

## Towards a More United and Effective Europe: Which Way Forward

*-Presenting the results of the 'Imagining Europe' project: A communiqué-*

As the unprecedented financial crisis and ensuing economic recession push Europe to the brink, a critical question arises as to what are the foreseeable trajectories affecting EU governance in the decades ahead.

The Eurozone crisis is dramatically shaping the construction of the EU as an integrated, legitimate and effective political space. On the one hand the crisis has accelerated policy and institutional integration in ways thought unthinkable only a few years ago. At the same time, the economic crisis and the ensuing socio-political malaise have generated centrifugal forces across the Union. These trends are giving rise to a vicious circle. The challenge for committed Europeans is that of reversing this vicious circle by imagining **what kind of future EU could reconnect to its citizens and from there punch its full weight as a 21st century global power.**

To pursue this exercise of imagination, the **'Imagining Europe' research project** proceeded in a bottom-up fashion, asking itself what greater unity, legitimacy, and effectiveness mean in five key policy areas: fiscal and monetary policy; infrastructure and communications; security and defence; energy and the environment; and migration and citizenship,



The project engaged a pan-European group of authors and reviewers to explore what a post-crisis EU may look like in the above mentioned policy areas. To discuss the results of the project and the possible future trajectories of the EU more broadly, the Istituto Affari Internazionali organized a two-part event. First, a half day public event in Rome on Friday 27th June hosted by **Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Emma Bonino**, who has been involved in the project since its outset followed by a weekend of high level brainstorming in the enchanting village of Santo Stefano di Sessanio in the Abruzzo region.

**“There is nothing more real or more concrete than ideas, everything else is operational”** affirmed Emma Bonino, kicking off the two-day event by bidding the participants a productive weekend of reflection.

In line with the project’s final report, ‘Imagining Post-Crisis Europe’, the debate began with a discussion around the legacy of the crisis. Andrea Renda, Researcher at IAI & CEPS, underlined that a return to growth in the short to medium term is optimistic, calling instead for “future ideas and projects not to be based on the assumption of growth, but rather establishing basic preconditions to restoring growth”. It was convened that the issue of growth, and the urgency of a **paradigm shift away from austerity and in favour of prosperity, is not only an economic necessity but is essential for beginning to restore the EU’s legitimacy vis-à-vis its citizens.**



The issue of legitimacy was further scrutinized from a series of different angles. Vivien Schmidt, Professor at the University of Boston, stressed how “other than considering input and output legitimacy, it is crucial to also look at throughput”, opening up the issue of the legitimacy of those processes governing EU decision making, the delicate question of the **EU’s internal balance of power and the oversized role occupied by Germany**.

The rise of Eurosceptic populist forces was discussed, participants agreeing that the phenomenon must not be underestimated as **the impact of these forces is engendering far wider and deeper repercussions on political agenda and discourse than attributable to a mere ‘rise of the fringes’**. The social and cultural cleavages are real and must be addressed within the framework of a renewed attention to EU identity politics and citizenship policies, emphasized Heather Grabbe, Director of the Open Society European Policy Institute.

Whilst well aware of the extremely arduous times and the onerous challenges that lie ahead the debate remained positive. Francois Heisbourg, President of the International Institute for Security Studies, underlined that we must keep in mind that a federal budget took the United States 75 years and a civil war, thus for the EU project to succeed “integrating the notion of the long term is essential”. It is important to recognize that **as of now there is no political ground to push for federalism, before such a project can, if ever, be resumed we must “rebuild the tissue of solidarity”** which is at the heart of the EU project, argues Gerard Pogorel, Professor, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Télécommunications.

The **burden falls on governments to illustrate and articulate the benefits of European integration**, which is disintegrating, underlines Giovanni Grevi, Director, FRIDE, due to a striking “**lack of ownership of the economic and political union**” reflecting the deficit in political investment that has characterized the sphere of EU governance and politics in the past decades.

Also participating in the debate: **Lorenzo Bini Smaghi**, Senior Visiting Fellow at Istituto Affari Internazionali and Visiting Fellow at Harvard’s Weatherhead Center for International Affairs; **Sven Biscop**, Director of Europe in the World Programme, Egmont; **Simon Blakey**, Special Envoy, Eurogas; **Paolo Costa**, President, Venice Port Authority; **Filippo di Robilant**, Former head of the secretariat of the Italian MFA; **Michael Emerson**, Associate Senior Research Fellow, CEPS; **Ettore Greco**, Director, Istituto Affari Internazionali; **Jolyon Howorth**, Visiting Professor of Political Science and International Affairs, Yale University; **Marco Margheri**, Head of Public and EU Affairs, Edison; **John Peet**, Europe Editor, The Economist; **Lapo Pistelli**, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Italy; **Marietje Schaake**, Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, European Parliament; **Vivien Schmidt**, Professor of International Relations and Political Science, Boston University; **Jesse Scott**, Head of the Environment and Sustainable Development Unit, Eurelectric; **Nathalie Tocci**, Deputy-Director, Istituto Affari Internazionali; **Jean-Arnold Vinois**, Honorary Director, Directorate General for Energy; **Jan Zielonka**, Professor of European Politics, University of Oxford.