, and a new downpour is imminent. Only several fishermen defy wind and waves with their typical British composure. Did they also vote for Brexit? Many of those who catapulted themselves out of political impotence into decisive opposition are now a bit intimidated by the joint responsibility they face. With others, uglier instincts are coming to the fore as a result of the unexpected exhilaration from being on the winning side for once. Reports of hate crimes and racially motivated attacks, particularly against Polish residents but against Muslims as well, continue to pour in. Could Brexit be not only the beginning of a political and economic decline, but also of an unstoppable rise of inhuman attitudes? The hope remains that this prospect will shake up and discourage, and ultimately prevent a similar self-destruction in other EU member states. “Not a good day today” mutters one of the fishermen as the first drops begin to fall and he grabs his almost empty bucket. I nod in silence and gaze out at the sea, in what I imagine is France’s direction.

The result of the referendum is a protest against the rigid British class system.
In TTIP we trust?

by Niklas Kosow

In October 2015, 250,000 people took to the streets of Berlin in the city’s biggest demonstration since German reunification. Their protest was directed against the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), a planned free trade agreement between the European Union and the United States. However, as protesters in Berlin and elsewhere made clear, Brussels and its negotiators have lost the trust of those they are supposed to represent.

Mistrust between the governments of the EU member states and their respective populations is higher than ever. This can be observed in the Eurobarometer, which has recorded how Europeans feel and think about public institutions since 1973, and exhibits a growing trend in recent years: trust in public institutions is falling rapidly.

The most common explanation for this trend is the economic situation in the EU member states. But is this really the case? Do citizens trust public institutions more when they are better-off economically? This theory seems to hold up when looking at previous examples of countries hit hard by economic crisis; in most cases, trust in public institutions declined particularly steeply. Yet a 2016 EU report covering all 28 EU member states argues that public integrity and the quality of governance are even more important to citizens than the economic situation. But what constitutes good governance? Parliaments that take the opinions of those they represent into account; an efficient public service that does not tolerate nepotism and bribery; a government that acts in a responsible and transparent manner. In many EU countries, these types of public institutions are few and far between. Moreover, the European Parliament remains uninfluential and ineffective, while the EU Commission is anything but accessible to common citizens.

The public discussion surrounding TTIP makes this state of affairs particularly obvious. Negotiations on the trade deal mainly concern technical questions and industrial standards, yet opposition to TTIP is so high in many European countries that the partnership’s possible failure is already being openly discussed. There are, of course, serious debates to be had regarding the potential costs and benefits of any such agreement. Nevertheless, it seems that a lot of criticism and opposition could have been avoided had negotiations been conducted in a more transparent fashion. Negotiations between the EU and the US highlighted a fundamental problem of contemporary politics: citizens simply do not believe that Brussels represents their interests at the negotiating table. That said, the Commission’s reaction to this lack of trust was counterproductive as well: documents relating to the negotiations were kept secret, and only made public following immense pressure from European civil society and various national parliaments. Even then, however, documents were initially only made available to parliamentarians. The wider public was only permitted to read through the TTIP negotiations after the documents were leaked and publicised by Greenpeace in a PR stunt.

The leaked documents revealed how far away the EU and the US still were from an actual agreement. Suddenly, only a few points of the agreement appeared to be really worthy of criticism. Making a secret of the negotiations not only hurt the Commission’s position and standing, but also damaged the image of the EU itself. Once again, the EU appears distant, as if it were governing against the interests of its own citizens.

Once again, the EU appears distant, as if it were governing against the interests of its own citizens.

The past years of economic hardship have also revealed what is often described as the EU’s lack of “input legitimacy”. The EU lacks the sort of popular legitimacy derived from citizen participation in the political process. Institutions are perceived as legitimate if citizens are able to take part in governance. Many political theorists argue, simply put, that a lack of input legitimacy can be compensated by so-called “output legitimacy”: people care less about participation in their respective political system if they benefit from it. In times of perpetual crisis and fears of downward mobility, economic benefits appear insufficient to restore citizens’ trust in institutions. Institutions on both the European and national levels must reform if they are to regain some of the public trust that has been lost. They must fight corruption and misspending, and show citizens that public influence and insider connections are not the only way to “make it” in Europe today.

More than anything, citizens must be able to participate in public life, and institutions must be more transparent. Citizens must be involved in decision-making processes from an early stage. How this is to be achieved, however, remains an open question. Should the European Parliament be given more competencies? Would it suffice if European politicians became more active on the national level and got better at explaining what happens in Brussels to their constituents? One thing is for sure: as far as the UK is concerned, reforms are too late. Its citizens already voted to leave.
In 2014, Swiss diplomat Heidi Tagliavini was appointed OSCE Special Envoy to the peace negotiations between Ukraine and the Russian Federation by then-chair of the OSCE and Swiss Foreign Minister, Didier Burkhalter. One year later, she stepped down as Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine. In the meantime, the Trilateral Contact Group moderated by her had agreed upon and signed the Minsk Protocol and the Minsk Package of Measures. The peace process entailing working groups for the implementation of the Minsk agreements was initiated and prepared under her direction.}

ad hoc: When exactly did the OSCE call you to Kiev?
Tagliavini: On the 70th anniversary of the Normandy landings on 6 June 2014, Chancellor Angela Merkel called the so-called “Normandy Quartet” into being, which brought together the French president Hollande, Russian president Putin, Ukrainian president Poroshenko and herself. This format was designed to find solutions to the conflict and be chaired by the OSCE. From there, the Trilateral Contact Group emerged almost overnight.

Unresolved conflicts that slip out of the spotlight for whatever reason possess a high potential for renewed escalation.

ad hoc: What is your personal connection to Ukraine?
Tagliavini: During my studies of Russian literature, I read various authors of the now-independent countries of the former Soviet Union, among them Ukrainian writers who wrote in Russian. In the 1970s, I was in Ukraine as a student and then again later, in 2009/10, as leader of the OSCE election observation mission. In the middle of winter, almost 1,000 election observers travelled to Ukraine. Such an election observation assignment provides very good access to a country’s culture and politics in a relatively short period of time, and I was there for approximately three months.

“**I sometimes felt like an engine**”

Interview with former OSCE Special Representative Heidi Tagliavini

ad hoc: Ms. Tagliavini, why should Europe be interested in the conflict in eastern Ukraine?
Tagliavini: It would be dangerous to lose sight of the conflict in Ukraine. My experiences in other conflicts, such as the Chechen War in 1995, show that unresolved conflicts that slip out of the spotlight for whatever reason possess a high potential for renewed escalation. Furthermore, this conflict affects Europe directly because it puts peace in Europe at risk.

ad hoc: What role did you have in tackling the crisis?
Tagliavini: Some called my work mediation, others preferred to call it moderation. I sometimes felt like an engine. I somehow tried to keep everyone going, even against their will, and tried to keep everyone involved and committed in order to come to an and finalize what we had to do. Not everyone was equally motivated and activity-oriented.
Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe:
Emerged from the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), intended to facilitate peaceful coexistence between East and West in Europe during the Cold War. One of the responsibilities of the OSCE is to secure peace and support post-conflict reconstruction in its 57 member states.

OSCE in Ukraine:
In addition to the Special Monitoring Mission seeking to reduce tensions through its presence and to contribute to stabilisation through daily reports on transparency, the Trilateral Contact Group with representatives from Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE is the principal tool for mediation. In addition, the OSCE election observation missions have observed the elections carried out in Ukraine since the outbreak of the conflict in 2014. There is a further observer mission on the Russian side of the Russian-Ukrainian border crossings Gukovo and Donetsk.

German OSCE Chairmanship 2016:
Germany is currently chairing the OSCE. Special Representative of the German government for the German OSCE chair is the member of the Bundestag Gernot Erler.

For centuries, Russian history was oriented towards Europe. Every Russian can name three or four European authors at the drop of a hat, but the same is rarely the case when it comes to Chinese, Indian or Persian literature. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the OSCE decided that, in line with the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, Europe spans from Vancouver to Vladivostok. It might be more difficult to find agreement on that question today.

ad hoc: What can we expect next in the conflict in east Ukraine?
Tagliavini: Unfortunately, there is growing mistrust on both sides, and positions are becoming increasingly inflexible; this development is typical the longer a conflict lasts. No one wants to take the first step towards disarmament. In this sense, we could have negotiated whether the contact line should be drawn five meters more to the east or not for much longer without making much of a difference. Only the desire for peace can drive implementation forward.

ad hoc: What part did Germany play in the negotiations?
Tagliavini: Thanks to Angela Merkel’s efforts, Russia participated in the contact group despite never viewing itself as one of the conflict parties. She also possessed, as only a few leaders of Western governments did, direct technical knowledge of the situation.

ad hoc: How does the conflict alter the OSCE and the security situation in Europe?
Tagliavini: Through the two instruments – the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and the Trilateral Contact Group – the OSCE fulfils its original mandate of observing compliance with human as well as civil rights and security in Europe in an almost ideal way. This task brought back the regional organisation, often wrongly underestimated, into people’s minds. What is going on in Ukraine is all about security and cooperation in Europe. At the same time, the European Union and the US have essentially acknowledged their leadership of OSCE. The OSCE was immediately on site when the conflict escalated, which was extremely important. The horrible plane crash over rebel-controlled territory in July 2014, however, led to a hardening of the fronts. After the incident, the West began to implement sanctions against Russia. This brought the conflict onto a new level of mutual distrust and lack of understanding unseen for quite some time.

ad hoc: What exactly is Europe?
Tagliavini: That’s an interesting question. The countries with a Soviet past in fact have a European past, for Marxism, upon which Soviet leaders based their ideology, is essentially very European.

Interview:
Heidi Tagliavini, having served as a diplomat for over 30 years, was Swiss ambassador and Special Representative to the UN and OSCE. Since 1998, she has served in leading positions for UN and OSCE peace operations in conflict zones in the North and South Caucasus as well as in Ukraine. She wrote the so-called “Tagliavini Report” on behalf of the European Council following the 2008 August War in Georgia. She received several awards and honorary doctorates for her work for peace. Heidi Tagliavini, born in Basel in 1950, is a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Interview: Loredana Sorg

Kiev: Exhibition of Russian weapons from the Donbas region battle zone.
The crisis in and around Ukraine has signalled a political rebirth for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Largely forgotten after the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s, it has become the leading monitor and facilitator between the warring parties in eastern Ukraine. It is the world’s largest regional security organisation, with 57 participating states spanning a geographical area from Vancouver and Vladivostok. It is not a perfect organisation, nor is it a substitute or competitor to the EU or NATO. That said, Germany’s Chairmanship of the OSCE this year underscores how indispensable to European peace and security the organisation remains.

Ready for action within 24 hours – after the decision to establish an OSCE Special Monitoring Mission was taken on 21 March 2014 at the Hofburg in Vienna, a group of “first responders” arrived in Ukraine the next day. Across the Atlantic, spring break had just begun at Harvard’s Kennedy School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where I was studying at the time and looking forward to a few weeks off. A few days later I would find myself on a plane to Kiev as a civilian expert working for the Center for International Peace Operations (Zentrum für international Friedenseinsätze), tasked to help lead the preparations for a much larger-scale deployment as part of a small team of international monitors. My deployment: Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second largest city, located some 19 miles from the Russian border.

During those early days, the crisis in eastern Ukraine was yet to reach its peak (that would occur in the coming months), but conflict dynamics were already escalating rapidly. Our tasks could not have been more diverse. Office space had to be found and local staff hired; armoured vehicles, radios, flak jackets and helmets had to be assigned. We got acquainted with our area of operation through daily patrols, completed stakeholder mappings and established contact with parties on both sides of the conflict. Our team in Kharkiv would grow quickly, from 4 to 60 monitors within the first month. The OSCE teams in Donetsk and Luhansk grew at an even faster pace.

The security situation on the ground was extremely volatile, not least for the OSCE monitors themselves. What started with the annexation of Crimea, public protests in major eastern Ukrainian cities and the occupation of administrative buildings by masked men in unmarked military uniforms, would develop into full-blown war by August 2014. German media covered the hostage taking of German soldiers in Slovyansk in April extensively. The crash of MH17 over eastern Ukraine in July would leave the world in shock and utter disbelief. OSCE monitors were the first international team to arrive at the crash site, helping to map debris, negotiate access for international aviation and forensic experts, and support the transport of bodies from the conflict zone to Kharkiv.

Two years on, a team that began with four to six monitors in each city has now become a major mission comprising more than 800 international monitors and around 300 local staff. The daily, weekly and spot reports published by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMMU) provide political decision-makers in 57 capitals, the UN, EU and NATO with fact-based
and objective information. As Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter put it: "The OSCE has become the eyes and the ears of the international community in Ukraine."

Yet Ukraine is not the only hotspot keeping the OSCE busy. The conflicts around Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, the international fight against terrorism, promotion of good governance, as well as the implementation of OSCE commitments related to human rights and the rule of law are additional priorities of the organisation.

All this makes for a full agenda for Germany’s 2016 OSCE Chairmanship. Guided by the motto “Renewing dialogue, rebuilding trust, restoring security”, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier is chairing the organisation in stormy times. To implement this agenda, the OSCE has access to a comprehensive – yet unfortunately largely unknown – set of instruments and mechanisms: 17 Field Operations across the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia, strong independent institutions based in Warsaw, Vienna and The Hague to promote human rights, democratic institutions, media freedom and the protection of national minorities, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Copenhagen, and the OSCE Secretariat.

The OSCE is a big family. Given the consensus rule when it comes to decision-making, it is not always the quickest organisation to respond to evolving situations. Its operational capacities require further strengthening, not least with regard to early warning and mediation support. But when all 57 OSCE states agree, as was the case with the SMMU, their decisions carry considerable normative weight, allowing the organisation to serve as an honest broker. Somewhat forgotten next to the EU and NATO in recent years, the Ukraine crisis brought the OSCE back into the spotlight as the only actor accepted as neutral by all sides to the conflict.

It takes an organisation in which Moscow, Washington and the European capitals are equal members to establish dialogue with Russia on a level playing field and draft effective confidence- and security-building measures. In being inclusive in its membership, the OSCE fulfils a purpose beyond the Ukraine crisis as such. As a platform for dialogue that brings together not only the Euro-Atlantic partners but all of the Soviet successor states as well, the OSCE is a unique meeting point for debates on security and stability in Europe.

Our work as OSCE monitors during the first six months of the conflict in 2014 was rarely easy. We oversaw prisoner exchanges, visited shelters and camps for the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons, reported on public rallies, monitored court trials and interviewed pro-Russian activists in Ukrainian high-detention facilities. We experienced how our own civilian monitors were taken hostage for multiple weeks and how OSCE patrols got caught in crossfire. But despite all this and the fact that a political solution to the conflict seems a distant hope at best, no other organisation could have engaged in inclusive European crisis management in the way the OSCE did. Today, with an emphasis on ceasefire monitoring, the daily work of OSCE monitors in eastern Ukraine and throughout the country continues to make a difference. And that, in turn, is a gratifying fact to know.
The “refugee crisis” continues to make headlines in Germany and Europe. *ad hoc international* talked to Alexander Betts, Leopold Muller Professor of Forced Migration and International Affairs at the Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford, about the European Union’s crisis management and what opportunities the crisis offers for rethinking international refugee protection.

**ad hoc:** EU refugee and asylum policy is characterised by a lack of responsibility sharing. A plethora of initiatives to distribute responsibilities among member states have failed, such as the EU refugee quota system. You have studied the conditions under which responsibility sharing between states takes place. Which of these do you see met in the EU and what is still missing?

**Betts:** The starting point for thinking about the failure of responsibility sharing needs to be an understanding of the nature of refugee politics. Globally and also at the European level, a power asymmetry exists between states; just ten countries host almost two thirds of the world’s refugees. In Europe, frontline states like Italy and Greece bear the greatest responsibility; those more distant, like the United Kingdom, can hide behind territory or water and skirt around that responsibility by engaging in beggar-thy-neighbour policies. Looking at Germany, another factor becomes apparent: how attractive a destination country is.

The problem today is the breakdown of the current system in Europe. We have a higher number of people arriving as asylum seekers. The Dublin model of responsibility sharing has been poorly adapted to that. What needs to happen is to avoid border closing as the only form of responsibility sharing. Governments need to recognise that they are better off acting collectively than in isolation, and they need to get to a point where they have reciprocal commitments within and beyond the refugee area. What needs to happen is to avoid border closing as the only form of responsibility sharing. Governments need to recognize that they are better off acting collectively than in isolation.

**ad hoc:** The EU-Turkey deal has received a volley of harsh criticism. What do you think are the consequences of such an agreement on the international refugee regime?

**Betts:** The EU-Turkey deal is a disaster for the global refugee regime. It is illegal, unworkable, and politically unsustainable. The “one-in, one-out” deal relies upon the idea that we can return Syrian refugees to Turkey, to what the EU has suggested is a safe third country. But Turkey does not fulfil these criteria. It is politically inexplicable how the EU can provide visas to 75 million Turks, predominantly Muslims, and yet not be prepared to allow access to one million Syrians with vastly greater humanitarian needs and claims. The deal is really challenging, and I expect it to gradually unravel. The problem, of course, is that both the EU and Turkey have committed so much political capital to it that they will fight to adapt it and make it workable.

In the context of globalisation, there are massive limitations in terms of what closing borders can achieve, because we live in an age of migration.

**ad hoc:** The EU and individual members have gone to great lengths to secure borders to prevent people from entering the EU. Beyond the tragic humanitarian consequences, can such a policy ever be effective?

**Betts:** In the context of globalisation, there are massive limitations in terms of what closing borders can achieve, because we live in an age of migration. There are around 250 million migrants in the world. We also have two dual forces transforming the world, one of which is state fragility. People may not necessarily face individualised persecution by the government in countries like Somalia or the Democratic Republic of Congo, but it is very hard for them to sustain the minimum conditions of survival. These people often are forced to leave their country as a last
resort. The second force is mobility, an increasing awareness of opportunities in other countries. Combined fragility and mobility mean that desperate and vulnerable people will move across borders. The increasing numbers are not an aberration, they are likely to be the new norm. We have to adapt to that reality rather than assume we can simply close the door.

**ad hoc:** There is an emerging consensus that any effective policy response should include tackling the root causes of flight. Do current approaches succeed in addressing the causes of displacement?

**Betts:** This area of refugee policy has historically been neglected because it is very difficult. The only way we can prevent cross-border displacement is by addressing the conflicts that lead to displacement. This requires political will and a functioning UN Security Council, but those factors are not present. This brings us to the second best solution: providing people with sanctuary and humanitarian response once they have left their countries of origin.

We need to reframe how we think about refugees, to recognise their skills, talents and aspirations.

**ad hoc:** Too often politicians portray aiding refugees as a zero sum game whereby benefiting refugees imposes costs on citizens. How can we break away from that thought pattern?

**Betts:** We need to reframe how we think about refugees, to recognise their skills, talents and aspirations. We need better data and human stories, but also a new language to shape the politics of refuge. You can be a refugee and still contribute economically to a host society. We have collected significant data in East Africa focusing on the economic lives of refugees in Uganda because, unlike many countries in the world, it provides refugees with the right to work and freedom of movement. We found that when we empower refugees to be able to work, they not only help themselves, but they also contribute to their host societies. In Kampala, 21% of refugees run businesses that employ other people; 40% of their employees are Ugandan nationals. In other words, refugees are creating jobs for citizens. And we are increasingly seeing similar data substantiating this point.

**ad hoc:** As director of the “Humanitarian Innovation Project”, you study the role of technology, innovation and the private sector in refugee assistance. Can you share examples that illustrate the resourcefulness of refugee communities?

**Betts:** In a recent report called “ Refugee Innovation”, we looked at examples of refugees’ own innovations from Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, Jordan and the United States. We found examples of Somali refugees running the main transportation system that connects the refugee camps to the capital city. In Jordan, in the Zaatari refugee camp, characterised by restrictions on economic life, we see examples of containers and tents provided by the UN being adapted to provide furniture, to build shop fronts. So whenever things are provided institutionally, they are adapted and changed by the refugees to suit their needs in terms of the architecture of communities, changing residential into business structures. These examples should inspire us to recognize the creative capacities and contributions of refugees, and they should change our refugee assistance model from one of institutional delivery to one of refugee empowerment.

**ad hoc:** Thank you very much for sharing your inspiring insights with us, Professor Betts. ✫

---

*Interview: Marcia C. Schenck*

---

Refugees arrive in a boat on the Greek island of Lesbos.
"Paris changes everything. We cannot allow illegal or uncontrolled immigration." These were the words of CSU politician Markus Söder, announced via Twitter following the 13 November attacks. In the past year, most conservative parties in Europe have called for an end to open border policies. Their concern is fed by the increase of terrorist attacks, as well as the immigration of many people from predominantly Muslim countries. Yet melodramatic political rhetoric often forgets that the majority of radical Islamist terrorists are European citizens, and that most refugees have come to Europe fleeing precisely such terrorists.

New regulations concerning the creation of a European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG) passed by the European Parliament last July can be interpreted as a direct response to the demand for closure of Europe’s external borders. In a hasty procedure, this “Frontex reform” has been pushed through the European institutions. It not only includes a renaming of the unpopular Warsaw-based border agency Frontex (now called the “European Border and Coast Guard”) but, more importantly, a significant extension of its mandate. Although the suggestion to allow the agency to deploy in a member state’s territory without its permission was rescinded out of concerns for national sovereignty, the agency will nevertheless be able to exert considerable pressure on individual states. For example, the EBCG could oblige countries to increase their efforts in protecting their borders, or to tolerate the agency’s engagement on their national territory.

In a hasty procedure, this “Frontex reform” has been pushed through the European institutions.

The creators of the new regulations have specifically targeted Greece, where more than a million refugees have arrived on its islands, and hence the European Union, since the beginning of 2015. Austrian Minister of the Interior Johanna Mikl-Leitner, for example, threatened last January that “if the government in Athens does not do more to safeguard its external borders, there will be a need for an open discussion concerning Greece’s exclusion from the Schengen area.”

However, Greece will never be able to completely control its 1,000 km maritime border and its 3,000 islands, even with massive support from a European border agency. Furthermore, it is absurd to believe that an effective Greek-Turkish border cordon could be established in compliance with international law, let alone acceptable humanitarian standards. The Greek coast guard not only has a moral duty to save people in distress at sea, but is also legally obliged by international maritime law. Taking aboard the refugees arriving from Turkey on barely seaworthy boats is the coast guard’s obligation.

Moreover, blanket deportation of all incoming refugees is simply out of the question. According to both international and European law, every person seeking refuge and intending to apply for asylum in the EU must be granted the opportunity to do so. This basic right would not and could not be altered by the new European Border and Coast Guard.

It is absurd to believe that an effective Greek-Turkish border cordon could be established in compliance with international law, let alone acceptable humanitarian standards.

Calls to close Europe’s external borders can ultimately only be realised by shifting responsibility for border controls onto third countries. To this aim, the EU has spent years reaching agreements with countries like Morocco and Libya to prevent potential refugees from leaving these places on boats for Europe. Turkey has recently also begun playing the role of doorman for the EU. The European Border and Coast Guard’s newfound authority to enforce European border controls in third countries – provided an agreement with the respective country has been reached – is thus a major expansion of this concept of “externalising” border control.
It becomes obvious that the continent’s “refugee crisis” is in many ways primarily a crisis of European solidarity.

These policies clearly violate human rights standards and can hardly be reconciled with the humanitarian obligation to protect refugees wherever they may be. Nevertheless, increased harmonisation of European border controls is quite desirable. The failures in registering newly arriving refugees on the Greek islands over the past year have underscored the need for a readily available contingent of border control personnel that can be deployed in member states during emergencies.

Unfortunately, the current resolution does not provide for equipping the EBCG with its own personnel. Its ability to operate will continue to depend on the individual member states, which are expected to provide staff for a pool of reserve personnel, although this procedure has already caused problems in the past. When Greece, overwhelmed and running out of options, requested 1,500 European border protection officers in 2015, member states contributed only a fraction of that number. Here, it becomes obvious that the continent’s “refugee crisis” is in many ways primarily a crisis of European solidarity.

The urgently required extension of the European Border and Coast Guard’s mandate for sea rescue of refugees is not covered in the reform, despite 3,000 people drowning in the Mediterranean in the first half of 2016 – the highest number in history. Instead, the border agency intends to increase deportations of asylum seekers. It is unacceptable that member states find common ground only when it comes to repressive measures such as border protection or repatriation, while putting security concerns before humanitarian principles. Harmonisation of border protection within Europe must be accompanied by a harmonisation of asylum standards in the individual member states. This should be complemented by a reform of the Dublin agreement and an extension of legal escape routes to Europe, such as more liberal visa regulations.

Harmonisation of border protection within Europe must be accompanied by a harmonisation of asylum standards in the individual member states.

Walling Europe off from the rest of the world will not solve the so-called “refugee crisis”, despite Thomas de Mazière’s claim in July 2016 (German Federal Minister of the Interior). The responsibility to care for refugees is merely passed on to third countries. The European Union’s response to refugees does not help solve its more general crisis, but rather undermines the Union’s core values of human rights and solidarity.
Support SINGA’s project incubator

The members of the nefia network have made their decision: the 2016 nefia fundraising event will support SINGA Deutschland, a non-profit social business that brings together newcomers and locals. Last June, we accepted applications from projects engaging with our 2016 topic, “Sustainable Europe”, which sought out initiatives to build a more cohesive European Union. As the winning project, we now present SINGA’s approach to the readers of *ad hoc international* for the first time, in an effort to help them raise more funds for current and future projects.

From owning his own music shop and playing in numerous bands to producing for the opera, Nabil Arbaain was at the beginning of a very promising career as a musician and producer. That is, until he was forced to leave Syria’s capital city of Damascus last year. His career was not the only thing Nabil had to leave behind; his rich collection of ouds could not be taken with him either. Luckily, his musical skills were stored in his mind and fingers, skills Nabil had also used to support other musicians in the first steps of their professional careers.

Now in his new home in Berlin, Nabil aspires to develop a project through which he can not only develop his own career in Germany, but also create a platform with which other refugee musicians can present and further develop their own musical talents. The possibility to meet local musicians and build networks is vital here. These networks can assist with access to instruments and resources crucial to any musician wishing to develop their career. Furthermore, Nabil’s project aims to paint a positive picture of refugees in Berlin, by highlighting their creative contributions to their new local society, rather than being seen as a burden. In order to accomplish this, Nabil explained that his project should help to form a “tent”-like space. As a result, “The Tent” (Al-Khaimeh) is also the title of the project.

We at SINGA will admit Nabil Arbaain into our project incubator program, beginning in early 2017. The program aims to support participants like Nabil in setting up their own projects and shaping them together with locals. Past entrepreneurs, people with good ideas to improve society, and people with artistic talents in need of a stage will all be connected with the right contacts and experts in order to help turn their projects into freelance employment. Participants will be connected with mentors and potential partners, as well as gaining access to individual consultancy and professional training. Together with our corporate and non-profit partners, we will work on developing sustainable project plans, accessible finance options, and on garnering more public attention for the projects. The intensive support and supervision of one project over a period of six months costs 3,000 euro. We would greatly appreciate your support.

nefia will accept donations for SINGA Deutschland’s Project Incubator until 26 December 2016. All donations will go directly to SINGA Deutschland.

By providing your name and address in the reference of the bank transfer, we will automatically issue a donation receipt for donations over 200 euros. Donation receipts for donations under 200 euros can be provided upon request.

Please transfer your donation to:
Netzwerk für internationale Aufgaben
Mittelbrandenburgische Sparkasse Potsdam
IBAN: DE67 1605 0000 3637 0217 21
BIC: WELADED1PMB
Reference: Spende SINGA Projektkolleg

Contact person for the Project Incubator Program at SINGA:
Luisa Seiler luisa@singa-deutschland.de

Fundraising coordinators at nefia:
Sarah Bidoli: sarah.bidoli@nefia.org
Christina Hübers christina.huebers@nefia.org

June 2016: This year’s nefia alumni meeting was held in Hamburg. Among other things, we visited the Airbus production facility. The weekend was organised by the class of 2013/14.
Europe means ...

“exploration without borders.”  
_Umberto from Italy_

“an amazing community of people and territories that is still finding its way.”  
_Marie from France_

“the best continent for modern human existence. Best in terms of development, social security, human rights, equality, cultural heritage, variety and cooperation.”  
_Ramojus from Lithuania_

“a common culture and a common destiny.”  
_Matteo from Finland_

“living together in peace.”  
_Cathal from Ireland_

Want to read more? Check out past issues of _ad hoc_ in our archive:  
https://nefia.org/publikation-ad-hoc/ad-hoc-archiv