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Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce the European Policy Centre’s Annual Report for 2019. It features highlights of the EPC’s many activities during the year and showcases its convening power, expertise, and impact on the EU policy agenda.

As you read this report, you will find many examples of how the European Policy Centre (EPC) has managed to shape some of the most important EU policy discussions.

Policymakers particularly valued our analysis on the 2019 European elections, Brexit and the circular economy. We developed practical recommendations to revamp European industry and better prepare the workplace for a digital and greener future. Our experience in promoting and evaluating EU-wide citizen participation in decision-making will help inform the upcoming Conference on the Future of Europe. And in our flagship publication ‘Yes, We Should!’ we stand up for European cooperation and offer advice to the new EU leadership on how to move Europe forward.

I firmly believe that think tanks such as the EPC play an invaluable role in promoting open and constructive debate in Brussels and beyond. Long-term, strategic thinking, fact-based analysis and bringing people with different points of view around the table – staples of the EPC approach – are more crucial than ever in the context of increasing polarisation and a deluge of disinformation.

In my years as president of this organisation, I have found that the EPC’s adaptability is its greatest strength. It does not rest on its laurels and works hard to anticipate emerging developments, allowing for greater flexibility and resilience.

I would, therefore, like to share my admiration for the tireless efforts of the dedicated EPC team, ably led by Chief Executive Fabian Zuleeg. Through their contributions, the EPC will continue to be able to carry out its mission of making European integration work better – an endeavour I look forward to being a part of.
Message from the Chief Executive

FABIAN ZULEEG
Chief Executive

It has been another successful year for the European Policy Centre with a record number of events and publications. We continued to expand our reach and impact in Brussels and the member state capitals, sharing our analysis and insights with policy- and decision-makers at the highest levels.

2019 was a year of transition on the institutional front. The European elections and the change in EU leadership dominated the agenda. In preparation for the new politico-institutional cycle, we presented a list of strategic policy priorities in the 24th issue of our Challenge Europe series, ‘Yes, We Should’, and provided practical guidance on how policymakers could implement our recommendations.

Besides our coverage of the election, we focused our attention on the most prominent ongoing policy debates, such as the EU’s climate ambitions, the digital transformation, trade and the Union’s place in the global order. We delivered an EU Industry Action Plan and carried out a critical analysis of the European Commission’s EU budget proposal for 2021-27.

Furthermore, 2019 marked the 20th anniversary of the Tampere European Council Conclusions, which set the stage for a common migration and asylum policy at the EU level. Together with our partners, the EPC embarked on a year-long project to assess the legacy of those conclusions. The results of this project went on to influence the Commission’s New Pact on Migration.

We also stepped up our activities on Brexit. Building on our cooperation with the European Commission Task Force for Relations with the UK via our Brexit Think Tank Group, we were able to monitor the ongoing Brexit negotiations closely and provide timely analysis and expertise on a complex range of issues linked to the future EU-UK relationship.

The Connecting Europe project, which aims to close the gap between Brussels and civil society in the member states, and our extensive experience in evaluating citizen participation in EU decision-making, have placed us in a unique position to make an active contribution to the upcoming Conference on the Future of Europe.

Operations-wise, the EPC remained committed to upgrading its communication tools. In November, we launched a new website, revamping our visual identity and boosting our online presence. We are continuing to enhance the website and raise our media profile in 2020. The EPC’s finances also continued to improve, as part of our objective to guarantee a more sustainable financial future for the organisation.

All this make me confident that the EPC is more than capable of meeting the challenges of an increasingly competitive and uncertain world. As I write this, we are at the tail end of one of the strangest European summers in living memory. COVID-19 has upended our sense of what is normal and forced us to rethink our strategy and working methods. The effects of the pandemic will be felt for many years to come.

2020 promises to be one of the most challenging years yet, but I am greatly encouraged by our ability to adapt to changing circumstances. None of the remarkable successes of the past year could have been achieved without the commitment and professionalism of the EPC team, and I would like to thank them for all they have done. I would also like to sincerely thank all our members and partners for their unwavering support and faith in our work.

Finally, my gratitude goes to our President Herman Van Rompuy for his wise counsel, to Poul Skytte Christoffersen for his support and contribution during his time as Chairman of the Governing Board, and to his successor and current Chairman David O’Sullivan, and all the members of the Governing Board for their support.
The EPC in 2019 at a glance

1. The ‘Yes, We Should! EU Priorities for 2019-2024’ conference with from left to right, Marietje Schaake, MEP; Daniela Schwarzer, Director of the German Council on Foreign Relations; and Corina Stratulat, Head of the EPC European Politics & Institutions programme and Senior Policy Analyst.

2. Chinese Ambassador Mr. Wang Yi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of The People’s Republic of China meets with then Chair of the EPC Governing Board Poul Skytte Christoffersen (left) and EPC President Herman Van Rompuy (right).

3. Margrethe Vestager, European Commission Executive Vice-President for A Europe Fit for the Digital Age and Competition, and Peter Altmaier, German Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy debate the merits of a new industrial strategy for Europe.

4. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker came to the European Policy Centre to speak about his time at the helm of the Commission: “When put to the test as we have been over the last five years, the resilience and strength of the Union has shone through, and in the face of the greatest challenges we have ever met in recent decades.”

5. First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon visited the EPC to present Scotland’s view of the ongoing Brexit talks: “Brexit – and all that flows from it – runs counter to Scotland’s expressed democratic wishes. And it would constrain the choices of Scottish Governments now and well into the future. It would reduce our ability to fund public services, support businesses, tackle poverty, and work with other countries.”

6. Senior Adviser to the EPC on Communications Jacki Davis in full moderating mode.
"For over 20 years, the European Policy Centre has been at the centre of the debate on Europe. Your ideas, your thoughts, sometimes your dreams have helped shape the future of the European Union. I am happy to be invited here today to speak about my thoughts and experiences. And I am happy that I will deliver my last Brussels speech here – hopefully."

JEAN-CLAUDE JUNCKER

Influencing the agenda

IMPACT

With its timely events, in-depth analysis and innovative policy solutions, the EPC continues to reach decision-makers in Brussels and other EU capitals at critical junctures in EU policymaking.
The changing of the guard

The most important event in the political calendar were the European Parliamentary elections between 23 and 26 May 2019, which ushered in a new politico-institutional cycle and a new EU leadership.

Ahead of the elections, EPC analysts focused on setting out a new agenda for the incoming Parliament and Commission (see Yes, We Should!). They argued that, to fight the danger of a more regressive, nationalistic, closed, illiberal and authoritarian Europe – which many feared the elections would yield – the EU should address the fundamental economic, technological and social insecurities citizens are facing and concentrate on initiatives in areas where it can make a tangible difference.

On 27 May the EPC organised an Elections Monitor. Senior Policy Analyst and Head of the European Politics and Institutions programme Corina Stratulat, EPC Director of Studies Janis A. Emmanouilidis and EPC Chief Executive Fabian Zuleeg analysed the outcome of the European elections and discussed the next steps with regards to a potential coalition-building in the European Parliament and the next EU leadership. The event was the first in many activities that explored the (possible) impact of the election results in different areas.

Challenge Europe

Yes, We Should!

Challenge Europe is a multi-authored, periodical publication appearing at key moments and dealing with key issues in the EU integration debate. The 24th edition presented a list of policy priorities for the incoming EU leadership. Our main argument was that the European Union is a great success story. For more than six decades, it has generated unprecedented levels of freedom, peace, prosperity, openness, and stability across the continent, proving that we wield far greater influence if we work together, economically and politically. However, today, the hard-won achievements of European integration are taken for granted or are openly questioned, while the wider international conditions that benefitted the Union’s development are fraying. Internal and external centrifugal forces are putting European integration under pressure. The EU cannot afford to stall – muddling through clearly entails the risk of losing relevance in the global context and in the eyes of citizens.

Each of the 24 contributions in this volume, authored by renowned experts and practitioners in their respective fields, presents a set of concrete recommendations for the next EU leadership, both in terms of key priority areas – sustainable prosperity, values, migration and Schengen, and Europe’s place in the world – and on how the EU can use the instruments it already has at its disposal to act in a more effective, transparent, and decisive way.

On 7 May 2019, we presented the publication at our Yes, We Should! EU priorities for 2019-2024 conference with, among others, Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, Marietje Schaake, MEP, Daniela Schwarzer, Director of the German Council on Foreign Relations and Guy Verhofstadt, MEP, President of ALDE Group; Brexit Coordinator of the European Parliament.

“… There are so many different issues at stake … it’s such a complex tableau of things, which will involve a lot of players,” – Janis A. Emmanouilidis, director of studies at the European Policy Centre.

“… Diesen Mechanismus können sogar einzelne Akteure systematisch ausnutzen, sagt der britische Politikwissenschaftler Paul Butcher, der zuletzt ein Papier über die „Heimatfront des neuen Informationskrieges“ veröffentlichte. „Diese extremistischen Aktivisten sind die größte Gefahr, der wir bei Online-Kampagnen ausgesetzt sind”

Financial Times, 27 May 2019

POLITICO, 20 May 2020

Der Tagesspiegel, 14 April 2020

Both before and after election day, our analysts were quoted widely in leading media in- and outside of Europe.
What’s next for the EU27?

Following the European elections in May 2019 and the changing of the guard in the European Commission, the EPC shifted its focus to the policy agenda of the next politico-institutional cycle.

What should be the main priorities of the new EU leadership? And what will the future hold for the EU following the UK’s departure? Those were the questions at the centre of a lively and interactive debate at our high-level conference on 6 November, which featured our President and President Emeritus of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy.

Other speakers included Danuta Hübner (MEP and Member of the Brexit Steering Group), Brigid Laffan (Director, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute), Anand Menon (Professor of European Politics and Foreign Affairs, King’s College London), Heather Grabbe (Director, Open Society European Policy Institute), Daniela Schwarzer (Director, German Council on Foreign Relations), and Loukas Tsoukalas (President, Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy).

Just before our annual conference, the European Policy Centre’s Strategic Council convened to assess the most pressing issues for the Union in the short and long term, and to map out what, as a result, should be the main focus of the EPC’s activities in the coming year and beyond.

EPC management and heads of programme and President Herman Van Rompuy sat down together with leading experts, academics, and former and current EU insiders for an open discussion on the strategic direction of the organisation in an increasingly competitive and polarised environment.

Beyond that, the EPC presented its research priorities for 2020: the EU Green Deal and the importance of the link between climate action policies and the digital transition; the negotiations on the next EU budget; the concept of strategic autonomy; the New Pact on Migration; the impact of disinformation on discourses surrounding migration; ensuring a level playing field after Brexit; how to fix the Single Market; and how the EU should address the influence internet platforms exert on public discourse.
The saga continued

The UK’s and EU’s disentanglement often took one step forward and two steps back in 2019. But despite the many unpredictable twists and turns, the EPC continued to be the reference point for think tank analysis on Brexit in Brussels, producing a steady flow of analysis, events and publications on the subject.

Our analysts studied the implications of the UK’s withdrawal from the EU for business, trade, citizens and the EU’s future relationship with the UK. With our timely and widely read publications, the EPC was able to demonstrate its unique, in-depth understanding of the legal and institutional aspects of the negotiations, and thereby influence the debate in a meaningful way.

At crucial moments, the EPC succeeded in organising events featuring insiders directly from the negotiating tables. On 2 April, a few days after the first Article 50 deadline had passed, Chief Negotiator of the Task Force 50 Michel Barnier came to the EPC to give an update on the negotiations. Earlier in the year, while UK politics was in gridlock after the Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration were voted down in Parliament, a high-level panel, organised in cooperation with the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies discussed possible ways forward. It featured Sabine Weyand (Deputy Chief Brexit Negotiator), Jill Rutter (Programme Director at the Institute for Government), Ivan Rogers (Former UK Permanents Representative to the EU), Jennifer Rankin (Brussels Correspondent at The Guardian), Tony Connelly (Europe Editor at RTE), and Brigid Laffan (Director at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies).

The EPC also continued to organise expert roundtables under its Brexit Think Tank Group and Brexit Forum monikers. To look at the sensitive issue of the level playing field in particular, the EPC had set up a special task force in 2018. Members explored what the consequences would be if London were to decide to lower social, environmental and labour standards after Brexit to give its businesses an unfair advantage over their EU competitors. In 2019, the results of the task force were published in a multi-authored book. The publication analysed the proposals that were then on the table to ensure a level playing field between the UK and the EU after Brexit and assessed how far the objectives laid out in the European Council guidelines had been met. Authors covered different crucial policy areas, including environmental standards, labour and social standards, technical regulations and standards, and state aid control.

“In a world of great trading blocks, the EU is the best means we are ever likely to have for expanding free trade while preserving social protections. In an age where the voices of protectionism and intolerance often seem to be getting louder, the EU amplifies our own support for openness, diversity and human rights. And at a time when the rules-based international order is being threatened, the EU exemplifies the value of co-operation and solidarity.”

FIRST MINISTER OF SCOTLAND NICOLA STURGEON

Chief Brexit negotiator for the EU, Michel Barnier, gives an update on the Brexit negotiations at an EPC Briefing.
As the EU was gearing up for the elections and the transition to a new politico-institutional cycle, the repercussions of the economic recession, the refugee crisis and Brexit could still be felt throughout the continent. European decision-making had become increasingly mired in gridlock and discord. In a letter addressed to all EU citizens, published in 28 different newspapers, French President Macron warned that, if the EU failed to reform, it could disappear altogether. Having already put forward proposals to address the ‘poly-crisis’ in the form of an overarching New Pact, the EPC continued to work on concrete recommendations on how to remodel the political and institutional make-up of the EU on several fronts:

- Giving citizens a seat at the EU table

With Europe’s leaders searching for solutions to restore people’s trust and engagement in the EU, EPC analysts set out to discover how EU decision-making could be made more democratic and transparent. Based on our experience in monitoring and evaluating the ECCs and our commitment to democracy and citizen participation, we resolved to invest time and resources to ensure the lessons learned from the European Citizens’ Consultations would be applied to the design and implementation of the Conference. The EPC was the first think tank to propose a detailed, concrete draft outline for the process, putting European citizens front and centre.

EPC analysts also continued to work closely with organisations in the Balkan region, such as CEP Belgrade, as part of our efforts to promote the development of the rule of law and public administration reform in the region.

EPC’s Corina Stratulat (Senior Policy Analyst) and Paul Butcher (Policy Analyst) present the results of the evaluation report on the European Citizens’ Consultations, together with a panel featuring Sixtine Bourguès, Deputy Director-General for Communication at the European Commission; Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul, Deputy Secretary General for the European Citizens’ Consultations, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, France; Karl-Heinz Lambertz, President of the European Committee of the Regions; and Salvador Llaudes, Analyst at the Elcano Royal Institute.
Believing that climate change and the rise of new digital technologies is having, and will have, a huge societal impact, the EPC set up several projects to see how the EU can help to support and ease the transition into the green and digital economy. Our efforts were validated when the new EU leadership decided to make the EU Green Deal and Digital Single Market two of its top priorities.

EPC analysts continued to follow up on the Union’s climate policies, and argued that policy choices in other areas, especially the EU budget, must be brought in line with the goals the EU member states committed to under the Paris Agreement. To that end, the EPC published a vital publication on how to Paris-proof the EU’s next Multannual Financial Framework (MFF).
In response to rising protectionism worldwide, Europe has shown a willingness to renew its commitment to the global multilateral system. Through engaging with high-level policymakers and stakeholders, the EPC investigated what the EU can do to translate this commitment into concrete action and save the rules-based global order.

Energy

The EU’s energy policy is closely linked to the Union’s climate ambitions and its geopolitical strategy.

In light of the new politico-institutional cycle, EPC analysts concentrated on proposing concrete initiatives aimed at reducing global emissions, promoting renewable energy sources, forecasting global energy demand and securing energy supplies.

Trade

In response to rising protectionism, the EPC investigated what the EU can do to translate this commitment into concrete action and save the rules-based global order.
A new industrial strategy for Europe

European industry is falling behind. New and unprecedented challenges and megatrends, from a slowdown in global trade to digital disruption and climate change, are making it increasingly difficult to stay ahead of the curve. However, despite these fast-paced developments, industry remains the backbone of the European economy, delivering high-quality jobs, innovation and world-class companies. If the EU is to retain its competitive edge, it must embrace change and renew its industrial strategy.

To support the growing political momentum for a revived EU industrial strategy, both in the member states and in the new von der Leyen Commission, the EPC presented the results of its task force on an Industry Action Plan for the European Union, which started in February 2018.

The main elements of our Industry Action Plan include mainstreaming industrial competitiveness across policy areas, and provides a more holistic and policy-oriented approach, with a vision towards 2050 that focuses on competitiveness, sustainability and strategic autonomy.

Alongside the call for an Industry Action Plan, the EPC, through a series of roundtables and subsequent papers, called on the new Commission to put the reform of the Single Market at the very top of its priority list. A modern and well-functioning single market is paramount if the EU is to deliver on the goals and aims it will surely set itself for the rest of its mandate, from sustainability to competitiveness and innovation.

The future of Work

Globalisation, automation, ageing societies, and digitalisation are transforming the world of work and putting pressure on our social welfare systems. The challenges that these disruptions pose are tremendous, and policymakers are still unsure of how to address the implications of the changing nature of work.

In 2019, the EPC wrapped up its research project ‘The future of work – Towards a progressive agenda for all’. The results were published in a comprehensive Issue Paper that takes an in-depth look at how labour is evolving throughout Europe and puts forward a set of policy recommendations for the EU.

EPC analysts called on the EU to become the driving force behind a progressive agenda for the future of work, despite its limited competences. The overall aim should be to establish an inclusive and competitive European labour market that is reinforced by future-fit social protection systems.

The results were also debated at a major conference with employment ministers from Finland, Germany and Norway, as well as the European Commissioner for Jobs, Nicolas Schmit. They, in turn, presented their vision for the labour market of the future and their plans for making the world of work a driver for social progress.

Within this overarching project, the EPC also finalised its ‘Social Protection in the 21st century’ task force. It studied the impact of labour market transformations on the functioning of the welfare state, bringing together experts, academics, policymakers, employers, practitioners, social partners and innovators.

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The EPC continued to promote the debate and carry out research on European health care systems under its well-established Coalition for Health, Ethics and Society (CHES), with the support of Johnson & Johnson.

Chaired by Hans Martens, EPC Senior Adviser, CHES fosters a dialogue on how to optimise the role of the EU in member states’ health policies.

Pivotal themes included how to make health a priority in the post-2020 agenda, the implications of new technologies for health workers, and how to tackle vaccine-hesitancy in Europe. CHES also looked at the relatively new concept of an ‘economy of well-being’, wherein health is mainstreamed throughout all policy areas.

“Themes in this report go at the heart of the priorities of the Finnish presidency. Social sustainability is key to the many transformations the EU is facing during the next decade. For evidence-based policymaking, reports like this are extremely valuable.”

TIMO HARAKKA, FINNISH MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT ON THE EPC’S FUTURE OF WORK REPORT

Photos taken at the Future of Work Conference, the pictures show Claire Dhéret (former) Head of the Social Europe and Well-Being programme presenting the results of the EPC Issue Paper (left); European Commissioner for Jobs Nicolas Schmit, the final panel with, from left to right, Claire Dhéret, Hubertus Heil, German Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs; Anniken Hauglie, Norwegian Minister of Labour and Social Affairs; Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights; and Timo Harakka, Finnish Minister of Employment (above, left).
Strategic autonomy for European choices

Europe in the World

With the return of realpolitik and zero-sum thinking on the international stage, and the rising competition between the US and China, it is time the EU fundamentally rethought its approach to an increasingly challenging international context.

That was the EPC’s main focus in the area of EU geopolitics and foreign affairs.

US-EU relations

The state of the transatlantic relationship was another important area of focus for the EPC. In partnership with the United States Mission to the EU, the EPC organised a number of events throughout the year on various aspects of importance to the transatlantic relationship. One of them was with Kate Kalutkiewicz, Senior Trade Representative at the U.S. Mission to the EU, who came to the EPC to speak about how the US and EU could help each other to address the shifting risks and opportunities in global trade.

The EU will play a major role in the development of the international order, whether through its absence or its engagement. The EPC therefore called on the new EU leadership and member states to place strategic autonomy at the top of the political agenda.

China

Recognising that China is and will remain a pivotal actor in the international global order, the EPC assessed the evolution of the EU-China relationship in many different policy areas, but mainly concentrated on cyber, climate policies, and trade.

In the 14th EU-China think tank roundtable, EPC analysts and researchers from other European think tanks met with counterparts from leading Chinese think tanks in Berlin to explore possible avenues of cooperation and discuss the long-term prospects of the EU-China relationship.

In December, the EPC had the honour of hosting Mr. Wang Yi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, The People’s Republic of China.
EU neighbourhood

EPC analysts continued to track developments in the EU’s neighbourhood, most notably in Turkey, the South Caucasus and Ukraine.

Through the Ukraine Forum, the EPC provides a unique platform to debate about EU-Ukraine relations and understand the foreign, security, economic and domestic policy developments in Ukraine.

We also followed up on our tracking of the country’s anti-corruption efforts, and looked at the political elite renewal after Volodymyr Zelensky’s election as the new Ukrainian president.

EPC analysts provided analysis on the increasingly strained relationship between the EU and Turkey, but also on internal developments in the country.

Radicalisation and violent extremism in Europe

Since the wave of violent terrorist attacks across Europe in 2015-2016, the EPC has been looking at the root causes of radicalisation and violent extremism in Europe and beyond.

To truly understand the context and motivations of individuals who commit terrorist crimes, the EPC looked at radicalisation and violent extremism from different perspectives, including education and the spread of online terrorist content. More importantly, the EPC organised an event to allow the victims and survivors of terrorism to share their stories and advocate for victims’ rights.

Criminallity and jihadist terrorism

From October 2018 until the summer of 2019, the EPC and the Counter Extremism Project (CEP) partnered up for a research project on the link between criminality and jihadist terrorism.

This project culminated in a multi-authored book, in which experts from both organisations carried out an independent assessment in ten European countries (Albania, Belgium, France, Germany, Republic of Ireland, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom). Drawing on this research, they proposed a number of bold recommendations to European governments and EU institutions to counter the ongoing threat of the crime-terror nexus.
Since the peak of the so-called refugee crisis in 2015, migration has become a divisive subject in Europe. The European Migration and Diversity programme, therefore, focused on finding pathways to overcome the gridlock in EU decision-making and create a new European consensus on asylum and migration policies.

Analysts also closely followed EU policy trends through the European Programme for Integration and Migration (EPIM) publication series, provided concrete recommendations and enabled multi-stakeholder discussions.

From Tampere 20 to Tampere 2.0

In the 1999 Tampere European Council conclusions, the EU member states committed to setting up a common EU migration and asylum policy. To mark the conclusions’ 20th anniversary, the EPC, together with Odysseus Academic Network, European Migration Network Finland and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, embarked on a year-long project to assess the legacy of the Tampere conclusions and how they continue to shape and inspire EU policymaking today. Centred on four pillars – partnerships with countries of origin, a common European asylum system, fair treatment of third-country nationals and the management of migration flows – these conclusions provided guidelines and sketched out principles that remain relevant two decades later.

The project included a series of expert roundtables, culminating in the Tampere 2.0 conference held in Helsinki in October 2019, in the margins of the Finnish Council Presidency. The ideas and suggestions discussed at these events were brought together in a multi-authored book.

Based on the state of the EU’s migration and asylum policies and the lessons learned from the 2015-2016 crisis, the book argued that solidarity and the implementation of common policies are the two building blocks for a new European consensus on migration. It put forward a set of concrete ideas on a new institutional and financial framework for migration policies, on legal migration, the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), Schengen, integration, border control, return and readmission, the Global Approach and Partnership Framework, and development.

Towards a new programme (2020-24) for EU migration & asylum policies 20 years after the Tampere conclusions’ conference in Helsinki. Speakers included Antonio Vitorino, Director General, International Organization for Migration; Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees; Nina Gregori, Executive Director, European Asylum Support Office; Michael Spindelegger, Director General, International Centre for Migration Policy Development; Claude Moraes, MEP.
Communicating migration policies

The EU had – and still has – a significant role to play in how the migration ‘crisis’ narrative came about. In the years since 2015, EU leaders have crafted a coherent story about migration; one that highlights the uncontrollable nature of arrivals and paints the ‘crisis’ as a stand-alone and historically unprecedented phenomenon. This narrative allowed EU politicians to frame migration as a security issue and legitimised restrictive policy measures, such as ramped-up border controls and increased cooperation with third countries, to curb migration.

More problematic, however, is that this narrative has contributed to an environment wherein right-wing populists are given ample room to spread their message. In many member states, they saw their chance to capitalise on voters’ concerns and used the situation as a tool to stir up fear and distrust. Mainstream politicians have subsequently also adopted a sterner discourse on migration, in the hope to appeal to voters who favour more restrictive measures.

To counter these dynamics, analysts from our European Migration and Diversity programme investigated how the EU could improve its communication on migration. In a series of roundtables, organised in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, communication and migration experts sat together and studied the issue from different angles. They explored and debated how the EU could better address people’s concerns and fears surrounding migration, the link between migration and populism, and what drives opposition to immigration and support for radical right-wing populists.

In a widely-read discussion paper, EPC analysts called on the European Commission to abandon the crisis narrative and instead develop a more proactive and diversified communication strategy.

This EPC will follow up on this research in 2020 with a comprehensive study on how disinformation influences views on refugees and migration throughout Europe.
Strengthening the links between civil society actors and EU decision-makers

Since its inception in 2017, Connecting Europe’s main objective has been to connect and transnationalise policy debates across Europe, in order to counter the growing mistrust of citizens with the EU. More concretely, it aims at bringing together civil society organisations funded by Stiftung Mercator with the EPC and the wider Brussels policy community.

In 2019, Connecting Europe continued to build and strengthen its network of +20 organisations and connected them with the EU policy sphere, working closely with the different EPC programmes. The joint projects covered a wide range of policy fields: climate change, migration, youth, democracy, but also the digital transformation and foreign policy.

Connecting Europe shared analysis and expertise on key political trends, especially on the European Elections in May 2019 and the start of the new Commission in December 2019. It organised several joint events and workshops with project partners, especially on the state of play of EU migration policy; disinformation and fake news; as well as the EU’s climate agenda.

In order to support its network members, the initiative also offered capacity-building measures and tailor-made advice, for instance by organising a study trip on the topic of youth and educational policy, and setting up meetings with relevant stakeholders. Through Connecting Europe, the EPC was also increasingly used as a hub for project partners and Mercator colleagues travelling to Brussels.

The highlights in 2019 were the annual network meeting in Berlin, where over 16 partner organisations joined over the course of two days and discussed the priorities of the newly elected European Commission and explored potential synergies between their projects; and the Advocate Europe Conference in Brussels, where local civil society organisations from across Europe connected with the Brussels policy sphere, including the European Ombudsman Emily O’Reilly and MEP Daniel Freund.

Finally, in 2019 Connecting Europe was extended until the end of 2021, as both the EPC and Stiftung Mercator wish to continue to build this unique network, which allows for civil society organisations to actively engage with the Brussels policy community and to bring new perspectives to EU debates.

“...That is the importance of the EPC’s and Mercator Foundation’s ‘Connecting Europe’ programme: it recognises that people with good ideas need to be connected with policymakers in Brussels.”

Emily O’Reilly, European Ombudsman
“Leaving is not the wish of the overwhelming majority of the citizens of the EU27. Support for EU membership is now at its highest in 27 years. The European voters turned out in record numbers in May. We cannot afford to disappoint our fellow citizens.”

EPC PRESIDENT HERMAN VAN ROMPUY DELIVERING A SPEECH AT THE EPC ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON 6 NOVEMBER 2019 IN BRUSSELS
The EPC is also grateful for the contribution of the following former team members:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

A special thanks goes out to Myriane Bartholomé, the EPC’s Membership and Publications Manager. In the summer of 2020, she retired after a long and successful career at the European Policy Centre, having been with the organisation since its founding. For over three decades, she was the first and foremost contact point for members, and a vital part of the communications team.
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The Strategic Council brings together experts, thought leaders and politicians from diverse backgrounds and nationalities. They bring fresh insights and forward-looking perspectives on the major challenges facing the EU. Once a year, they meet to discuss strategic priorities and their implications for the work and strategic direction of the European Policy Centre.

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  Vice-President Government Affairs & Policy, EMEA, Europe, Middle East and Africa, Johnson & Johnson
Achieving sustainability
Financing

The EPC’s finances continue to improve. EPC ended the financial year 2019 with a surplus of €82,405, bringing the equity capital to €177,489.

Total income in 2019 was €2,998,992. The piechart shows the breakdown of funding sources.

Approximately 40% of the EPC’s funding in 2019 came from grants from the following sources:

- The King Baudouin Foundation, the EPC’s strategic partner, awarded the EPC a grant of €350,000.
- The Stiftung Mercator awarded the EPC a grant of €375,000 for the Connecting Europe project.
- The Europe for Citizens programme: the EPC received an operating grant of €250,000 for 2019 under the “Europe for Citizens” programme, alongside other similar think tanks and civil society organisations.

The EPC received €200,000 in 2019 from the Adessium Foundation to support two programmes: European Politics & Institutions and European Migration and Diversity.

A donation of €20,000 was received from Cariplo for the year 2019.

Another 22% of the EPC’s funding came from membership fees. In 2019, the total income from membership fees was €658,113.

Pro bono contributions

The EPC would like to thank Dechert LLP for its generous pro bono support and advice.

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The King Baudouin Foundation is a Belgian public benefit foundation that seeks to change society for the better by investing in inspiring projects and individuals. One of its aims is to foster cohesion and build bridges within Europe. With that objective in mind, it established a strategic partnership with the European Policy Centre in 2002.

The partnership contributes to the European integration process by setting the stage for informed debates about EU policies with a wide range of stakeholders. The foundation’s sustained support allows the EPC to have a long-term perspective whilst maintaining its independence.

The Europe for Citizens programme, funded by the EU budget, awarded the EPC an annual operating grant of €250,000 for the period 2018-2020, alongside other similar think tanks and civil society organisations.

As a think tank engaged in European public policy research, the EPC contributed to the aims of the programme through its activities aimed at promoting citizens’ understanding of the EU policymaking process and their involvement in the European public policy debate, as well as through its work on the future of Europe.

The EPC thanks the European Commission and the EACEA for its support.
Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EAPDI)
European Confederation of Junior Enterprises (JAIE)
European Council of Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)
European Public-Health Association (EUPHA)
European Stability Initiative
European Youth Forum
FEANTSA (European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless)
FORUM EUROPE, Foundation for strong European Regions
Genie Trust
Goethe-Institut Brüssel
Housing Europe
International Catholic Migration Commission – ICMC Europe
International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
International Rescue Committee
Internet Society
Network of European Foundations for Innovative Cooperation (NEF)
NGO “Corporate Relations Research Center”
NRC Europe
ONE
Oslo International EU Advocacy Office
Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)
Red Cross EU Office
RUSI Europe
Society Against Violent Extremism – Belgium
Sophia Children’s Hospital International
The ENERGY ACTION Project (EnAct)
The German Marshall Fund of the United States
Trade Union Companies Association – ESINET

Ukrainian Think-Tank Liaison Office in Brussels
Ukrainian World Congress (UWC)
Votewatch Europe
WWF European Policy Office

REGIONAL BODIES AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES - 54
Baltic Islands Government
Central Denmark EU Office
Central Sweden European Office
City of Vienna - Liaison Office
Conference des Regions Peripheriques Maritime des Pyrenees (CPRMP)
EUROCITIES
Government of Catalonia – Representation to the EU
Hanse-Office
Hil-Government of Gibraltar – Representation to the European Union
Liaison Agency Flemish Europe
Lombardy Region Government - EU Office
North Sweden European Office
NorthNorway European Office
Office of the Northern Ireland Executive
Province of Limburg
Region Östergötland
Representation Office of Carinthia
Representation of Lower Saxony to the EU
Representation of the Free State of Bavaria to the European Union
Representation of the State of Baden-Wurttemberg to the European Union
Representation of the State of Bremen to the EU
Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the European Union
Scotland Europe
Scottish Government EU Office

SIDeE: European Office
Slovakia-Büro
Stockholm Region EU Office
Tampere Region EU Office
Turkish Citizen Representation in Brussels
Verbindungshaus Land Niederösterreich
Welsh Government
West Finland European Office
West Norway Office

RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS - 6
Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union (COMECE)
Conference of European Churches
European Evangelical Alliance
European Union Office of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland / Church Council
Protestant Church in Germany – Brussels Office

ACADEMIC - 2
Coventry University
The Faculty of International Legal Relations, National University “Odessa Law Academy”

OTHERS - 2
International Committee of the Red Cross

ANNEXES
Overview of events
(per programme, chronological)

Conference Yes We Should!
Connecting Europe Webinar The need to Re-unite Europe – the state of the Union
Workshop Younger Europeans’ Strategy Lab: The EU’s blueprint for 2019-2024
Workshop Younger Europeans’ Strategy Lab: The EU’s blueprint for 2019-2024
Workshop The future of Europe: what role for climate and energy policy in a reformed EU?
3rd Meeting of the Working Group Refocusing the EU: What Role for Climate and Energy Policies in a Reformed EU?
Webinar Disinformation and democracy – what dangers lurk ahead of the European elections?
Connecting Europe Webinar Still on top of the agenda? The role of migration in the EU electoral campaign
Policy Dialogue Ensuring equal access to digital skills for young people – Learning from the grassroots level
Expert Workshop When mayors make migration policy: From field research to policy recommendations
Workshop Webinar Ursula von der Leyen at the helm: What priorities and tasks for the new European Commission?
Workshop Revising the EU leadership(s): election process: paving the way for 2024
Workshop Network meeting for all project partners – With Connecting Europe in Berlin
Conference The need to Re-unite EUrope – the state of the Union
Conference Strengthening democracy on the ground: How grassroots civil society organisations counter shrinking civic spaces across Europe
Digital Clearinghouse roundtable for regulators
The President’s Table Perspectives on external financial instruments in the next Multiannual Financial Framework
Europe in the world Policy Briefing The foreign policy priorities of the Romanian EU Council Presidency
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