

Conference program

Baltic EU Conversations 2018: Is Europe Back?

As of 15 March 2018

23 March 2018

Venue: Saeima (the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia), 6/8 Jēkaba street, Riga

8.30–9.30: Morning coffee and registration

9.30–10.00: Opening addresses

- ✓ Andris Sprūds, Director of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs
- ✓ Inna Šteinbuka, Head of the European Commission Representation in Latvia

Keynote speech:

- ✓ Ināra Mūrniece, Speaker of the Parliament of Latvia

PANEL 1: 10.00-11.30: The New Shape of the European Union (room 108 “Baltiešu zāle”)

Although in the last ten years the European Union has seen rapid integration and a deepening of cooperation between member states, the project is still incomplete. Multiple crises have demonstrated that pooling resources is necessary and preferable in dealing with problems less expensively. At the same time, Brexit and the path to the completion of the Economic and Monetary Union are cause for ongoing structural, institutional and policy changes in the EU. Hence, can the European project ever be completed? What are the conclusions on reflections papers published by the European Commission in 2017? Is the completion of the EMU possible by 2025?

Moderator: Ian Kearns, Researcher, Latvian Institute of International Affairs

- ✓ Valdis Dombrovskis, Vice-President of the European Commission
- ✓ Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia
- ✓ Rem Korteweg, Head of Europe in the World unit, Clingendael - the Netherlands Institute of International Relations

11.30-12.00: Coffee break

PANEL 2: 12.00-13.30: The EU Budget post-Brexit: Needs and Wants (room 108 “Baltiešu zāle”)

The drafting and discussion of the post-Brexit Multiannual Financial Framework of 2021-2027 are gradually gaining speed. The loss of a significant contributor to the EU budget and demands for abolishing the “national envelope system” are the most often mentioned arguments, indicating that the next financial perspective could have a different methodology. Evidence of the relative success of the EFSI and the overall structural changes of the economy due to digitalization and automation are additional arguments for the MFF2021-2027 which must be approached with inventiveness and political courage. Is there evidence for this and will the MFF methodology experience significant alterations? Will it be able to address the challenges of the new economy and future social policies? What will be the priorities for the first post-Brexit EU budgetary framework?

Moderator: Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, Director of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science

- ✓ Dana Reizniece-Ozola, Minister of Finance of the Republic of Latvia
- ✓ Thomas Wieser, former President of Economic and Financial Committee and Eurogroup Working Group
- ✓ Juraj Draxler, Director, Institute of Strategic Analyses at Slovak Academy of Sciences, former Minister of Education of Slovak Republic

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13.30-14.30: Lunch break (in the Saeima Canteen, 11 Jēkaba Street)

LUNCH BREAK PANEL (with the support of the European Parliament Information Bureau in Latvia): Is There A Place for the EU in 2018 Latvian National Elections? (in Latvian) (room 108 “Baltiešu zāle”)

National elections in member states have traditionally avoided European Union related topics. With the population looking for domestic heroes, politicians neglect topics that are decided collectively at the EU level. Moreover, politicians avoid addressing the institutional and political processes in the EU and their effects on the member states. What are the central topics that are to be raised in national elections? Is the future of the European Union one of them? What suggestions do Latvian parties have to improve the EU?

Moderator: Kārlis Bukovskis, Deputy Director, Latvian Institute of International Affairs

- ✓ Armands Krauze, Union of Greens and Farmers
- ✓ Edvīns Šnore, National Alliance
- ✓ Atis Lejiņš, Unity
- ✓ Boriss Cilevičs, Social Democratic Party "Harmony"

14.30-15.45: BREAKOUT SESSIONS

PANEL 3A: Three Years to Migration Crisis (room 108 “Baltiešu zāle”)

Since its peak in 2015, the migration crisis has slowly but steadily been brought under control. Although migratory pressures have been decreasing, the issue has not been fully resolved as almost 150 thousand people tried to get into the EU in 2017. The resettlement of refugees within the EU still causes significant internal discord, with some countries being sanctioned by the European Commission. The repatriation of refugees to their home countries is also relatively slow. Although the economic contribution from the migration crisis can only be estimated in few years, the political conclusions can already be drawn now. How will the 2015 migration crisis be remembered in the EU's history? What are the lessons learned and what are the remaining challenges to be addressed? How can we prevent a similar crisis in future?

Moderator: Viljar Veebel, Associate Researcher, Latvian Institute of International Affairs; Researcher, Baltic Defence College

- ✓ Egils Levits, Member of the European Court of Justice
- ✓ Evika Siliņa, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Latvia
- ✓ Sławomir Dębski, Director, Polish Institute of International Affairs
- ✓ Patrick van Schie, Director, Telders Foundation, Netherlands

PANEL 3B: Seeking European Defence (room 206 “Budžeta un finanšu komisijas zāle”)

The establishment of PESCO in the last months of 2017 was a strong signal for the European Union countries seeking more structured collaboration on military and defence issues within the EU. Although this became another example of multispeed Europe with only 25 member states joining the project, it is evident that the majority of countries do not want to deal with modern security challenges singlehandedly. What is the future of the European Defence Union? Will it compliment NATO? Should it also embrace EU candidate countries? Will it become the basis for the new post-Brexit security environment in Europe and create a division of labour among them?

Moderator: Māris Andžāns, Senior Researcher, Latvian Institute of International Affairs

- ✓ Margarita Šešelgyte, Deputy Director, Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius University
- ✓ Sandra Fernandes, Assistant Professor, University of Minho, Centre for Research in Political Science

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- ✓ Annegret Bendiek, Senior Associate, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP)
- ✓ Mika Aaltola, Programme Director, Finnish Institute of International Affairs

PANEL 3C: Connecting Europe and Beyond: Transport and Infrastructure (room 306 “Eiropas lietu komisijas zāle”)

A well-functioning Single Market and the EU’s place as a global trading power is impossible without solid and efficient transport and infrastructure connections. The Rail Baltica project will fill the gaps in the EU’s transportation networks. New trade routes with Eastern Asia and new energy routes with Central Asia are also infrastructure projects that have the potential to create an economic boost for all involved countries. Hence, what are the future visions for major transport and infrastructure projects from the EU?

Moderator: Mārtiņš Daugulis, Researcher, Latvian Institute of International Affairs

- ✓ Roberts Zīle, Member of the European Parliament
- ✓ René Nyberg, former CEO of East Office of Finnish Industries
- ✓ Nadine Godehardt, Deputy Head of Asia Research Division, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP)
- ✓ Jakub Jakobowski, Senior Researcher, Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), Poland

15.45-16.15: Coffee break

PANEL 4: 16.15-17.45: Europe’s Place in Globalized World (room 108 “Baltiešu zāle”)

With some voices calling for more regulated globalisation, with other voices calling for more self-absorbed and national foreign policies and with an increasing number of voices challenging the Western world, the European Union is struggling to keep the modern multilateralism and openness present in international relations. With the United Kingdom leaving the EU, the global role of the block will need to be adjusted. With the EU needing to take a leading role in combating climate change, a united voice will be paramount. Has the establishment of the EEAS almost ten years ago resulted in more unified foreign policies? Will the EU manage to retain its political and economic influence in the world? What is the future for collaboration between the three whales of the Western world: EU, the US and the UK?

Moderator: Edijs Bošs, Associate Researcher, Latvian Institute of International Affairs

- ✓ Lolita Čigāne, Chair, European Affairs Committee of the Parliament of Latvia
- ✓ Vygaudas Ušackas, former Foreign Minister of Lithuania and ambassador to Russia, Afghanistan, the Court of St. James’s and the United States
- ✓ Daniela Schwarzer, Director, German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP)
- ✓ Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark

17.45: Concluding remarks, coffee, food and wine

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