



THE GEN Z FOREVER WAR?



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Letter from Chairman

Francesco Sismondini

Dear friends, dear readers,

You now hold in your hands the latest printed issue of our magazine, hot off the press. Allow me to share that these words come with a mix of emotions unlike any I've felt before.

The tragedy of war has become a grim constant in our daily lives for years now: from the horrific conflict in Ukraine, to the suffering in the Middle East and North Africa, and now the escalation involving Israel, the United States, and Iran. While we hold onto a cautious optimism that these historic shifts might eventually open a path to a well-deserved transition to democracy and freedom for the great Iranian people, we cannot ignore the devastating human cost of this conflict. The loss of innocent lives in this complex struggle demands profound reflection, and we must never lose sight of our shared humanity.

How can we remain indifferent in the face of such loss of life? We, the democratic students of Europe—how can we allow the madness of war to be normalized in European political discourse?

Permit me to extend a heartfelt message of solidarity and affection to our brothers and sisters in NEDISY in Cyprus, and to all the people of the island, including our British colleagues, amid the recent repeated attempts to bombard the British bases.

Friends, our stance must be resolute and unequivocal: over recent decades, we have learned that strong, united deterrence remains the only true safeguard against the chaos of international anarchy. It is encouraging to see European nations uniting more closely, with a clear and coherent defense strategy. Yet, as we build our defense, we must remain vigilant. We must ensure our actions are guided by our core values, careful diplomacy, and long-term security, rather than being swept up in endless cycles of escalation.

Let us instead continue in the spirit of these words from Charlie Kirk, himself a voice shut down by a different kind of war: "When we stop talking, that's when we start dividing."

For this reason, we will keep organizing our EDS policy forums and solidarity roundtables, inviting to Brussels those who bear this terrible burden on their own shoulders. We will persist in creating a free space for dialogue and community, so that the young students of the EPP in Brussels can continue to engage, connect, and build understanding together.

With hope and determination,
Francesco Sismondini
Chairman, European Democrat Students

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The Dawn of a New Persia

Why “Epic Fury” is the Path to Peace

■ *Vladimir Kljajic*

As of March 12, 2026, the Middle East has entered its most transformative era in half a century. On February 28, the United States and Israel launched Operation Epic Fury (known in Israel as Operation Roaring Lion), a massive, preemptive campaign designed to finally dismantle the primary driver of global instability. For those who have long warned of the Iranian regime’s nuclear and regional ambitions, this moment represents a difficult but necessary “course correction.” By targeting the command structure of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the regime’s nuclear infrastructure, the allies are not merely waging a war—they are creating the conditions for a lasting, secular peace.

Dismantling a Legacy of Terror

To understand the optimism behind this operation, one must first confront the grim reality of the last 47 years. Since the 1979 Revolution, a radical clerical elite has held a great civilization hostage. This regime did not just oppress its own people; it exported a “theology of the bomb” that destabilized every corner of the region.

From the 1988 mass executions to the brutal suppression of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests, Tehran’s domestic policy has been defined by the gallows. Regionally, the IRGC acted as the “Head of the Snake,” funding proxies that turned Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq into battlefields. By removing the

architects of this system—including the confirmed death of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in the initial strikes—the allied operation has decapitated the leadership of global terror.

The Doctrine of Moral Deterrence

Under the restored “Maximum Pressure” doctrine of President Trump, the United States has pivoted away from the failed “strategic patience” of the past. While the transition to military action is never taken lightly—and the tragic casualties at the girls’ school near Bandar Abbas remind us of the immense stakes—there is a growing consensus that this was the only way to prevent an imminent nuclear breakout.

By targeting the fortified nuclear sites at Fordow and Natanz with unprecedented precision—including the use of GBU-57 bunker-busters—Operation Epic Fury has achieved what years of diplomacy could not: the physical degradation of Iran’s ability to hold the world at nuclear gunpoint. As President Trump recently noted, stopping this “evil empire” is an objective that transcends even the current volatility in global energy markets.

A Unified European Front

Crucially, this conflict has served as a catalyst for a more coherent and assertive

European defense strategy. While Europe has historically been divided on the use of force, the sheer scale of the Iranian threat—and its increasingly direct attempts to destabilize the Mediterranean and the British bases in Cyprus—has forced a new consensus.

European nations are uniting more closely than ever, recognizing that deterrence is the only true safeguard against international anarchy. By coordinating with the U.S.-Israeli operation to safeguard the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, Europe is asserting itself as a primary security actor. This shift from “warmongering rhetoric” to a pragmatic, defense-oriented strategy ensures that Europe is not just a witness to history, but a guardian of the values it seeks to protect. The EDS and our partners in the EPP have long advocated for this: a Europe that speaks with one voice on defense and refuses to be dragged into a “wretched carousel of death” through inaction.

The Strength of the Abraham Accords

The current operation also reveals the enduring strength and strategic brilliance of the Abraham Accords. Throughout the escalation, nations like the UAE and Bahrain have remained a vital “buffer of stability.” By refusing to join the Iranian regime’s calls for regional retaliation, these partners have proven that the vision of a “New Middle



East”—one based on shared economic prosperity and security—is stronger than the old ideologies of hate.

The Abraham Accords have provided the logistical and political architecture for this new regional balance of power. They demonstrate that when Arab and Israeli interests align against a common threat, the result is not more chaos, but a more resilient and unified defense of the region’s future. This operation is as much about protecting our Arab allies as it is about dismantling a rogue nuclear program.

An Opening for 90 Million Iranians

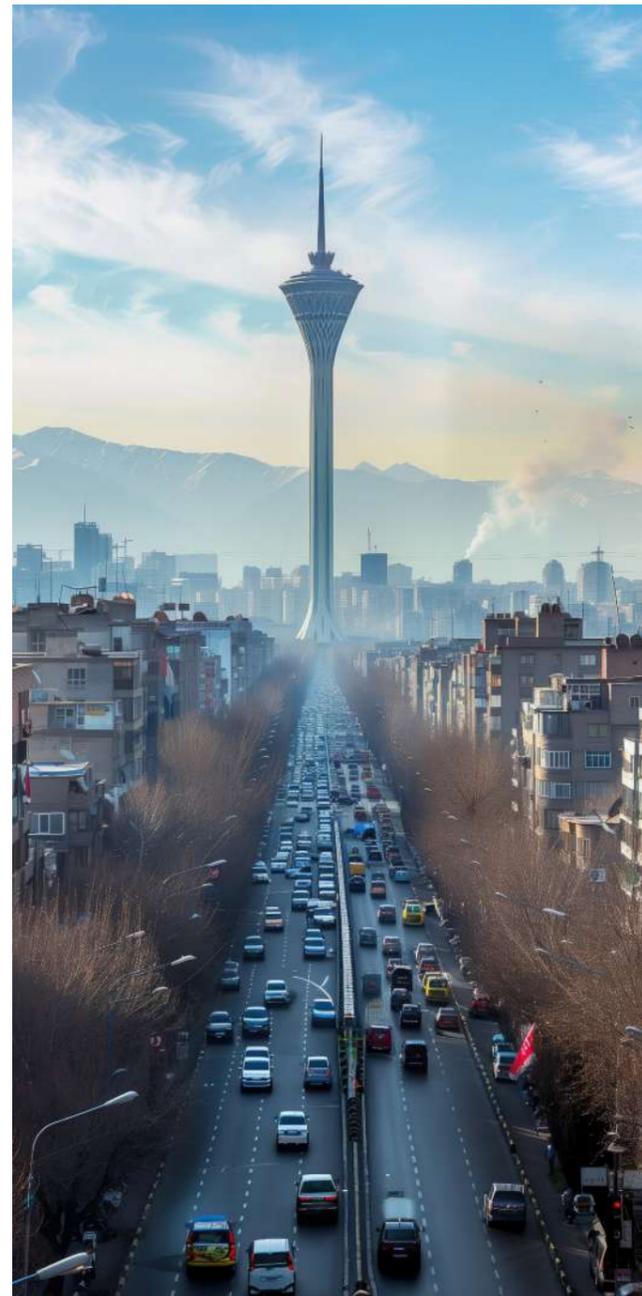
The ultimate measure of success for this conflict will not be found in the smoke over Tehran, but in the liberation of the Iranian people. For years, the Iranian youth have been shouting “Death to the Dictator” at the risk of their lives. Today, the West is finally providing the opening they need to reclaim their sovereignty.

As the regime’s grip on the internal security apparatus falters—evidenced by the recent strikes on Basij checkpoints in the capital—the vision of a free, prosperous, and secular Iran is moving from a dream to a tangible reality. The goal is simple: to return Iran’s immense wealth, stolen for decades to fund foreign militias, back to its rightful owners. We are not just ending a war; we are witnessing a “Berlin Wall moment” in the Middle East.

A Cautious Path Forward

We must remain clear-eyed about the risks. With the Strait of Hormuz currently closed and Mojtaba Khamenei attempting to rally the remnants of the regime through a dubious succession, the path ahead remains volatile. However, the alternative—a nuclear-armed IRGC leading a global campaign of terror—was far more dangerous.

Let us continue in the spirit of dialogue and strength. As we move forward, EDS will remain at the forefront, organizing forums and roundtables to engage with the young students of the EPP and our international partners. We will continue to build a free space for understanding, ensuring that as the old regime falls, a new, democratic community is ready to take its place. The dawn of liberty is rarely quiet, but for the first time since 1979, the shadow of the mullahs is finally being lifted.



THE DIGITAL PARISH

How Blockchain Can Strengthen Small Communities Rather Than Erase Them

■ *Finlay Thacker-McPherson*



The Backbone of a Nation

The towns and villages across Britain are utterly indispensable to the wider nation, roughly 15% of the UK’s total population reside within rural areas. These communities find themselves as the backbone for national food production, areas such as the idyllic Peak District are over 80% farmland, highlighting a generational dedication to feeding the nation. When looking at the impact of countryside towns and villages in general, rural communities are vital

to British society, not only in the food and services they provide, but in the purest sense that they represent a unique sense of British identity.

Within the hedgerows and dry-stone walls that make up these rural communities, is a vast history of thousands of years on this island. Rural communities in Britain evoke images that are revered across not only Britain but the world as a whole. From cricket matches played on village greens to swathes of farms that have been held in

the same family for generations, the British countryside encapsulates so much of British identity. The family-owned businesses that support these communities, such as the famous village pub, have been around for hundreds of years, forming a civic center for rural regions and serving thousands of customers.

Energy Poverty and Centralised Disconnect

However, the reverence the British public holds for the countryside has not saved it from bearing the brunt of huge surges in energy prices. While these increases have been nationwide, it is rural areas that are being hit the hardest, and as such are pushed further to the brink. Rural areas have higher levels of energy poverty, partially down to the fact that houses in these regions tend to be far less energy efficient and much more energy intensive, creating a perilous situation.

As rural communities face increasing levels of fuel poverty, the energy companies that are tasked with providing them with

energy at affordable prices have recorded consistent profits, highlighting a clear level of disconnect between centralised fuel providers and the towns and villages they are supposed to serve. In rural England, according to the UK government, the average fuel poverty gap (the extra income a household needs to escape fuel poverty) increased by around 62 % between 2019 and 2024. Whereas in 2024 alone, UK energy companies registered a pre-tax profit of £30 billion, all whilst rural people struggled to heat their homes.

This is having a stark impact on rural communities, the people that make up and encapsulate such areas are being forced to leave due to rising costs, and the small, family-owned businesses and pubs that allow for village communities to sustain themselves and retain their identity are hugely under strain. To allow for these areas to be sustained, there must be a significant emphasis on ensuring energy costs are reduced, and effort needs to be made in making rural villages and towns sustainable and with an eye to the future, rather than allowing them to be consigned to the past.



A New Age of Localised Energy Supply

Through a measured and effective transition to renewable energies, rural communities can see a localised form of energy production that brings down costs and gives them a path out of their fuel poverty crisis. Blockchain enabled peer-to-peer energy trading provides a unique opportunity to incubate this change. It can facilitate the reduction of costs for energy production and usage in rural areas, giving neighbours and communities the ability to produce, trade, and use their own energy, keeping it community based and affordable.

Though this may appear as if it is a far cry from the traditions that underpin rural life, that is certainly not the case. Such an energy trading system continues the decades old practice of a farmers market or farm stall. Just as farmers would trade their surplus eggs at the farm gate stall, the peer-to-peer energy trading system allows them to gather surplus energy they have generated themselves, and trade it to their neighbours. The 'blockchain' element of this system simply acts as an invisible ledger, ensuring that everyone is paid fairly and that the transaction can be done on an entirely decentralised basis, without a corporate middle-man taking a cut of the proceeds. This extends a familiar rural practice into energy supply practices.

The idea that nothing goes to waste stems directly from these traditions, and can once again be used in order to bring rural energy costs down and preserve such cultural landmarks. As those who live in Britain know all too well, skies are not always clear blue and full of sun, therefore limiting the reliability of solar power. However, Anaerobic Digestion provides a viable alternative that ensures that such peer-to-peer energy systems can operate year round. It uses biogas (which can be sourced from slurry

and crop waste) meaning that agricultural waste found on almost every farm, can be turned into a baseline source for energy for the rural communities that they have supported for generations. Through the introduction of biogas as an energy source, coupled with peer-to-peer energy trading, rural areas can be insulated from centralised energy companies, and are less impacted by the National Grid failures.

A significant benefit to the implementation of blockchain enabled peer-to-peer energy trading systems is their reduction of rural reliance on the National Grid. Insulation from outside influences is something that has persisted through the history of the British countryside, and can continue through the 'island mode' concept that is facilitated by P2P energy trading systems. To achieve this, surplus energy generated can be stored in Community Battery Arrays, which operate effectively as a storage time share, to be used in times of peak stress or if the National Grid fails, allowing for greater community control of their own energy storage. In addition to this, decoupling from the National Grid can be aided through the adoption of Vehicle to Grid (V2G) technology, which turns electric vehicles that are increasingly being adopted across the countryside into mobile power banks for villages by connecting to the localised grid and powering utilities through the night.



This is not simply a theoretical solution. The Brooklyn Microgrid pilot scheme offered an early glimpse of what decentralised, peer-to-peer energy trading can look like in practice. The project enabled households with rooftop solar panels to sell surplus electricity directly to their neighbours using blockchain-based transaction systems. Rather than relying solely on a distant utility, participants could trade locally generated power within their own community, improving transparency and strengthening resilience during grid stress. While not perfect, it demonstrated that local energy markets facilitated by blockchain technology are viable.

The Preservation of Identity

Energy policy is rarely framed as a question around preservation of tradition and community, yet in rural Britain it undoubtedly is. When energy costs remain high, young families leave in search of affordability, small businesses close under

mounting overheads, meaning that the institutions that anchor village life fall away. There is no clearer case of this than village pubs, with roughly a pub closing every day across England and Wales in 2025, the vital cornerstone of many towns and villages is under serious threat. Likewise, a farm under strain risks breaking a generational chain of stewardship. By giving the communities that feed the nation greater control over their own energy through blockchain enabled peer-to-peer trading, we protect the distinctive social fabric rooted in these towns and villages.

Britain's rural towns and villages have endured for centuries because they have adapted without surrendering their character. Today, the challenge is to continue this in the face of rising energy costs and centralised systems that leave little room for local control. Blockchain-enabled peer-to-peer energy trading ensures that the places which have fed the nation, shaped its identity and sustained its traditions are not left behind.



MAKING YOUTH AFFORDABLE AGAIN

Housing Edition

■ *Sotiris Paphitis*



There is one policy failure quietly reshaping Europe's political and social fabric: housing.

If youth unaffordability is the crisis of our generation, housing is its epicentre. The inability to access stable, affordable accommodation is no longer a marginal inconvenience for students and young professionals. It is redefining independence, delaying life choices, distorting labour mobility, and increasingly radicalising political attitudes.

To make youth affordable again, we must

begin where the problem is most visible - and most solvable.

The Generation Locked Out

Across Europe, the numbers are sobering. Young people leave their parental homes later than ever before. In major cities, rent for a one-bedroom flat often exceeds 60% of an entry-level salary. Home ownership - once the cornerstone of middle-class security - is becoming statistically improbable for those without family wealth.

This is not a cyclical fluctuation. It is structural.

Housing supply in high-opportunity urban centres has failed to keep pace with demand. Zoning restrictions, slow permitting procedures, litigation bottlenecks, and inconsistent urban planning policies have collectively strangled new construction. Meanwhile, population growth in metropolitan areas, short-term rental platforms, and speculative investment have intensified pressure on existing stock.

The result is a generational bottleneck: older cohorts sitting on appreciating assets, younger cohorts trapped in appreciating rents.

When housing absorbs disproportionate income, everything else is postponed – savings, entrepreneurship, family formation, mobility. Independence becomes a privilege rather than a milestone.

Housing as Economic Infrastructure

Europe still treats housing primarily as a social issue. It is more than that. It is economic infrastructure.

A functioning housing market enables labour mobility. It allows graduates to move where jobs are. It permits young professionals to accept internships, training contracts, or early-career opportunities without facing insolvency. When housing markets freeze, labour markets fragment.

This matters particularly for countries struggling with brain drain. If young talent cannot afford to live in their own capitals, they will relocate to those where they can. Housing scarcity does not only distort domestic politics – it redistributes human capital across borders.

The European Union invests billions in skills, research, and education. Yet without affordable housing in innovation hubs, we undermine the return on that investment. Housing policy, therefore, is growth policy.

The Politics of Exclusion

The consequences are not merely economic.

When young people perceive that the system structurally favours asset-holders over earners, trust erodes. The perception, fair or not, that politics protects incumbents while newcomers compete for scarcity feeds polarisation.

Housing radicalises quietly. It does not provoke immediate protest, but it generates sustained resentment. When a generation concludes that ownership is unattainable, it begins questioning not just markets but institutions.

Europe cannot afford a political centre hollowed out by housing injustice. Intergenerational equity is not about redistributing wealth arbitrarily. It is about restoring balance between opportunity and security. A functioning housing market should not require inherited capital as an entry ticket.

What Will Not Work

Before proposing solutions, we must acknowledge what has consistently failed. Short-term rent freezes, while politically attractive, reduce supply incentives and discourage maintenance. Blanket price caps without structural reform often benefit current tenants at the expense of future ones. Symbolic taxes on vacant properties generate headlines but rarely generate sufficient stock.

Housing affordability cannot be legislated into existence by decree. It must be built, literally.

A Reform Agenda for Youth Housing

Making youth affordable again requires structural courage. The following reforms

should anchor a serious European housing strategy:

1. Unlock Supply Through Regulatory Reform

Planning systems must be modernised. Fast-track approval processes for residential projects, especially those targeting young professionals and students, should become standard. Appeals and administrative litigation should be streamlined without undermining environmental standards.

Where land is scarce, zoning density should increase. European cities cannot preserve low-density nostalgia while expecting high-opportunity dynamism.

2. Incentivise Purpose-Built Youth Housing

Governments should incentivise private and public-private development of purpose-built rental accommodation for young workers and students. Tax credits or reduced land-lease rates can encourage long-term rental models rather than speculative resale.

Student housing in particular should be treated as educational infrastructure, not an afterthought.

3. Support First-Time Buyers Without Inflating Demand

Demand-side subsidies must be carefully designed. Poorly calibrated assistance simply increases prices. Instead, schemes should target savings mechanisms – matched savings accounts, tax-advantaged first-home funds – that reward long-term planning rather than immediate bidding power.

4. Mobilise Underused Public Assets

Public authorities often own underutilised

land and buildings. Transparent audits and redevelopment partnerships can convert dormant assets into affordable housing stock. This is a governance issue as much as a financial one.

5. Align EU Investment with Urban Affordability

European structural and investment funds should explicitly integrate housing affordability metrics in urban development programmes. Growth corridors must include residential planning, not merely commercial expansion.

Independence as the First Freedom

Housing is not merely about square metres. It is about autonomy.

The ability to rent a flat, share a space, or purchase a modest home is the first concrete expression of adulthood. Without



it, other freedoms feel abstract.

When young Europeans postpone independence, demographic consequences follow. Fertility declines, family formation delays, and long-term economic growth slows. Housing policy therefore intersects with demographic sustainability, a challenge Europe increasingly recognises but rarely connects to property markets.

If we speak seriously about Europe's future, we must speak seriously about where its young will live.

Towards a Fairer Property Economy

Europe does not face a housing shortage because it lacks wealth. It faces one because incentives and regulation misalign.

Making youth affordable again in housing means restoring a property economy that rewards productivity, not mere possession.



It means recognising that asset inflation without generational access corrodes social cohesion.

This is not a call for ideological upheaval. It is a call for pragmatic reform. Markets function best when entry is possible. Democracies function best when opportunity feels attainable.

The housing crisis will not resolve itself through gradual adjustment. It demands political will equal to its structural depth.

The good news is that the solutions are within reach. Construction can accelerate. Regulation can modernise. Public assets can mobilise. Investment can realign.

What is required is clarity: housing is not peripheral to the youth affordability crisis. It is central to it.

If Europe wants to make youth affordable again, it must begin with the keys.

THE 2030 ULTIMATUM

Securing Europe in an Age of Disruption

■ Vladimir Kljajic



The era of “enlargement fatigue” did not end in a boardroom in Brussels; it ended in the trenches of Ukraine. For decades, the European Union treated the integration of its neighbors as a technical exercise—a slow-motion process of checking boxes while the geopolitical ground shifted. Today, that luxury has vanished. As we face a revisionist Russia and a volatile new global order, the “gray zones” between the EU and its neighbors are no longer just diplomatic vacuums; they are the primary frontlines of European security.

The integration of the Western Balkans, Ukraine, and Moldova is no longer a discretionary policy choice; it is a geopolitical imperative. To meet this moment, the Union must adopt a “Strict Strategic Horizon” by aligning on 2030 as the target date for accession. This is not about lowering the bar

or offering shortcuts; it is about restoring the credibility that was eroded by twenty years of vague promises.

The Security Imperative: Enlargement as Defense

The immediate driver for this shift is the reality of a world in flux. We are witnessing a fundamental reimagining of the global security architecture. The return of transactional politics to Washington, underscored by a potential shift toward a more isolationist “America First” doctrine, sends a clear message: Europe’s security can no longer be outsourced indefinitely. If the Union cannot stabilize its own neighborhood, it cannot claim to be a serious global actor.

A 2030 deadline serves as a “pressure

cooker” for both the EU and candidate states. History provides a stark contrast: the 2004 “Big Bang” enlargement succeeded because a clear target forced both sides to finalize difficult reforms. Conversely, the “European future” promised to the Western Balkans in 2003—offered without a timeline—led to a ritualized façade of progress. Two decades of ambiguity have bred apathy, allowing malign third parties to fill the void with disinformation, debt-trap diplomacy, and corruption.

By setting 2030 as a “Strategic North Star,” we force the necessary internal reforms. We must be honest: a Union of 35 or more members cannot function under the current “veto culture.” Moving toward Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) in foreign policy is not a surrender of sovereignty, but a fortification of it. In a world of giants, a veto-paralyzed Union is a target, not a player.

The Accountability Filter: The Case for Staged Accession

The most common argument against a 2030 deadline is the fear of “importing instability” or weakening the rule of law. To address this, we must replace the binary “in-or-out” model with a framework of **Staged Accession**.

This model treats accession as a performance-based contract rather than a single destination. It allows candidate states to gradually integrate into the Single Market and specific EU programs as they successfully close negotiation clusters. This is the ultimate tool for accountability, providing a roadmap that is both rewarding and rigorous:

1. Tangible Rewards for Reform: Instead of asking a population to wait fifteen years for a single reward, a country that meets the standards for the “Internal Market” cluster should gain immediate

access to the Single Market for goods. This provides the “carrot” that local businesses and citizens need to see to sustain support for painful reforms.

2. Strict Reversibility: Accountability is meaningless without consequences. If a country backslides on judicial independence or democratic norms, the benefits of their current stage must be “frozen” or revoked. By making the process explicitly reversible, we ensure that the “Fundamentals First” principle is never compromised.

3. Clear Expectations: This model removes the “goalpost shifting” that has characterized the last decade. It sets clear, unmoving expectations for the local political elites, the EU bureaucracy, and—most importantly—the observers who monitor these transitions.

The Long-Term Economic Dividend

While security is the near-term spark, the long-term fire is economic. Skeptics often focus on the immediate costs of integration, but this is a narrow view that ignores the transformative power of the Single Market. The 2004 enlargement proved that bringing Eastern Europe into the fold was the single greatest driver of EU competitiveness in the 21st century.

An enlarged Union of 35+ members creates a market of over 500 million people. In a global economy where supply chains are being “friend-shored” to mitigate risks from China, the Western Balkans, Ukraine, and Moldova offer a unique opportunity. They provide the labor, energy potential, and agricultural depth required for Europe to achieve genuine strategic autonomy.

Ukraine’s reconstruction alone will be the largest economic project of our generation;

it is vital that this project be led by European standards and European firms within a shared legal framework.

Furthermore, integrating these regions is about securing the digital and energy corridors of the future. By bringing these neighbors into our regulatory orbit now, we secure the minerals, green energy routes, and digital infrastructure that will define the next fifty years of European industry.

Conclusion: History is Watching

The 2030 deadline is not a gift to our neighbors; it is an insurance policy for

ourselves. We cannot afford a Europe that is “whole and free” only in rhetoric. The “gray zones” of today will inevitably become the conflict zones of tomorrow if we do not act with conviction.

For those committed to the European project, the message is clear: We must lead with the same vision that the founding fathers showed in the wake of the Second World War. We must be the bridge that connects Lisbon to Luhansk. By combining a strict 2030 horizon with an accountability-driven Staged Accession model, we can build a Union that is not just larger, but stronger, safer, and more united than ever before.





VENEZUELA

The False Dialogue That Sustained Chavismo

■ *María Zapatero Villaronte*

of political renewal. The Bolivarian project promoted a progressive concentration of power in the Executive and a systematic erosion of institutional checks and balances. What initially enjoyed electoral legitimacy gradually evolved into a model in which political alternation ceased to be a real possibility.

After Chávez's death, rather than correcting course, the system became even more closed under Nicolás Maduro. Control of the judiciary, pressure on the media, and manipulation of the electoral system consolidated a deeply entrenched authoritarian regime. The economic and social crisis completed the picture, triggering a massive wave of migration that turned Venezuela's collapse into a regional problem and, increasingly, a European concern as well.

Dialogue as a Strategy for Survival

In this context, chavismo developed an effective strategy to remain in power through the so-called political dialogue which, since 2014, has led to different rounds of negotiations with sectors of the Venezuelan opposition, often with international mediation. These talks never altered the real structures of power, yet they helped reduce external pressure and

project an image of political normality. Within this framework, the siblings Delcy Rodríguez and Jorge Rodríguez have played a central role as part of the regime's inner circle and as key actors both in the internal management and international projection of chavismo. It is therefore no coincidence that Jorge Rodríguez has led the government delegations in most of the negotiation processes with the opposition.

The personal involvement of former Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero in these dialogues has in practice functioned as a political safe-conduct for chavismo. The regime has repeatedly presented his participation as evidence of openness and normality before the international community, while on the ground repression, persecution of the opposition, and the absence of any minimum conditions for free elections continued. For this reason, a significant part of Venezuela's democratic movement argues that his role did not bring the country closer to a transition, but rather contributed to whitewashing the regime and granting it time, oxygen, and

legitimacy without demanding verifiable results.

When Dialogue Legitimizes Power

Here an uncomfortable but necessary lesson emerges: in authoritarian contexts, dialogue without clear conditions often becomes a tool for legitimizing power. When diplomacy becomes personalized and detached from firm democratic principles, it loses its capacity to produce meaningful change.

Venezuela today represents a test of coherence for the European Union, where the European Parliament has repeatedly shown greater clarity than some national governments. If Europe intends to be more than a spectator, it must understand that defending democracy requires more than good intentions; it requires firmness, coherence, and the recognition that not every dialogue is neutral. In Venezuela, what failed was not dialogue in the abstract, but the refusal to call things by their name and to defend democracy without ambiguity.

Those who have closely followed the political evolution of Venezuela know that for many years, Spain maintained a relevant position in its relationship with the country, not only because of historical and human ties, but also because its foreign policy was traditionally aligned with the defense of liberal democracy and the rule of law. That clarity has gradually faded at the same pace that Venezuela has moved away from any recognizable democratic standard.

From Electoral Legitimacy to the Closure of the System

The process began with the arrival of Hugo Chávez to power in 1999 under the discourse



EUROPE CAN PLAN EVERYTHING EXCEPT HOW TO MOVE

Administrative Time As Europe's Lost Strategic Dimension

■ *Alessandro De Pra*



Europe's Lost Dimension: How Administrative Time Defeats Strategic Ambition

Europe has consistently been at the forefront of establishing grand visions for its future. However, between the intention of these visions and their execution, a critical element has quietly slipped away: the sense of tempo. While Europe possesses a remarkable policy architecture on paper, ideas falter the moment they are subjected to reality. They enter a paralyzing circuit of reviews and formalities that look complete in a dossier but remain empty in effect.

This is no longer a mere administrative glitch; it has become a cultural reflex and a hesitation built directly into the machinery of

governance. The great political philosophers recognized this danger long ago. Alexis de Tocqueville cautioned against the web of pervasive rules that entangle democracies. Edmund Burke warned that institutions surrender their dignity when procedure outweighs purpose. Most acutely, Raymond Aron observed that political systems fail not just through blatant mistakes, but because they are unable to act within the tempo demanded by world events. When taking these warnings together, the message for modern Europe is undeniable: a system out of rhythm soon loses its authority.

The Illusion of Autonomy

In the modern world, logistics provide the clearest evidence that time is non-

negotiable. The global circulation of goods moves by rhythm, not rhetoric, making time the sovereign power. Yet, Europe often behaves as though time were a negotiable commodity.

The contrast with rival economic powers is stark. Strategic decisions that take two to four weeks to finalize in the United States or South Korea often require two to four months within the European Union. Under the weight of such delays, any talk of European "strategic autonomy" rings hollow; without administrative velocity, autonomy is reduced to mere ceremony.

The sluggish implementation of the Draghi Report—with barely a tenth of its recommendations enacted—serves as a blaring warning that Europe reflects in decades but moves only in semesters. This profound imbalance corrodes competitiveness and frays public trust.

The PureTech Warning: When Correction Comes Too Late

Europe speaks daily of sovereignty, but

rarely acknowledges the variable that actually determines it: the speed at which a system can identify an error and rectify its course. The controversy surrounding the PureTech engine serves as a revealing industrial lesson. The engine's technical issues—wear, oil dilution, and complicated belt-to-chain transitions—were not secrets. Faults occur in any industrial ecosystem. What separates a resilient economy from a fragile one is response time. While mechanics and workshops sounded the alarm early, Europe's institutional mechanisms moved cautiously, waiting for total alignment among manufacturers, regulators, and insurers before taking decisive steps. Consequently, consumers faced unpredictable costs and regional supply chains were sidelined. A failure becomes truly systemic when the time required to correct it exceeds the time it takes for the damage to spread.

The weakness of Europe's industry does not lie in making technical mistakes, but in the glacial pace at which it absorbs them. History proves this: the Concorde failed because Europe did not adapt or scale it fast



enough, whereas Airbus survived because it learned to coordinate corrections without excessive ceremony. A system preserves itself by correcting errors before their consequences become irreversible.



The Mediterranean Exception: Real-Time Reality

If Europe wishes to remember how to move, it must look to where geography still imposes discipline: the Mediterranean. As the continent's oldest strategic space, it remains the last arena where time is a physical, rather than administrative, reality.

For centuries, this region rewarded precision. Venetian power rested on the absolute rule that a delayed ship was a lost opportunity. Even today, the logic of the sea endures; while northern Europe renews documents faster than decisions, in the Mediterranean, reality interrupts bureaucracy. From Piraeus to Valencia, a delayed hour in port operations represents a measurable loss of energy flows and capacity, not just a symbolic issue. Furthermore, marine insurance is shifting from regulation-heavy London to agile markets like Athens, Genoa, and Limassol. These southern European forces possess what the broader continent desperately lacks: operational honesty.

A Blueprint for Regaining Rhythm

Europe does not lack intelligence or resources; it lacks alignment between decision and consequence. The problem is not the continent's doctrine, but its

rhythm. A handful of low-cost, high-impact adjustments could shift this trajectory exponentially:

- **Implement a single evaluation phase for grants under €200,000:** Eliminating duplications will restore proportion and significantly shorten decision times.
- **Standardize to three templates for all EU programmes:** Creating a common structure cuts friction for both applicants and administrators, proving that legibility is capacity.
- **Establish a 30-day fast track for micro-grants:** Small projects do not require long delays; a fixed, short window will immediately boost credibility with citizens.
- **Create regulatory sandboxes for mobility innovation:** Testing must be accelerated in controlled environments to prevent European companies from being replaced by faster competitors.
- **Launch a unified maritime data gateway:** Consolidating fragmented information streams into a single-entry point will provide real-time awareness for Europe's seas.
- **Enforce early warning networks and coordinated adjustments:** Suppliers must be able to signal problems directly without drowning in procedure, ensuring one unified timeline for industrial diagnostics.

Europe faces new frontiers, from shifting Mediterranean flows to Arctic passages and accelerated digital supply chains. In all these domains, time is the decisive variable. Civilizations endure only when movement swiftly follows judgment; they decline when judgment remains trapped on paper. Europe still has time, but it has none left to waste.

The PureTech Lesson: When Europe Learns Too Slowly

(Industrial Time as the Continent's Hidden Vulnerability)

Europe speaks daily of competitiveness and sovereignty, but rarely mentions the variable that determines them: the speed at which a system identifies an error and rectifies course before the consequences set.

The PureTech engine is a revealing example—not because its technical problems were unique, but because the entire sequence exposed a deeper European habit: slow detection, slower coordination, and an almost ceremonial approach to correction. The problems were no secret. Wear, oil dilution, irregular maintenance behavior, and later the passage from the oil-immersed belt to a chain that brought new complications. In any industrial ecosystem, faults show up. What separates a resilient system from a fragile one is the speed at which it responds.

Europe moved slowly. Workshops sounded the alarm early, but the institutional mechanisms moved cautiously, almost as if they were waiting for full alignment by every actor—manufacturers, suppliers, insurers, regulators—before making a decisive step. Consumers suffered unpredictable costs, national supply chains lost planning stability, and Italian components suppliers found themselves sidelined by decisions taken far above them.

A failure becomes systemic when the time required to correct it exceeds the time in which the damage spreads. And that's precisely the territory PureTech had drifted into. Guilt is not the issue. The point is to note that the weakness of Europe's industry is not about making technical mistakes, but about the pace at which it acknowledges and absorbs such mistakes. The continent has lived this pattern before.

Concorde disappeared not because it was a flawed aircraft but because Europe never reformed it, scaled it, or adapted it fast enough. Airbus, by contrast, survived precisely because it learned to coordinate and correct without excessive ceremony. The lesson is decidedly conservative: a system preserves itself not by avoiding errors but by correcting them before consequences turn irreversible.



Mediterranean maritime practice understood this intuitively: a ship with a fault delayed repair at its own risk; the sea did not wait. Industrial Europe, by contrast, behaves as if time were abundant and consequences negotiable.

If Europe is to avoid a repeat of the PureTech pattern, three disciplines are needed:

- **Early warning:** Suppliers, mechanics, and risk assessors must signal problems directly without drowning in layers of procedure.
- **Coordinated adjustment** means one timeline, not many; one diagnosis, not competing interpretations.
- **Respect for physical reality:** Engineering belongs first to physics. Committees come after.

PureTech is not an engine story. It's just a wake-up call: Europe will not have industrial autonomy until it regains the courage, and tempo, to correct itself before the world moves on.

FIT FOR 55

Europe's Climate Design Faces Its Economic Reckoning

■ Andia Homata



In Brussels, climate policy is written in directives. In Frankfurt, Rotterdam and Katowice, it is expressed in power prices, capital flows, and industrial margins. The European Union's Fit for 55 – the legislative engine of the European Green Deal – is no longer symbolic. It is a structural attempt to re-price carbon across a 450-million-person economy while maintaining competitiveness and political consent.

The commitment is codified in the European Climate Law, mandating at least a 55 per cent cut in net greenhouse gas emissions

by 2030 compared with 1990, on a binding path to climate neutrality by 2050. Fit for 55 is the delivery mechanism. The critical question is effectiveness: which measures will structurally bend the emissions curve, and which merely shift costs across sectors and time?

Carbon markets: pricing as discipline

At the heart of the package lies the reformed EU Emissions Trading System (ETS). Updated in 2022, it tightens the emissions cap, accelerates annual reductions, phases

out free allowances for key industries, and expands coverage to buildings and road transport.

The logic is straightforward: constrain supply, raise the cost of carbon, and force firms to invest in cleaner technologies. Power generators and heavy industry are now legally required to cut emissions faster than before. A Social Climate Fund is designed to cushion households from higher energy bills.

Evidence is encouraging. Coal is losing ground to gas and renewables as carbon prices rise. The risk lies in political dilution: industry groups are lobbying for extended relief, which could blunt incentives. For economists, the conclusion is clear: a credible, rising carbon price is Europe's most cost-effective decarbonisation tool, provided it is perceived as fair.

Effort Sharing: national targets, uneven capacity

Not all emissions can be traded. The Effort Sharing Regulation assigns binding national targets for sectors outside the ETS buildings, agriculture, waste, and domestic transport. Countries must reduce emissions steeply by 2030, with targets adjusted for income and starting positions.

Flexibility is both a strength and weakness. Member states can choose cost-effective instruments, from retrofitting buildings to electrifying transport. But implementation quality varies widely. Agricultural emissions especially methane and nitrous oxide remain politically sensitive. Success depends on whether governments treat targets as binding economic constraints, not aspirational goals.

Technology mandates: the automotive pivot

Few measures illustrate EU market-shaping

more than CO₂ standards for cars and vans, effectively requiring zero-emission new vehicles by 2035. Unlike pricing, this is regulatory compulsion. It forces electrification, drives battery and charging infrastructure investment, and reshapes the industrial landscape.

The climate impact is clear: tailpipe emissions from new vehicles will fall to zero. Economically, the stakes are higher. Europe's automotive sector depends on global supply chains for batteries and critical minerals. Policy success depends not just on decarbonisation but on sustaining industrial competitiveness, legislation doubling as industrial strategy.

Carbon borders: linking trade to climate

The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) applies a carbon price to imported goods based on embedded emissions, preventing carbon leakage. Without it, stricter domestic carbon pricing could simply shift production abroad with it, Europe levels the playing field.

CBAM also sits at the geopolitical interface. Trading partners have expressed concern, some calling it protectionist. Exemptions and administrative simplifications may slightly reduce stringency. Its global effectiveness depends on whether it incentivises cleaner production abroad or promotes wider adoption of carbon pricing.

Methane: high impact, low cost

Methane regulation targets leaks in the energy sector, requiring monitoring, repair, and restrictions on routine flaring. Methane's short-term warming effect is far higher than CO₂, so reductions can deliver rapid climate gains. Most abatement technologies are proven and relatively inexpensive, making this a high-return component of Fit for 55.

Structural decarbonisation or temporary distortion?

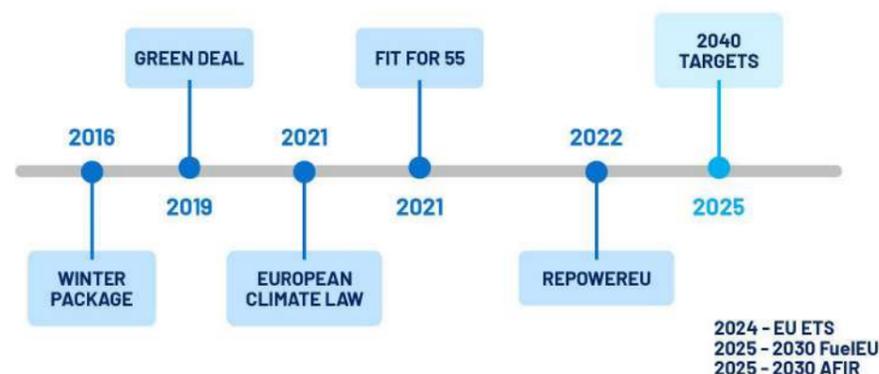
Eurostat and the European Environment Agency report that EU greenhouse gas emissions have fallen roughly one-third since 1990, even as GDP expanded. On the surface, this suggests decoupling growth from emissions essential for sustainable climate policy.

But recent reductions coincided with extraordinary shocks: pandemic disruption, the post-2022 energy crisis, and elevated fossil fuel prices. These temporarily suppressed demand and accelerated fuel switching. The critical question is whether emissions declines will persist once markets stabilize.

Structural declines reflect permanent shifts renewables replacing coal, transport electrification, efficiency gains. Cyclical declines reflect temporary contraction. Early evidence suggests structural decarbonisation in the power sector, while buildings and agriculture remain challenging. Fit for 55's ultimate success depends on whether reductions endure under normal economic conditions

A critical assessment

Fit for 55 is a comprehensive attempt to recalibrate incentives across energy, industry, transport, and trade. Its design follows economic orthodoxy: price carbon where feasible, regulate where markets fail, and guard against leakage.



Three fault lines will determine success:

- Policy integrity.** Exemptions, delayed phase-outs, and softened enforcement could erode cumulative impact.
- Distributional equity.** Carbon pricing in households and transport tests social tolerance; compensation mechanisms must be credible.
- Strategic competitiveness** Decarbonisation must align with industrial renewal. Climate leadership that undermines industry risks political backlash.

The measures most likely to deliver quantifiable reductions by 2030 embed binding market constraints, mandate technological transitions, or target high-impact pollutants. Decentralised instruments face higher execution risk.

The wager is that early, rules-based decarbonisation will enhance Europe's long-term productivity, energy security, and strategic autonomy. If correct, Fit for 55 will be remembered as a structural reform of the European growth model. If not, it will stand as an ambitious experiment constrained by political and economic realities.

For policymakers and markets, the decisive phase is no longer legislation but implementation.

THE UK-TÜRKIYE AGREEMENT ON THE EUROFIGHTER:

Its Implications and Ankara's Diplomatic Strategy of Rapprochement with Europe

■ Spyros Katsanevakis



On October 28, the symbolic national holiday of the Hellenic Republic, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer jointly announced with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan the sale of 20 Typhoon fighter aircraft (also known as Eurofighter) from London to Ankara. The Turkish "casus belli" against Greece remains active, while at the same time the main leading figure of the Turkish opposition is imprisoned. Within this framework, the sale of advanced military equipment to Ankara acquires particular political and symbolic significance. This development demonstrates the prioritization of political and geostrategic needs over the promotion of democratic values and the protection of human rights in the contemporary international system.

The Eurofighter is a joint project between

the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, and Spain, which are represented in the negotiations by some of the giants of the defense industry, such as Airbus, BAE Systems, and Leonardo. The Eurofighter constitutes a characteristic example of the European effort for collective development and production of weapons systems, which since the early 2000s has been inextricably linked with the shaping of common defense policies and industrial cooperation in Europe. It has been the primary fighter aircraft of the British Air Force for the past two decades, including missions in Iraq, and now appears to effectively intercept Russian aircraft since the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Strategic Necessity: Navigating the U.S. Deadlock

The London–Ankara agreement, worth €10.7 billion, constitutes part of Türkiye’s broader effort to upgrade the operational capabilities of its air force. This development gains particular importance, as it coincides with the deadlock in Ankara’s negotiations with the United States for the acquisition of F-16V and F-35 fighter jets. The selection of the Eurofighter appears to be integrated into a broader strategic pursuit of “defense autarky,” whereby the Turkish leadership seeks to bridge the gap between its ambitious technological objectives and its actual operational capabilities. Overall, if one also takes into account Türkiye’s strong desire to participate in the European Union’s SAFE defense program, a broader shift in Türkiye’s stance toward European defense markets becomes evident.

Operational Timelines: Bridging the Gap to KAAAN

Ankara urgently needs the Eurofighter Typhoon as an interim solution between its aging F-16 fleet, which faces problems due to age and operational wear, and the forthcoming domestically produced fifth-generation fighter KAAAN, which is currently in the testing and development phase for the coming years. Given that the delivery deadline for the British Eurofighters is set for 2030, five years after the signing of the agreement, sources within the Turkish government report that Ankara will move even sooner toward the arsenals of Arab Gulf countries. Specifically, Turkey appears to wish to purchase 12 “packages” of Typhoon Tranche 3A from Qatar’s existing arsenal.

Economic Incentives and Industrial Leverage

This development is not detached from the systematic development of the Turkish defense industry over the last two decades, which has strengthened Ankara’s foreign policy and transformed armament

programs into an instrument of diplomatic influence. The agreement, however, does not satisfy only the needs of the aging Turkish Air Force. London is now officially entering the highly profitable Turkish defense market, and this sale constitutes Britain’s first export order of a defense nature since 2017. Prime Minister Keir Starmer stated that this contract would maintain and protect more than 20,000 jobs in BAE Systems factories in the coming years.

At this point, it is important to observe whether Türkiye will ultimately succeed in successfully concluding negotiations for the modernization of the F-16V with the American defense company Lockheed Martin. Following its exclusion from the U.S. F-35 program and with the American “door” overall only marginally open, Ankara is compelled to make the best available choice, not the best possible one—turning to different markets and appearing to have fourth-generation answers to problems that have now moved into the fifth generation.

The Diplomacy of Concessions: Security vs. Stability

Analysts report that Starmer lost an extremely important opportunity, as he could have easily requested concessions and assurances from the Erdoğan regime in exchange for the sale of the Eurofighters. In a similar case, under the Biden presidency in 2024, the sale of American F-16s occurred only after Türkiye agreed to the accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO.

During the negotiations, the German side is said to have conveyed Athens’ explicit demands: that the fighter aircraft must under no circumstances be used against EU and NATO allies, meaning, primarily Greece and Cyprus, where violations of airspace by the Turkish side have in recent years been a rather frequent phenomenon. Nevertheless, Turkish officials report that such delimitations never ended up in

the agreement document and do not constitute commitments regarding the use of the fighter aircraft. If this is verified, then the British–produced Eurofighters will be able to be used for overflights and missions against the very allies whom the British and Germans declare that they support.

The “Back Door” to Europe: Utilizing the Post-Brexit UK

The UK–Türkiye agreement on the Eurofighters is integrated into a broader strategic effort by Ankara to reposition itself as a close and indispensable partner of Europe, at a time of intensified geopolitical shifts. After the isolation caused by tensions with the United States and its removal from the F-35 program, Türkiye now seeks to restore bridges with European states through armament and industrial cooperation, in order to cover necessary internal needs. The choice of the United Kingdom—outside the European Union but a fundamental pillar in the European defense architecture—functions as a means of approaching Brussels without the direct involvement and institutional constraints of the Union. At the same time, Ankara utilizes these armament programs to reinforce the narrative it has projected in recent years as a factor of stability in security issues ranging from Ukraine to the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as its contemporary expansionist aspirations regarding the “New Syria” and the “Blue Homeland”.

Integration vs. Isolation: The Future of European Security

Observing political reactions in the international context, a fear appears to be emerging that Türkiye is entering European strategic autonomy “through the back door.” According to Professor of International Relations Kostas Ifantis, this fear is excessive, as Türkiye is considered by the majority of European countries to be an integral part of the European security architecture.

Despite broader doubts and reservations regarding human rights violations and the clear lack of rule of law, many European states undeniably view cooperation with Ankara as a one-way path, primarily due to its geopolitical position, but also because of the current challenges affecting Eastern Europe and the Middle East. From the Turkish perspective, participation—or even rapprochement—with European defense schemes, such as the SAFE program, does not constitute a circumstantial choice, but part of a long-term strategy for reintegrating the Turkish defense industry into European production and financing networks.

The Fragile Balance of Power

The UK–Türkiye agreement on the Eurofighter Typhoon does not merely constitute a commercial act or a technical upgrade of Turkish air capabilities. On the contrary, it is embedded in a broader web of political, industrial, and geostrategic choices, where foreign policy, the defense industry, and diplomacy complement one another. For London, the agreement reflects the post-Brexit need for repositioning in critical markets and the utilization of defense as an instrument of economic and strategic power. For Ankara, it reflects a deliberate effort to bridge operational gaps, strengthen defense autarky, and reapproach Europe through industrial cooperation, bypassing institutional and political obstacles.

At the same time, the absence of clear political terms and commitments highlights the contradictions of European strategy: while cooperation with Ankara is considered necessary for security reasons, it remains unclear how this aligns with the safeguarding of democratic values and regional stability. Under this prism, credible deterrence and the maintenance of the balance of power do not constitute a policy option, but a fundamental prerequisite for managing Turkish assertiveness and for shaping future European strategies.

THE ARCTIC FRONTIER

A New Arena For Global Power

■ Domagoj Cigić



For decades, the Arctic was seen as a zone of peace, a frozen periphery removed from the grit of global power politics. However, as of early 2026, that ice is literal and metaphorical history. The region has transitioned from a scientific curiosity into a high-stakes arena where the European Union's quest for strategic autonomy, Russia's entrenched military dominance, and a newly assertive United States are rapidly colliding.

A Frontline for European Security and Strategy

The Arctic is no longer a distant concern for the European Union; it is a frontline for its security and economic survival. The region holds the critical raw materials required for the EU's green transition. Without secure

access to these, the EU's goal of climate neutrality remains vulnerable to external supply chain shocks. Furthermore, the Arctic is the gateway to the EU's northern flank. With Finland and Sweden now in NATO, the High North is an integral part of the Euro-Atlantic security space. For the EU, a stable Arctic means secure undersea data cables and a vital buffer against hybrid threats.

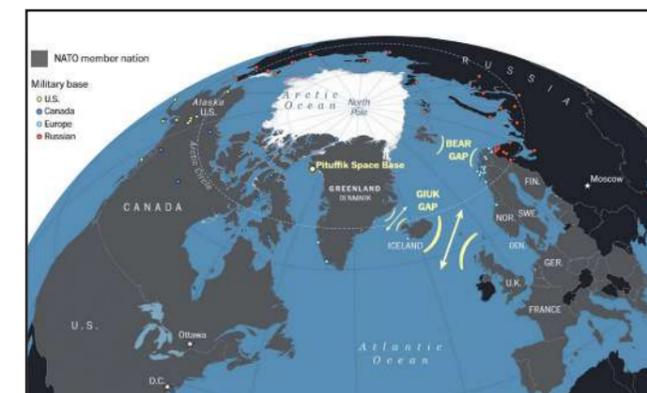
Russia's Arctic Hegemony: The Nuclear Advantage

While the West scrambles to gear up, Russia has a decades-long head start. Moscow views the Arctic as its primary strategic resource base, with roughly 20 percent of its GDP generated above the Arctic Circle. This advantage is led by the state-owned giant Rosatom, which has pioneered a nuclear-

first Arctic strategy. Russia operates the world's largest icebreaker fleet, including nuclear-powered vessels that clear paths year-round. A cornerstone of this infrastructure is the Akademik Lomonosov, the world's first floating nuclear power plant. Based in the remote port of Pevek, this floating battery provides electricity and heat to industrial hubs and residential areas, effectively colonizing regions once considered uninhabitable. By controlling these waters, Russia acts as the sole gatekeeper for the Northern Sea Route, which can cut shipping times between Europe and Asia by 40 percent compared to the Suez Canal.

The Transactional Frontier: The Battle for Greenland

The United States' perspective on the Arctic has shifted toward a more transactional view of national security. Washington views the region through the lens of pure defense and resources (denial). In 2026, the US has increased pressure on the EU to align with its interests, recently culminating in a diplomatic crisis over Greenland. From the US viewpoint, the island is a stationary aircraft carrier essential for monitoring Russian and Chinese submarines entering the Atlantic through the Greenland-Iceland-UK Gap. The US administration has utilized aggressive tactics, including threats of high tariffs on European goods, to motivate Denmark and the EU to increase their own military activity in the region or to sell Greenland to



the US. This pressure is intended to ensure that Greenland's minerals are reserved for Western supply chains and that the territory remains a secure pillar of the NATO early-warning system.

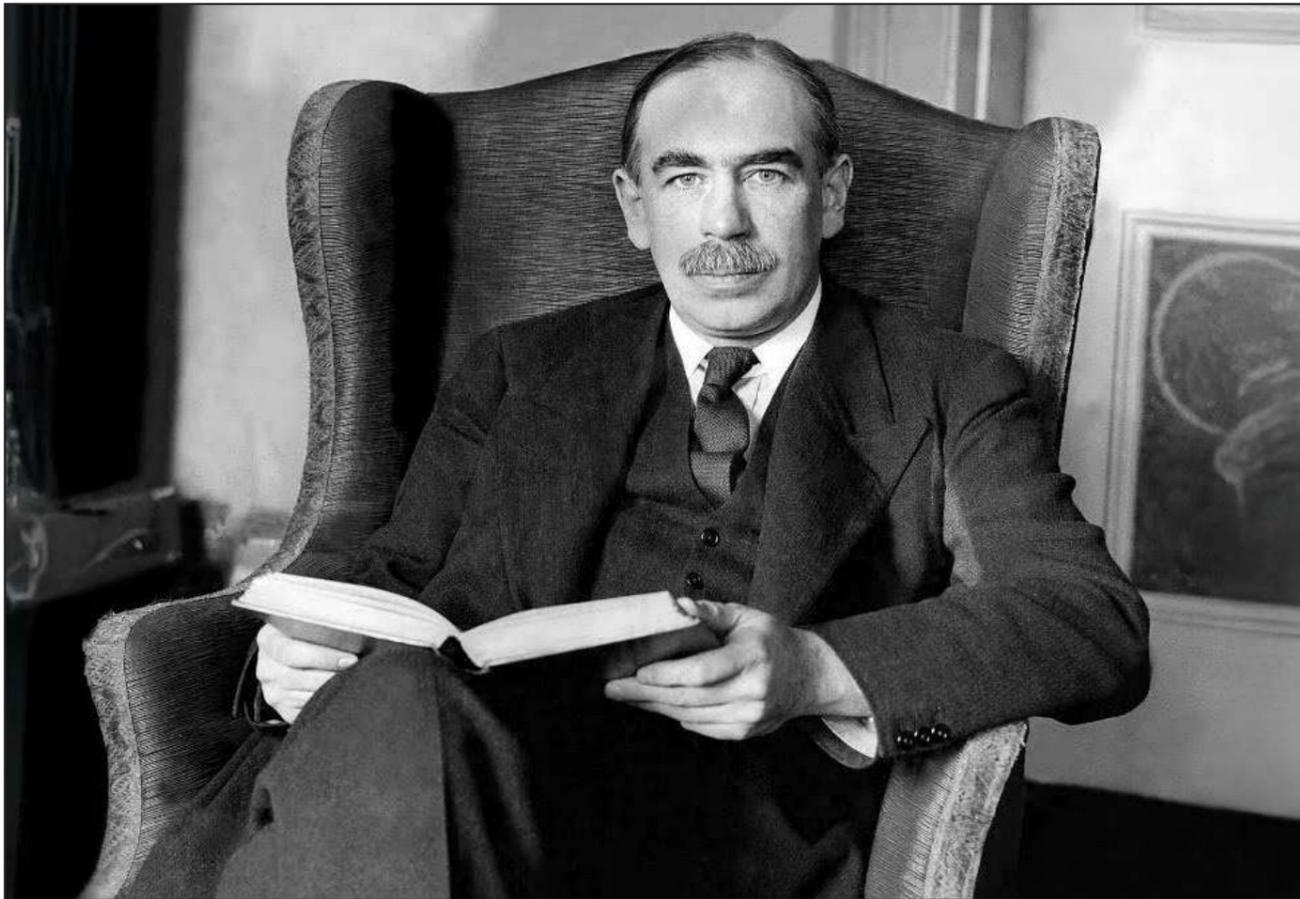
The Melting Shortcut: Opportunities and Ecological Risks

The driver of this Arctic space race is the alarming rate of climate change. The Arctic is warming four times faster than the global average. As ice caps retreat, shipping routes like the Northwest Passage and the Northern Sea Route are becoming seasonally navigable. A voyage from Japan to Europe that takes twenty-two days via the Suez Canal can be completed in roughly twelve days via the Arctic. However, this shortcut carries massive risks. Increased black carbon emissions from ships accelerate further melting, and the lack of search-and-rescue infrastructure makes any accident a potential catastrophe.

From Spectator to Geopolitical Actor: A Roadmap for the EU

The EU cannot afford to be a spectator. To maintain relevance, it must pivot from being a purely normative actor to a geopolitical one. This involves deepening ties with Greenland and Norway through massive investment in sustainable mining, offering a European alternative to more coercive foreign offers. The EU must also focus on dual-use infrastructure such as satellite surveillance and maritime security to protect its own interests independently of Washington's volatility. By leveraging its market power to set strict green shipping regulations, the EU can ensure the Arctic does not become an ecological free-for-all.

As global powers rush to claim these melting frontiers, it seems we are not just witnessing the end of an era, but a Cold War that is finally starting to thaw - and things are definitely starting to heat up.



THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF ILLUSIONS

Why Keynes's Economic Utopia Remains Out Of Reach

■ Alex Zamborský

In 1930, as the world was spiraling into the depths of the Great Depression, John Maynard Keynes sat down to write a psychological antidote to the prevailing gloom. His essay, "Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren," remains one of the most brilliant—and most flawed—documents in the history of economic thought. In it, Keynes looked past the breadlines of the 1930s to imagine a world a century ahead, predicting that the "economic problem" of scarcity would finally be solved.

Today, as we approach that century mark, we find ourselves in a strange position:

Keynes was mathematically right about our wealth, yet socially wrong about our lives.

The Mathematics of Progress

Keynes's reputation as a visionary rests on the first half of his essay, where he identifies the three engines of growth: technological progress, increased productivity, and the accumulation of capital. He looked back at the stagnation of human history—noting that the average standard of living barely budged between 2000 BC and 1800 AD—and realized that compound interest and industrial efficiency had fundamentally

changed the rules of the game. He was essentially laying the groundwork for what would later become the Solow Growth Model, recognizing that humanity would eventually be able to perform manufacturing and agricultural tasks with a mere fraction of the traditional effort. His prediction that living standards in "progressive countries" would increase eightfold by 2030 was remarkably prescient. Economically speaking, we have arrived exactly where Keynes said we would.

The Mirage of the 15-Hour Week

It is in the second half of his work that the "unbearable lightness" of his illusions begins to show. Keynes famously predicted that by our time, we would be working three-hour shifts and fifteen-hour weeks. He envisioned a society that had solved the "economic problem" and was free to enjoy the fruits of its labor in pursuit of more pleasant, artistic, and leisurely activities.

However, Keynes made the classic mistake of viewing economic progress as a linear march toward a fixed finish line. He assumed that once our basic needs were met, our "unlimited wants" would naturally subside. He failed to account for the "hedonic treadmill"—the human tendency to invent new needs as fast as we satisfy old ones. While Keynes saw a world of leisure, his contemporary Aldous Huxley was writing *Brave New World*, warning that a society freed from the struggle for survival might find itself sedated by shallow pleasure rather than elevated by high art.

The Rooftop Reality Check

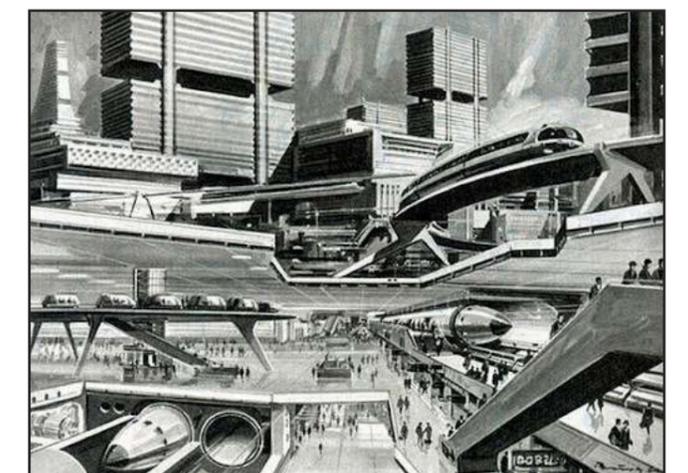
The fragility of Keynes's optimism was violently exposed less than a decade after he wrote it. In perhaps the most poignant image in the history of economics, Keynes found himself in 1942 sitting on the roof of King's College Chapel in Cambridge, patrolling for German bombers alongside his intellectual rival, Friedrich August von

Hayek. The vision of a "Brave New World" of peaceful leisure was being systematically destroyed on the battlefields of Europe. This moment serves as a permanent memento for all utopian thinkers: progress is not a guaranteed upward slope. History does not move in a straight line toward salvation; it can be derailed by ideology, conflict, and the very human impulses that Keynes's models ignored.

The 21st Century Paradox

As we revisit Keynes after nearly a century, we must ask why his 15-hour work week never materialized. We have the productivity he dreamed of, yet the "economic problem" remains as heavy as ever. Our failure to reach his utopia is not a failure of technology, but of distribution and desire.

Keynes believed that "for the first time since his creation man will be faced with his real, his permanent problem—how to use his freedom from pressing economic cares." A century later, it appears we are still terrified of that freedom. We have chosen to remain on the treadmill, trading the leisure Keynes promised for a never-ending cycle of new wants. The history of the 20th century taught us that progress is not inevitable; the 21st century is teaching us that even when we achieve it, we may not know how to live with it.





ARCHITECTURE-LED REUSE STRATEGIES

How Architecture Can Ease Europe's Housing Crisis And Bring Empty Buildings Back To Life

■ *Marios Konstanteas*

Europe's housing crisis is usually framed as a shortage that can only be solved by building more. More land released, more permits issued, more cranes on the skyline. But a large share of the answer is already standing inside our cities, in buildings that are vacant, half used, or stranded by changing economies. Across the EU, affordability has deteriorated fastest in cities. Rents and sale prices have risen faster than incomes, while students and young people are pushed into overcrowded rooms, unstable leases, long commutes, or housing that is plainly unfit. At the same time, Europe holds

significant unused capacity. Empty homes, partially vacant offices, abandoned retail units, and idle public buildings remain in place while demand rises around them. If housing is a social emergency, long term vacancy cannot be treated as a neutral market outcome. It is a failure to use what already exists. This is where architecture moves beyond appearance. It becomes a discipline of repair and conversion, and a practical way to translate housing policy into real homes. Unused capacity is not one single category. It often appears as residential vacancy, commercial underuse,

and dormant public assets. Each comes with different constraints and different policy tools, but all share the same contradiction. We allow valuable space to sit idle inside the urban fabric while students and young people struggle for stable, affordable housing. Treating vacancy as part of urban infrastructure reframes the crisis. It becomes a question of access and activation, not only new supply.

The Architecture of Repair: From Quick Fixes to Lasting Solutions

The clearest architectural contribution is adaptive reuse, converting underused buildings into housing. Retrofitting vacant homes and reshaping existing structures can deliver units faster than building from scratch because the land, structure, and much of the infrastructure already exist. But conversion alone does not guarantee quality. The difference between a quick fix and a lasting solution is often technical, and that is where architects matter. They turn policy goals into workable, safe, dignified housing. They resolve fire safety, accessibility, and services. They protect daylight, ventilation, and healthy indoor conditions, rather than producing cramped units that simply increase numbers. In older European building stock, architects also lead heritage sensitive retrofits that preserve cultural identity while improving comfort and performance. Vacancy is also often partial rather than total. It appears in empty floors, unused upper levels above shops, half occupied office blocks, or retail space left behind by changing patterns of work and consumption. What can be converted, where, and at what cost depends on form, ownership, regulations, and local infrastructure. This is why repeatable conversion guidance matters. Cities can speed delivery when common building types have clear assessment steps, clear compliance pathways, and clear habitability standards. A typical deep office floorplate, for example, needs

early decisions about daylight zones, escape strategy, compartmentation, and services routing before it can become decent housing. These are not aesthetic preferences. They are delivery decisions.



The Climate Connection: Cutting Carbon and Living Costs

A reuse first approach also aligns housing delivery with climate goals. The EU Renovation Wave frames renovation as essential for energy security, affordability, and emissions reduction. From a climate perspective, renovation and reuse avoid a major cost of new construction, embodied carbon, meaning the emissions locked into materials and construction processes. Buildings drive emissions not only through energy use, but through materials such as cement and steel. Extending the life of existing structures, where feasible, is therefore a direct emissions strategy. Circular renovation reduces demolition waste and virgin material demand while improving energy performance. For residents, especially students and low income households, energy performance is not an abstract metric. Poor insulation and inefficient systems raise monthly bills. The real price of housing becomes rent plus energy. In that sense, architecture supports affordability twice. It creates additional homes through conversion, and it reduces living costs through performance upgrades.

Overcoming the Barriers: Finance, Governance, and Data

If vacant buildings are such an obvious opportunity, why do so many stay unused? Because vacancy is rarely a design problem alone. It is also a finance and governance problem. Ownership can be fragmented. Legal status can be unclear. Renovation can carry risk, and funding can be hard to access. In other cases, enforcement is weak, incentives are poorly designed, or administrative processes are too slow. Still, architecture plays a decisive role here because many governance tools require technical clarity and credible building intelligence. Cities need workable definitions of vacancy. They need clear standards for habitability after conversion but also predictable compliance pathways that accelerate approvals without lowering quality. Better housing policy depends on better knowledge of the buildings a city already has and architects and environmental experts are among the most suitable professionals to provide this kind of knowledge.

Securing the Social Return: Prioritizing People

Social housing should be central to any strategy for reusing abandoned places. If reuse is left entirely to market demand, many converted buildings will return as high rent apartments, short stay units, or speculative assets rather than homes for people under pressure. Abandoned schools, offices, municipal buildings, former hotels, and other disused properties can become part of a social housing pipeline when cities link conversion permits, public funding, or tax incentives to affordability obligations. This can include long term rent caps, priority access for students and young workers, a share of units for vulnerable households, and management by municipalities, housing associations, cooperatives, or other social economy actors. In this model, architecture

does not only deliver units, it helps build a fair allocation system by designing housing that is safe, adaptable, and suitable for long term community life. A reuse strategy becomes real when it is paired with tools that make conversion easier, faster, and fairer.

Cities can build vacancy registries that track duration, condition, and conversion potential, then link that data to practical guidance for common building types. This strengthens enforcement, reduces uncertainty, and helps prioritise high impact projects. Where owners cannot or will not invest, cities can support lease to renovate models, enabling long leases to social housing providers, cooperatives, or social economy actors who renovate and manage homes under affordability conditions. This reduces vacancy while protecting the public interest. As a matter of fact reusing abandoned buildings for social housing is often faster and less land intensive than building new estates, especially when the sites are already connected to transport, schools, healthcare, and everyday services. If public funds renovate private assets, they should secure measurable social returns.

Affordability periods, student allocations, accessibility compliance, and energy targets should be conditions, not optional extras. Underused offices and retail often sit in places already served by transport and social infrastructure. Conversion in these locations adds homes without sprawl and without waiting for new greenfield development. In neighbourhoods where identity matters, heritage led regeneration can deliver housing while preserving character and improving safety and performance without displacement driven by demolition led redevelopment. A reuse first strategy also needs to be honest about limits. Not every building is convertible at reasonable cost, and a poor conversion can create low quality housing that stores up social problems for later. That is why quality

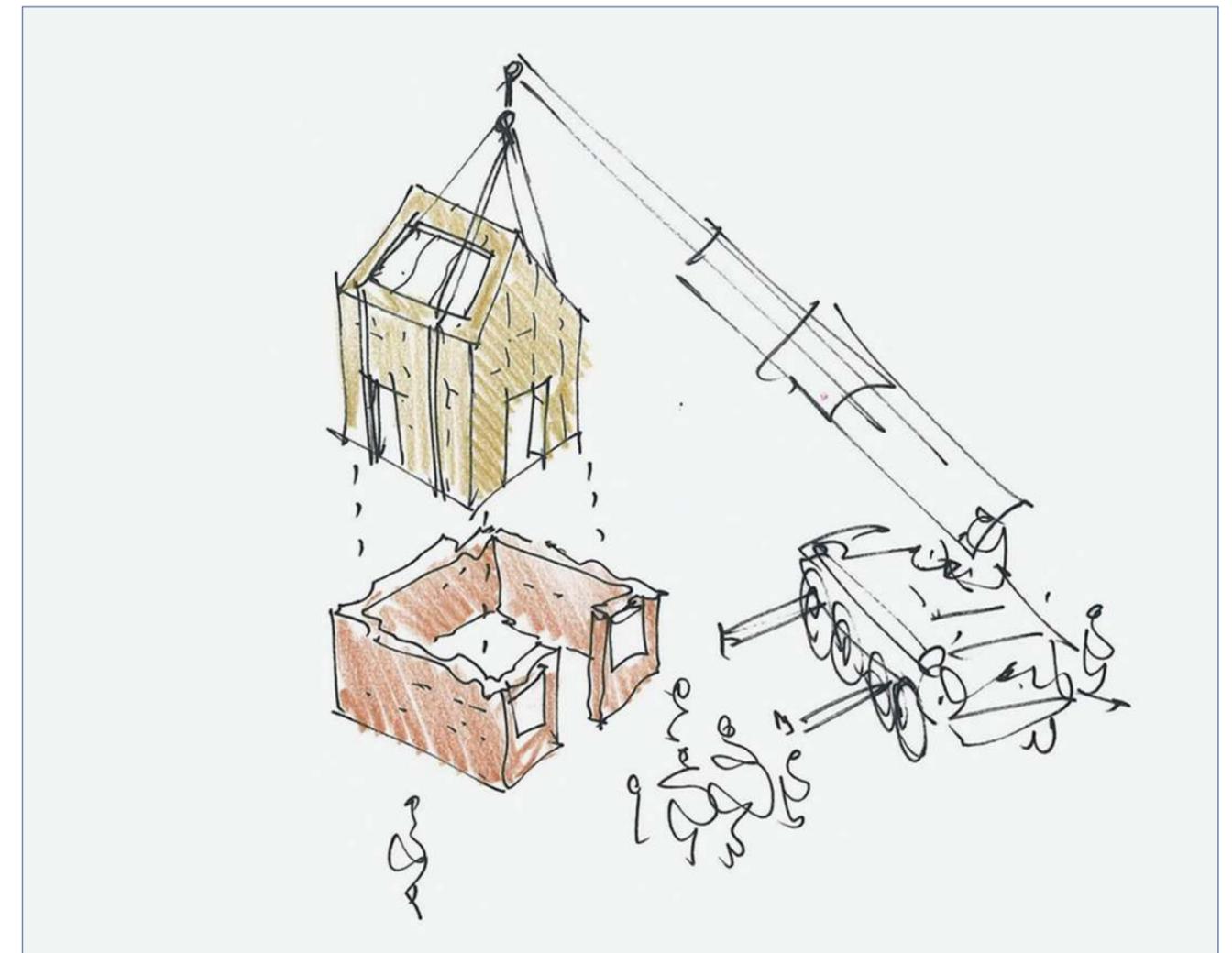
thresholds matter, and why conversion should be treated as a regulated delivery pathway, not an emergency shortcut. Done well, reuse can also reduce displacement pressures by adding homes in serviced areas and by tying public support to affordability obligations, rather than enabling speculative windfalls.

The Student Reality: Fairness in the Urban Fabric

For students, housing is not a background statistic. It shapes access to education in real time. Rent spikes decide where someone can study, and sometimes whether someone can study at all. Long commutes drain time and wellbeing. Overcrowding becomes normal. Insecurity

becomes constant, and participation in city life narrows.

A reuse focused approach can produce results within political timeframes that students can actually feel, not only in distant target years. It is also a fairness argument. Cities should not expand outward while viable space remains unused within the urban fabric. Europe does not lack buildings. It lacks affordable access to them. If vacancy and underuse are treated as part of urban infrastructure, architecture becomes a frontline tool against the housing crisis, not through iconic new projects, but through conversion, deep renovation, and policy ready building intelligence. The city is already built. Now we have to make it liveable and make access to it fair.



LOSING FOCUS



■ Sofia Kubrakova

When asked the question “How do you imagine the future of Europe?”, many young people struggle to give a clear answer. Yet they can easily admit that we are living in difficult times.

Another conflict, another dispute, and in recent years so much has already happened, mostly events of a negative nature. All of this has caused us to lose our sense of stability and security.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to imagine a concrete future for Europe, let alone to point out its clear direction. There is a growing feeling that no one, even someone holding great power, can lead us

onto the right path.

The image of today’s world is beginning to resemble an apocalyptic vision. Of course, this may sound exaggerated, but this warning should not be ignored.

A cursed generation?

It can be observed that pessimistic moods dominate among people. In the face of political instability, a sense of endless chaos emerges, every action and decision seems fragile, while the world order appears unstable and uncertain. This makes it especially difficult for young people to define who they are, what their goals are,

and what the meaning of life is.

These are not just temporary moods, but rather a broader pattern visible among Generation Z and part of the millennials. They grew up without a clearly defined vision of where Europe and the West as a whole is heading. An idea or long-term plan that could guide and motivate European societies was never fully formed or rooted.

This raises the question: can this be described as a disease of our generation? There is a clear difference between us and older generations, who lived with the idea of building a better future, often through resistance to oppressive political regimes. In Poland in the 1980s, for example, the anti-communist Solidarity movement emerged and united society. Its participants were full of enthusiasm and commitment, with clear visions for their lives, because they knew what they wanted and what they could achieve together.

Today, living in a democratic and liberal Europe, we have countless opportunities for personal development and shaping our own futures. The problem appears at a more basic level. It is seen in the struggle to find ourselves and a sense of purpose within this chaotic reality.

Significant events

Certain global events have seriously disrupted the natural development, growing-up process, and sense of normality for today’s young generation. The COVID-19 pandemic forced students around the world to suddenly give up social life and traditional forms of education. No one was prepared for such a drastic change in lifestyle.

Life in isolation significantly influenced how young people perceive reality and negatively affected social development. Mental health problems increased rapidly. According to data from the World Health

Organization, depressive and anxiety disorders rose by around 25% among young people in the first year of the pandemic.

Over the following years, this intensified the already existing sense of uncertainty about the future. People became afraid to make long-term plans, which directly limited self-development and reduced social and community engagement.

Another destabilizing factor is the war in Ukraine, now entering its fourth year. It is a large-scale conflict with no clear improvement in sight. Before it began, it was hard to imagine that such a close armed conflict would occur within our lifetime.

For years now, Europeans have lived under constant tension caused by Russian aggression and the possibility of its further expansion. Countries bordering Russia or Belarus feel particularly threatened. In reality, no one knows how or when this war will end, or what consequences it will bring. Once again, we face uncertainty about our future and how to build it. It is difficult to imagine a stable future for Europe when such dramatic events are happening just beyond its borders.

All of this has significantly distorted how the future of Europe is perceived and imagined.

What are the solutions?

In the face of this global problem, solutions must be sought. Looking back, young people in times of crisis often responded through unity. When a problem affected many individuals and its shared nature was recognized, people came together. They identified with social groups or movements that provided a sense of purpose and led to real change.

Examples include the Solidarity movement in Poland or the student protests of 1968 in Western Europe, when young people

opposed authoritarian structures, social inequalities, and conservative norms. This is how they imagined the future of Europe.

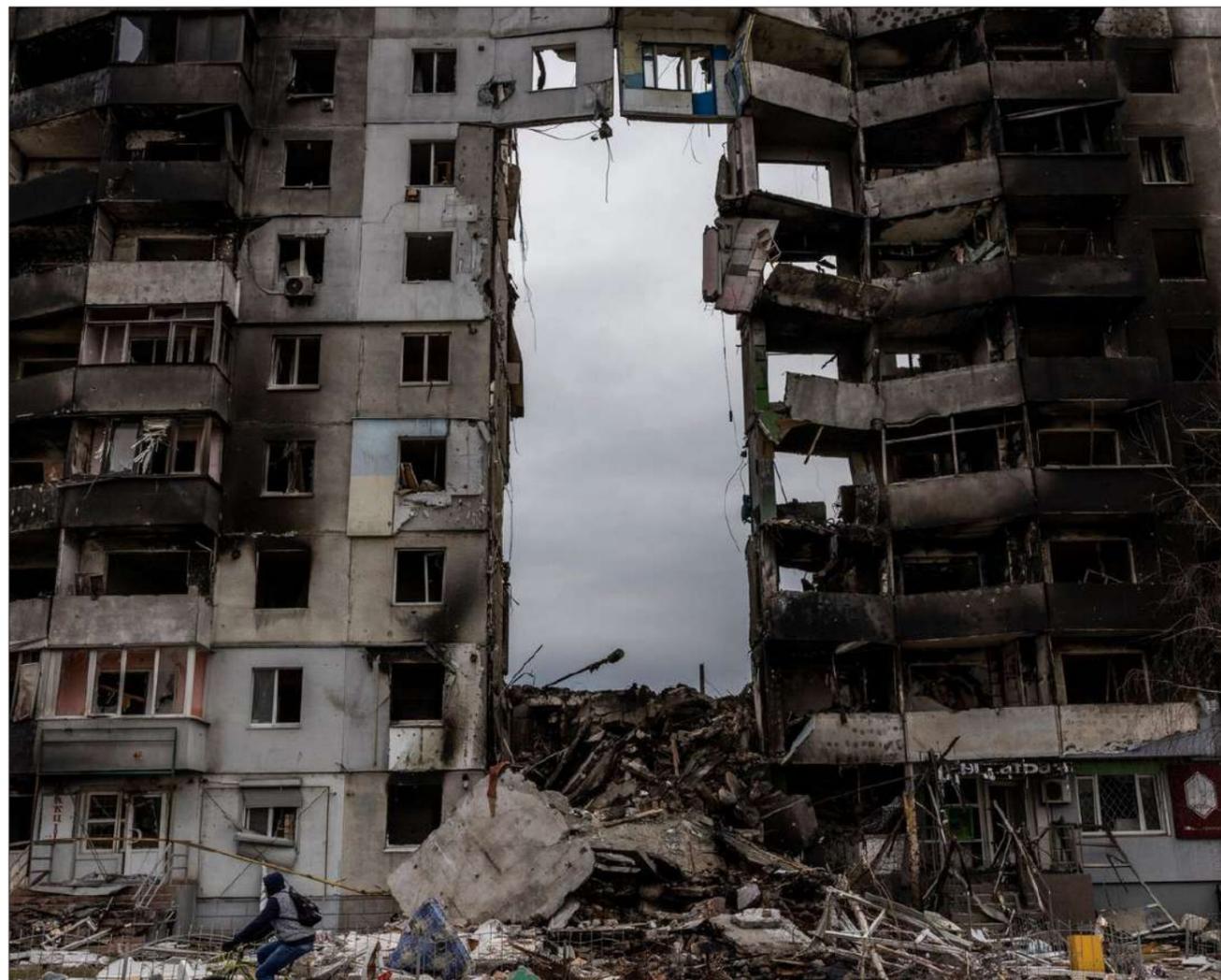
Today, however, different processes seem to dominate. The conditions described above have led to a specific way of coping with growing problems. Across Europe, especially among young people, there is a growing tendency to engage in extreme political movements - both on the left and the right.

This phenomenon stems from the need for simple answers and clear solutions. Radical groups present their ideas in a straightforward, uncompromising way, which attracts young people searching for stability and a clear vision of the future.

They offer a simplified image of Europe, promising to “eliminate” problems quickly, even though such problems cannot be solved in this way.

In practice, this approach has little to do with effective, systemic solutions. Instead of restoring order, it leads to further destruction and deepens existing social and political problems.

All these developments lead to one conclusion: the future of Europe is not only about strategies, projects, and political agreements. Of course, Europe needs plans for development, but it is difficult to speak of a real future if its main and future creators, young people, are unable to imagine it at all.



THE STOLEN FUTURE

Russia's War On Ukrainian Youth

■ Alex Gunter



In the occupied territories of Ukraine, a quiet yet devastating war is being waged against the youngest members of society. While the front lines are marked by artillery and trench warfare, the internal front in cities such as Donetsk, Mariupol and Melitopol is defined by the systematic erasure of identity and the weaponisation of medicine.

To grasp the gravity of the present crisis, one must look to the revival of a grim Soviet-era practice: punitive psychiatry. Recent reports indicate that in the occupied Donetsk region alone, at least forty-eight Ukrainian minors have been forcibly confined to psychiatric hospitals. Their supposed diagnosis is “extremism”; their real offence is refusing to renounce their Ukrainian identity.

A Dark Soviet Legacy Revived

For those who recall the 1960s and 1970s in the USSR, news of teenagers being committed to mental institutions for political dissent has an all-too-familiar ring. The state maintained that anyone who opposed the “perfect” socialist system must, by definition, be mentally unwell, even coining the term “sluggish schizophrenia” to describe individuals who appeared outwardly normal but harboured so-called reformist delusions.

Today, the Russian occupation authorities appear to have reached for the same playbook. In the twenty-first century, the language has changed, but the logic remains. “Reformist delusions” have been

replaced with allegations of extremism. Teenagers who post pro-Ukrainian messages online, decline to stand for the Russian anthem at school, or keep a Ukrainian flag in their bedroom are being pathologised by the state.

This goes well beyond medical misconduct; it is a method of intimidation. Confining a child to a psychiatric facility removes them from parental protection and shields their treatment from public scrutiny. Reporting from the Human Rights Center Almenda suggests that such placements form part of a broader programme of “re-education”. Within these institutions, basic dignity is often absent, and sustained psychological pressure is used in an attempt to break young people’s resolve and supplant their national identity with enforced loyalty. It is, in effect, a war for the future in which the battleground is the mind of a child.

An Ecosystem of Institutionalised Fear

The tragedy does not end at the doors of psychiatric wards. For the estimated one and a half million children still living under occupation, daily life is a test of endurance. The occupation authorities have cultivated an environment of institutionalised fear through overlapping forms of repression. Administrative coercion is one such tool. Minors are frequently fined or compelled to issue public apologies for “discrediting” the Russian Federation. For families already struggling under occupation, the threat of a substantial fine or the loss of parental rights is often sufficient to silence an entire household.

At the same time, education has been heavily militarised. Schools have been repurposed as centres of indoctrination. Youth organisations such as the “Movement of the First” are deployed to instil militarised values, compelling Ukrainian children to wear uniforms and to view their own homeland as an adversary. For older teenagers, the

dangers are more immediate. Reports describe intrusive searches of schoolbags and mobile phones by security services. Young people and their families face the persistent threat of being taken “to the basement” — the widely used term for improvised detention centres and torture chambers that have emerged across the occupied territories to stifle dissent.

The Systematic Erasure of Identity

Evidence gathered by human rights monitors paints a bleak picture of persecution. Children are not being targeted for criminal acts, but for resisting absorption into the Russian socio-political order. The Russian Federation’s official “lists of extremists and terrorists” now reportedly include at least twelve Ukrainian minors. These are not combatants; they are pupils who expressed independent views or maintained a connection to their Ukrainian heritage in a system that demands unquestioning conformity.

Such targeting is often preceded by aggressive “preventative” interviews with law enforcement, during which children are questioned without legal representation and pressured to inform on their peers. This climate of suspicion and coerced betrayal is designed to fracture trust within the younger generation, making organised resistance — or even private disagreement — seem unattainable.

The International Mandate for Accountability

The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Vladimir Putin over the unlawful deportation of children. Yet the international response to the persecution of those who remain in occupied territory has been slower and less decisive. The political misuse of psychiatry was widely condemned following the collapse of the Soviet Union and was understood to be

a line that must never again be crossed. When medicine is used to brand patriotism as pathology and to punish the young, it constitutes a grave breach of fundamental human rights — not only of the Geneva Conventions, but of basic human dignity.

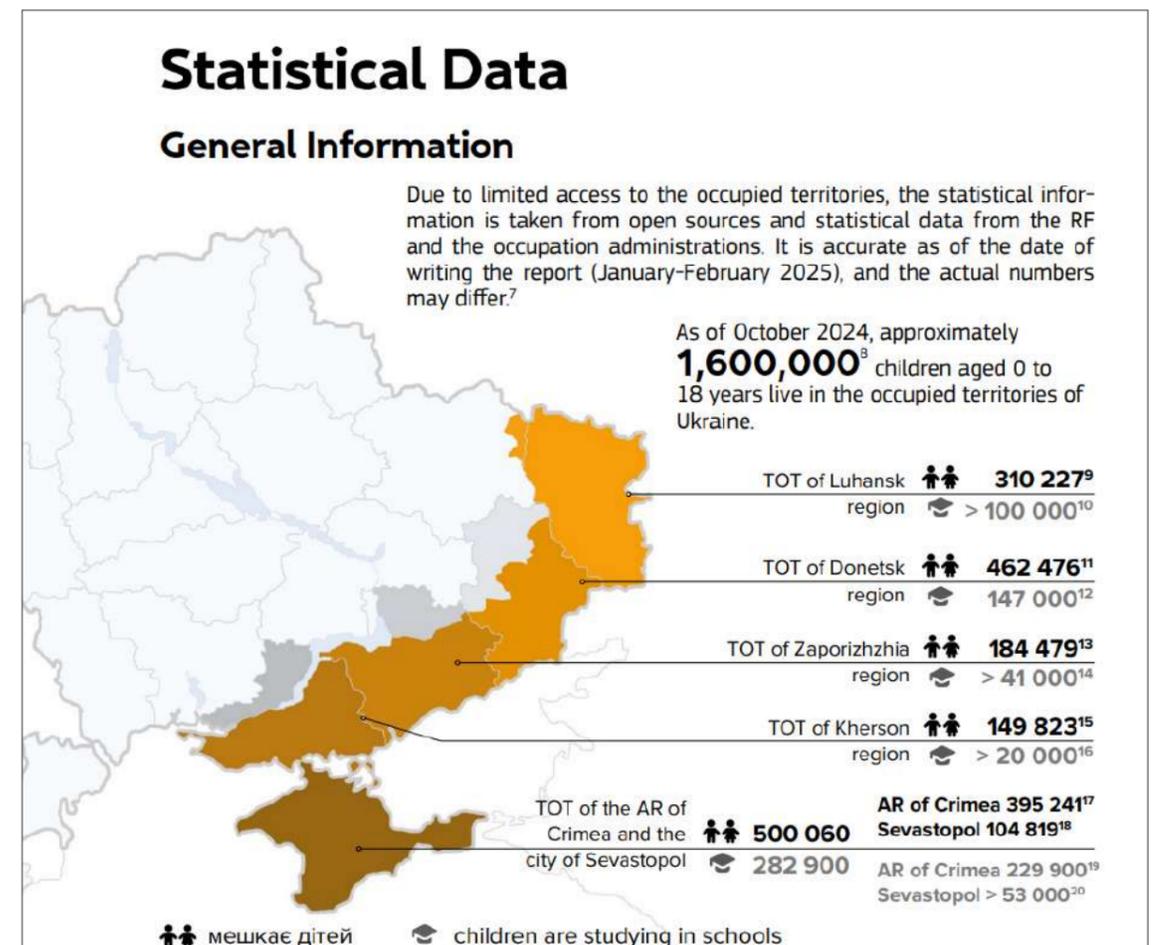
The European Union and the United Nations must move beyond expressions of concern and adopt concrete measures. Targeted sanctions should be imposed on medical administrators and psychiatrists who authorise the forced confinement of minors. A dedicated international monitoring mechanism is urgently needed to track the whereabouts and welfare of children placed in psychiatric care in occupied areas. Furthermore, the international community should formally recognise that forced re-education and psychiatric persecution form part of a broader attempt to erase the

Ukrainian national identity.

A Defining Choice for Europe

The teenagers of Donetsk and Mariupol are engaged in a profoundly lonely struggle for the right to remain themselves. They are being told that their language is criminal, their identity a disorder, and their future the property of a foreign state. If the systematic destruction of a generation’s mental wellbeing and identity goes unanswered, the failure will extend beyond Ukraine. It will signal to authoritarian regimes everywhere that children are legitimate targets.

Defending these young people means defending the very idea of a free Europe. The promise of “never again” must apply as much to the psychiatric wards of Donetsk as to the battlefields of the Donbas.



EDS 2028: On Responsibility, Reach, and Renewal

■ Sotiris Paphitis



It is tempting, when discussing the future of EDS, to speak only in terms of ambition. Growth, influence, expansion - these words come easily to us, particularly in a political environment that rewards volume over substance. Yet ambition, if left untethered from purpose, risks becoming noise. And student politics, perhaps more than any other field, is especially vulnerable to that temptation.

Having spent some years now within EDS, I find myself returning to a familiar question: what is it that we are ultimately trying to build? The answer, I believe, lies not in a single reform or slogan, but in a deliberate effort to strengthen EDS along two essential and interdependent axes - an internal axis of consolidation and quality, and an external axis of influence and unity.

The Internal Axis: Doing Our Work Better

No organisation can credibly seek greater influence if it has not first earned coherence. The internal health of EDS is therefore not an administrative concern; it is a political one.

Governance must be the starting point. This current Bureau has made a lot of steps towards the right direction. We should aim to build upon them. Rules and procedures exist not to restrain initiative, but to enable it. Clear decision-making processes, transparent accountability, and continuity between successive leaderships are what allow an organisation to pursue long-term goals rather than reset itself every year. Strengthening governance is, in this sense, an act of respect - for our members, for our institutional memory, and for those who will

inherit EDS after us.

Closely linked to this is the quality of our policy output. EDS resolutions should aspire to be more than symbolic gestures. Under this Bureau we have made a great step in that direction. Last April EDS made EPP policy by successfully passing a resolution on academic freedom in the party's Congress in Valencia. We can definitely have even more achievements like that. We can definitely make our voice heard even louder.

Our motions should be grounded, coherent, and capable of shaping debate beyond our internal forums. This requires investment: thematic working groups, closer engagement with academic and professional expertise within our network, and a willingness to prioritise depth over quantity. Influence is not achieved by speaking often, but by speaking well.

Finally, there is the question of closeness among members. EDS is at its best when it functions not merely as a platform, but as a community, as an EDS family. Cross-border cooperation and sustained collaboration between member organisations and EDS create bonds that outlast study missions

and council meetings. An organisation whose members feel genuinely connected is one that can withstand disagreement,

change, and growth without losing its sense of direction. Over the years, we have all built genuine, strong connections with each other. We can tap into these bonds to make EDS even greater.

The External Axis: Extending Our Reach Responsibly

Internal consolidation, however, is not an end in itself. EDS exists within a broader political ecosystem, and our relevance is measured by our ability to engage meaningfully with it.

Our relationship with the European People's Party is central. As the official student organisation of the EPP family, EDS carries both an opportunity and a responsibility: to articulate student perspectives clearly, credibly, and constructively. This requires more systematic engagement - not only presence, but preparation; not only access, but contribution. Youth voices are most effective when they are informed, consistent, and solution-oriented.

Beyond the EPP, partnerships matter.



The Martens Centre, YEPP, and allied organisations offer avenues for intellectual exchange and strategic cooperation that EDS should use more deliberately. These relationships should not be transactional, but complementary – each organisation contributing its strengths to shared objectives. In doing so, EDS can position itself as a bridge between ideas and political action.

There is also a broader question of unity within the European centre-right student movement. Fragmentation weakens us. Reaching out to former member organisations, and exploring opportunities with new student groups, especially in underrepresented regions, should be understood as investments in our future. A larger, more diverse membership base does not dilute EDS; it grounds it more firmly in the realities of Europe as it is.

Looking Toward 2028

Thinking about 2028 is not an exercise in prediction, but in preparation. The choices we will have to make today – about how we govern ourselves, how seriously we treat our ideas, and how openly we engage with partners – will determine whether EDS

remains relevant or merely active.

Leadership, in this context, is less about visibility and more about stewardship. It is about ensuring that the organisation we pass on is stronger than the one we inherited: clearer in purpose, wider in reach, and more confident in its role. Growth without coherence is fragile; coherence without ambition is stagnant. The task before us is to pursue both, consciously and responsibly.

A Closing Thought

Student political organisations exist to serve something larger than themselves. They are preparatory spaces – places where future leaders learn not only how to debate, but how to listen; not only how to win, but how to build. If EDS is to remain faithful to that purpose, it must resist both complacency and spectacle.

EDS 2028, then, is not a destination. It is a standard – one that asks us to take our responsibilities seriously, to expand our influence thoughtfully, and to ensure that whatever we do, we do it in service of something enduring.

If we succeed in that, the rest will follow.



A DISTORTED LEFT COMPASS

■ Moriz Jeitler



The Dead End of Student Politics

Across Europe's universities, student politics has reached a worrying dead end. Instead of focusing on tangible improvements to student life, democratic participation, or genuine engagement with global threats to democratic and humanistic values, substantial parts of the student political left have radicalized.

Spilling over from across the Atlantic, what presents itself as "performative activism" has increasingly devolved into a single-issue obsession. This fixation not only ignores other urgent causes, but has

predominantly become a breeding ground for antisemitism across campuses on the entire continent.

The Drift from Core Responsibilities

Student governments and representative bodies were never meant to function as ideological megaphones for geopolitical culture wars. Their primary responsibility is clear: to represent students, improve academic and social conditions, and act as a bridge between students and democratic institutions. Yet today, many devote their sole energy to symbolic resolutions, protests, and slogans that have

virtually no impact on students' daily lives.

The fixation on the "Free Palestine" movement illustrates this drift perfectly. While the Middle East conflict itself is complex and tragic, its reduction to simplistic narratives on European campuses has produced alarming side effects—namely, Jewish students increasingly feeling unsafe, excluded, or directly targeted. Antisemitic rhetoric is often tolerated, or worse, excused under the flag of "anti-imperialism," thus blurring lines that democratic societies have a responsibility to defend clearly. A radicalized left that claims moral superiority while ignoring or relativizing antisemitism has fundamentally lost its ethical grounding, often relying heavily on dogmatic progressivism imported from American campuses.

A Selective Moral Compass

Even more striking is what this one-sided focus leaves out. While student politicians shout slogans in Western capitals, real democratic struggles are largely ignored. The movements in Iran, Serbia, and Georgia are perhaps the most obvious examples. Students there risk imprisonment, torture, and death for demanding fundamental freedoms and human rights.

If student politics were truly driven by solidarity and democratic values, these movements would be front and center. Their absence reveals a selective and questionable moral compass shaped more by ideological fashion than by a genuine commitment to democratic ideals. It is telling to ask: has a single socialist student



representative been outspoken about the protests in Tbilisi?

Reclaiming Student Politics

This is where we, as European Democrat Students (EDS) members, must step up—louder, clearer, and more confidently. Our answer cannot be reactionary outrage or empty counter-slogans; rather, we must reclaim student politics through competence, awareness of real matters, and genuine service. High-quality representation, transparent governance, and concrete improvements to student life—such as advocating for better housing, reliable mental health resources, and transparent university budgets—are the most effective antidotes to superficial ideological signaling. When students see results instead of performative actions, ideological grandstanding quickly loses its appeal.

At the same time, our organizations must rediscover their role as internal correctives to their big-stage counterparts. Too often, established center-right parties retreat into cautious silence on geopolitical questions, fearing controversy rather than standing up for democratic allies. As the next generation of leaders, we cannot continue to mirror this

timidity. Advocating for genuine democratic movements globally is vital, but it must not devolve into the obsessive polarization that sidelines our core duty to everyday student life.

Student organizations are uniquely positioned to push for clarity: supporting democratic forces, naming authoritarian regimes for what they are, and rejecting moral relativism, while never forgetting our main mission to improve daily student life in every way possible. Being "reasonable" does not mean staying quiet. Instead, it means being principled, informed, and unapologetic in siding with what is right instead of staying complicit in silence.

It means rejecting antisemitism without qualification and standing with real democratic movements beyond Western comfort zones, all while insisting that student politics return to its core mission: serving students and strengthening democracy. Only in this way will Europe continue on its path to greatness. If the left continues to choose ideological purity over responsibility, then it is up to us to offer a better alternative—providing reliable representation and services that outshine any questionable propaganda.



BRIDGING THE ATLANTIC

Why the EU–Mercosur Deal is a Win for Europe’s Youth

■ Vladimir Kljajic



Yesterday, January 9, history was truly made. After decades of negotiations, stops, starts, and endless political debates, the European Union and the Mercosur bloc have finally put pen to paper. The ink is dry on what is now one of the world’s largest free trade zones, covering nearly 800 million people. But beyond the mainstream headlines analyzing beef quotas, automotive tariffs, and machinery exports, we need to ask the real question: What does this massive transatlantic bridge actually mean for us

the students, young professionals, and entrepreneurs of Europe?

For the EDS community, it is a gateway to new horizons in a post-crisis world. Here is why this agreement is a genuine game-changer for our generation.

1. The Digital Highway is Finally Open

For young founders and those working in the tech sector, the market just got significantly bigger. The agreement does more than lower tariffs on goods; it eliminates critical barriers for digital services and e-commerce.

For the first time, European startups have direct, streamlined access to the vibrant, high-growth economies of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay. The deal guarantees legal certainty and protects intellectual property, meaning if you are developing a fintech solution in Berlin or an EdTech platform in Sofia, your next big user base might just be in Buenos Aires or São Paulo. We are no longer limited by the boundaries of the Single Market; our digital playground now extends across the Atlantic.

2. Sustainability as a Core Pillar (Not Just a Slogan)

We know that our generation demands climate action, and rightfully so. Critics feared a “trade at all costs” approach, but this 2026 agreement is vastly different from the drafts of the past. It includes binding commitments to the Paris Agreement and strict, enforceable clauses against deforestation.

By linking trade access to high environmental standards, the EU is effectively exporting its green values. We are proving that economic growth and ecological responsibility can and must go hand in hand. This gives young, eco-conscious consumers in Europe the assurance that closer ties with South America will support, not hinder, the global

fight against climate change.

3. Strengthening the Democratic Alliance

In an increasingly fragmented world where authoritarian regimes are trying to rewrite global rules, this deal is a geopolitical power move. This success is a testament to the steadfast leadership of President Ursula von der Leyen and the European Commission, whose persistence and strategic vision turned a stalled negotiation into a monumental victory for the West. By solidifying ties with Mercosur, Europe is strengthening the “Democratic Axis.” For young political activists in EDS, this is crucial: it ensures that the global standards for trade, labor rights, and data privacy are set by democracies, not by state-capitalist autocracies.

4. A New Era of Mobility and Science

While this is legally a trade agreement, closer economic ties invariably lead to closer academic and cultural ties. As European companies expand their footprint in South America, the demand for cross-cultural competence will skyrocket.

We can expect a surge in research cooperation, funded by joint EU–Mercosur grants, and hopefully, expanded exchange programs. Imagine a “Transatlantic Erasmus” becoming the norm in the near future, where an internship in Montevideo is as accessible as one in Madrid. This opens up a career trajectory for young Europeans that simply didn’t exist a decade ago.

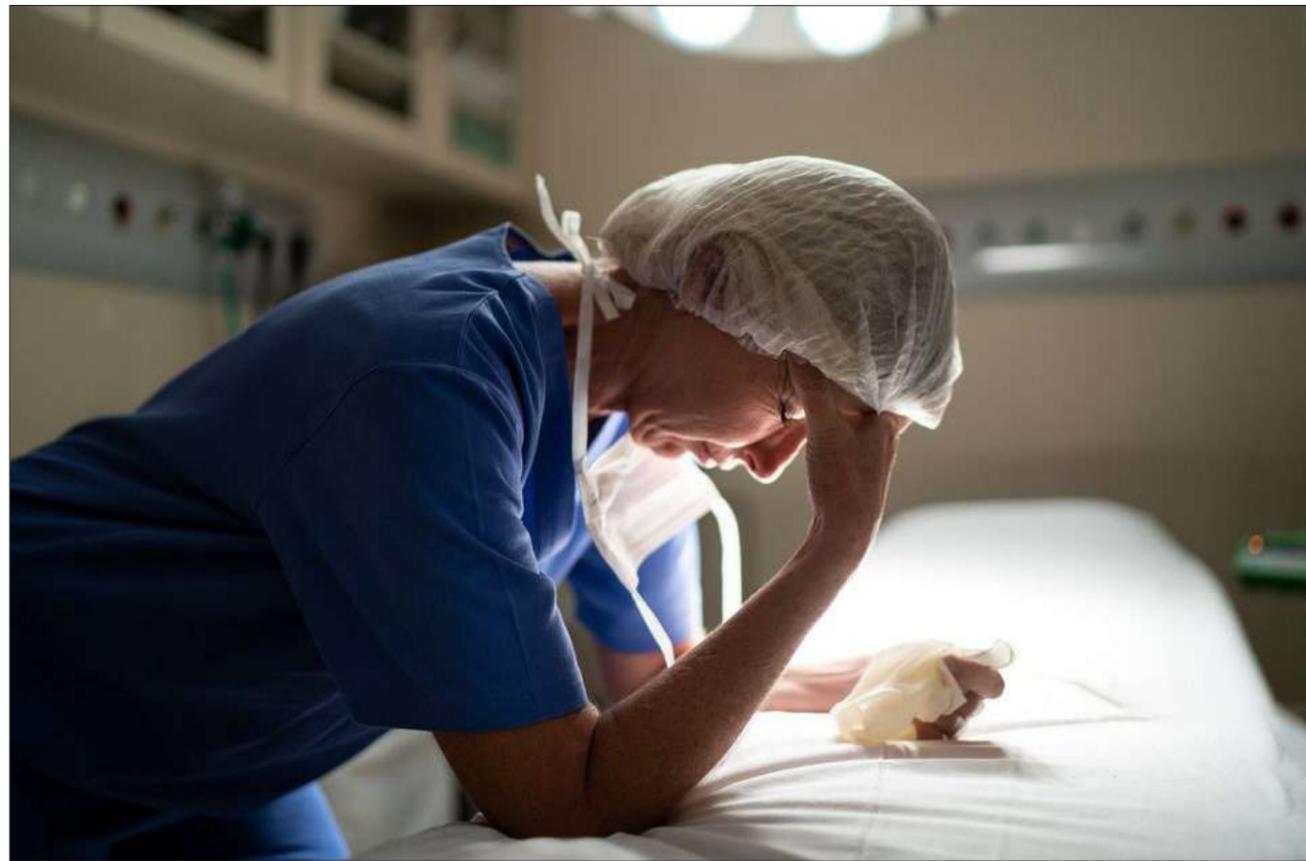
The EU–Mercosur deal signed yesterday is about more than lowering tariffs; it is about lowering walls. It is a bold statement that Europe remains open for business and committed to global cooperation.

For young Europeans, this deal offers a challenge. The infrastructure has been built, and the door to South America is wide open. The question now is: are we ready to walk through it?

WHEN THE HEALERS BECOME THE WOUNDED

A w Plea for Europe's Failing Care System

■ Lara Ghanoudi



We are taught to heal – not to break.

Yet across Europe's hospitals, the healers are the ones quietly falling apart. As a newly qualified nurse, I entered this profession believing compassion could fix almost anything. But what I've learned is that compassion alone cannot hold up a collapsing system. Behind every reassuring smile lies exhaustion; behind every steady hand, anxiety. The truth is harsh: our hospitals are full of wounded healers, and

the cost is being paid not only by us, but by our patients.

The crisis beneath the white coats

The World Health Organization's Mental Health of Nurses and Doctors (MeND) survey – covering every EU Member State, Iceland and Norway, with over 90,000 responses – delivers a devastating message:

- **One in three** doctors and nurses is living

with depression or anxiety.

- **One in ten** has recently thought about ending their life.
- **32 %** show signs of depression; **24 %** of **anxiety**; **3 %** meet the threshold for **alcohol dependence**.

In Latvia and Poland, nearly half of all respondents report depressive symptoms. Even in Denmark and Iceland, where healthcare systems are better resourced, around 15 % are affected – far above population averages.

Across the region, healthcare workers are five times more likely to experience depression than the general public. And the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work confirms that during the pandemic, over a third of healthcare and social-care staff reported anxiety, depression or burnout – levels that remain dangerously high today.

These are not just statistics. They are the pulse of a workforce in distress.

The Toxic Trinity: Violence, Exhaustion and Precarity

The MeND survey reveals a toxic trio that corrodes both morale and mental health.

- **One in three** has endured **bullying or violent threats**.
- **One in ten** has suffered **physical violence or sexual harassment**.
- **Seven in ten** face **regular aggression** from patients or relatives.
- **A quarter of doctors** work **more than 50 hours a week**, and a **third of nurses** survive on temporary **contracts**.

Each of these conditions doubles or even

triples the risk of depression and anxiety.

I have seen colleagues cry quietly in supply rooms, wipe their faces, and step back onto the ward because there is no one else to cover. A nurse can offer compassion to a patient in pain, but there is little compassion left for her when the shift ends.

Hospitals should be sanctuaries. Too often, they feel like battlefields.

Purpose without peace

What breaks my heart most is that most of us still love what we do. Two-thirds of doctors and nurses say their work feels meaningful. Purpose keeps us going – but meaning without rest is a slow kind of collapse.

Well-being among healthcare workers is now a third lower than in 2021, and two-thirds lower than in other professions. We are a workforce fuelled by moral duty rather than sustainable support.

Imagine a candle burning bright in a storm – steadfast but shrinking. That is Europe's health workforce: radiant with dedication, fading under relentless wind.

When Caregivers Crack, Patients Suffer

Poor mental health among healthcare workers isn't only a human tragedy; it's a public-safety emergency.

The WHO found that staff suffering from depression are twice as likely to take sick leave and three times more likely to plan to leave their job. Every departure adds weight to those left behind.

I have felt it myself – rushing from one patient to another, knowing each deserves more than the minutes I can give. When nurses and doctors are stretched to breaking point, care becomes mechanical, and mistakes become more likely.

When caregivers crack, patients don't just wait longer; they are left more vulnerable.

The Seven Prescriptions for Recovery

The WHO has already prescribed the cure. What's missing is political will.

- 1. Zero tolerance for violence and harassment** — Protect healthcare workers as fiercely as patients.
- 2. End the culture of heroic overwork** — Regulate hours, mandate rest. Fatigue kills empathy and accuracy.
- 3. Reform shift systems** — Make schedules predictable and humane, especially for the majority-female nursing workforce.
- 4. Train compassionate leaders** — Managers must recognise burnout early and respond with empathy, not reprimand.
- 5. Replace precarity with stability** — Secure contracts and fair pay are mental-health interventions in disguise.
- 6. Guarantee confidential mental-health support** — Every health worker deserves stigma-free access to counselling.
- 7. Measure what matters** — Track and report workforce well-being like any other key health indicator.

These measures are not utopian — they are necessary. They require courage more than cash.

The Moral and Economic Imperative

Investing in the mental health of health workers is both ethical and economical.

Europe already faces a projected shortfall of nearly one million health and care workers by 2030. Each resignation, each sick day,

each burnout episode carries a financial and human cost. WHO analysis shows that investing in workforce well-being yields high returns through improved retention, safety and performance.

Neglect, by contrast, is ruinously expensive. A system that consumes its own workforce cannot endure.

Europe's Moment of Reckoning

Europe's healthcare system is burning from within — and the flames are consuming its doctors and nurses first.

If policymakers fail to act, the collapse will not begin with infrastructure or technology, but with people — with the very heartbeat of our health services. The WHO has already given us the evidence; the stories from the wards fill in the colour and pain behind the numbers. The next move belongs to Europe's leaders. Because when the healers burn out, the light that guides our health systems goes out with them.

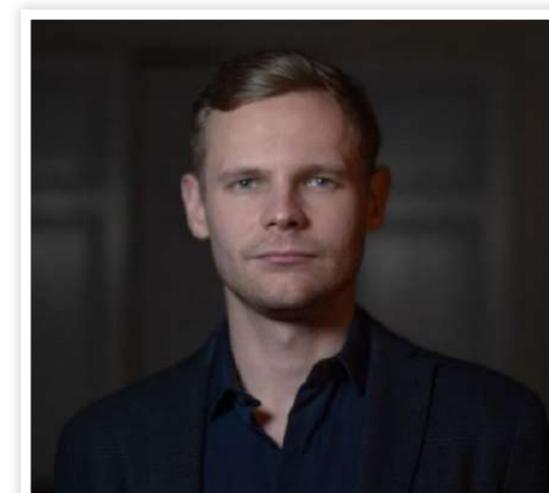


EDITORIAL LEADERSHIP



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EDITORIAL TEAM



Andia Homata, originally from Cyprus, holds a degree in Business Management from the University of Essex and is currently pursuing a Master's at the London School of Economics. With a strong academic background in business and organisational studies, she is particularly interested in the intersection of economics, policy, and global markets.



Sofia represents Nowa Generacja. Based in Wrocław, Poland, she studies law at the University of Wrocław and works as a social parliamentary assistant. Passionate about human rights, geopolitics, and justice – especially women's rights – she believes that real change comes from action, integrity, and courage.



Andrea Mghames, represents the Lebanese Forces Party in Lebanon. With a master's degree in International Relations and currently serves as a Regional Program Coordinator and Business Developer at Balinca, a company specializing in training services. In addition to her professional work, Andrea is a lifelong professional swimmer. Andrea is excited to write about and raise awareness of the significance of Lebanon especially during this period of severe economic collapse, political instability and widespread corruption.



Lara Ghanoudi is a nursing student at the Complutense University of Madrid. She is passionate about international affairs and focuses on the impact of health and religion on the youth.



María Ferrer Argente is from Zaragoza, Spain. She holds a Law Degree from the University of Zaragoza, a Master's in European Union Studies from the University of Salamanca, and graduated with an LL.M. from the College of Europe in Bruges in 2023. After completing internships in Legal and Home Affairs at the EPP Group in the European Parliament and in communications at the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, she began working as a parliamentary assistant (APA) for a Spanish MEP from the EPP in the European Parliament.

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