



**HISTORY AND TECHNOLOGY**

# **Schools Beyond Borders: The European Union**

**Education for Active Citizenship  
for the Europe of Tomorrow**

**edited by  
Maurizio Cau  
Giuseppe Zorzi**



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## Editorial

When Giuseppe Zorzi, a teacher at Leonardo da Vinci High School in Trento, presented his idea of the Schools Beyond Borders project, it was an aha – moment! We immediately spotted the missing piece for the widespread transfer of the “DomoSens” work-related learning model developed by FBK.

We had previously concluded three projects that had something in common: a technical-scientific starting point and a path that widened to incorporate contributions that make up a complex context. This is where future generations will have to work and live.

The original plan was to adopt the model to topics related to Humanities (as mentioned in the Editorial of the SenSAT Notebook - Quaderno 4). However, we had not quite found the right proposal.

Giuseppe Zorzi had an intuition! Inspired by this Quaderno, he enriched the proposal by focusing on one of the requirements that the design model must have: participation of different schools and different territories. He added a pilot trial that involves collaboration with schools from various countries.

We hope you enjoy reading about this project.

*Claudia Dolci and Pierluigi Bellutti*

# Introduction

by *Maurizio Cau, Christiane Liermann and Giuseppe Zorzi*

The “Schools Beyond Borders Project 2019-2020. Education for Active Citizenship for the Europe of Tomorrow. Trentino-Alto Adige/South Tyrol-Bavaria” is the first experimental step of a large-scale European project (“Schools Beyond Regions and Borders”), which over the next years 2021-2023 aims to involve a total of seven nations: Italy, Germany, Austria, Ireland, France, Spain and Bosnia. Its general objective is to promote interaction and mutual understanding between European students and teachers by exchanging knowledge and best practices in education for active citizenship. This objective is achieved through year-long teaching programmes based on one or more conceptual axes. They are explored in monthly videoconferences in English for all students involved in the initiative, alongside weekly classroom activities with the same pupils. In both programmes, students play a central role together with their teacher-project contact person.

The common topic in the 5 “trial” lessons, developed during the 2019-2020 school year and presented in the following pages, is the European Union in its historical, institutional and fundamental political dimensions.

The specific objectives of these lessons are as follows:

- provide teachers with materials for teaching “active European citizenship” in high schools;
- allow students to acquire a basic knowledge of the EU from a historical, legal and political point of view;
- facilitate meetings among students from different backgrounds and origins based on issues of

common interest to promote a sense of belonging to the EU;

- encourage respect for minorities;
- pool responsibilities and skills using a multicultural and multilingual laboratory;
- promote opportunities for young people from bordering regions of different countries – Bavaria, Alto Adige/South Tyrol and Trentino – to get to know each other;
- improve foreign-language skills, not only English but also German and Italian, enhancing the teaching of these languages at high school.

These are ambitious and challenging objectives which are fully embedded in the mission of the two institutions who have supported the project: the Villa Vigoni. German-Italian Centre for the European Dialogue in Loveno di Menaggio (Como), and the Bruno Kessler Foundation in Trento.

Their financial support made it possible to launch a stimulating project that focuses on the new European generations.

The first step of the teaching programme 2019-2020 involved two countries (Italy and Germany) and three classes in their second- and third-to-last years at three high schools. The classes involved are: class 4G at the Liceo Scientifico Leonardo da Vinci in Trento (coordinated by Giuseppe Zorzi); class 3TS4 at the "Marie Curie" Technical Institute for Tourism and Biotechnologies in Merano/Meran (coordinated by David Augscheller) and class Q 11/12 at Sonthofen Gymnasium (coordinated by Winfried Engeser).

The texts of the lectures were produced and shared by two university professors: Marco Brunazzo, Associate Professor of Political Science at the Department of Sociology and Social Research at the University of Trento, and Jens Woelk, Full Professor of Comparative Constitutional Law at the Facul-

ty of Law and at the School of International Studies at the University of Trento.

The scientific rigour and extreme clarity of their lectures provided a qualified and up-to date basis to support the activities in the classroom, conducted by the three teachers involved in the project.

As previously mentioned, the key factor is the commitment, enthusiasm and creativity of the students. They were asked to revise the main content of each lesson and create a short text (by way of an interview with their teacher). Working together with their teacher, they selected a number of keywords based on the content of their chosen lesson.

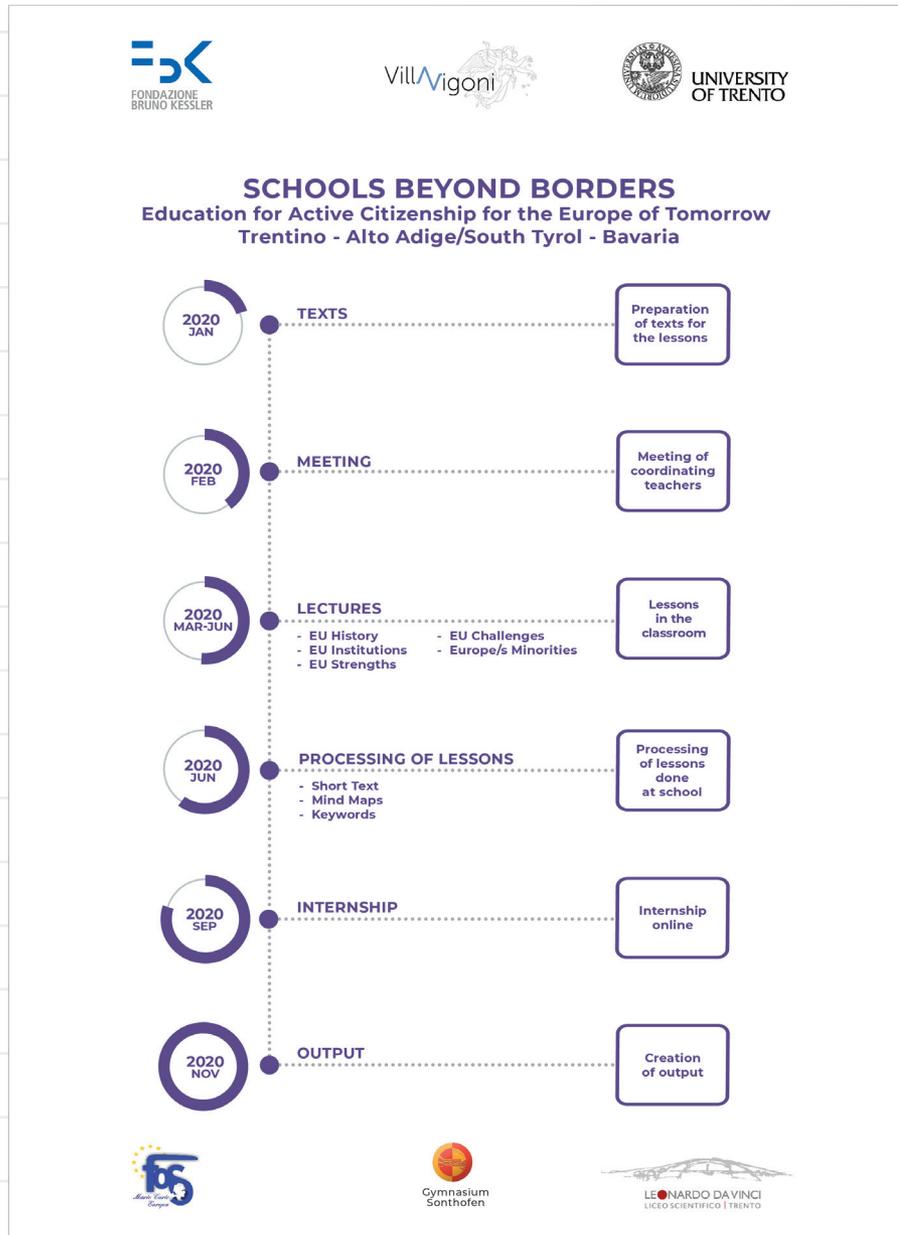
All lessons were held during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the distance teaching became necessary for everyone. Distance-learning continued in September using internships at the Bruno Kessler Foundation. Working under the careful scientific supervision of Maurizio Cau, researcher at the Italian-German Historical Institute (ISIG) of FBK, the editorial team followed the teaching model of the "DomoSens" work-related learning scheme developed in recent years by FBK. This team consisted of 2 students from each of the classes involved in the project. They adapted the material for the 5 lessons to create a "Quaderno di Scuola" and design a digital platform. This contains useful material for both teachers and students interested in learning about the European Union in its various dimensions.

Finally, it is worth remembering that the project was carried out in the students' native languages: Italian and German. English was used for the final paper version: the Quaderno. The online version is available also in Italian and German, in order to make the product accessible to as many people as possible.

Our thanks go to Dr. Pierluigi Bellutti and Dr. Claudia Dolci of FBK for the DomoSens teaching

model, to Raisa Hovorun, teacher of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) for the translations into English and – last but not least – a big thank you to all the teachers and students in Trento, Merano and Sonthofen for their contribution to this project.

# Project Workflow



# 1. HISTORY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



*"This ensemble cannot and must not remain a technical and economic enterprise in the future: it requires a soul, the conscience of its historic affinities and its present and future responsibilities, a political will serving the same human ideal ..."*

Robert Schuman, 1963

## LECTURE

## HISTORY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Marco Brunazzo (University of Trento)

European integration began at the end of World War II, but the creation of the EU may have its roots in the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the Ancient Greek and Roman Empires. It is not the history of an international organisation, hostage to the different wishes of the member countries that created it. Rather, it shows how contemporary European countries have struggled to shape a changing international system by creating supranational institutions and policies.

After World War II, European countries faced unprecedented challenges to rebuild their economic and physical infrastructure, their domestic and international political order. Having founded international order for most of the modern era, they had to adapt to a new balance of power where the USA and the USSR were the victorious powers. They also wanted to understand the success of totalitarian regimes that had used nationalism to generate consensus. Although the UK and France were not to blame for fascism, they had to process the traumatic end of their empires and the legacy of colonialism.

For Western European countries, integration was a new world order based on a market economy and liberal democracy. They created the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the 1948 Treaty of Brussels; a first

step towards the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The path to integration may now seem linear, but it was characterized by uncertainty due to the different objectives and resources of the member countries.

In 1950, the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman proposed a common coal and steel market with Germany and possibly with other Western European countries. The Schuman Declaration became the basis of the European Coal and Steel Community, which began with the signing of the 1951 Treaty of Paris. Influenced by Jean Monnet, Schuman wanted to create unity by bringing together the strategic coal and steel industries in a common market under a common High Authority. For France and Germany, then Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, this was the first step towards closer economic cooperation. For others, it was the beginning of a political union.

The history of Europe is said to have begun with the rise of the Roman Empire. However, the Treaties of Rome signed in 1957 are considered the start of the institutional history of the current EU. It was a turning point for the six founding countries that wanted to expand the cooperation already proposed within the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) to form the European Economic Community and the European

Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM). Historians, political scientists and political leaders disagree over the intentions of the signatories of the Treaty of Rome. However, it embraced unity in Europe and supported France's strategy to avoid another conflict with Germany. Germany and Italy also consolidated their position as legitimate liberal democratic partners for a stable Europe: the small Benelux countries were now able to sit at the table with the large countries; the Netherlands was guaranteed economic security thanks to free trade. Economic integration was seen by all as a source of stability, capable of diverging interests.

The first major crisis was in 1965. Walter Hallstein, President of the Commission, presented some proposals for financing the Common Agricultural Policy. France objected and withdrew its delegation for six months. This impasse was resolved with the Luxembourg Compromise, which stipulated that a member state could demand a compromise if it felt that its national interests were threatened.

The 1970s saw a growing concern about the pressures of rapid social change and the end of the post-war economic boom. Increased public spending and devaluation would not solve the problem, although they could cure some of the symptoms of economic stagnation. The new awareness was that politics within the member countries and international developments, such as the war in the Middle East, as well as finan-

cial instability were obstacles to integration.

However, there were significant developments in the evolution of the EU. In 1973, Denmark, Ireland and the UK brought the number of member countries to nine. The second development was the agreement to strengthen the powers of the European Parliament, leading to direct universal suffrage in 1979. The third development was the European Monetary System, set up in 1979 to offer greater coordination between the central banks of the member countries. Fourthly, regular consultation between foreign ministries and ministers brought closer cooperation in foreign policy matters.

The election of François Mitterrand as President of the French Republic and Margaret Thatcher as British Prime Minister reflected the erosion of the consensus that had characterized most European countries in the post-war period regarding the role of the state. First seen as a tool for political and social modernisation, political parties in all European member states then tried to diminish the power of the state. This vision led to two major reforms: the Single European Act in 1986 and the Economic and Monetary Union in 1992. Meanwhile, Greece entered in 1981, and Spain and Portugal in 1986.

The institutional changes decided in Maastricht radically reorganized the powers of the European institutions and how decisions were made. The Maastricht Treaty provided the EU

with a new institutional architecture based on three pillars: the European Community, which covered almost all sectors of economic activity, the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and Justice and Home Affairs. The Maastricht Treaty took the step that led to the birth of the Euro within a decade. The UK and Denmark, however, never accepted the single currency.

Austria, Sweden and Finland joined the EU in 1995. The end of the Cold War brought the hope that the international order could be extended to the East. However, there was uncertainty due to the diverse interests of the numerous member countries. Used to authoritarian rule and a centrally planned economy, the Warsaw Pact countries and the Baltic states faced social, political and economic challenges likely to create social and political tensions. Member states had to bring stability to their new democratic neighbours. In 2004 the EU grew from 15 to 25 members, 8 of which were once considered opponents of Western Europe. Romania and Bulgaria joined in 2007 and Croatia

in 2013, bringing the total number of member countries to 28.

To deal with the increase, the Treaty of Lisbon came into force in 2009. But a global financial crisis led member countries to uncertain and sometimes contradictory decisions. The euro crisis became a political and institutional challenge for the EU, as did another crisis in 2016 that risked reversing the integration process. In a referendum, 52% of British voters decided to abandon the EU. This happened in January 2020 after long negotiations.

The history of EU integration is also the history of the role of the state. Many EU founders saw integration as a way of modernising the state without sacrificing its centrality. Others saw it as a way of replacing nation states with United States of Europe. Despite these opposing views, the EU has managed to integrate more than any other form of regional organisation shaping every aspect of European life.

#### Resources

The history of the European Union: [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history\\_it](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history_it)  
Digital Research in European Studies <https://www.cvce.eu>

## INTERVIEW

## THE LONG WAY

*Maurizio Cau (FBK-ISIG) speaks to Cristian Pompermaier (4G - Liceo L. da Vinci)*

*After what Professor Brunazzo and your teacher told you, is telling the story of European integration really that difficult for a young person of your age?*

Not really, but you also need someone to start talking about it, which is what happened with this experimental project, which we students found extremely interesting. Of course, there are widespread prejudices in this story, because we are conditioned by the political battle between the various parties. So, I felt it was important that Professor Brunazzo reminded us that European history after the Second World War also depends on a series of cultural and political processes which, like the Renaissance or the Enlightenment, occurred many centuries ago. I also felt it was just as important to stress that the history of the EU is not the same as the building of a nation, but rather the constantly evolving product of a complex supranational historical process organised on several levels. There need to be several prerequisites, starting from the acceptance of the market economy and liberal democracy. However, I expected the path to be more linear overall; obviously, the interests of the various states that founded it have often been divergent. Actually, it seems like a political miracle that Europe managed to overcome the terrible situation it was facing at the end of the Second World War!

*Seventy years have passed since May 9, 1950, when the French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman made his Declaration to the German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, proposing to create a common market for*

***coal and steel with Germany and possibly with other West European countries ...***

I was impressed by the content and the "vision" of the "Schuman Plan". The vast majority of politicians today seem overwhelmed by the fears of the present, or they seem to be chasing unrealistic scenarios. But these two nations had their feet firmly on the ground when they suggested putting coal and steel together in the same market under the direction of a single High Authority. They were the two resources France and Germany had been at war over for centuries. The signing of the ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community) treaty in 1951, the Rome Treaties of 1957, the birth of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) all go in this direction. But all this didn't stop Schuman and Adenauer, inspired by the extraordinary Jean Monnet, from thinking that a political process was also needed. As my teacher told us, the Italian Alcide De Gasperi – another great statesman of the time – believed that the ultimate goal of the new Europe had to be the creation of a stable political community!

***And now the bad news; all those crises during the building of Europe from the past to the present!***

Professor Brunazzo told us about the conflicts between the various European states, for example, the so-called "empty chair crisis" in 1965 when France went as far as to withdraw its delegation for six months in opposition to stronger and more structured financing of the Common Agricultural Policy. He also told us not to underestimate the severity of the financial – and consequently – social crisis which impacted all Western countries during the seventies. Moreover, the seventies and the early eighties witnessed how the new Europe was extraordinarily able to respond, not only when it was enlarged to nine states in 1973 but also when they decided to hold direct elections to the Euro-

pean Parliament and create the European Monetary System (EMS) in 1979. Referring to my notes, I understand that a new phase began here, that first led to the Single European Act of 1986, then to the Economic and Monetary Union signed in Maastricht in 1992.

***Yes, Maastricht; a fundamental step in the building of Europe. But how many teachers get to talk about it, at least in the last year of high school?***

I think you can count them on the fingers of one hand! Our History teacher once told us that in an increasingly globalised and fast-paced world like the one we live in, we have to set priorities not only in what we study but also in what we teach! On the subject of Maastricht, Professor Brunazzo reminded us that Maastricht is where the process started that led most European countries to the Euro as a common currency.

***Meanwhile, the fall of The Wall, many years before you were born.***

It still fascinates me to see photos of all those young Germans who climbed that wall after so many years of division and ideological conflicts! Of course, I don't think that without this event, countries such as Finland could have joined the European Community in the following years, or even Poland and the three Baltic Republics in 2004, when the EU experienced its greatest expansion going from fifteen to twenty-five members. Apparently, the number of people who now criticise the opportunity of this enlargement has dramatically increased. Other people wonder what would have become of the former Warsaw Pact countries in view of Putin's current politics and Trump's neo-isolationism, if they had not been part of the EU.

*Or after the financial crisis in 2008! Not to mention the severe crises that followed; from the new migration crisis to the Brexit result in January 2020, and now the past dramatic months of Coronavirus!*

However, it seems that this time massive interventions by the EU have left behind the reservations of the past. The recent proposals made by Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, would have been unthinkable a few months ago. As sometimes happens, we hope that this last major crisis will help Europe to finally find its original vocation and, as our teachers often tell us, "go beyond the Pillars of Hercules"!

## KEYWORDS

## HISTORY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

**BREXIT** Brexit was a complex process which, starting with the referendum in June 2016 and following lengthy negotiations, concluded at the beginning of 2020. It marked the exit of Great Britain from the EU. The event in question, unique in the short history of the Union, raised heated discussions at many levels. Many saw in all this the start of a process of disintegration. Others recognised the opportunity and necessity to make a qualitative leap in political action, to be able to talk about a European “dream” also in the future.

**INTEGRATION** When we speak about integration within the EU, we want to highlight a relatively short but complex process. As in the past, nationalism is still the most dangerous opponent to defeat. But this decisive step, which calls into question both politics and the economy, cannot be separated from the formation of the new generations. First and foremost, we need new and up-to-date citizenship education.

**ENLARGEMENT** Enlargement is a word that has characterized the EU since its creation. Starting from the first six member states of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), today we have reached a EU of 27 (after the exit of Great Britain). Nineteen states have adopted the euro as their common currency. However, the fact remains that enlargement – as well as a possible process in the opposite direction – does not in itself solve the complex problems of today’s Europe. For this reason, we also need a strong cultural and political push to find answers that can be shared, as well

as motivations for "being together" that are not just tactical but also strategic.

**NEW SKILLS** The topic of new skills is current in the debate about the EU today. The EU was born as a community for sharing resources such as coal and steel that were once crucial, and then evolved towards a progressive "transfer of sovereignty" of previously national competences towards Brussels. In this perspective, not only has it built a Federation of European States (United States of Europe) but rather a supranational body in continuous evolution and which has no equal in other state forms of the modern era.

**CRISIS** In modern political and economic history, the term "crisis" generally indicates a situation of stagnation, stalemate, difficulty, conflict. Concerning the short history of the EU, the word "crisis" has often coincided with the prevailing of national interests over any other "vision" of European order in the future. On the other hand, there is no denying that even "visions" need many small concrete steps to be fulfilled. Nor should we forget the fact that in the word "crisis", already from an etymological point of view, there is also the possibility-opportunity to transform the present difficulties into entirely new scenarios, creative and closer to the new generations.

**UNCERTAINTY** The term is also often used to indicate the current situation in which Europe finds itself. Many factors have contributed to all this: the major financial crisis of 2008, the world-wide phenomenon of the new great "migrations", the so-called "Brexit" and finally what went down in history as the "Coronavirus pandemic". All this must make us reflect with realism on how little it takes

to overwhelm our certainties and optimism that for a long time appeared on the stage of history as indestructible, if not eternal. But at the same time, we need to go back to where there is only rubble, to build a more humane and fairer world.



# 2. INSTITUTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



*"Until you have tried, you can never tell whether a task is impossible or not ... I am not optimistic but I am determined ..."*

Jean Monnet, *Memoirs*, 1976

## LECTURE

## INSTITUTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Marco Brunazzo (University of Trento)

According to the Treaty of the EU which came into force in 2009, there are seven EU institutions:

1. The **European Parliament** is a directly-elected legislative body with supervisory and budgetary powers. It is made up of 705 members and is based in Strasbourg (where plenary meetings are held), Brussels (meeting place of political groups and parliamentary committees) and Luxembourg (head-quarters of the General Secretariat).
2. The **European Council** establishes the general political orientation and priorities of the EU. It is made up of Heads of State or Government of the member states, a President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission. It is based in Brussels.
3. The **Council of the European Union** is the voice of the states of the EU, it adopts EU laws and coordinates EU policies. The members are government ministers from each EU country according to the policy area under discussion. It is based in Brussels.
4. The **European Commission** promotes the interests of the EU by proposing and enforcing legislation, as well as by implementing policies and the EU budget. It is made up of a “college” of commissioners; one from each member country. It is based in Brussels.
5. The **Court of Justice** ensures that EU law is interpreted and applied in the same way in every European country. It is made up of two courts: the Court of Justice (one judge from each country and eleven Advocates General) and the General Court (two judges from each country). It is based in Luxembourg.
6. The **European Central Bank** keeps prices stable and conducts EU economic and monetary policy. It is made up of the President, five members of the Executive Board and the governors of the central banks of the euro-area countries. It is based in Frankfurt.
7. The **Court of Auditors** checks that EU funds are collected and used correctly, and improves EU financial management. It is made up of one auditor for each EU country. It is based in Luxembourg.

There are three main characteristics of the EU institutional system. The first is complexity; there are no counterparts in democratic states or international organizations. The European

Council, the Council of the EU, the European Commission and the European Parliament allow the EU to make decisions on behalf of almost half a billion inhabitants from 27 different countries. This complexity stems from a second characteristic of the EU institutional system: European policy is always a discussion of the "rules of the game", never dictated solely by the search for the best solution to problems. Consequently, the system is complicated because EU institutions are European politics. There is a link between the institutions established in the 1956 Treaty of Rome and the current ones. Many of the original institutions have changed their names and roles, and the number of institutions has grown, though the system has changed less than expected.

The reason for this continuity lies in the third characteristic of the EU institutions: the search for consensus. EU institutions were not just created to make decisions; their primary role is to manage conflicts and facilitate agreements between member states. Although the system seems slow and difficult for citizens to understand, it has often been surprisingly versatile; EU institutions now serve a greater number of countries than it was imagined in the 1950s. Moreover, their responsibilities have expanded to areas of interest that were originally under state control. There is no single institution that carries out the functions which, in national systems, are entrusted to the government. Commu-

nity decision-making is shared among several institutions which are independent but functionally interconnected; a little like in the USA.

According to the chief architect of the US Constitution, James Madison, freedom is protected by "so contriving the interior structure of the government as that its several constituent parts may, by their mutual relations, be the means of keeping each other in their proper places." (Federalist No. 51). Madison put forward a political system based on a multiple separation of powers. Power was divided horizontally into the executive, legislative and judicial branches, and vertically into the central and the federal levels of government. This aimed to prevent the formation and tyranny of permanent majorities, i.e. the accumulation of all executive, legislative and judicial powers in the same hands.

The working logic of European institutions is revolutionary: no actor or coalition of actors can control the entire system permanently. This is because the governing institutions are separate but share power and resources: each one can express its own opinion or veto the initiative of another institution. Government action is subject to a series of checks and balances which generate competition and cooperation between institutions that produce public goods.

In the EU the separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers formulated by Montesquieu is more complex. The three powers

are separated horizontally and vertically. In the horizontal dimension, executive power is exercised by the European Commission, the European Council or the Council of the European Union. Legislative power is exercised by the European Commission, the Council of the Union and the European Parliament (like the chambers of a bicameral parliament). Finally, judicial power is vested in the EU Court of Justice and the national courts.

As for the vertical division, the institutions represent different electorates. The European Parliament is elected directly by citizens every five years and represents their interests. Members of the European Council and the Council of the European Union represent the interests of the individual member countries and are elected at national elections held every three to five years, depending on the country. Finally, members of the European Commission, which represents supranational interests, are elected through a complex mechanism in which member states play a decisive role but where Parliament influence is growing.

In short, the EU does not have a single legislative body, but a legislative process in which different institutions, the EU Council, Parliament

and Commission, play different roles. Similarly, there is no single executive body, as in some areas executive power is exercised by the Council of the EU (which acts on the basis of a previous Commission proposal), and for other purposes (such as competition policy) by the Commission.

The complexity of the system and its need for consensus is seen in the way legislative acts are adopted. According to Ordinary Legislative Procedure:

- The EU Commission presents a proposal to the Council and the EU Parliament.
- The Council and Parliament adopt the proposal at first or second reading.
- If an agreement is not reached at second reading, a Conciliation Committee is convened.
- If the proposal approved by the Conciliation Committee is acceptable to both institutions at third reading, the legislative act is adopted.

If a legislative proposal is rejected at any stage of the procedure or if Parliament and the Council do not reach a compromise, the act is not adopted and the procedure ends.

#### Resources

EU institutions and bodies [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies_en)

## INTERVIEW

## A COMPLEX ORGANISM

*David Augscheller (FOS M. Curie) speaks to Riccardo Pisoni (4G - Liceo L. da Vinci)*

*In his second lesson, Professor Brunazzo focused on the fundamental institutions of the EU: the Parliament, the European Council, the Council of the EU, the Commission, the Court of Justice, the European Central Bank and the Court of Auditors. What struck you the most?*

Professor Brunazzo's lecture helped us first of all to orient ourselves among the various European institutions, also from a terminological point of view: how many European citizens today can distinguish between the European Council, the Council of Europe and the Council of the EU? Here obviously we come back to the thorny knot of education and information. On the other hand, we have to admit that the framework around all these institutions makes sense and is more productive than many people say nowadays.

*It is no coincidence that the inspiring quote by Jean Monnet was also mentioned, "Nothing is possible without men, nothing is lasting without institutions".*

We young students, on the other hand, hear many politicians say that not only are many of the European institutions outdated; they don't represent the citizens' interests, and are not needed at all! So, it becomes impossible to distinguish between a legitimate will to change and an instrumental and ideological approach to things: a vision that wants to bring us back to the Europe of nation-states, typical of the modern age, against any form of transfer of sovereignty to supranational bodies.

***Your criticism of certain ideological "shortcuts" today seems very acute! After all, we could say that in recent years the same concept of "complexity" has often seemed a useless frill of the "politics of the past". But things are actually much more complex: it is one thing to simplify, it is another thing to trivialise and reduce everything to slogans!***

Not surprisingly, Professor Brunazzo told us that the first characteristic of the EU institutional system is its complexity. But he also added that this complexity allows the EU not only to develop a political debate within it but also to evolve and make decisions that are accepted by almost half a billion inhabitants in 27 different countries – at least where a good compromise has been reached! And without any institution ending up cancelling the other in the long run!

***But that does not mean the European institutional system has always worked well – as he said.***

I think it would be foolish to deny that, in some crucial phases in the history of the EU, we have come unprepared or there has been too much fear. Of course, the compromise has not always lived up to the challenge of the moment. But this is not a good reason to throw the baby out with the bathwater, especially if we consider that European institutions today serve a far greater number of countries than the six states that gave birth to the ECSC Treaty back in 1951.

***Talking of which, Professor Brunazzo recalled the analogies that exist between the complex Community decision-making process and the American system.***

I personally found the reference to James Madison, the main architect of the American Constitution, very interesting. It is the idea of a deep connection between freedom and a political system

based on the multiple separation of powers, not only horizontally (between the executive, legislative and judicial) but also vertically (between the state and federal levels), so as to prevent not only permanent majorities from forming but also one institution from dominating over the others.

***Nevertheless, the complexity remains.***

To the point where, if I understood correctly, a body like the European Commission can (vertically) represent supranational interests, but at the same time (horizontally) it has the power to initiate legislation and execute the law in specific areas. So, we go back to the "complexity" of the EU institutional system, where different institutions perform different processes (legislative, executive, etc.). The Commission, Parliament, Council of the EU, etc., all play different roles. However, there may also be an "ordinary" legislative procedure which is more frequently used.

## KEYWORDS

## INSTITUTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

**COMPLEXITY** Complexity is one of the main characteristics of the institutional framework of the European Union and is quite unlike any other democratic country or international organisation. The reason is that European politics is a continuous discussion about the "rules of the game" and never solely the solution to a given problem. Europe has expanded from 6 to 27 countries, and so procedures and skills must be constantly reinvented to facilitate common agreements and manage potential conflicts.

**DIVISION OF POWERS** In many ways like the American political system, the European system has no institution that is clearly identifiable with the government. Indeed, community decision-making is shared among numerous institutions, which are separate but functionally interconnected. It is a bit like in the United States of America, where the political system is based on the multiple separation of powers: horizontally between the executive, legislative and judiciary; and vertically between the central and federal units. This anti-hegemonic logic refers to the typically "liberal" mechanism in the political thoughts of John Locke and Alexis de Tocqueville regarding the "balance of power".

**REFORMS** As with any political decision, no institutional system, not even the most powerful and efficient one, can be considered eternal. After all, an institution is never an end in itself; it is just a human construct that operates throughout history. It therefore needs constant adjustments. It is then up to the wisdom of the legislator to make sure that no rash choices are made, perhaps under

the pressure of the trend of the moment. So reforming European institutions must not frighten us. We need to understand why Europe was created; it was a political body born outside the logic of the prevailing ideological "blocs", yet constantly evolving to guarantee citizens peace, well-being and social justice together.

**INSTITUTIONAL STABILITY** Of course, the so-called "institutional stability" cannot just be a slogan used to cleverly hide the difficulties and crises that we are facing today. Nor can it be just another word for "unchanging". There is a common thread linking the original European institutions with the ones that exist nowadays. We should not forget that the stability that EU institutions have now achieved was made possible by their extraordinary flexibility and ability to adapt to the most difficult moments in its history.

**CONSENT** No political power can last a long time without consensus. And no consensus can last without a political system that can invest in the power of institutional innovation. In the context of the EU, the original institutions have, in many cases, changed their names and roles. Moreover, the number of institutions has grown over time. However, the European institutional system as a whole has changed less than we might have expected. This continuity exists because of an important feature that characterises the entire European institutional framework: the search for consensus, not only regarding the will of the individual citizens of the various EU countries but also concerning the fact that all the different institutions need the contribution of others to make decisions.



The background of the entire image is the European Union flag, which consists of a blue field with twelve five-pointed gold stars arranged in a circle. The flag is shown with a slight ripple, giving it a three-dimensional appearance.

# 3. STRENGTHS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

*"The unification of Europe was a dream of the few. It became a hope of the many. Today it is a necessity for us all ..."*

Konrad Adenauer, 1954

## LECTURE

Asking about the strengths of the European Union is like asking if the EU still exists; this is not a trivial issue. More and more citizens are accusing the EU of being distant and slow, of not doing enough, and of being controlled by economic interests that are not always transparent and so on. Can the existence of the EU be justified at the present moment? We will leave this question to a popular British newspaper, "The Independent". On 21st March 2007, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome, this newspaper published a list of 50 reasons to love the EU:

1. The end of the war between European nations.
2. Democracy is now flourishing in 27 countries.
3. Once-poor countries, such as Ireland, Greece and Portugal, are prospering.
4. The creation of the world's largest internal trading market.
5. Unparalleled rights for European consumers.
6. Co-operation on continent-wide immigration policy.
7. Co-operation on crime, through Europol.
8. Laws that make it easier for British people to buy property in Europe.
9. Cleaner beaches and rivers throughout Europe.
10. Four weeks statutory paid holiday a year for workers in Europe.
11. No death penalty (it is incompatible with EU membership).
12. Competition from private companies means cheaper phone calls.
13. Small EU bureaucracy (24,000 employees, fewer than the BBC).
14. Making the French eat British beef again.
15. Minority languages, such as Irish, Welsh and Catalan are recognized and protected.
16. Europe is helping to save the planet with regulatory cuts in CO2.
17. One currency from Bantry (Ireland) to Berlin (except Great Britain).
18. Europe-wide travel ban on tyrants such as Robert Mugabe, leader of Zimbabwe.
19. The EU gives twice as much aid to developing countries as the United States.
20. Strict safety standards for cars, buses and planes.
21. Free medical help for tourists.
22. EU peacekeepers operate in dangerous places around the world.
23. Europe's single market has brought cheap flights to the masses and new prosperity for forgotten cities.
24. Introduction of pet passports.
25. It now takes only 2 hours and 35 minutes to travel from London to Paris by Eurostar.
26. The prospect of EU membership has forced

## STRENGTHS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Marco Brunazzo (University of Trento)

- modernisation on Turkey.
27. Shopping without frontiers gives consumers more power to shape markets.
  28. Cheap travel and study programs mean greater mobility for Europe's youth.
  29. Food labelling is much clearer.
  30. No tiresome border checks (apart from in the UK).
  31. Compensation for passengers suffering air delays.
  32. Strict ban on animal testing for the cosmetic industry.
  33. Greater protection for Europe's wildlife.
  34. Regional development fund has aided deprived parts of Britain.
  35. European driving licenses recognised across the EU.
  36. Britons now feel a lot less insular.
  37. European bananas remain bent, despite sceptics' fears.
  38. Strong economic growth – greater than the United States last year.
  39. Single market has brought the best continental footballers to Britain.
  40. Human rights legislation has protected the rights of the individual.
  41. European Parliament provides democratic checks on all EU laws.
  42. EU gives more, not less, sovereignty to nation states.
  43. Maturing EU is a proper counterweight to the power of US and China.
  44. European immigration has boosted the British economy.
  45. Europeans are increasingly multilingual – except Britons, who are less so.
  46. Europe has set Britain an example how properly to fund a national health service.
  47. British restaurants are now much more cosmopolitan.
  48. Total mobility for career professionals in Europe.
  49. Europe has revolutionised British attitudes to food and cooking.
  50. Lists like this drive the Eurosceptics mad.
- As can be seen from this list, the EU has a variety of strengths. From the point of view of citizens' rights, the EU has been a significant engine of modernization. The EU strives to prevent authoritarian conduct and protect democratic rights in member states. Furthermore, the European Court of Justice has been essential to expanding the scope of individual citizens' rights in matters such as gender equality, personal data protection and consumer rights. The Court of Justice has also repeatedly made efforts to promote students' rights. For example, in 2004 and 2005, the Court sentenced Belgium and Austria for discriminating against graduates from other member states by not guaranteeing them the same conditions as those reserved for Belgian and Austrian graduates. The Court also ruled that a Member State cannot refuse a loan to finance studies or a scholarship for students

who reside in its territory and meet the requirements to stay there. In 2012, it even condemned Austria for discriminating against students from other member states, as only students whose parents received Austrian family allowances could enjoy reduced transport rates.

The EU has also always promoted fundamental rights on an international level. For example, countries wanting to join must have "respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities". These values are common to the member states in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail" (Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union). Furthermore, the EU uses trade policy with third countries as a tool for promoting human rights in various parts of the world, making the signing of agreements conditional on respect for workers' rights.

From an economic point of view, the advantages of the EU are even more evident, though many citizens are unaware of it. EU citizens have the unprecedented opportunity to travel, live and work in the EU countries of their choice. They can compare the prices of products and services and buy the cheapest ones. European standards for consumer healthcare are among

the highest in the world and are often criticised by multinationals precisely for their rigour. The EU also guarantees its citizens more favourable purchasing conditions and greater choice thanks to its competition policy. For example, in the 1980s, the EU liberalised the telecommunications sector by allowing price reductions in services such as long-distance and international calls. In 2017, thanks to the EU's commitment, roaming charges for calls, messages and data were abolished, allowing travellers to use their mobile phones more than before.

It must also be remembered that the EU allocates a great deal of its budget to help farmers, regions whose development is lagging behind, those facing major industrial restructuring processes and territories hit by natural disasters. The action of the European Central Bank was instrumental in crucial moments of the 2008-2011 economic crisis and the Covid-19 crisis of 2020, stopping speculation on government bonds and preventing bankruptcy in many countries.

But all that glitters is not gold; less than 10 years after the above list was published, British citizens voted to leave the EU. However, this must not obscure the fact that the EU has made Europe what it is today.

#### Resources

What Europe does for me <https://what-europe-does-for-me.eu/it>

## INTERVIEW

## AN INSTITUTION TO LOVE

*Winfried Engeser (Gymnasium Sonthofen) speaks to*

*Martina Franchi (4G - Liceo L. da Vinci)*

*Today Professor Brunazzo highlighted the strengths of the EU. What was your reaction?*

It may seem strange to you, but the first thing that came to mind was the fact that my generation, especially in recent years, has mostly been told what is wrong with the EU. Besides, how many times have national governments told their citizens that their domestic problems were Europe's fault? And how many times have they left necessary but unpopular internal decisions to Europe? Then along came the Coronavirus pandemic, and many young people have discovered that Italy is still standing thanks to the much-maligned Europe!

*Indeed, at some crucial moments during the economic crisis of 2008-2011, decisive action by the European Central Bank stopped speculation on government bonds, preventing many countries from going bankrupt. In the meantime, the new European Commission has finally "changed pace" also in its economic policy compared to the strategy of the previous Commission headed by Juncker.*

When Professor Brunazzo highlighted the "change of pace" of the new Commission headed by Ursula von der Leyen, he asked us which national government we thought could single-handedly deal with a serious global economic crisis like the present one. I think the new generations should ask themselves this question, without believing that Brussels is always right! I must also point out that in many European countries – including Italy – we are still far from being able to imagine a

woman at the head of a national government. It will take time, because the absence of women in leadership positions is, above all, a cultural problem.

***Professor Brunazzo then cited a list of 50 reasons to love the EU ...***

The idea of the British newspaper "The Independent" in 2007 seems very useful even nowadays, for at least two reasons. Firstly, because I believe there is no future without knowledge of the present and the past; and secondly, because national sentiment is important but promoting a widespread "European sentiment" is not enough, especially in times of crisis. Talking of which, I was struck by what Professor Brunazzo said, that not only do European citizens need to share economic or foreign policies, but we also need to have more in common than just data and facts; we need collective emotions and dreams!

***It is also true that the list published in "The Independent" dates back to 2007 and that countries like Italy are currently experiencing a profound crisis that is nothing like any of the 50 reasons.***

Good point. We discussed it in class after Professor Brunazzo's lecture. However, the question remains: what would Italy be today without the protective umbrella of the EU? I have to say that the list in "The Independent" highlights many positive aspects that still apply today as they did in 2007.

***For example?***

Professor Brunazzo repeatedly stressed that the EU has always been attentive to the promotion of citizens' rights as well as democratic rights. For example, he referred to matters such as gender

equality and equal treatment, personal data protection and consumer rights. He said that the European Court of Justice also promotes students' rights and prevents discrimination in the various EU member countries. And yet countries that want to join the EU must respect a whole series of criteria relating to tolerance, justice and solidarity. All this is very demanding, especially for societies with a long history of authoritarian or even dictatorial regimes.

***We need a more systematic and up-to-date form of information right from schools ...***

Yes. Many young people do not know that many of the benefits they enjoy have been achieved thanks to the EU. And although European standards to protect consumer health are among the highest in the world, they are often criticised by multinationals precisely for the rigour they use to enforce these standards. For us students, the fact that the EU started liberalising the telecommunications sector in the 1980s is a huge deal. All this has brought down the prices of services such as long-distance and international calls. In addition to that, it has abolished roaming charges for calls, messages and data.

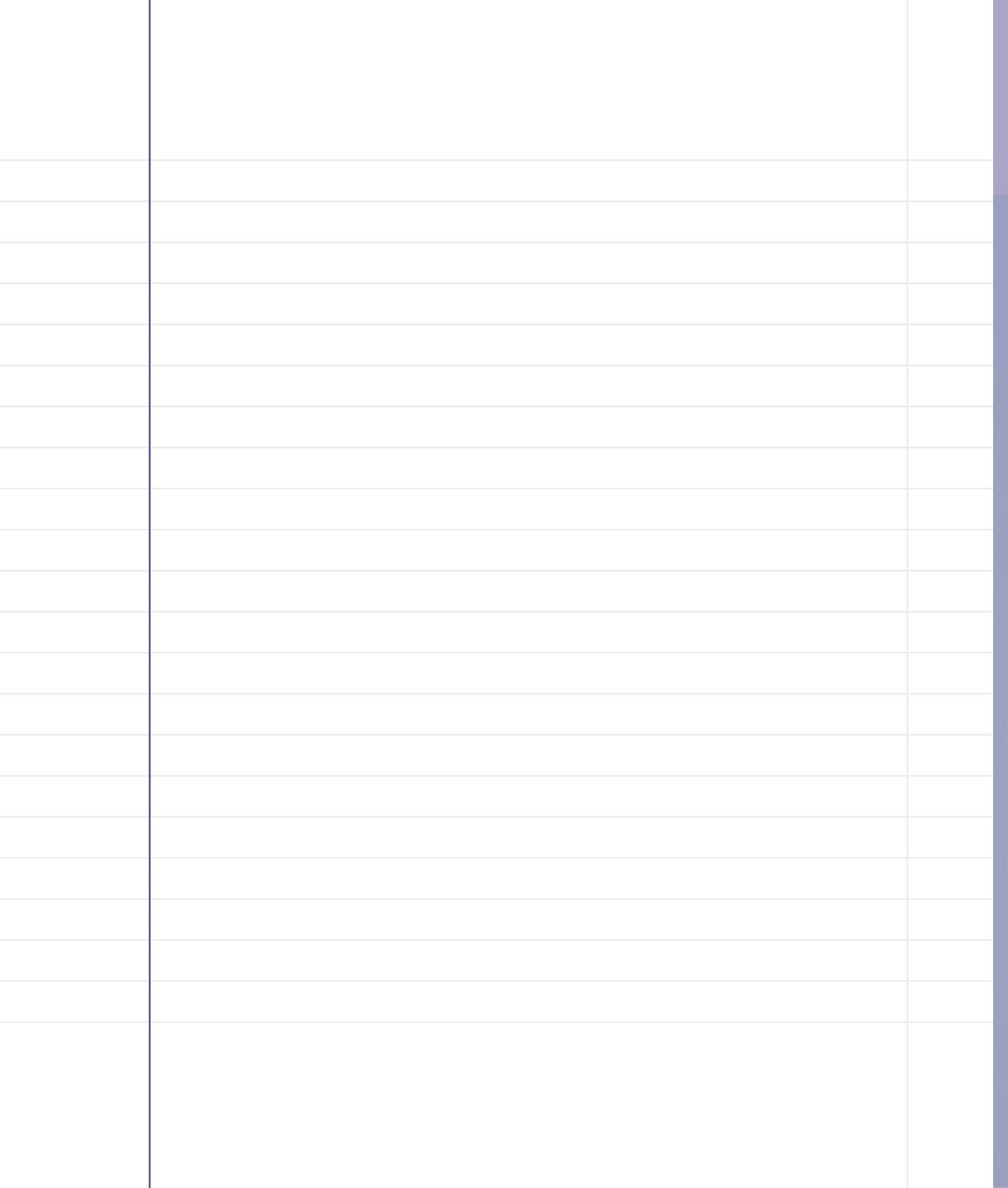
## KEYWORDS

## STRENGTHS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

**POLITICAL RIGHTS** These are the rights that the European Union guarantees citizens who have the right to vote so that they can actively participate in political life and in the making of everyday public decisions. More generally, the EU ensures that democratic rights are not limited in any of the member states. According to Articles 39 and 40 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights – also known as the Nice Charter – every citizen of the Union has the right to vote and stand as a candidate at elections to the European Parliament in the member state in which he or she resides, under the same conditions as nationals of that state. Members of the European Parliament are elected by direct, free and secret universal suffrage.

**ADVANTAGES** From an economic point of view, the advantages of the EU are obvious, although not all citizens are aware that many of the benefits they enjoy have been achieved thanks to the EU. Never before have we had so many opportunities to travel, live and work wherever we want in the EU. Moreover, we can compare the prices of products and services and buy the cheapest ones. European standards for protecting consumer health are among the highest in the world. The EU also guarantees its citizens better purchasing conditions and greater choice thanks to its competition policy. Also from an economic point of view, it is worth remembering that the EU allocates a significant proportion of its budget to help farmers, regions that are lagging behind in development, those that have to face major industrial restructuring processes, and territories hit by natural disasters.

**IMPORTANCE OF EUROPE IN THE WORLD** The European Union plays an important role in the world. It is the largest economy in the world; in fact, it is the leading exporter of manufactured goods and services as well as the largest import market for over 100 countries. The fact that at least 19 countries out of 27 use a single currency is a big advantage; we are talking about 340 million EU citizens, which is 75% of the total population. The role of the EU is significant in many fields: for example, in diplomacy, working for fundamental freedoms and the rule of law at an international level. It is no coincidence that its member states are the top donors of humanitarian aid worldwide. Also, the EU's trade policy towards third countries is used as a vehicle for promoting human rights in various parts of the world, so that, for example, trade agreements are only made if workers' rights are respected.



The background features a light blue gradient with a faint, larger-scale version of the European Union flag (a circle of twelve gold stars on a blue field) centered at the top. Below the flag, the words "European Commission" are partially visible. Scattered across the lower half of the page are several stylized, geometric birds in shades of blue and teal, appearing to fly upwards and to the right.

# 4. CHALLENGES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

*"Europe exists, but it is in chains; we need to break these fetters links; our political structures betray their own arteriosclerosis terribly ... To unite Europe, there is perhaps more to destroy than to build; we need to throw away a world of prejudice, timidity and bitterness ... Let us talk, insist, let us let not take a moment to breathe; so that Europe remains the topic of the day ... What should should our watchword be? In my opinion, union with a variety of natural and historical forces ..."*

Alcide De Gasperi, 1953

## LECTURE

## CHALLENGES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Marco Brunazzo (University of Trento)

When European leaders met in 2017 for the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, the UK had just invoked Article 50 of the Treaty on EU, starting a two-year countdown to leave the EU. The festivities were eclipsed by the financial, migration and Brexit crisis, along with difficult transatlantic relations after the election of Donald Trump just when the southern and eastern borders showed signs of unrest.

Jean Monnet, French diplomat and founding father of the EU, believed that “Europe would be built through crises and that it would be the sum of their solutions.” He expected European elites to choose integration even in difficult times, when the only alternative would be to reverse the process of creating an ever closer Union. The question is whether the nature of the crisis facing the EU at the beginning of the 21st century is different and whether disintegration is a real possibility. The crisis produced by Covid-19 may prove to be an even greater challenge.

Today the EU is facing a series of existential dilemmas. The first one is the dilemma between solidarity and respect for the rules. Winston Churchill’s appeal for a United States of Europe in 1946 called on European countries to abandon the rivalry created by defending national interests and to work closely to solve common

problems. For most of the history of European integration, member states have willingly sacrificed their immediate interests to support a partner country. However, in the 1980s, the government of Margaret Thatcher felt that EU budgetary rules and the Common Agricultural Policy penalised the UK disproportionately. The UK’s large service sector and relatively small agricultural sector made it a net contributor to the EU budget and a limited beneficiary of the CAP. On that occasion, the other member states agreed to reduce the UK’s contribution to the EU budget.

The challenges facing the EU today make it hard to guarantee solidarity and respect for the rules. The refugee and migration crisis showed that shared responsibility of reception goes against EU rules. Some member states opposed the migrant transfer project by invoking the Dublin Regulation, stating that if the regulations were not respected, this would challenge both the management of the EU’s external borders and the free movement of people inside the Schengen Area. This time, respect for the rules came at the expense of solidarity.

There are convincing reasons to argue that a union of sovereign states must be based on respect for the rules rather than on political calculations, including those based on power

relations (Fabbrini 2017). The smaller states must feel sure that the more powerful states obey the rules, and do not apply their economic and political strength to suit their own interests. The larger, wealthier states must feel that they do not have to bear the cost when smaller states go against the rules. According to the principle of solidarity, the member states recognise that they will not have exclusive authority within their borders, and in return, they will be able to count on coordinated responses in the event of a crisis. The open question in the EU concerns the benefits and costs of mutual solidarity and under what conditions it should be granted.

The second existential dilemma is the choice between interests and values. The EU has always considered itself a special political actor, capable of expressing a special political power. European integration was an attempt to solve problems of a political nature in both Europe and the international system, unlike systems that are founded on the sovereign power of a nation state. For this reason, the EU had considered traditional concepts such as sovereignty and national interests not as principles of organisation but as political factors that caused conflict and instability. Instead, the EU was a political order based on shared values and not on conflicting interests; values that were rooted in the principles and institutions of liberal democracy. The EU was to be a

civil or regulatory power, not one that used its material power to force other states to behave according to their likings.

Political instability on the EU's southern and eastern borders, changing balances of power towards Asia and the erosion of the transatlantic alliance have forced the EU to choose between its strategic interests and values. It has often been able to negotiate a balance between the two, but many of the current pressures require a clear choice. For example, the migration crisis has raised questions whether there is sufficient solidarity between member states to keep internal borders open. This crisis has forced the EU into agreements which, according to most agencies involved with human rights and immigration, will put many migrants at risk.

The clash between values and political correctness is also present in internal matters. Developing liberal democracy in some member states has become a pressing concern, especially for those that joined the EU after 2004. In Hungary, Viktor Orbán's government restricted freedom of the press, shut down a university, undermined the rule of law and praised "illiberal democracy". There were political and geostrategic reasons for not confronting the Hungarian government, but many European citizens lost faith in the argument that the EU stands for a different type of political power.

The challenge is how to plan the future of the

EU in the face of growing domestic and international uncertainty. In 2017, to celebrate 60 years of Rome Treaties, the European Commission produced the “White Paper on the Future of Europe”. Contrary to what the founding fathers did in 1950, the White Paper does not propose a way forward; it merely outlines five possible scenarios:

1. **Carrying On:** This option focuses on minor political issues and proposes progressive change to improve the single market, the single currency, transport and digital infrastructure without major institutional reforms.
2. **Nothing But The Single Market:** This option focuses attention on the single market, ensuring the free movement of goods and services across borders, but no longer guarantees the free movement of people or a common asylum policy.
3. **Those Who Want More Do More:** This option supports “Carrying On” regarding the basic issues in Scenario 1, adding an “exception” for states that want to do more.

This flexible approach keeps the 27 together on key issues they agree on, such as the four freedoms and the single market. They can also continue integration within the framework of existing treaties and institutions, without being hindered by others.

4. **Doing Less More Efficiently:** In 2025 the EU will act more quickly in its chosen areas, as the single market is the only sector where the 27 members continue to cooperate. Integration in sectors such as regional development and state aid is reduced to an exclusively national competence.
5. **Doing Much More Together:** This scenario is based on Jean Monnet’s belief that crises would build political union and the argument put forward by many EU leaders that the EU in its current form cannot deal with the many crises it faces, let alone the member states on their own. A true political union must be created with the power to generate and share resources through widespread consensus.

#### Resources

S. Fabbrini, *Sdoppiamento. Una prospettiva nuova per l’Europa*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2017  
The debate on the future of the EU [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/future-europe\\_it](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/future-europe_it)

*Giuseppe Zorzi (Liceo L. da Vinci) speaks to Lucrezia Torre and*

*Chiara Venturato (4G - Liceo L. da Vinci)*

*Today Professor Brunazzo shared a beautiful quote by Jean Monnet in which the French diplomat says that moments of crisis are a great opportunity to make courageous political choices ...*

He also reminded us that in recent years many European politicians seem to have lost the far-sighted spirit of this quote. Even the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome on 25th March 2017 was celebrated in a less than festive atmosphere. Of course, the concurrence of the financial, migration and Brexit crisis did not help.

*Today, the EU has to solve a few existential dilemmas, the first being the one between solidarity and respect for the rules ...*

Professor Brunazzo stressed that for various reasons, for most of the history of European integration, member states believed that their national interest coincided with integration. At times, this led them to willingly give up their immediate interests to meet the needs of one of their partners. But he also said that there were times when some countries felt that EU policies did not protect their particular national interest enough, such as Great Britain in the days of the Thatcher government.

*Professor Brunazzo also explained that it is increasingly difficult to find a balance between the principle of solidarity, respect for the rules and the current institutional and political architecture of the EU.*

We all saw what happened during the migration crisis. Some member states opposed the migrant transfer project by invoking the Dublin regulation; that is, EU legislation! We think that when respect for the rules conflicts with solidarity, anything can happen. This conflicts with the spirit of the new Europe born after the Second World War. Shared rules must be able to coexist with mutual solidarity.

*Let us now come to what has been called the EU's "second existential dilemma": the choice between interests and values. What has happened in recent years – for example, the migration crisis – has led the member states to choose between their strategic interests and the values that defined European integration.*

Of course, we wonder how the EU can possibly accept agreements that endanger the survival of hundreds of thousands of migrants. What is certain is that the current internal divisions regarding the issue of migration make it impossible to find a third way that can be both "strategic" and "more humane".

*To complicate matters even more is the clash between values and what is politically appropriate. Over the past decade, developing liberal democracy in some member states has become a pressing concern. This is particularly the case with those that joined the Union after 2004, for example, Viktor Orbán's Hungary.*

There are no political or geostrategic reasons to justify a government that restricts the freedom of the press, closes a university for political reasons, and even goes so far as to speak in favour of an "illiberal democracy". We are talking about a government that is a full member of the EU!

*In 2017, the Commission produced the "White Paper on the Future of Europe". It shows a lack of certainty about the future, and, contrary to what the founding fathers did in 1950, it does not suggest a way forward but merely outlines five possible scenarios.*

It seems to us that we can no longer go on taking small steps as we have been doing

for the last ten years. What we need is a major shock for the EU to establish a true political union.

If this scenario were not immediately practicable, we would prefer a scenario where some member states go forward with integration according to the existing treaties and institutions, without being held back by others.



*Class 4G, Liceo Scientifico L da Vinci, Trento*

## KEYWORDS

## CHALLENGES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

**DILEMMAS** The term covers the need to choose between two contrasting solutions when there is no other way out. Today, the EU is facing several major dilemmas. The first one concerns solidarity and respect for rules. As the migration crisis has repeatedly shown, it is getting harder to find a point of convergence between solidarity between member states, compliance with EU legislation and its institutional as well as political architecture. The EU's second existential dilemma regards having to choose between interests and values. For example, the thorny issue of migration raised questions about finding a balance between the values on which the EU was founded and the national interests of the member states. The solution to these two dilemmas will largely determine the future of the EU.

**SOLIDARITY** The principle of solidarity aims to ensure the well-being of the EU by making sure that all member states fulfil their economic, political and social obligations. The Lisbon Treaty of 2007 (which entered into force in 2009) introduced an explicit Solidarity Clause (Article 222), which obliges EU countries to act jointly if any EU country is the victim of terrorist attacks or natural or man-made disasters. The way this solidarity clause is implemented is decided by a qualified majority within the Council of the European Union, unless the measures to be taken apply to the defence sector, in which case unanimity is required.

**RULES** A union of sovereign states must be based on respect for rules rather than on political calculation: smaller states must be sure that larger and more powerful states obey the rules and do not use their economic and political strength only when it suits their own interests. The larger states, especially the wealthier ones, must feel that joining a union does not mean having to bear the costs when smaller member states do not respect the rules. On the other hand, the principle of solidarity requires member states to have mutual obligations, precisely because they have accepted to be governed by the same rules. In other words, member states accept not to have exclusive authority within their own borders but, in return, they will be able to count on common and coordinated responses in the event of a crisis.

**INTERESTS** The founding fathers of Europe never underestimated the importance of national interests. They were convinced that it was in the interest of the nation states to join the new European project in order to guarantee peace, well-being and democracy for all. Of course, this implies that sovereignty will somehow have to be relinquished. However, nowadays many political leaders believe that national interests no longer coincide with integration, or that they are no longer protected by EU policies. More generally, emergencies such as the financial crisis of the last few years, the migration crisis, problems of international security and recently the Coronavirus pandemic are a burden for everyone. Because of this, the future of Europe opens up to several very different scenarios, which would have been unthinkable in the aftermath of World War II.

**VALUES** Any process of constitutional and democratic involution, both in the EU and within the individual member states, instantly contradicts the values on which the EU was founded. Some values like freedom, equality and fraternity have their roots in Greek and Christian philosophy, although a political context such as the French Revolution may seem more appropriate for them. Other values such as peace became fundamental for the founding of the new Europe, devastated after two terrible world wars. The repeated crises that the world has witnessed in the last few years have increasingly forced the EU and its member states to choose between their strategic interests and the values that defined European integration. It becomes all the more crucial to make courageous political choices – even radical, if necessary – that are shared as much as possible.

**SCENARIOS** In the coming years, all European leaders will have to face the challenge of finding a suitable way to draw up a future for the EU in the face of growing internal and international uncertainty. In March 2017, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, the European Commission produced a document called the “White Paper on the Future of Europe”. It showed uncertainty about the future, and contrary to what the founding fathers did in 1950, the White Paper does not propose a way forward; it merely outlines five possible scenarios. The way we deal with these scenarios will determine the future of the EU.

# 5. AUTONOMY, FEDERALISM AND MINORITIES IN EUROPE

The background of the slide features a dark blue gradient with several white silhouettes of people. Each silhouette is holding a knife, with the blades pointing upwards. The silhouettes are arranged in a way that suggests a group of people, possibly a crowd or a group of protesters, against a lighter background.

*"Those who – like myself, born in 1930 – experienced war during their youth, with all its horror, resulting misery and suffering, can judge from direct experience the value of a united Europe for peace and freedom. Those who have not experienced this personally, those who have known only a peaceful Europe and, because of some open questions and unsolved problems, sceptically ask what benefits a unified Europe actually brings with it, must be reminded now and in the future: that it brings one thing above all: peace"*

Helmut Kohl, 2013

## LECTURE

## AUTONOMY, FEDERALISM AND MINORITIES IN EUROPE

Jens Woelk (University of Trento)

**The right to decide:** In Hong Kong, protests against the People's Republic of China about the extradition of citizens to China are in reality about autonomy and democracy, about keeping a different system compared to the Chinese one. When the former British colony was returned to China in 1997, the capitalist economic system, democracy and human rights were guaranteed. And to be preserved. These guarantees are no longer tolerated by China.

Autonomy is not independence. It is the freedom to make different decisions within a larger context. This contrasts with pressure towards equal rules for all, which may be necessary in some areas to guarantee integration within one State.

**Local autonomy:** The right to decide on local matters is a standard example of autonomy and a basic principle of every human community. What are the rights and limits of decisions on local affairs and development? Usually limits in the constitution and general laws.

**Democratic self-determination:** Autonomy is based on the principle of democratic self-determination of individuals and communities. This is summarised in the principle "no taxation without representation" originating in the American Revolution (Boston Tea Party, 1773). Those concerned by decisions must be in-

volved in making them, or elect representatives so that rules are accepted by all, although majority decides in a democracy, not unanimity.

**Regional differences:** Different treatment of territories can be due to:

- Geography: remote (island-) regions, such as Greenland for Denmark and Sardinia for Italy, as opposed to Corsica in France.
- History: San Marino and Monaco have been independent for centuries, while formerly independent Bavaria became part of Germany and Scotland became part of the UK.
- Language: a language border was central to the restructuring of Belgium into four autonomous units: French-speaking Wallonia, Flemish Flanders, the bilingual capital Brussels and a German-speaking community in the East. The Basque Country in Spain and South Tyrol in Italy also have an autonomous status. Linguistic differences do not always lead to autonomy, as shown by Alsace-Lorraine and Brittany in France.
- Economy: Lombardy and Veneto, the driving force behind the Italian economy, have demanded more autonomy.

**Political decisions as a basis for autonomy:** Political decisions may lead to the formation of states and to autonomy. No country is the

same from North to South. France has departments and now regions which are administrative structures; Italy has 20 regions, while Germany has 16 Länder with extensive autonomy, including law-making powers. Italy is a regional state; Germany is a federal state. Both are based on the autonomy of their territories. In Germany, the powers of all federal states are equal; in Italy, the degree of autonomy of the regions is different (ordinary – special).

**Federalism = autonomy and integration:** Germany, USA, Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Nigeria, Russia, India and Australia are all federal states. They are often large or populous. Federalism (from the Latin term *foedus*, meaning pact or treaty) unites territories typically under common policies regarding defence, foreign policy and currency; other matters are regulated independently by the member states. In the USA and Switzerland, territories joined for geographical reasons and against external threats. Despite differences between the federal states, two levels of government interact with citizens, legislate or levy taxes; such issues are decided by the centre in a unitary state. The two levels are coordinated by the constitution and in the institutions, such as a second chamber of Parliament or in ministerial conferences; controversies are regulated by a supreme or constitutional court.

**The Federal Republic of Germany:** Germany was unified under Bismarck in 1871, first into

a confederation of states, then into a federal state. The National Socialist dictatorship in the Third Reich rejected autonomy, as control by the centre was decisive. After 1945, federalism was revived by the Allied powers and democratic reconstruction took place. The Federal Constitution, adopted in 1949, was ratified by the state parliaments, not by a referendum. The Länder are responsible for implementing state and federal laws and have extensive and exclusive powers in some areas, such as security and education. They participate in federal legislation through the Bundesrat (a chamber of territorial representation in the legislative procedure), with rights of veto. This autonomy could be seen in the states' different reactions to the Coronavirus crisis, until the Minister Presidents of the Länder and the Chancellor started to coordinate regularly.

**Ordinary and special regions in Italy:** Italy is a "unitary and indivisible Republic" that promotes "local autonomy" (Art. 5 of the Constitution). Like Germany, Italy was unified late, in 1861, following the French model despite differences between the industrial north and the agricultural south. After the Second World War, a new regional state with a strong central power guaranteed cohesion; 15 regions and 5 autonomous regions were formed. All regions can adopt legislation, but only autonomous regions have exclusive powers. In contrast to the German federal state, regions are less repre-

sented in Rome. Only autonomous regions can truly differentiate from State laws and between themselves, e.g. bilingualism is regulated differently in the minority areas in South Tyrol, the Aosta Valley and Friuli.

**Minorities in Italy:** Art. 6 of the Constitution protects 12 "historical linguistic minorities" representing 0.8% of the population. Law 482/1999 differently protects the small, dispersed minorities and large, compact groups. The latter live in Alpine regions and their areas were annexed in 1919 and, in the following years, linguistic minorities were suppressed by Fascism, which explains today's combination of territorial autonomy and minority protection. The Alpine autonomous regions are the Aosta Valley, Trentino-South Tyrol (with 2 autonomous provinces: Trento and Bolzano), and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Their bi- and multilingual societies have greater autonomy in education and in the public sector.

**Majorities – states – minorities:** National territories are not homogeneous: differentiation enables tailor-made solutions. Through regional

autonomy, minorities may become a majority at local or regional levels, where they cannot be outvoted, but influence decisions. Federalism and autonomy allow more democratic participation at different levels of government: state, region, municipality. This is important because "self-determination of peoples" is reserved for "nations" and minorities cannot form states.

**Decentralization and integration:** There have been two trends since the Second World War. Decentralisation transforms unitary states into regional states (Spain, UK) or federal states (Belgium). Federal states are now formed by "devolution" of former unitary states; the decisive criterion for comparison is the degree of power given to the subunits to act more autonomously. The second trend, reminiscent of federal states, is European integration: cooperation and integration of states without forming a new superstate. South America is attempting similar integration through Mercosur. European integration brings new opportunities, such as cross-border cooperation in the European region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino.

For our students, taking part in the video talk by Professor Jens Woelk was stimulating in many respects. First of all, it was a great experience to share the audience with so many students and teachers in other countries. Secondly, it was interesting to attend the lecture held by a German professor as he switched, in his talk, from German to Italian and English. Besides, there was another impressive aspect: getting information about Europe that was, on the one hand, new to our students and, on the other hand, familiar as it dealt with federal structures we know from our political reality, but which were presented from many different perspectives.

For example, Professor Woelk started his lecture with a look at current problems in Hong Kong, where people are demonstrating for freedom and autonomy. The People's Republic of China is trying to interfere with and question the principle of "one country, two systems". He managed to show clearly that here the core of autonomy, the right of a community to regulate their affairs with their own legislation, is being challenged.

Thus, Hong Kong established the background for the discussion about the autonomy of local communities in Europe. This communal autonomy was derived from the state but granted to regions as an essential right to decide their public affairs for themselves. Behind this idea lies the principle of democratic self-determination. It is an individual right which can be transferred to communities. The slogan of the Boston Tea Party "no taxation without representation" is a striking expression of this idea.

Professor Woelk talked about regional varieties of autonomy, touching on Greenland, Sardinia, San Marino, the Basque region in Spain, Lombardy, South Tyrol, Bavaria, Scotland and Catalonia. It was fascinating to follow him on his journey through all these regions and political systems all over Europe and beyond.

The main focus of our students was on Professor Woelk's concise comparison of federal and regional structures in Germany and Italy. He explained that federal structures have been characteristic of Germany throughout history, apart from the deplorable years from 1933 to 1945, when the Nazi tyranny removed the autonomous rights of the German states by establishing a rigid central state control. After the Second World War, federalism was revived as the Allies tried to avoid any form of strong German central power whatsoever. The federal system is firmly rooted in the German constitutional system, and its consequences can be witnessed in many decisions taken during the current Corona pandemic crisis.

For us German students, it was interesting to contrast our federal system with the role that regionalism plays in Italy. According to Professor Woelk, Italy is a unitary state, but it supports regional autonomy, especially to allow for special rights of language minorities, islands and regional differences. There are twenty regions with their own legislative competences in Italy, five of which enjoy a special autonomous status, like Trentino and South Tyrol. It was remarkable to discover that all these regulations aim to secure specific protection for minorities such as the Slovenian population scattered around Friuli, the German speakers in South Tyrol and even a tiny ethnic group in Trentino whose dialect is similar to the one spoken in Bavaria.

To sum up, Professor Woelk highlighted two main trends in the development of Europe after the



*Gymnasium Sonthofen, Sonthofen*

Second World War; one of them being decentralisation, the other is the process of European integration at a higher level. Twenty-seven countries have established cooperation; the current structure is similar to that of a federal state without there actually being one. In this particular system, there is a chance for neighbouring regions to cooperate across national borders. However, the Covid-19 crisis has shown that this cooperation is endangered when member states decide to close their borders in order to protect their populations against threats from outside.

## KEYWORDS

## AUTONOMY, FEDERALISM AND MINORITIES IN EUROPE

**AUTONOMY** The term stems from Greek *autós* (self) and *nómos* (law, right), i.e. the right to give oneself rules. In relation to minorities, cultural autonomy includes the protection and promotion of the languages, religions or customs of groups living dispersedly, while territorial autonomy is often granted to groups living compactly in their traditional settlement area. Cultural autonomy enables a language, religious or ethnic community to organise its political and cultural life using specially elected self-governing bodies. Territorial autonomy goes beyond this insofar as it includes administrative and often also legislative powers in particular areas of a country.

**FEDERALISM** The most quoted and perhaps most appropriate definition of federalism is the one suggested by Daniel Elazar, according to which federalism is “self-rule plus shared rule”. It is pragmatic and extremely short but gives a rough idea. Federal states usually have some elements in common, such as: the division of state functions between at least two different orders of government both enjoying political autonomy; the supremacy of the federal/national constitution; and a system of cooperation among the levels, including a body for resolving disputes on competencies (usually a Constitutional or Supreme Court).

**MINORITY** There is no generally applicable definition of “minorities” in international law; in the law of individual states, however, the term often refers to specific groups or with particular characteristics, e.g. the Italian Constitution explicitly mentions the protection of “linguistic minorities”

(Art. 6 Const.). However, there are usually four elements that are necessary to classify a group as a minority: numerical inferiority in comparison to the majority population; a non-dominant position in the state; citizenship; and the intention to maintain and jointly develop ethnic, linguistic or religious commonalities in a spirit of solidarity.

## THE SCHOOLS AND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES INVOLVED



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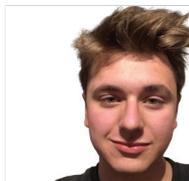
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# Aftermath

## ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE

*Raphael Verdross (Cl. 3TS4, FOS "Marie Curie")*

The "Schools Beyond Borders" project about the EU has really enriched all of us. Although due to the Coronavirus pandemic we had to rely on video lessons, this did not affect our interest in working with the students in Trento and Sonthofen. The project as a whole taught us something fundamental: we are really one big European family. However, we are not always aware of it due to various cultural, political and socio-economic factors.

Many people cannot identify with the idea of Europe, even if they do not want to isolate themselves either. For example, when people are asked what their identity is, hardly anybody calls themselves European. Instead, the majority of citizens prefer to identify with their nation. Furthermore, criticism of the EU is stronger today than ever. All the advantages and opportunities that characterise our daily lives are now taken for granted and are no longer recognised as achievements of the European Union. This is the attitude some of us had, at least initially, and it is partly due to lack of information. When we became aware of how many benefits and opportunities we enjoy, we realised that this great European transnational political project must not stop in the face of criticism, even if some of it may be valid.

The lectures were well-structured and varied and showed us very interesting aspects of the EU's institutions and overall organisation. For us teenagers, many of the themes were related to issues of

current interest, which made for stimulating moments of reflection. Perhaps the most interesting thing about the five lessons was the use of several foreign languages in our discussions with the experts and the other two classes: something really special! One benefit of video-conferencing was that it helped us to learn the terminology in the foreign languages, which would otherwise

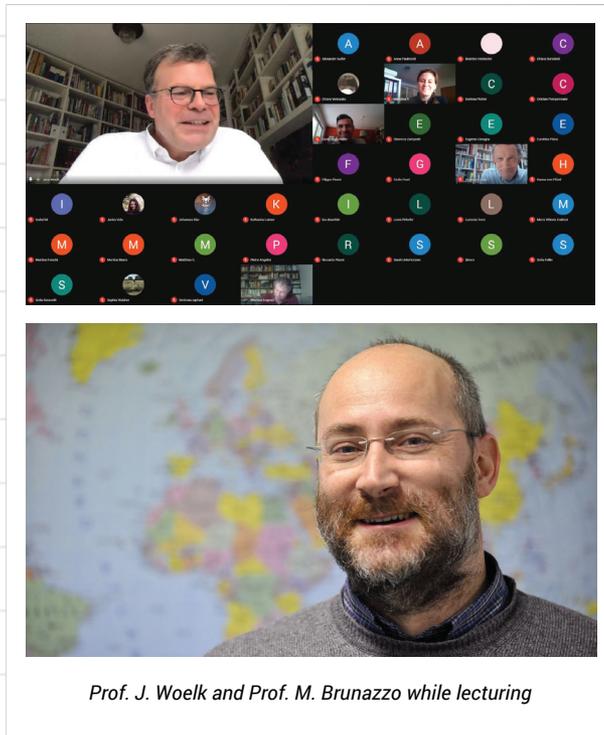


*Class 3TS4, FOS "Marie Curie", Merano/Meran*

have been difficult. Of course, for us German native speakers, it was not always easy to understand the lectures in Italian. But in the end, we managed to gain an incredible amount of critical ideas. We found the issues related to political history and the protection of minorities in Europe particularly interesting, also because the issue of autonomy concerns us directly.

Another positive aspect, we feel, was the relaxed and informal working atmosphere during the lectures. We always had the chance to ask questions which were answered fully in a way that fuelled further discussion. It is not surprising that the lectures turned out to be both interesting and ... fun! We were also particularly interested in the topics relating to European administration and related organisations which have to ensure the functioning of large areas and sectors. It is now clearer to us why a decision-making process and the search for consensus can sometimes be a long and complex path. It is also evident that the complexity of the various European institutions is proportional to the number of states that refer to them.

But that is not all. It was also particularly interesting to hear about the tasks of the European Central Bank. The ECB is not only responsible for distributing credit but also for managing entire economic cycles in a socio-political context where hundreds of millions of people live. It was fascinating to hear about the many sectors in which there is cooperation within the EU. However, it was equally fascinating to hear how the common benefits must constantly reckon with the diversity of interests also present



within the large political families of the EU. Many of us were unaware of this before starting this project.

The fact that we could also touch on highly topical issues concerning our daily life was very important for us. It actually helped us to better understand the current "public" discussion inside and outside the EU. The Covid-19 situation and the measures to be taken were discussed in detail. This was of particular interest to us, given the relevance of the issue.

Another positive factor was that each lecture was well-structured. The speakers introduced the topics with straightforward explanations and some reference data that served as a frame for the following lesson. This gave us a clear overview. Besides, each of the five lectures had individual fo-

cal points, such as the political management of the pandemic, the organisation of the EU, financial issues and also the wide variety of interests among the various political groups. These focal points produced additional value for all of us.

Many of us now have a different perception of the EU. We are more aware that the many standards and rules of this large organisation shape our life and make it better, not worse. One example of that is the protection of consumer rights; this would be difficult to achieve without the EU. Before we took part in this project, we were not fully aware of these strengths. Thanks to what we have covered in just five lectures, we have realised that the EU is not as distant from us as it often seems! To sum up, our daily life is not regulated as part of only one local territorial entity or state. It goes hand in hand with the policies and regulations of the EU. Despite all its limits (which cannot be ignored) the EU is a large international organisation which defends our political and economic rights and guarantees us a wide range of benefits.

## A WORD ABOUT FBK AND SCHOOLS

*Claudia Dolci (FBK)*

In recent years, the Research and Innovation Unit for Schools has improved its activities with and for schools. The programmes regarding research and the world of work are organised in a way that fosters the curiosity for knowledge in young people and the critical thinking they need to make informed choices in life. The world of work requires increasingly transversal professionalism and skills, as well as an aptitude for change, which students must learn at high school. Teachers and trainers must work together to help young learners get hands-on experience. They also need to acquire a mental attitude towards change, and fundamental problem-solving skills that are efficient, creative and innovative.

Thanks to its acknowledged scientific excellence, the Bruno Kessler Foundation is honoured to supervise and coordinate activities for young people in research and direct them towards the professions of the future. For this reason, it launched the FBK Junior Programme a few years ago. The activities of this programme are carried out in synergy with the headteachers in Trentino, making FBK a point of reference for the schools involved. This has enriched its curriculum, making it a national example of best practices.

Every year FBK involves more than 500 high school students in individual internships and annual projects within a network of local organisations and schools. It uses the new "DomoSens School-Work" teaching model to promote collaboration between schools from various sectors and bring students into contact with researchers and experts from different fields of knowledge. Such model

proposes projects which use scientific methodology, giving participants their first opportunity to be exposed to innovation. Students experience how to organise work according to team play and interdisciplinarity.

Added to these activities is the “WebValley” experience. For the last twenty years, this three-week data science summer school has invited the best students in the fourth class of high school, not only in Trentino but also on a national and international level, to introduce them to an experience of interdisciplinary research.

All these activities for schools clearly demonstrate FBK’s dedication to invest in young people. Conducting research means continually looking towards the future in order to create it. Young people are given the opportunity to be key players in building their future.

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