



European Economic  
and Social Committee



The newsletter of the Association of Former Members of the EESC

2024

# EUROPEAN COUNTRIES FLAGS



Norway



Germany



Slovenia



Iceland



Bulgaria



United  
Kingdom



Czech Republic



Italy



Finland



Ukraine



Switzerland



Ireland



Bosnia and  
Herzegovina



Estonia



Slovakia



Liechtenstein



Latavia



Austria



Belgium



Andorra



Montenegro



Lithuania



Hungary



Netherlands



Belarus



Romania



Luxembourg



Portugal



Sweden



France



Spain



Albania



Denmark



Macedonia



Croatia



Monaco



Poland



Serbia



Greece



Moldova

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## BIANNUAL REVIEW THAT MAY CONTAIN ANACHRONISMS



### EDITORIAL

Jacques DELORS

He was born in Paris on 20 July 1925. His father had survived the First World War, but had been severely disabled in it; his mother was a hatter.

He started work at the Bank of France as an employee in one of the lower grades, then thanks to his talent, but also – and above all – his hard work, he climbed the ladder of the hierarchy relatively quickly. That did not prevent him from taking up senior trade union management posts at the same time, first in the CFTC (French Confederation of Christian Workers) and then in the CFDT (French Democratic Confederation of Labour).

It is therefore no coincidence that Jacques Delors made lifelong learning one of his main objectives as European Commission President.

In 1969, he was appointed to the cabinet of Prime Minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas, a former resistance fighter close to General de Gaulle. He joined the Socialist Party in 1974 and was elected to the European Parliament in the 1979 elections. He resigned from the Parliament in 1981 to serve as Minister of Economy and Finance in the first socialist government, under Pierre Mauroy.

In 1984, the Heads of State and Government of the ten member countries of the European Communities agreed that Jacques Delors should be President the European Commission as of 1 January 1985. This was probably one of the best decisions they could ever make.

During the ten years he was Commission President, the process of European integration came on in leaps and bounds. The process that set social dialogue on an institutional footing (1985), the Schengen Agreements (1985 and 1990), the Single European Act (1986), the ERASMUS programme (1987) and Economic and Monetary Union (1991), as well as the creation of the European Central Bank and the introduction of the single currency – these are some of the important milestones we mainly owe to Jacques Delors.

His motto, ***‘Competition that stimulates, cooperation that strengthens, and solidarity that unites’***, had a very specific meaning, in particular as regards the concept of solidarity, to which many politicians often merely pay lip service.

For his part, President Delors had every intention of putting these three concepts into practice – which he did. A large number of initiatives put in place during his presidency aimed at bringing real substance to the concept of solidarity.

I had the good fortune and great honour to debate with Jacques Delors at meetings of the Executive Committee of the European Trade Union Confederation and at EESC plenary sessions. I shall never forget that in November 2011, at the French Economic, Social and Environmental Council in Paris, Jacques Delors – accompanied by his faithful assistant Jean-Pierre Bobichon – spent a whole morning debating the future of the European Union with leaders of the French trade unions and the entire EESC Workers’ Group.

I also had the privilege of taking part in various informal meetings and get-togethers with other friends and peers, also attended by Jacques Delors. What stands out for me is that all the projects he undertook in the course of his ten years as President of the Commission – and most likely throughout his whole lifetime – were human-centred. Jacques Delors passed away on 27 December 2023, but his actions and his spirit will remain alive as long as there are Europeans on this earth.

**Georges Dassis**

AFM PRESIDENT





## CELEBRATING LEGACY, FOSTERING FUTURE CONNECTIONS

Good morning everyone! My name is Laurențiu Plosceanu and I am the current EESC Vice-President for communication.

I have been a member for 17 years, and during my time here I have had the privilege to meet so many men and women who helped me understand the added value of our Committee and the importance of organised civil society, working as a bridge between the civil society and the EU institutions.

Some of the EESC members that I met during my mandate are now part of the Association of former EESC members. I am pleased to see that the association further promotes the image of our committee also in the different EU countries and preserve the European spirit among former members.

Last April, I had the honour to represent the current EESC President, Oliver Röpke, at the general assembly of the Association of Former EESC members. I could explain that the EESC went back to where it belongs, as new goals have been achieved showing that the EESC is able to make the difference.

Moreover, our committee introduced new initiatives. These include the Enlargement Candidate members initiative, aimed at integrating civil society from candidate countries in the work of the EESC, and the call for Blue Deal, a comprehensive set of recommendations for a sustainable water policy.

The committee also made his voice heard at the international stage, as we took part in many important events, such as the COP in Dubai, the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the UN commission on the Status of Women in New York.

Recently, the EESC also celebrated an important milestone: the 65th anniversary of the birth of the committee. It was a proud moment to reflect on our achievements, to which you also contributed, and the way forward.

Now, the message of our committee is clear: show that the EESC is the connected EU advisor, improving the legislation since 1958. It is for this reason that we count on the help of the association of former members, as a tool to raise awareness of the EESC, its role and its work and to establish a genuine and effective link between its members and the EESC. That is why the EESC will always rely on the help of the former members association, a close friend which links the past and the present.

Laurentiu Plosceanu

EESC Vice-President



## A PORTRAIT OF ISABELLE LE GALO FLORES, EESC

Isabelle Le Galo Flores, French and Spanish by nationality, is the new EESC secretary-general. She is a mathematical engineer who studied political science in Paris. She discovered the EESC 30 years ago and immediately felt that it was an essential part of our European democratic model. She has dedicated this last decade to a sponsorship foundation working on systemic change to secure sustainable food supply and citizen art. Democracy and peace have been central values throughout her life.

Ms Le Galo Flores has devoted her career to social innovation, positive impact and empowering people, with a strong commitment to gender equality and diversity. She received the *Top 100 Women Leaders* in Spain award. Her approach is based on the direct, indirect and collective systemic impact on each other of different players and institutions within the same ecosystem. She intends to use this expertise to enable the EESC to assess and demonstrate its impact in society — the inclusion of young people is a tangible example that can make a difference.

Ms Le Galo Flores wants to exploit the talents available at the EESC, which are present and active. She has worked extensively on collective intelligence methodologies based on shared reflection drawing on each participant's experiences, trajectories, trials and learning. She will advance hand in hand with the Committee's political authorities to continue to strengthen the links uniting us with civil society and to make them more visible.

The new secretary-general aims to use her term in office to help build the common, democratic future of the peoples of Europe, in a challenging and rapidly-changing context where our collective intelligence is our best ally.



## 30 YEARS OF THE SINGLE MARKET

As the current president of the EESC's Internal Market Section (INT) I can tell you that we do have a quite a busy agenda and most probably very similar discussions to those that you led here in Brussels. As you are aware we celebrated 30 years of the Single Market recently – but while it is one of the greatest assets of the EU, it remains far from being complete.

Our current battles about “gold plating” of EU regulations by the member states, the rather fragmented implementation and very different enforcement of EU rules on the national level, are unfortunately, nothing new. Many of the problems companies are confronted with, such as exorbitant reporting obligations, non-compliant products from third countries entering the Internal Market or access to finance, you already tried to solve during your years of service in the EESC.

Thus, I'm grateful for this opportunity to exchange with you and assure you that we recognise the treasure of knowledge that you hold and that we would be happy to tap it for our work today.

Of course, there are some new developments, new technologies have entered our lives, and also the geopolitical situation has undergone a change from even only two decades ago. We unfortunately, have cause to doubt the hitherto good relationship between the EU and the U.S. can be continued. This also translates into economic worries about tariffs, or about the poaching of innovative companies. We have seen and even aided the ascent of another huge economic power house in the East, and are now faced with strong economic competition from China. In response to these developments we are now in a situation where we no longer create global partnerships and aim to build multilateral rules based trade networks but we find ourselves in a situation where we have to guard our Single Market, our manufacturers, our companies, our entrepreneurs from unfair practices abroad, where we have to screen investments much more closely to avoid foreign state powers getting control over critical infrastructures.

The EU is entering a defence mode – both on the military level but also regarding its economic interests. The world is becoming more transactional and we have to adapt to these developments.

Sandra Parthie

current president of the EESC's Internal Market Section (INT)

## INTERNAL MARKET



## EESC — A PART OF THE LIVING VOICE

On Tuesday April 9th, Lucie Studničná, President of the Workers' Group, delivered an intervention at the meeting of the Association for Former Members.

Lucie highlighted how proud and honoured she was when looking back at all the invaluable work and commitment made by the former members of the European Economic and Social Committee to shape European policies that promote equal opportunities, social rights, social justice, human rights, freedom and a fair distribution of wealth and resources. Tireless efforts and vital contributions were made which had a significant impact on the lives of people across the continent and which have been invaluable in protecting human and workers' rights, promoting gender equality, and combating discrimination and exclusion in all its forms.

She then highlighted how the EESC was a part of the living voice of organized civil society which represents a fundamental aspect of our democracies, an aspect which is sometimes overlooked. All the hard work from the Workers' Group members, as well as the work from the other two groups play a key part in making this world a better place for all. This is particularly needed in the wake of a pandemic, a cost of living crisis, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the war in the Middle East.

"Fundamental rights, equality, social dialogue and solidarity, democracy in the wider sense, are not cosmetic additions to be set aside when difficult times show up on our doors. They constitute the foundations of who we are, and without them, everything would crumble to the ground", she said. And she added, "the speed and severity by which civil society is silenced and repressed in certain countries should give us a clear picture of why our work matters. As many other things in our countries, we take it often as a given. But it is not a given. It is a hard-fought right, and as such, we must always remain vigilant. The policies and legislation shaped by the committee have helped to create a more just and fair society, where social rights, human rights, and civil liberties are respected and protected".



With the forthcoming EU elections, Lucie argued that it was important to remain hopeful about the future. The fact that we have a legitimate right to decide our future is the cornerstone of democracy and this right must be protected at all costs.

Lucie took a moment to make an homage to Jacques Delors and his vision and ideas, his way of handling things which is something very needed in this very time. His presidency was also not short of crises and challenges from the collapse of the Soviet Block to the wars in former Yugoslavia but this did not deter him from tackling the social challenges of this time. He saw social partners' cooperation as the necessary balance of the single market, and this he brought to the European Commission with him. A fundamental impulse to social dialogue was the Val Duchesse social dialogue process, initiated in 1985 by his presidency, involving for the first-time employers and workers at European level in the Single Market.

During Delors' mandate, the Commission requested the EESC to explore the possible contents of a Community Charter of Basic Social Rights. The Single European Act laid the legal basis for community-wide social dialogue, with the establishment of what in 1992 became the Social dialogue Committee, the main forum for social dialogue at European Level. Jacques Delors was decisive in the creation of the single market, the Maastricht Treaty, the Euro, and in many ways the European Union as we know it today. And this includes our main building, named after him.

"Europe", he said in our Workers' Group meeting in 2011, 'should not just be the fireman, but also the architect, defending European wellbeing and the rights secured during the 20th Century".

Lucie closed her intervention by saying that the best way to honour his memory and efforts was by continuing his work. To carry that same flame of political courage and vision, and demand of the next European Commission the same spirit. Now more than ever we will need this.

Lucie Studničná, President of the Workers' Group



# AN INCLUSIVE EU

There is a certain truth that once you have left the school building as a student and return as a visitor, it all looks different. The furniture is smaller, the windows seem different and there is an overwhelming feeling of having outgrown it. The same goes for all former members of a club, and former members of the workforce. So when I recently asked a former Member of the EESC what it is like to be back for the former Members' meeting, the counter question was: where are the British Members and what is the behind-the-scenes gossip? And the former British Members, who do return, were equally perplexed at how the rest of the EU is doing without them. The fact is that the referendum on Brexit is, at the time of writing, coming up to its eighth anniversary. Since then, everything has changed for the United Kingdom and the EU, even if it might look the same to some. After Brexit, there was talk of more exits from the EU. There was a lot of soul searching as to whether the EU had lost the support of some members and whether some would try to redefine their membership in a way that would give them back more sovereignty. Russia's decision to invade Ukraine, a sovereign state, and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have irrevocably changed all that. The breaching of a sovereign border has shocked Europe to the core.

Historically, Europe has changed borders, often because of aggression. After the two World Wars, we firmly believed that it would never happen again. But it has. Russia's breach of this unwritten rule has raised the likelihood that re-shaping borders by means of war is acceptable. This in effect is a return to the chaos and strife that has bedevilled Europe for centuries.

For the EESC, these historic events have changed Members' attitudes towards their membership of the Committee and the war has signalled a new type of debate at the Committee, one that links everything to this illegal invasion.

Twenty years after the Union's biggest expansion, enlargement is back on the political agenda. The EU is now also concerned about security of energy supply and the whole debate around military defence has changed. Even the role of civil society in its broader sense is now up for debate.

Successive EU leaders have constantly referred to the concept of building bridges between citizens and Brussels. They have never defined the bridge or indeed how many would cross it. Nor have they agreed on whether the mere act of crossing it would be enough to narrow the widening gap between civil society and the State.

But unfortunately, there is still a significant gap. We see it in the polls for the [European elections](#). Voters still use the

European Parliament as a type of experiment, even though its powers have considerably increased since its inception. There is a rise in extremist ideologies, much of it frighteningly familiar to the prevailing ideology after the First World War.

Talking to former Members, I am struck by your strong sense of achievement and your inherent belief that Europe needs to stay on the path of peace. Your views were poignant. There was a sense of real hope, whether it was better trading conditions in a fluid single market, or whether it was the development of proper conditions and rights of workers, or the pursuit of social progress in the field of fundamental rights, global poverty, equality and social justice.

These were and still remain enormous challenges. Today, we have a widening chasm between citizens and the State. As in the 1920s, 'SUPER NATIONALISM' is on the rise. Unfortunately, the main objective of super nationalists is to obliterate all others, or at least to deliver as much humiliation as possible. However, the EU was created, amongst other things, so that as many national governments as possible could come together and embrace the range of possibilities of future human civilisation. Equally, to embrace with respect the differences that naturally exist. Differences that can deliver healthy respect and admiration.

In the EESC, we have thousands of civil society organisations connected to our membership. We have networks of communities involved in efforts to improve citizen's well-being. But there is a challenge: The EU and each of its 27 Member States will need to involve these organisations - in a more open, transparent and regular way - in terms of a meaningful civil dialogue. If they fail to embrace these organisations, then they will eventually lose any connection between citizens and government. This is why I am grateful that not only current Members but also former Members of the EESC are helping to raise the importance of civil dialogue in their respective Member States. In these uncertain times, and in view of the increasing polarisation of populations, it is more important than ever to build bridges between people and politicians.

Séamus Boland

President

Civil Society Organisations' Group of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)



# UNE UNION EUROPÉENNE INCLUSIVE



## EUROPEAN ELECTIONS IN URGENT NEED OF 'EUROPATRIOTS'

As the war rages on its doorstep, the European Union is about to elect a new Parliament without Russia's aggression having really shaken its day-to-day business. Beyond the necessary sanctions and NATO-backed assistance, the Union has not gone as far as taking action on the ground, reviewing its security dependence or re-examining its own incomplete state. With the war threatening its members in Central and Eastern Europe, it remains mired in internal disputes and half-measures. Will the 'mishmash' so derided by Charles de Gaulle during the ECSC era be all that's left? Despite its many achievements (the single market, free movement, continental enlargement), the aim of its founding fathers - a federal Europe - remains a distant, utopian dream. The flame appears to have gone out, leaving the EU27 seemingly unable to shine a light on their common endeavour. There is no right path for those who don't know where they're going.

The EU has morphed into a free trade area, paying for enlargement with a loss of identity and direction, to the extent that it is a wonder why the British left since it represents everything they wanted - and in English to boot! But how can those who hoped the EU would become a united force accept such a situation? Despite the improvement under Jacques Delors, his successors have failed to remedy Europe's glut of shortcomings (leadership, budget, autonomy, defence, customs, taxation, turnout) and just as many national inconsistencies. This is Europe's reality now: muddled and confused. Seventy-three years on, De Gaulle's 'mishmash' remark has turned out to be quite the prophecy. While order needs to be restored, most see this as wishful thinking. Everyone is tending to their own affairs while Russia exploits our every weakness, including the great unknown of the forthcoming US presidential election.

As our usual step-by-step approach takes us closer to the abyss, there is only one way of standing up to Russia even if the US were to disengage: we urgently need to reverse our European deficiencies and national inconsistencies. Because, 'although men fear change, only change allows them to progress'. With our backs against the wall, the question will be less about the ability to succeed and more about the will. Faith can move mountains - but is there any left? Finding it again will require a kind of European patriotism never seen before, with Member States at last renouncing their national

exclusivity over all collective feelings and shared emotions.

This was once perfectly summed up by Julien Freund, the French- and German-speaking European activist: 'a political community that is not a homeland for its members ceases to be defended and quickly becomes dependent on others'. Over to the 'Europatriot' candidates, who are entirely free to present transnational lists, to win over the voters.

## ADVERTISING THROUGH INFLUENCERS AND ITS IMPACT ON CONSUMERS

One of the most characteristic aspects of the transformation seen in the audiovisual and electronic communications field is the rise of "influencers" – online content-creating users who disseminate messages systematically and in various formats (videos, comments, photos), achieving a high profile among the target audience to which they are addressed. These are individuals who apparently operate in a personal capacity and may have large number of followers building trust but also have commercial connections and earn money from such activities. This has a direct and indirect impact on the attitude of followers towards brands as well as on their consumer purchasing decisions.

The perception of closeness, authenticity and trust that characterises the relationship between influencers and consumers, which does not usually occur to the same degree with other social communication models, raises concern in particular for minors: the continued and prolonged use of social networks among minors, and their vulnerability as 'consumers' who are exposed to commercial communications often contain elements detrimental to their physical, psychological, social and emotional development

As regards the commercial communication, not only does the use of influencers as champions of products and brands allow **companies seeking to advertise to benefit from their impact and reputation**, but also, they are **reaching young people, who are harder to reach through more traditional mass media**. It also **affords such companies greater freedom** when developing sales arguments which they would not use in their conventional advertising and which sometimes circumvent the law. On the other hand, **advertisers themselves stress that the particular nature of influencers gives them a high degree of autonomy** in constructing the commercial message, which the normal advertiser cannot always control.

Although there are no specific rules at EU level governing the activity of content creators/influencers, there is existing legislation which provides an adequate level of protection for the dual activity that content creators/influencers can carry out in the single market: as advertisers and as sellers/producers. However, on the basis of this legislation, **various Member States have been developing their own laws** in response to the challenge posed by this phenomenon.

### Recommendations

As a result of the existing problems, it is necessary to improve and implement European legislation for specific illegal activities involving influencers and to harmonise it at

European level, with specific obligations for the administrators of the platforms on which they operate, and for content creators and/or influencers themselves (EU and non-EU residents).

The constant developments in this area, **requires immediate intervention** in order to ensure that the

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treatment of the "specific" illegal activities of content creators/influencers in the EU with equally specific obligations for the administrators of the platforms and social networks in which they operate, and for the content creators/influencers themselves (EU residents and non-EU residents) be addressed through the implementation of strong EU legislation.

Measures to be taken

The administrators of platforms and social media networks need to:

be jointly and severally liable for illegal content published by content creators/influencers;

be obliged – in all cases where illegal activity by content creators/influencers is reported – to take the necessary action to neutralise the illegal online communication and report the illegal activity carried out by content creators/influencers to the competent authority.

platforms and administrators of social networks should require all content creators/influencers operating outside the EU to identify clear legal liability within the EU and to hold professional indemnity insurance in case of harm caused by unlawful conduct.



**This harmonised treatment of influencers at European level should take into account, as a minimum, criteria such as:**

identifying the advertising nature of their messages with a commercial purpose using indicators and clear warnings, thereby avoiding covert advertising;

making these messages subject to sector-specific rules, in order to protect the health and safety of consumers and users, especially minors and other vulnerable groups;

considering the breach of rules to be an infringement committed by the influencer, without prejudice to the joint and several liability of advertisers and platforms and social networks.

Special attention should also be paid to

the improper or disparaging use of trade marks,

unauthorised financial products, and identity theft or fake influencers using the images of well-known people without their knowledge, which are increasingly common, particularly in relation to financial investments and cryptocurrencies.

This unlawful conduct could become increasingly sophisticated and widespread with the use of artificial intelligence (AI) techniques and must be tackled effectively.

There are a number of issues relating to the activity of content creators/influencers, such as:

their place in labour law, matters concerning income tax and VAT, and the specific activity carried out by influencers who are children, which we believe should be carefully analysed at EU level.

Despite the presence of some European rules, various forms of action are called for:

- adopt specific legislation on influencers;
- implement existing consumer protection legislation;
- publish guides and codes of conduct to establish good practices;
- use digital control and enforcement tools;
- provide training and certification for influencers;
- raise awareness and support consumers;
- facilitate compliance on platforms through standardised dissemination tools.

Given the existing problems, it is necessary to improve and implement European legislation for specific illegal activities involving influencers and to harmonise it at European level, with specific obligations for the administrators of the platforms on which they operate, and for content creators and/or influencers themselves (EU and non-EU residents).

***Grace Attard - General Secretary ACR Malta***

**There are a number of issues relating to the activity of content creators/influencers**

# THE BEACON OF EUROPEAN UNITY

I am not interested in political power as an end in itself; I am interested in it because it enables me to implement my ideas: my ideas regarding the social, economic and cultural prospects of our supranational collective.

Besides, the economic union of Europe itself began as an idea. And the idea remains that of integrating policy across the EU.

In the upcoming European elections, therefore, as I see it, what matters is not the process, but the outcome.

Given the above, what predominantly interests me are the European powers and candidates who will govern Europe and its citizens over the next five years.

That they will GOVERN us means, first and foremost, that they will ensure our survival. Our survival in a world that is constantly changing and becoming increasingly competitive and violent. The survival of our EUROPEAN IDEA, our EUROPEAN ENTITY and our EUROPEAN ACQUIS! And ultimately our survival CREATIVELY. That is to say, based on cooperation with the other major world

powers on the planet, but at the same time, on DEMOCRACY - democracy, autonomy, self-sufficiency and innovation!

In the upcoming election campaign, I identify and stand with those political forces who are looking for MORE EUROPE, a MORE POWERFUL EUROPE!

On the other hand, I oppose those who take a short-sighted approach, who lack insight and who ignore our traditional democratic standards. That is to say, those advocates of any kind of isolationism. That political idea and choice which has twice led our continent to disaster.

And a point to note:

For people around the world today, the unity between Europeans and their associated European achievements continue to be serve as a beacon. A beacon of the creative potential of humanity.

Christoforos KORFITIDIS



## FINLAND NEWS

In Finland, preparations for the elections to the European Parliament intensified in the spring. Fifteen representatives from Finland will be elected. The parties have appointed their candidates and finalised their electoral programmes, and election campaigns started to pick up momentum in May. Efforts have been made to stress the importance of citizens actively voting, for example through the EESC's 'Use your Vote' campaign. The various interest groups in society – business/employers, trade unions, farmers, etc. – have also clarified the priorities they hope the electoral candidates – and the newly elected parliamentarians – will work to pursue. Among other things, the five Finnish associations representing the interests of seniors are due to hold a major electoral debate together at the end of May. Their key priority is for the EU to agree on an age equality strategy, finalise a care strategy, and strive to ensure older people have better opportunities to be included in the digitalisation of society and the economy. The slogan is 'The Europe we want is for all ages!', as published in a manifesto of the European seniors' association AGE-Platform Europe.

affected by war (Ukraine and the Middle East/Gaza) have been recognised and feature as part of the public debate. Unfathomable acts of war continue to be waged against innocents, which is simply inexcusable. We greatly welcome the critical attention drawn to this issue by the president of the AFM, Georges Dassis, in his opening speech at the annual meeting of the AFM in April. The majority of victims are innocent individuals of all ages who, despite being blameless, have been ruthlessly impacted in their droves by the heinous acts of war inflicted on them. We can and will try to influence this by speaking out and expressing our indignation against the mass attacks on civilians and their homes – and appeal for them to stop immediately.

Filip Hamro-Drotz

The atrocities carried out against civil society in the areas





### The job advert read:

"Head of the European Commission Office in Northern Ireland"- essential criteria - 12 years post graduate journalistic experience, knowledge of EU Affairs, knowledge of Northern Ireland and fluency in a foreign language

Born in Belfast, I had an Honours Degree in European Studies from Ulster University. I had worked for 6 years as a journalist in Brussels covering EU affairs and returned to BBC Belfast to work for 6 years as a reporter. That gave me 12 years post graduate journalistic experience and, thanks to my 'Erasmus' year abroad, I was fluent in French. The advert could have been written for me! I applied.

I was convinced that my best pitch at interview would be to say that I would invite EC President, Jacques Delors for his first visit to Northern Ireland. So I called his office in Brussels to ask if this would be possible. They said yes. I got the interview. I got the job and started as Head of the EC Office in March, 1992. President Delors paid his first visit to Northern Ireland in December that year.

Just a few months into the job, I got an early call with shocking news. The building which housed the EC Office had been bombed. I rushed to the scene to find all the windows in tallest building in Belfast shattered. The army had cordoned it off but they let me through at my own risk. I put on a hard hat and went up to the top floor to discover a scene of total destruction with windows blown out, curtains flying and papers strewn all over the floor. Luckily, no one was injured.

True to his word, the EC President paid his first visit to Northern Ireland just weeks after the devastating bomb blast. On visiting the EC Office, he was visibly shocked to see boarded up windows, police body searches, army check-points and many other all too familiar features of the sorry aftermath of Belfast bombings.

Travelling by army helicopter, he spent two days in discussions with elected representatives, victims groups, Church leaders, X-offenders and other civil society organisations actively searching for solutions to the conflict. He went to Armagh by helicopter, landing in the Royal School to cheers from the crowds. He dined with the 'great and good' at Hillsborough Castle and met the young winners of the 'letter to Delors' competition. Most pleaded with him to bring peace and, in true Delors style, he did what he could to help make that happen.

President Delors was moved by these testimonies and impressed by the courage and resilience of the people he met. This was a vital learning experience as he sought to understand the complex political, religious, cultural, economic and social differences tearing communities apart. In his final press conference, when asked what the EU would do to help, Delors made a public promise which the EU has always kept. His answer was clear; "I will do something as soon as I am asked,". In other words, all the UK and Ireland had to do was 'ask'. Two years later they

did. Delors acted and the EU Member States responded with a £multi-billion PEACE programme which continues to this day.

The IRA announced a ceasefire on August 31, 1994 and, as promised, Delors immediately set the wheels in motion for the EU response. A meeting was held between Delors and the three Northern Ireland MEPs - Ian Paisley, John Hume and Jim Nicholson - on October 13, 1994 - the day the loyalist paramilitaries announced their ceasefire. The DUP leader later proclaimed that meeting was the best EC encounter he had experienced. This comes as no surprise because it resulted in the initiation of the longest, largest and most unique peace and reconciliation programme ever operated by the EU.

Immediately after that meeting, Delors set up a 'Task Force' which consisted of the Heads of the EC Offices in London, Dublin and Belfast. It was unusual but fortuitous that all three of us were from Northern Ireland. The Task Force included a team of EC experts led by the EC Secretary General, Carlo Trojan, and skilled EC staff including Colette FitzGerald, who later took over as Head of the EC office in Belfast. Input from the EC Office administrator, Jeanette Thornton, was also invaluable.

On the instruction of Jacques Delors, our mandate was to draw up a 'shopping' list of the needs of Northern Ireland in the new political climate created by the ceasefires, give it a price tag and deliver it to the EC President in time for the European Summit in Essen in December, 1994. That gave us less than two months to complete one of the biggest tasks many of us would ever attempt. We could have tried to rush it through but that was not the way Delors did business. He wanted input from the people he had met two years earlier at the grass roots, the coal face, the sharp end, the grave side and the gun barrel telling their tale.

In a 6-week consultation including reports drawn up by MEPs, conferences, moving moments and shocking revelations, a peace-building strategy started to emerge. One mission stands out. The EC Secretary General visited Belfast to see for himself. He went to the home of a family living in the shadow of a 'peace' wall separating the Catholic and Protestant communities. He sat in the small front room of the terrace house while his hosts told how they lived through the troubles. He may have had the top job in Brussels but this was no 'faceless' bureaucrat. Their exchange was genuine.

**The job advert read:...**

He listened and learned. As Chair of the Delors task force, his response was positive and heartfelt.

Another important occasion was when EC Regional Commissioner, Monika Wulf Mathias, who succeeded Michel Barnier, came to Northern Ireland to 'negotiate' a highly sensitive part of the PEACE programme. She met the three MEPs to test the possibility of political parties working together to access EU funding. The meeting took place outside Belfast and she insisted on going it alone. A testament to her skill as a former leader of the largest German Trade Union, she clinched the deal marking the beginning of local councillors from all political colours working with business and trade unions to access EU PEACE funds. Many still marvel at how she managed to pull it off!

Just days before the EU Summit in December 1994, the proposal was prepared, proofed and ready to go. The price tag was €300 million. The Heads of State and Government of the 12 Member States had a packed agenda but, thanks mainly to Delors, they reserved time for Northern Ireland. In a matter of minutes they unanimously agreed funding of €300 million for a four-year period. That was the start of the first ever Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. Three decades and two billion Euros later, the EU PEACE Programme is widely accepted as the most unique and successful peace initiative the EU has ever undertaken.

Jacques Delors left as EC President the end of 1994 having succeeded in what he often described as his greatest achievement. He secured a deal which would help lay the foundation for the Good Friday Agreement four years later. He was without doubt the greatest ever European Unionist. People in Northern Ireland still remember fondly his visit in 1992. He gave many not only the confidence to believe it was wrong to hate and right to work for equality, mutual respect, cross-community reconciliation and tolerance but he also provided the means, through the PEACE Programme, to move towards peace and reconciliation in a place which suffered decades of conflict.

That has been a reality since the Good Friday Agreement was signed in 1998. Peace, not yet perfect, has been 'dropping slow' ever since. The EU PEACE programme is one of the only EU programmes which continues after Brexit. In this way, the great Delors legacy lives on.

Jane Morrice  
Former Head EC Office, former Deputy Speaker NI Assembly NI Women's Coalition, former BBC Belfast reporter



<https://www.google.com/gasearch?q=itn%20jacques%20delors&tbm=&source=sh/x/gsm2/5#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:1e31399b,vid:tEDEBmk5G k,st:0>

# What will the European Union be like in 2050?

No one knows what the fate of the Union will be in an era that still seems far away. In hindsight we can imagine a very different geopolitical structure, with no more than five or six interlocutors that will dominate the scene of our planet.

First of all Russia, China, India with the immensity of their territories and the availability of immense wealth consisting of raw materials, energy sources, precious or rare metals and a system of government, criticizable as much as you want, but capable of effectively governing three immense countries, straddling two continents, Europe and Asia. The population of the three countries could represent in a few years two thirds and perhaps more, of the world population, accustomed for some time now to putting the general interest before their own personal interest. The vastness of their territories; in each of the three countries, a domestic market among the largest for production of wealth, production for domestic and export markets and domestic consumption, production of wealth; which now have considerable know-how; own assets or acquired through direct purchase or exploitation of local sources of resources in raw materials, rare metals. All these companies now have know-how of great strategic interest, where Western entrepreneurs had transferred production to take advantage of low wages; they end up selling or selling off to the highest bidder on the spot. On the African continent, probably South Africa, with the rest of the continent that climate change will have partly reduced to a desert and which will always be a resource for Europe, but also a considerable burden, on an economic, financial and human level. In South America, a probable predominance of Brazil, with an -2- population in almost exponential growth and the availability of immense wealth, partly yet to be exploited. Finally, the United States of America, which already influences decisions in many parts of the world and will continue to do so on a technological, economic and military level, on which the fate of our European Continent also largely depends. Western Europe, which largely corresponds to today's European Union (the eastern part is that of Russia and a certain number of satellites that all gravitate in Russia's zone of influence). The European Union is undoubtedly a part of the Continent at the forefront in terms of research, technological development, creation of wealth usable by the populations, and a state structure that is mostly democratic. But Europe, despite the legacy of its own culture, its own traditions, and unprecedented scientific and technological development, has several handicaps that will make it a poor continent for the future. Its population is decreasing more and more to the point that it is hypothesized that its population will decrease, in the next twenty-five years, from about five hundred and fifty million inhabitants in recent years to four hundred and fifty million, perhaps even to four hundred million towards 2050. The situation appears catastrophic for a continent that has only scarce resources of raw materials, normal and rare, very scarce energy sources and that is losing or selling off an important part of its know-how, which many of the economic areas of the planet that we mentioned before profit from. -3 This is the context in which the European Union finds itself operating: with many different handicaps: the excessive number of its members, destined to grow rapidly, according to the promises made to many countries, some of which, like

many Eastern European countries (already members of the Union), do not at all share our values, our objectives nor the strategy that seems to need to be implemented quickly. All this in spite of what had been agreed among the Members of the EEC at that time, that before a further enlargement there had to be a deepening of the contents, to provide the Community with the policies indispensable for its growth and for the financing of the same as well as for its "Governance". The Members of the EEC and the Institutions then had at their disposal a class of politicians excellent for their vision of the future of the Community and a political will that seems to be lacking in the Leadership of the Union today. Moreover, the Union today suffers from another handicap that could lead to a total impasse; perhaps even to an unprecedented disintegration of the Union, which would be irreversible: the requirement of a unanimous vote that makes any progress impossible if the amount requested, rightly or wrongly, by those exercising the right to vote has not first been paid, which without unanimity of consent makes the adoption of any initiative impossible.

The unanimous vote is a weapon in the hands of those who believe they can gain advantages by bartering their vote when it is essential, in any circumstance, to advance the UNION. -4- How to get out of it to move forward? In the "80s" the Community was in a deep crisis, almost without a way out. The Franco-German duo of the time proposed and succeeded in appointing a new President of the European Commission, an atypical figure in the European political landscape: Jacques DELORS! A man who had a conception, a vision and the iron will of how to get the Community out of the crisis in which it found itself. He conceived a "Plan and a strategy" to ferry the Common Market towards the "SINGLE MARKET"; he did the same in the following decade with the proposal of "Economic and Monetary Union" of which only the Monetary Union and the Single Currency managed to bring it to fruition. He did it with two Treaties, "The Single European Act" and the "Schengen Treaty"; both Treaties had an intergovernmental character and only later were the instruments adopted to transpose everything into the Community legal system. The result is before us: we have a Single Market that has been largely achieved and free circulation assured "for People, goods, capital and services", which the Court of Justice, with a series of subsequent rulings, has confirmed and consolidated in their existence as well as in their operation. The current crisis requires an extraordinary initiative to study how to move forward without the obsession



## What will the European Union be like in 2050?

of doing nothing or paying what is due, requested by those who, with their vote, can prevent us from moving forward. It does not seem that there is another solution to overcome the current "impasse", because the excessive number of member countries and the unanimous vote prevent it. An initiative based on the mechanism of "Enhanced Cooperation, limited to ten, twelve Member States, without a pre-established agenda, to talk about how to imagine the Future of the Union and of the active Partners who have the same intentions, could also yield unexpected results; provided that we meet in a context towards which none of the other Member States can have pretexts or political and institutional claims to put forward to block the initiative and the path. I imagine participation limited to the six founding countries, with Spain, Portugal, Austria, Sweden, Finland and Greece in the south-east, who respond to an invitation from a President or Prime Minister, in a holiday resort and away from prying eyes./ Without a pre-established agenda but with a program to do many things that have not been done in recent years. If it still had a political and institutional existence, one could think of the "Council of the Western European Union (WEU)" which entails a series of extraordinary advantages: the number of effective Members is very limited. An extraordinary advantage in addition: the presence among the effective Members of the "United Kingdom", with which a comparison on foreign policy and defense is always indispensable; a contribution that the Europe of yesterday has never lacked? However, a credible interlocutor will always be needed without which the initiative would be doomed to failure. A political and human figure, who has accumulated a series of roles of great value, suitable for a very delicate mission such as this. We certainly have him but we do not yet know if he is available for a Political Project that could perhaps constitute the way out of the current impasse.

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