

Liz Mohn, Wolfgang Schüssel

Voices for the Future

20 Years of the Trilogie Salzburg



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The Trilogue Salzburg
2001–2021

Acknowledgements

For 20 years, the Trilogue Salzburg has been a source of knowledge and inspiration, thanks to the objective, open dialogue it facilitates among political, economic and cultural representatives from all over the world. Its goal has been to make the world a bit better, more peaceful and more humane. Many of the global challenges that concern us today were already being discussed at the Trilogue at a time when few decision makers had them on their agendas – something this publication impressively documents as it looks back over the event's 20-year history. We would like to thank those who have been part of the Trilogue Salzburg not only for their forward-looking contributions, but also for the intensive, trusting exchange that has given rise to such close ties between the participants.



Liz Mohn



Wolfgang Schüssel

Preface

Wolfgang Schüssel, Liz Mohn

The future will be challenging. Not only is that statement true today, during the Covid-19 pandemic, it was true 20 years ago as well. As preparations were being made for the first Trilogue Salzburg, which took place in August 2002, there was no shortage of events suggesting the future would be somewhat bleak, or at least promising to have an enormous impact on what was to come. As an aide to memory, here are a few notable happenings from back then: On September 11, 2001, a terrorist attack leveled the World Trade Center and killed thousands of people. Europe was taking on a new shape as Greece joined the eurozone in 2001, and 12 EU member states introduced the coins and banknotes of their common currency at the beginning of 2002. At the EU summit in Copenhagen in December 2002, the decision was made to welcome 10 new members. In a referendum in Switzerland in 2001, three-quarters of the population voted not to engage in negotiations to accede to the EU – and a few years later, comprehensive bilateral agreements were signed. In 2002, Switzerland became the 190th member of the United Nations. At the end of 2001, China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO).

In the first decade of the new century, there was a spirit of change and optimism in the air, and much was in flux, above all in Europe. We were all looking for ideas that could move us forward. Art in all its guises served as a source of inspiration, but how would it be possible to introduce and implement these ideas in the political and economic arenas? As German philosopher Moritz Carrière put it, “To shape the particular from the idea is the purview of art; to grasp

the idea from its various sides by thought, to shape the idea of the state, of art, of humanity itself on the basis of the real and the given, by virtue of foresighted imagination and conclusive reasoning, is the purview of philosophy.”

The Salzburg Festival was conceived during the First World War's darkest hour; the first *Everyman* stage was carpentered from boards used for a barrack that housed prisoners of war. Resistance and intrigues notwithstanding, Max Reinhardt succeeded in establishing the summer festival in Salzburg. Reinhardt exemplified the concept of learning by doing, of renewal – even after horrendous catastrophes such as the world war. His credo was, “When one senses that routine has begun creeping in, that's always the time to try something new.”

All of these considerations gave rise to the Trilogue Salzburg: a gathering of leading individuals from the cultural, economic and political spheres, from as many countries and global regions as possible, who would meet unencumbered by the concerns of daily life to discuss and reflect, inspired by the Salzburg Festival's magnificent performances. The idea was to combine impulses from all three areas – thus the name “Trilogue” – so that something new could take shape.

The significance of art and culture was and is tangible at the Trilogue Salzburg, as artists make meaningful contributions to reconciliation, understanding and peace, not to mention innovation. Art moves and rattles us – “ice picks against the frozen sea in us,” as Franz Kafka put it. The Trilogue provides art – which must often defend itself from being preempted or appropriated – with a platform of equal standing. One unforgettable moment was the participation of director Andrea Breth, who came to Salzburg with great skepticism, but then enthusiastically embraced both the format and interdisciplinary thinking, enriching them with her comments. Wonderful musicians like Thomas Hampson, Franz Welser-Möst, Clemens Hellsberg, Valery Gergiev, exceptional directors like Jürgen Flimm, brilliant authors like Marc Elsberg and screenwriter Joan Xu have taken part in the Trilogue – which would have been impossible to realize without the active participation of Helga Rabl-Stadler, president of the Salzburg Festival, who has never failed to provide the event's attendees with a personal introduction to the performance they are about to see.

The issues we have addressed in the Trilogue's 20-year history have never served to address the past, but have always looked to the future, true to Albert Einstein's motto, "I'm more interested in the future than in the past, because the future is where I intend to live." The scope of the discussions has been wide, depending on what the future seemed to be promising at any given point in time and what merited a closer look. Topics have ranged from the search for identity to the question of how high-quality, sustainable economic development can be achieved and competitiveness maintained, to the various facets of globalization, Asia's rise, successful neighborhood policy, and the difference between perception and reality.

The Trilogue Salzburg was never meant to be an art-for-art's-sake event. The intention has always been to serve as a generator of ideas and impetus – for business and politics in Germany and Austria, but above all in Europe. The city of Salzburg was never located on a silk road, but a salt road that provided prosperity early on. Undoubtedly the city's most famous artist, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, was born there and contributed to Salzburg's becoming a cultural center. Hardly any location in the heart of Europe is better suited for contemplation and entertaining new trains of thought. This vibrant heart – Central Europe, in fact – offers enormous potential and also serves as a bridge to the East and Far East. The Trilogue has reflected this as well.

A range of perspectives can be found at the Trilogue, not only because of the different professions present; regional differences also offer new vantage points. The contrast in the way Europe is seen internally and externally is particularly great: The image of decay, of disintegration is often conveyed – the EU as a sick man, as a sinking ship or estranged family, home to blockades, intrigues, petty fights. Naturally, no one can deny that problems and disputes exist. Yet the opposite is also true: The EU sets standards that are considered exemplary from the US to China. The EU assists and supports, creates security and stability through peace missions and responsibly allocated development aid. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, €400 billion has been disbursed to the EU's new member states – a huge expression of solidarity and many times more than the US made available through its Marshall Plan after the Second World War. A gentle giant, the EU makes our planet

more livable, sustainable, open and secure – even if it is not always aware of its considerable power.

In his essay *After Europe*, Bulgarian political scientist and Trilogue participant Ivan Krastev analyzes how democracy and globalization have changed: “What was until recently a competition between two distinctive forms of government – democracy and authoritarianism – has evolved in the wake of the global financial crisis into a competition between two different forms of the statement: ‘There is no alternative politics.’” Krastev criticizes that even in democracies, policy decisions are increasingly presented as having no alternative – which, after all, contradicts the very nature of democracy. The Trilogue has always been a search for possible alternatives, for best practices, for new pathways – as the quintessence of every democracy, as nourishment for free, independent citizens.

Apropos freedom: It has undoubtedly suffered the most during the Covid-19 pandemic. Not only because of the clear restrictions on movement, the social distancing and lockdowns. The state’s paternalism is evident far beyond its pandemic-management efforts. No European politician is promoting the EU these days as a force of openness, one that transcends borders even on the continent itself, or advocates in the wider world for liberalization, free trade and political progress. All of Europe is bunkering down and putting up barriers. The EU now seems to be, first and foremost, a defense mechanism and bulwark – against Chinese corporate acquisitions and American digital enterprises, against illegal migrants and against the threat of dumping from post-Brexit Britain. A Europe that curls itself up like a hedgehog and spreads its spines is not our idea of Europe. Anyone who fears freedom should consider the words of former US President Thomas Jefferson: “Timid men prefer the calm of despotism to the tempestuous sea of liberty.”

Jean Monnet once said he would, in a second attempt, give the European project a cultural foundation. That is an interesting and at the same time disquieting thought. It is precisely its diversity that makes our European way of life unique. That is even truer for the global community. Perhaps cultural exchange, translation, communication, contact, jointly organized festivals – without hegemony or a mania for centralization – would allow peaceful coexistence to flourish among the world’s peoples. That was ultimately what

Monnet was pursuing with the European idea: “We are not uniting states, we are bringing people closer together.”

If, in the 20 years that the Trilogue Salzburg has been taking place, it has succeeded in bringing at least a few people closer together and igniting some new ideas, then they can be seen as wonderful injections of courage for the future – whatever it might bring.

Courage in an Age Lacking Courage: An Appeal

Helga Rabl-Stadler
President of the Salzburg Festival

“Our Salzburg Festival House is meant to be a symbol. It is not the founding of a theater, not a project called to life by a few starry-eyed fantasists, and not the undertaking of a provincial town. It is a matter of European culture. And of eminent political, economic and social importance.” Those were the self-assured, urgent and unmistakable words used by poet and Salzburg Festival founder, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, as he described the task Salzburg faced 100 years ago.

And in his 1917 memorandum, composed in the midst of “the ravages of this war,” von Hofmannsthal’s congenial partner, director Max Reinhardt, wrote of the “terrible reality of our days,” of the “conflagration enveloping the world” that the Salzburg Festival could and should repudiate. Founding a festival was meant to be “one of the first works of peace.” The festival owes its existence to this firm belief in the power of art and in Salzburg as a seat of power.

It seems entirely logical to me that the Trilogue was founded at the beginning of the new millennium in the “heart of the heart of Europe” (as Hofmannsthal defined my hometown). Above all, I would like to thank Liz Mohn in particular for mobilizing all of the Bertelsmann Stiftung’s intellectual and organizational resources, and for continuing to make them available. I would like to thank Wolfgang Schüssel that the decision was made in favor of Salzburg. After all, this city is ideal for thinking about the world, for thinking anew and thinking ahead.

What Reinhardt postulated about the festival applies here, too, to some extent. He was convinced that the exceptional could only

be achieved “at a remove from the everyday bustle of city life” and “far from the distractions of the metropolis.” The gatherings at the Trilogue, which usually give rise to inspiring exchanges after just a few hours, show that he was right. And the evening visits to the festival have always been more than mere entertainment – if I may say so.

“Art is a language that uncovers the hidden, tears open the sealed, makes tangible what is innermost, one that warns, excites, unsettles, gladdens.” That is what the great Austrian conductor Nikolaus Harnoncourt passionately proclaimed to the audience during his remarks as the Salzburg Festival celebrated its 75th anniversary. “A work of art that wants to inspire, to move, needs qualified rejection as much as it needs approval” and “the great artworks are masterpieces because they always have something to say to people – even if every generation sees something different.” The title of his remarks was “What Is Truth? or Zeitgeist and Trends.”

Especially today, policy makers from all parties are tempted to follow the zeitgeist, allowing them to celebrate quick successes online. To me, that makes art’s contribution all the more important. No, artists are not smarter, they do not occupy the moral high ground. But in a time of hasty answers, they know how to ask questions that force – at best, inspire – the public to reflect.

Max Reinhardt, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss were firmly convinced that antique mythology offered subtle possibilities for interpreting modern problems of both a personal and political nature. Von Hofmannsthal, Strauss’s favorite librettist, put it thus: “For if this age of ours is anything, it is mythical – I know of no other expression for an existence which unfolds in the face of such vast horizons – for this being surrounded by millennia, for this influx of Orient and Occident into our self, for this immense inner breadth, these mad inner tensions, this being here and elsewhere, which is the mark of our life. It is impossible to catch all this in middle-class dialogues. Let us write mythological operas! Believe me, they are the truest of all forms.”

Our operas *Salome* and, this year, *Elektra*, provide impressive, breathtaking proof of this thesis. The temporal distance enables us to clearly see, as with a magnifying glass, the eternally valid conflicts: war and peace, love and hatred, forgiveness and revenge.

And anyone looking for change architects could very well find them among our artists. Director Peter Sellars incorporated environmental issues into his productions long before Greta Thunberg took to the streets for the same cause – not bathetically, not using a sledgehammer, but with an artist’s sensibility for the looming catastrophe.

The Trilogue gave representatives of art and culture an equal place at the table with captains of industry and government ministers, so they could negotiate the future – a position we had to struggle for in the quotidian political arena during the pandemic. Everything else seemed more important – the hospitality industry, retail, the agricultural lobby. Yet the longer the lockdown went on, the more people quoted Reinhardt: art not as mere decoration, but as nourishment. And suddenly, the Salzburg Festival was again being praised for being what it was originally created to be: a beacon in dark times.

In April 2020, however, sympathies were not on our side. At a time when practically all other festivals were being cancelled, one feuilleton writer for a German-language publication stooped to the scurrilous assertion that “the Salzburg Festival undoubtedly wanted to become the cultural world’s Ischgl.”

Should we have allowed the coronavirus to wrest control completely and let the long-planned 100th anniversary of the world’s largest classical music festival simply go unobserved? Or was it more appropriate to carry out the event – while always giving the health of our artists, employees and audiences top priority, of course – so it could set an example of the power of art in a powerless time? No one could give us advice, there were no precedents to look to. The mood at the highest leadership levels was – and remains – marked by uncertainty, whether in business, politics or culture.

The lockdown imposed by governments was followed by an equally fatal lockdown in the brains, in the responses of those who should actually be leading, be thinking of alternatives. That the Metropolitan Opera closed its doors in March 2020 and announced it would reopen sometime in the autumn of 2021 after an incredible 18 months is not merely a loss for opera fans. It will be a blot on New York’s reputation as a cultural metropolis for a long time to come. It discredits the value of art. Art and culture are nourishment. They are essential services.

The Salzburg Festival provides both meaning and employment – we were always aware of this dual responsibility when we took the risk of performing during the pandemic. It was a calculated risk, not a gamble. We acted in keeping with an idea advanced by Peter F. Drucker, the first management guru: “There is the risk you cannot afford to take, and there is the risk you cannot afford not to take.” Had we cancelled, our lack of courage would have been a cause for shame in light of our founding fathers, who believed in the need for festivals in much more difficult times.

Last year’s summer season was at times a veritable purgatory – even as the pandemic continues to cast its shadow over us this year as well. But by September we had near-heavenly results: a sold-out festival, a giant step forward in terms of digitalization, a thousand good ideas on how we can offer faster and even better service to our greatest asset, our loyal customers from 80 countries around the world.

I am certain that my appeal for courage in an age lacking courage will be well received, especially by Trilogue participants, and to that end I would like to cite Hugo von Hofmannsthal once more: “When the will alone bestirs itself, something has almost already been attained.”

I very much hope that, in the coming decade, the Trilogue will continue to infect decision makers from around the world with the will to engage in discourse and debate.

Europe's Role in the World

The aftermath of the financial and debt crisis has not yet been overcome, the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic cannot yet be foreseen, relations with neighboring countries have not been defined, the question of the extended workbench has not been answered, and the refugee issue has not been resolved. There are, moreover, self-inflicted shortcomings, since Europe's basic values are ignored when convenient, Brexit remains unsettling and lessons have yet to be learned from vaccination-distribution efforts. Not to mention the problems that ensue when populists call the entire notion of a unified Europe into question, or when expectations are raised and demands made from both within and without. Europe currently faces numerous challenges that are affecting the continent's very foundations and ability to coexist.

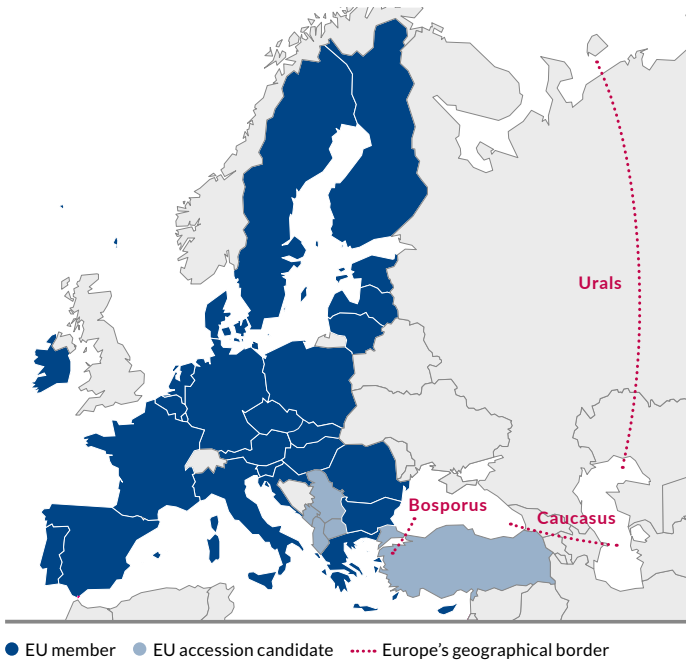
Europe has experienced – and survived – dramatic crises again and again. Not by merely putting up with everything, but by responding to and overcoming crises when they happen. One strength in this regard is Europe's diversity – and we Europeans should be proud of our manifold lifestyle, which many in the world admire and feel is worth emulating. Yet more and more people here have little appreciation for our own way of life. It's paradoxical: On the one hand, Europe and the European Union are, in this age of globalization, bigger, stronger and more influential than ever before. On the other, the continent has seldom seemed more hesitant and divided internally: Communal rules are broken, solidarity merits no more than a wan smile. Purported national interests are praised instead.

Yet what is this Europe? Which role are we talking about that Europe must, can or should assume in the world? Is it time to redefine the role of the “European house,” and does it even need a new role in the world at all? Does a common understanding exist of these issues? Is a robust vision needed if Europe’s role in the world is to be respecified?

The emergence of Europe as we know it

Geographically, Europe forms, together with Asia, the continent of Eurasia and is therefore “only” a subcontinent – the western fifth of the Eurasian land mass. Distinct boundaries, such as the North Atlantic and Mediterranean, do not exist to clearly differentiate

Europe's Borders



Source: Authors' depiction

Europe from Asia, which is why cartographers and politicians have always been confronted with the question of which countries should be counted as part of the European continent. The vague border runs along the Ural Mountains and Ural River to the Caspian Sea, as well as to the Caucasus Mountains, Black Sea and Bosphorus. This Europe comprises between 47 and 49 sovereign states lying wholly or partly within these borders.

Yet Europe has long been much more than just a geographic concept. Historically, it has been marked by the colonies that individual countries established during the age of imperialism, allowing them to generate wealth and exert political influence. Moreover, the onset of industrialization turned Europe and its nations into a global region of growth and prosperity. But the frequent assertion of national interests led to wars initiated by – and waged in – European countries. The return of troops from all parts of the world after the First World War allowed the Spanish flu to spread globally, causing further suffering. After several years of peace and reconstruction, fascism and the Second World War followed, which once again put a spotlight on the European continent as a central theater of war and led to widespread destruction of lives, property and natural resources.

After the Second World War, the Cold War – combined with the founding of a European Economic Community – divided the continent into Eastern and Western Europe. Correspondingly, common rules were established for a European Community predicated on solidarity, economic growth, democratic values and the hope for peace. With the reunification of Germany, the demise of the Warsaw Pact and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, fears faded that the Cold War might turn hot.

The vision of a united Europe

Europe, however, has long been much more than just a shared history – and its experiences and lessons from the past should be used to inform its future role. Although its different cultures and religions have led to conflict in the past – and in some cases continue to do so today – they can now, thanks to numerous shared values, coexist peacefully and enrich our European way of life. First and

foremost, the inviolability of human dignity is seen as especially worthy of protection here, and is regarded as the cornerstone of all basic rights. Also fundamental for Europe's communal life is the freedom its citizens have to express their opinion, choose their religious affiliation and assemble without having to fear (government) persecution or exclusion. Representative democracy, the equality of all citizens, the rule of law and human rights are other values and goals that have been laid out by the European Union in the Treaty of Lisbon and the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights.

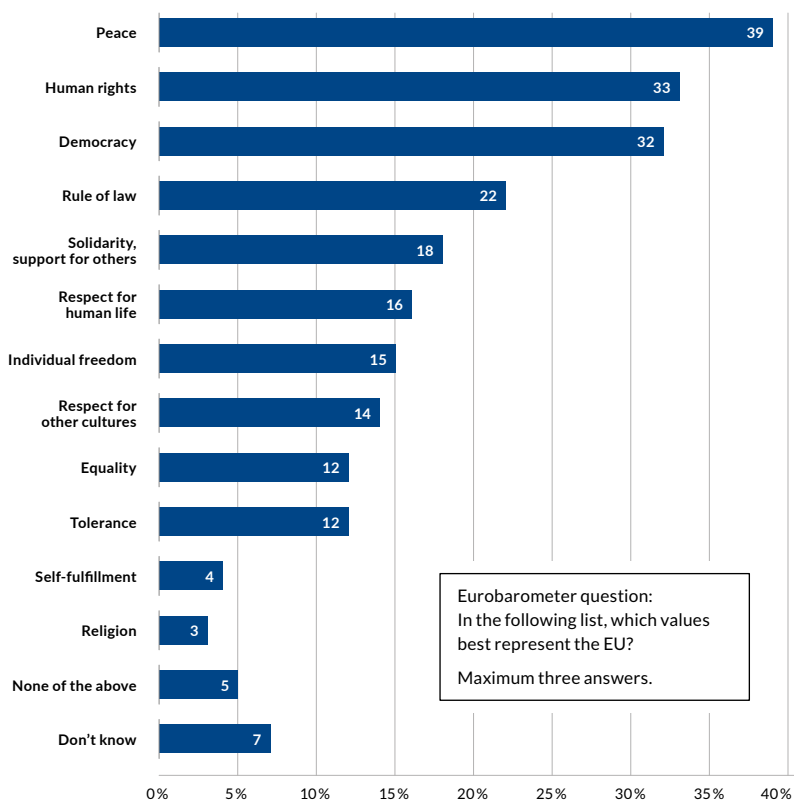
Yet Europe means much more than a shared understanding of values. At the latest since Konrad Adenauer and Robert Schuman, it has been a political factor, behind which stand a political will and political force for shaping events. After all, throughout history European states have repeatedly formed alliances, such as the Congress of Vienna, the Council of Europe, the European Union and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). These have served to achieve common objectives and prevent conflicts among states, thus improving lives on the continent, preserving peace and promoting prosperity.

To that extent, Europe is also an idea, a vision, a cohesiveness. And, no, this idea is not perfect and many things must be improved. Yet can the answer be to focus on going it alone and on the things that divide? How are peace, freedom and prosperity to be ensured if everyone in Europe proceeds down a different path once again? And how is a fractious Europe supposed to help shape the world we live in? Would such a Europe be taken seriously by the world's other powers? After all, this vision of a united Europe was and is the foundation for prosperity and growth.

One of Europe's milestones in the 21st century was the introduction of a common currency. It has facilitated trade within the eurozone and strengthened the pre-existing single market. Free trade agreements with nations and alliances around the world guarantee that, within the global economy, the union itself is now seen as important, instead of individual European states.

At the same time, digitalization is accelerating and easing international communication and global trade. The world is growing even closer together and the younger generation in particular enjoys a range of opportunities. For example, when young people seek

European Values



Source: European Commission. Eurobarometer 89: European Citizenship. 03/2018.

employment, they can choose a job not only in their home country, but also in numerous countries around the world. However, the negative effects that can result from a global economy of this sort were made apparent by the worldwide economic crisis and subsequent euro crisis. Both events not only devoured trillions in financial resources, they also weakened the trust and hope many young people have in the EU. The member states' high levels of debt reduced their room for maneuver in terms of policy responses, and made joint solutions necessary.

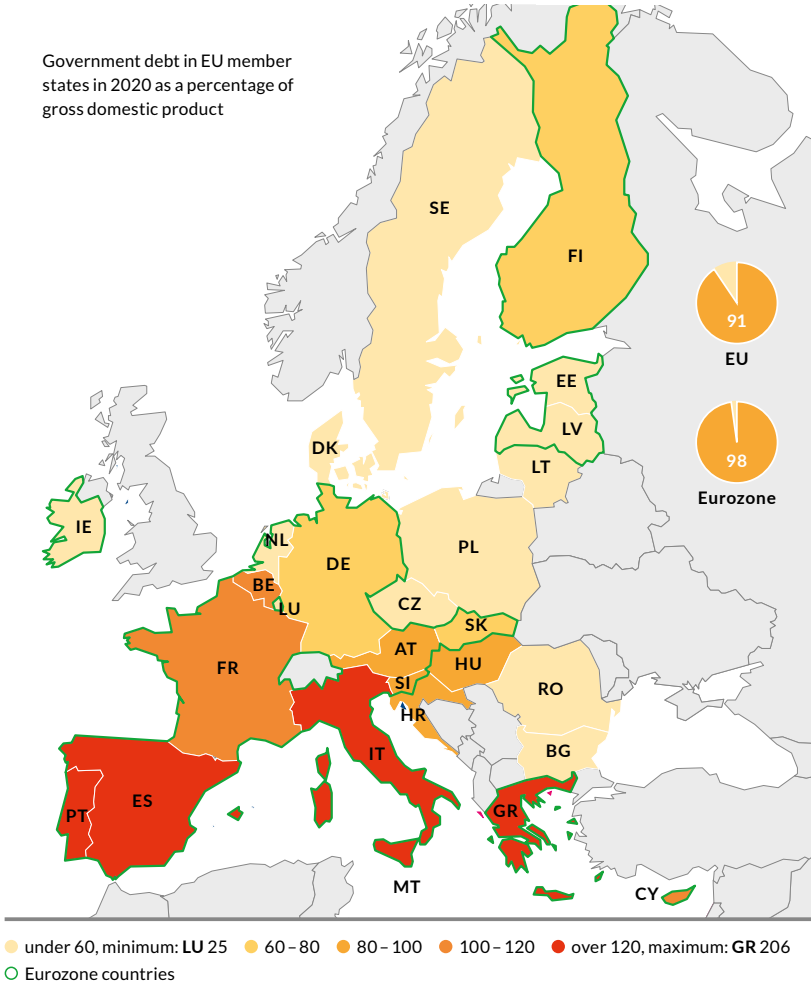
Yet Europe is much more than an economic power. It is the joint search for solutions to crises that affect all European states to varying degrees. Since the outbreak of civil war in Syria at the latest, the ongoing influx of refugees has repeatedly confronted the EU with challenges in terms of its migration and foreign policy. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that those of us living in the relatively prosperous countries north of the Mediterranean do not bear the main burdens that result from dislocation and displacement. Those fall instead on the countries bordering the crises, to which people first flee from war, persecution and devastation. Although the political divisions between Eastern and Western Europe seemed to have been overcome at the beginning of the century, the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by Russia made a new EU security policy necessary. Additionally, a trend towards Euroskepticism became evident in the 2014 European elections, one that has been reinforced since then by increasing nationalism in more and more countries.

While many Europeans view democracy as the best political system for their country, they increasingly doubt how effective policy makers can be. The growing presence of populist parties in Europe's parliaments is also increasingly altering today's democracy. Many people now see this as a threat to liberal democracy, whose success very much depends on the courage to compromise. How can we strengthen cohesion in (European) society in the future, so we can continue to live and share the humane, democratic values we know? Not least, the UK's departure from the European Union raises the question of how Europe's role will evolve over time.

So we see that Europe plays a different role depending on the point of view, and that, given how it sees itself, it must fulfill not one, but numerous roles. Our job is to define and determine what

European Government Debt

Government debt in EU member states in 2020 as a percentage of gross domestic product



Source: Eurostat; authors' calculations

they are. Yet no continent can define its role independently of its neighbors and the global community of states, nor can it overcome all by itself the challenges it will face over time. No country can develop solutions on its own. We are witnessing the rise of many Asian nations, especially China. Many people in these countries are now better off. Yet can we join with them to find a new, a shared, a peaceful way to coexist – politically and economically? After all, we live neither in a European nor in an American, not even in an Asian century. We live in a global century.

Partnership with neighbors

For the first time, we are experiencing the dangers wrought by a global virus, including its impact on politics, business and society. Covid-19 knows no borders. Yet we are also experiencing cooperation in the fight against the virus – across borders, continents, religions, ideologies, world views. Shouldn't global threats connect us in the future instead of dividing us? We have yet to achieve global solidarity. Europe's future role, however, will depend on how it is defined in terms of its interactions with other world regions, and how Europe's relationship – or, more precisely, that of the European Union – is shaped vis-à-vis other regions.

This necessarily includes reflecting the status quo in the countries located directly next door. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) focuses on providing the EU's immediate neighbors to the south and east with incentives to implement reforms in the areas of rule of law and democracy. At the same time, the countries themselves decide to what degree they will develop ties to the EU on this basis. Numerous individual measures have also been designed to promote relations: Programs for fostering regional cooperation among the partner countries themselves and with the EU include the Eastern Partnership (EaP), which was established in May 2009 under the Czech EU Council presidency; in addition, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), established in July 2008 under the French EU Council presidency, is meant to play a key role as a multilateral forum for political dialogue and regional cooperation. Here, the EU serves primarily as an economic partner and mediator for its near