

CONCLAVE

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# A POWER AGENDA FOR A GLOBAL, SUSTAINABLE AND RESPONSIBLE EUROPE

Risks and Opportunities for the EU  
in an Era of Geostrategic Shifts

A report based upon the exchanges between the participants in the Second European Conclave and endorsed by the Conclave Board members in their individual capacity:  
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*May 2025*







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Shaping a European 2040 Vision

# CONCLAVE

17/19

January 2025  
Brussels, Belgium

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# Foreword

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# OUR WORLD AND OUR

It would be a mistake to believe that the second term of the current President of the United States (US) has opened a new era of geopolitical disruptions and global market upheavals triggering a worrying phase of decline for the transatlantic alliance. If the American President has indeed turned the world upside down in less than three months in office with a disruptive economic and foreign policy agenda, he has only heightened and accelerated already-existing long-term trends. The breakdown of the rule-based order and the return of military force did not start on January 21, 2025. Europe is only facing, now in plain light, a reality that had thus far remained half-tone: despite considerable assets, the continent is at immediate threat of a geopolitical disappearance, global economic demotion and industrial colonisation. Those words might hit as a hard truth to some, but they no longer belong to a Cassandra-like rhetoric: they define the world Europeans find themselves in.

In this “open era” of chaos, unlawfulness and violence, in which force too often prevail over agreed-upon rules, dialogue and cooperation, Europeans have a historic opportunity to fully tap into their exceptional economic, political, industrial, intellectual, technological and scientific potential but also to leverage **their remarkable institutional strength** to regain control of their destiny.

It is high time to adopt without delay a **Power Agenda** to transform the European Union (EU) into a global, sustainable and responsible power, one that would take the geopolitical shape of a non-imperialist power, championing a well-balanced multilateral global order based on mutually agreed rules and common interests for shared prosperity.

Is this a luxury? No, it is an imperative of existential nature. Watching the train of History go by, without getting our act together to defend our values of liberty, tolerance, openness, dialogue and justice, and to protect our model built on the pillars of the rule of law, democracy, scientific freedom and innovation, social protection, climate action, environmental conservation and cultural diversity, will condemn us to geopolitical, economic and historical marginalization. Our duty is as much to our forefathers than it is to the future generations, as well as to all the countries and peoples around the world who have not yet given up on Europe to uphold a global order of cooperation, dialogue, mutual respect and rules.

If our ambition must be high and our determination resolute, our answers cannot be easy. The second term of President Donald Trump does present an unprecedented challenge for the world, particularly for Ame-



# RRRY R HOPE

## Concrete Pathways to a Power Agenda

rica's allies and partners, who find themselves increasingly destabilized and at odds with Washington's geo-political agenda.

The US is turning its back on the global order it helped establish in 1945, shifting towards geo-political retrenchment – venturing into unheard claims over sovereign territory of allies –, predatory transactionalism over multilateralism, protectionism, and an erosion of democratic values in global affairs. Meanwhile, domestic transformations, such as the weakening of federal agencies, attacks on scientific freedom, and the rollback of climate and diversity policies, underscore a broader radicalisation in American politics.

Should this trend sustain itself, we would see the end of Western unity and Western geo-political homogeneity and be prepared for a reversal of geo-political alliances. This would mean possibly returning to a world order comparable to that of the 1930s.

Is this evolution irreversible? Not necessarily. **It will depend upon the way other powers react, in particular the EU.** The American people also will return to the polls in 2026, and global markets will react accordingly. Europe cannot afford to be passive. It must take immediately pro-active steps to develop its own agenda and enhance its resilience and safeguard its own interests in the future while staying true to its

values of moderation, balance, and openness to cooperation.

For Europeans, considering the brutality of a shifting world order is essential. National interests are increasingly prioritised over traditional alliances, making it crucial to establish an ambitious, courageous, and actionable long-term strategy. This includes reinforcing Europe's strategic geo-political independence in such key areas as energy, defence, technology, and infrastructure. Additionally, Europe must pursue a bold new approach to reengage with other regions of the world, especially countries in the so-called Global South and particularly Africa.

In this regard, the ambition of transforming the EU into a global, sustainable, responsible, science- and tech-driven power, set forth in the first Conclave report, is more indispensable and relevant than ever.

From this perspective, the EU must equip itself with enhanced foresight, analysis, and decision-making capacity, with accelerated and improved execution, while preserving its tradition of humanism based on freedom, solidarity, science, knowledge, and a sense of sustainability.





# The four priorities defined in the first Conclave Report take on a new significance in the current context:

- Geo-political assertion with the strengthening of an autonomous defence and security policy based on an independent defence industry;

- Technological and scientific leadership with a focus **on attracting the best researchers in the world, boosting artificial intelligence and developing** a European platform strategy, with a priority on health, and an objective of competitiveness and much increased growth potential;

- a common goods strategy with a focus on energy and climate;

- and a new democratic stage.

The latest developments in a sputtering transatlantic relationship heighten the urgency of a continental defence and security strategy (integrating the United Kingdom and Norway). As America redefines its stance, Europe confronted with other military powers, such as Russia or China, must therefore focus on strengthening its own resilience and strategic autonomy. This calls for a historic

increase in defence expenditure, balanced by a strong principle of spending efficiency and resource pooling; the rapid scaling-up of the European defence and space industry; and a new geopolitical approach based on a review and strengthening of EU's strategic partnerships.

Putting defence and space at the top of European priorities offers a historic opportunity to bolster not just our collective security but also our industrial competitiveness and economic growth for the next decade. This is nothing less than a one-time opportunity to turn the Draghi, Letta, Niinistö, Tirole, and Heitor reports into reality. This should also lead us to open wide the doors of the EU to the world's best scientists and engineers – at a time when their freedom is being threatened in too many countries – as well as to artists, who are increasingly muzzled.

The second Conclave, held at the Royal Palace in Brussels last January, underscored these priorities and shaped the present report. Concrete outcomes include increased cooperation in science and research, the development of an EU capital market, and





tangible steps towards European strategic autonomy. It is encouraging to see EU leaders actively discussing these critical issues, as evidenced by recent high-level summits on defence and technological sovereignty.

But let us be clear: the Power Agenda we recommend is the only way for Europeans to reclaim their destiny and become proactive. Its definition and implementation should be at the heart of public debate. It must be supported by a Growth Agenda that goes much beyond mere competitiveness which, alone, does not guarantee growth.

This report is based on an analysis shared by the members of the Board, whose diversity is a strength, and which prepares the political consensus that Europe needs to move forward.

Achieving this transformation rapidly is only possible if Europeans double down on unity and cohesiveness.

**Guillaume KLOSSA**

Chairman of the Board

and Piero BENASSI, Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON, Philippe ÉTIENNE, Mariya GABRIEL, Art Jan de GEUS, Peter GRK, Maria João RODRIGUES, Grégoire ROOS, Daniela SCHWARZER, Erika STAEL Von HOLSTEIN, Loukas TSOUKALIS, António VITORINO, Malte Tim ZABEL.



# EXECUTIVE

The second Conclave conference (January 2025) took place in the context of dramatic geo-political shifts. Europe slowly awakens to get its act together.

**New initiatives are launched at EU level. But more should be done. This report sets forth concrete recommendations to fuel the public debate, encourage bold decision-making and give perspectives on how Europe can be the global value-based, sustainable and responsible power it needs to become if it is to survive.**



# SUMMARY

The world is being shaken by dramatic geo-political shifts, which can severally undermine peace and prosperity in the European Union (EU). Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine is a direct threat to European security. The United States (US) seeks for self-interest and makes unpredictability a key element of its foreign policy, while turning its back on international cooperation in trade, security and development. China surpasses the EU in many areas, first among which technology, industry, research and innovation, as well as military capacity development. Europe clearly must get its act together. It is against this backdrop that the second Conclave conference took place, on 17-19 January, in Brussels. Our work focused on Geo-politics, Defence and Security, Science and Technology as key drivers for Competitiveness and Growth. We also discussed at length the crucial question of financial resources to finance the EU's ambition. We recognise that further steps must be taken in other areas like Climate Change and Democracy. Our first Conclave "umbrella"-report (2024) already contained relevant recommendations in that sense.

On Defence and Security, we advocate, first and foremost, for a continued and strengthened European support to Ukraine irrespective of external calls of threats to stop doing so. Furthermore, existing programmes, such as "ReArm Europe", are aligned to enhance Europe's military capacity and defence industry. But more should be done. Strengthening EU's mutual defence clause (Article 42.7 of the Lisbon Treaty) will require autonomous defence capabilities. Defence budgets need to increase from 1.9% of GDP in 2024, to at least 3% per annum. "Project Common Bonds" should finance defence spending, signalling unity across the Union. The EU should make the necessary reforms to prepare for a new enlargement round and most notably pave the way for Ukraine's integration into the EU, leverage this as a strategic asset in negotiations and integrate Ukraine's defence industry into European defence. The EU must also implement fast-track procurement processes that allow for weeks-long development cycles, iterative testing and rapid mass deployment.

The report of the **First Conclave** conference, published March 2024, was titled: "Europe 2040: Tomorrow is Today". It called for "co-building a global, sustainable and responsible power". The report identified 17 fundamental issues Europeans need to tackle to remain relevant. Perhaps prescient, one of them was: "Preparing for America's waning commitment to Europe". We advocated "the creation of a European defence pillar integrated into NATO and able to act autonomously if needed" and "a public debate on what a European defence should look like". At the time of the second Conclave in January 2025, and even more since then, these have unfortunately become even more relevant recommendations.

**International Trade and Development Aid** are in a dire and worrying state. The World Trade Organisation (WTO), once key to enable and foster fair and mutually beneficiary trade flows, is paralysed. Rivalry reigns not only between the West and China but also between the US and its neighbours and of course the EU. The development programme USAID has been shut down. Fortunately, the European Commission (EC) has a mandate to act in the name of the Member States to stand firm on trade. The EU developed strong development aid instruments like the “Global Gateway” (€300billion). But more should be done. The EU must reinforce its Single Market for its own growth, but also strengthen its position an attractive trade partner. A Reconstruction Fund for Ukraine is an immediate need. Europe must build partnerships with Northern Africa, negotiate free trade agreements with India, ASEAN countries and Mercosur.

**Science and Technology are key drivers for competitiveness and growth.** Europe is well placed in research and knowledge but lacks a coordinated approach and a financial ecosystem (venture capital, stock markets) to secure growth capital for innovation. So, more should be done. Europe should double budgets for programmes like the European Research Council (ERC). The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP10) needs implementation as a stand-alone programme. Horizon Europe should be improved to include Eastern European countries in a collective effort for prosperity. Europe needs a Simplified European Private Company (SEPC) regime including a unified insolvency framework.

“Moon-shot” projects will spur innovation and attract and retain top scientists – we need, can and should attract the world’s best talents. The EU should develop a comprehensive STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) educational strategy that caters to all EU citizens. A European research “passport” would function as a standardised digital tool to streamline the mobility, collaboration, and funding access for researchers across the EU.

**A truly Industrial Policy** is necessary for innovation and growth. Europe has matured industrial sectors but falls short of political strategic adaptivity. Other hindering factors are bureaucracy and complex labour laws. European-scale industrial policy depends on Union-wide integrated supply chains capable of competing with the US and China, while providing balanced opportunities for diverse European regions. In the new context of 2025, the EC announced a €200-billion investment initiative to make Europe a leading AI-powerhouse. But more should be done. The EU must build a next-generation Industrial Policy supporting innovation not only in processes but also in products, standards, procurement, skills, and societal change. On the supply side, it should adapt competition and financial rules. Sectors like automotive, machinery and pharmaceuticals need technological solutions to sustain relevant brands and a large-scale quality jobs. Sectorial plans are needed to keep or gain technological leadership by using a mission approach and counting on a reformed European Innovation Council as well as on an EU Tech Sovereignty Fund inspired from the US DARPA model.



**Data Collection and Cybersecurity** are the new technological battlefields. The EU has already a remarkable track record in regulations through the Digital Markets Act (DMA) and the General Data Protection regulation (GDPR), and also through strengthening the EU Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA). The European AI-act is work in progress. But more should be done. Sectors like defence, health, education, energy, all suffer from inefficient and ineffective data-infrastructure. An EU wide digital platform is needed. The EuroStack provides an ambitious, value-driven and relevant strategic blueprint to drive innovation, competitiveness, and sustainability in Europe's digital economy. It offers a speaking example of how to build an autonomous digital infrastructure that turns Europe's vulnerabilities into strengths.

**How to fund the EU's ambitions?** Advancing industrial defence integration, rebuilding industrial and overall economic competitiveness, speeding up the energy transition and decarbonisation while adapting to climate change require substantive funding, beyond the current frameworks. Capital markets in the EU remain largely fragmented along national lines, meaning businesses and investors face different regulations. Some efforts have been made, but there is still a lot to do. Flexibility within the EU budget is essential to reallocate unused funds (e.g. COVID) and to rebalance national and EU budgets. Defence investments can be made easier at national level by an adjustment of the Stability and Growth Pact or be funded by common bonds for projects relevant to EU defence and security. NextGen financial instruments can serve as catalysts for European

defence, infrastructures, or green and digital infrastructures, and be complemented by IPCEIs mobilising national resources (public and private). A digital levy tax would provide the EU with greater financial leeway and a more sustainable and autonomous funding capacity. Regarding private investments to revamp InvestEU for high impact, the EU should create high-risk windows for frontier technologies and climate tech innovation.

**Citizens Engagement** is key to build public support for more policy integration, stronger cooperation and new flexibility in funding capacities. Europe must shift from a consumption-driven economic model towards a more investment-oriented system. For defence, the EC proposes €800billion; science and technology also need investments. Achieving climate neutrality by 2050 will require an additional €1000billion each year. Such transitions can only be met with success if citizens are actively engaged and convinced of the long-term benefits. We need to listen to citizens in the first place and to invest in dialogue and engaging narratives. The EU should initiate citizen conferences to critically evaluate and redesign taxation and social spending frameworks, with a focus on environmental sustainability and socioeconomic equity. To protect and strengthen Europe's information infrastructure, the EU should establish a "European Media Grid". This unified digital framework will interconnect diverse national media ecosystems, ensuring seamless cross-border information flow, pluralism, safeguard against disinformation, manipulation, and monopolistic practices and prepare Europe for the AI era.

# CONCLAVE

"With the Russian war against Ukraine ongoing and transatlantic relations under strain, the need to strengthen European security has never been more evident. I firmly believe that civil society has a crucial role to play - and will be essential in shaping a secure future for Europe. That's why I was proud to take part in the interdisciplinary discussions of the European Conclave."

**Katarzyna PISARSKA,**  
Chair, Warsaw Security Forum  
Chairwoman of the Council,  
Casimir Pulaski Foundation

17/19  
January 2025  
Brussels, Belgium

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# 1

## GEOPOLITICAL POWER AGENDA

In 2024, the first Conclave report laid the foundational vision for Europe's transformation into a geo-political actor with greater autonomy. It framed enlargement as both a geo-political necessity and a vehicle to reaffirm Europe's influence, while stressing the need for bold reforms. It emphasised the need to prepare for a waning US commitment, strengthen European defence capabilities, and reimagine multilateralism.

A “Copernican revolution” was advocated – positioning the EU as a global, sustainable power capable of defending its values through strategic planning, deeper cooperation, and investments in defence industries and diplomatic partnerships. In 2025, this second report significantly sharpens this vision, contextualising it against the backdrop of Donald Trump's return to power. In short, what was foresight in 2024 has become necessity in 2025, and the Conclave doubles down on its push for a geo-political power Europe.

ISSUE 1: Geo-politics

## Strengthening and Diversifying Europe's Alliances

### Setting the Scene and Key Challenges

To sharpen its geo-political character, Europe needs to shockproof its strategic alliances and accelerate their diversification along a strategic line of key priorities, from security to trade, from critical minerals to technology. Europe cannot and should not remain dependant on an exclusive partnership, nor surely should it replace one over-reliance (the US) with another one (China). Old alliances can only be healed, not rebuilt. Diversification of strategic partnerships and the building of new alliances fit for a new age of geo-strategic competition will be key if Europe wants to become a global geo-political power.

- Europe does find itself confronted with a rapidly changing global order marked by renewed great-power rivalry. In addition, while the EU is under attack from powerful actors, both economically and ideologically, many emerging regional powers are still looking to Europe with the expectation that it can contribute to a more stable, fairer and more inclusive international order.

- This shift forces the EU to adapt the transatlantic relation considering the uncertain commitments of the US, “America First” policy and the US pivot to Asia.

- Trade is becoming increasingly weaponised. In fact, since the collapse of the Doha Round of WTO negotiations in the 2000s, efforts to create an ever more multilateral global trade system have consistently failed.

- Such volatile conditions risk undermining European unity including in foreign affairs.

- They also highlight the necessity of forging strategic ties with other global partners, such as many countries in Africa, India, Southeast Asia, Latin America, Arab Gulf, while strengthening further already close ties with Canada, Japan, South Korea and other democracies in the « North ».



## The EU's Recent Track-Record

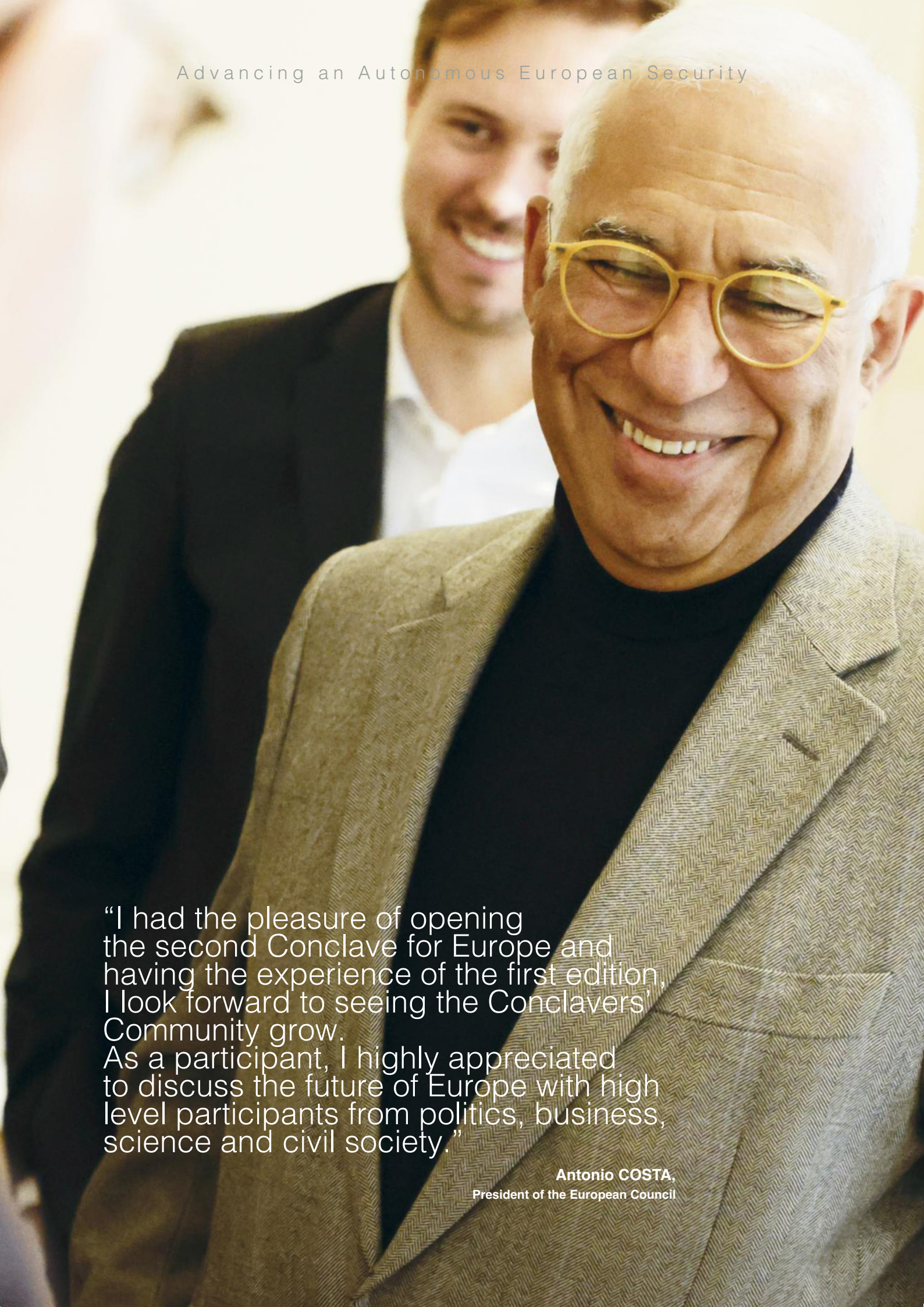
- In recent years, the EU has made some progress towards a more cohesive foreign policy stance, notably by jointly implementing sanctions on Russia and maintaining coordination on Ukraine. On the other hand, European internal divisions on the Middle East continue to translate into European lack of influence in the region.
- In 2025, the EU also took significant steps towards re-establishing defence cooperation with the United Kingdom (UK).
- Facing growing economic and geo-political tensions with China, the EU has shifted its policy discourse from decoupling – the severing of economic ties – to de-risking, to reduce dependencies in critical sectors while maintaining economic relations and cooperation on global issues.
- The Global Gateway, launched in 2021, supports European businesses abroad by securing funding and partnerships for development projects that also advance EU strategic interests. Focused on Africa, Asia, and Latin America, it promotes infrastructure, energy, and digital connectivity, positioning the EU as a key partner in sustainable development.
- Still, despite attempts to cultivate partnerships with regions beyond the transatlantic sphere – like Africa, the Indo-Pacific, and parts of Latin America – progress in deepening these relationships has been uneven.

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## Recommendations

- An immediate priority for European security remains the preservation of a strong enough transatlantic relationship ensuring continued US military engagement in Europe, although this can no longer be taken for granted. The US provides critical defence capabilities that Europe can currently neither fully match nor develop on its own. By 2030, a shared EU/US goal should be to establish a European defence pillar that is integrated within NATO but capable of operating independently when necessary. To be credible in this, European defence budgets need to increase from 1.9% of GDP (EUR 326 billion) in 2024, to at least 3% (EUR 514 billion) per annum, including EU-wide financing, which would give more credibility to the EU's mutual defence clause (Article 42.7 of the Lisbon Treaty).
- To complete this, the EU should establish a formal Security and Defence Partnership Agreement with the UK.
- At the same time, Europe needs to diversify its strategic partnerships. This approach should include expanding economic, research, and development ties with G20 countries, but also with countries in the group of BRICS, and the Global South more generally.
- The EU needs to reinforce its “competitive offer” to allies and partners by leveraging the Single Market. It should boldly champion regulatory and financial incentives that reflect European standards on climate, labour protections, and technology norms, ensuring that Europe is seen as a credible rule-shaper on the global stage and provides partners with strong opportunities for trade and cooperation.
- For example, it is imperative for the EU to negotiate new next-generation free trade agreements (FTAs). The EU must secure access to key markets and offer reciprocity, foster sustainable development, and promote digital and green standards in agreements with fast-growing economies like India, ASEAN nations, and Mercosur.
- With the potential massive reduction of US development aid, exemplified by cuts to USAID programs, the EU must keep its leadership role in development assistance and fill some of the most pressing emerging financial vacuums, while helping the beneficiaries to become more autonomous and resilient.
- Eventually, streamlining EU foreign-policy decision-making will be necessary, whether through shifting more decisions from unanimity to qualified-majority voting or creating more flexible mechanisms for rapid crisis response.
- Europe should also develop its worldwide influence and outreach capacity through leadership programmes for opinion-makers and leaders of all generations to reinforce bridges and favour a better understanding of what the EU is. The rivals of Europe develop undermining strategies against Europe banking on the lack of understanding and knowledge of Europe and the EU. It is urgent to reverse this dynamic.



A close-up photograph of Antonio Costa, President of the European Council, smiling and wearing yellow-rimmed glasses. He is wearing a grey herringbone jacket over a black turtleneck. In the background, a younger man with a beard is also smiling, wearing a dark suit jacket over a white shirt. The background is softly blurred.

Advancing an Autonomous European Security

“I had the pleasure of opening the second Conclave for Europe and having the experience of the first edition, I look forward to seeing the Conclavers’ Community grow. As a participant, I highly appreciated to discuss the future of Europe with high level participants from politics, business, science and civil society.”

**Antonio COSTA,**  
President of the European Council



## 2

### ADVANCING AN AUTONOMOUS EUROPEAN SECURITY

In 2024, the first Conclave report laid the foundational vision for Europe's transformation into a geo-political actor with greater autonomy. It framed enlargement as both a geo-political necessity and a vehicle to reaffirm Europe's influence, while stressing the need for bold reforms. It emphasised the need to prepare for a waning US commitment, strengthen European defence capabilities, and reimagine multilateralism. A *"Copernican revolution"* was advocated – positioning the EU as a global, sustainable power capable of defending its values through strategic planning, deeper cooperation, and investments in defence industries and diplomatic partnerships. In 2025, this second report significantly sharpens this vision, contextualising it against the backdrop of Donald Trump's return to power. In short, what was foresight in 2024 has become necessity in 2025, and the Conclave doubles down on its push for a geo-political power Europe.

ISSUE 3: Defence

## Building a Defence Industry that Meets Short-, Medium- and Long-Term Challenges without Delay

### Setting the Scene and Key Challenges

Just as the US – and now China – have smartly leveraged the research and innovation capacity of the military to stimulate industrial and economic competitiveness (e.g. the DARPA), the EU should urgently accelerate the integration of its defence industry. Defence cannot be an end in itself, and the EU should therefore ensure that military innovations can be easily adopted for civilian use.

- The current geo-political climate, underscored by Russia's aggression, has reinforced the urgency for Europe to strengthen its defence capabilities.
- Despite having substantial armed forces across its Member States, Europe remains heavily dependent on US defence technology and lags behind the US and China in defence-related research and development (R&D) spending.
- The proliferation of multiple distinct defence-industrial bases across Europe has resulted in the duplication of resources, inefficiency, and insufficient interoperability.
- Furthermore, large-scale and fast-paced technological defence projects – such as modern drones, AI-driven military tech, and advanced ammunition – are often too slow to develop because of complex procedural and funding requirements.
- The consequence is that nowadays the EU defence appears weaker than during the Cold War due to decades of low spending and lack of coordination between European countries.
- Still, recent Eurobarometer surveys indicate robust public support across the EU for a unified defence policy and a strengthened European defence industry.



### The EU's Recent Track-Record

- In 2024, the EU's defence expenditure surged to EUR 326 billion, a more than 30% increase since 2021 and accounting for 1.9% of the EU's GDP. The EU budget has been funding for the first time defence industry developments and procurement.
- In March 2025, European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen proposed the "ReArm Europe" initiative, aiming to raise up to EUR 800 billion over an indicative timeline of four years to strengthen EU defence. The plan leverages the Stability and Growth Pact's escape clause, allowing Member States to raise defence spending by 1.5% of GDP without breaching fiscal rules.
- To reinforce its own defence, the EU has also put together a European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS) to strengthen its Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB).
- However, EU Member States still fall short of their target to produce 35% of military equipment through European cooperation. The European Commission and EEAS raised the goal to 40% in 2024; yet the actual share remains at just 18%. Collaborative European defence R&T investments are also well below the 20% target, standing at only 6%.

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### Recommendations

- The EU's rearmament strategy must be based on clear goals. It should link short-, medium-, and long-term plans, rely on up-to-date analyses of current challenges, and be guided by well-assessed military and equipment needs. This requires a broad, inclusive approach aimed at boosting Europe's arms production capacity –especially for weapons currently reliant on non-EU suppliers.
- EU forces should be able to operate together smoothly – from high-level planning to battlefield tactics – using compatible equipment, joint command structures, and common training standards.
- Creating an EU equivalent of the US Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) could accelerate research on breakthrough technologies like autonomous drones, AI-driven systems, and space-defence infrastructures.
- In practice, Europe must make the 40%-joint-procurement target legally binding with short- to medium-term enforcement of annual increases.
- The EU should also embed European preference – of at least 65%, and ideally up to 80% – within the European Defence Industrial and Technological Base (EDITB).
- The EU must expand the scope of Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI) to include military capabilities.
- Fast-track procurement processes must be implemented, to enable development cycles that last just weeks incorporating, iterative testing and rapid large-scale deployment.
- "Project Common Bonds" could help finance EU defence spending, signalling unity across the Union.
- To nurture skills, the EU must promote a "Defence Skills Agenda" aimed at developing a specialised workforce. In partnership with universities and technical institutes, sponsoring advanced degrees and vocational training in key fields (e.g., AI, advanced materials, space technologies) will help close critical defence-related skills gaps.





## II. Science and Technology as Key Drivers for Competitiveness and Growth

“Conclave is different. It transcends the conventional think tank and stands as an interesting platform for profound dialogues spanning business, science, and politics. The inaugural and even more the second Conclave provided an opportunity to listen and learn from authentic people. And to share my perspectives as an entrepreneur, scientist, and investor on the future of European industrial policy.”

**Stjepan ORESKOVIC,**  
Majority Shareholder – Bosqar Invest

CONCLAVE



## II. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AS KEY DRIVERS FOR COMPETITIVENESS AND GROWTH

In its 2024 report, the Conclave placed scientific and technological leadership at the heart of Europe's ability to project power, compete economically, and remain sovereign. It emphasised the creation of a comprehensive single market for science and technology, called for a European DARPA, and urged a shift in mindset: the EU must think in terms of strategic and societal impact, not just budget lines.

The 2025 report reaffirms this conviction and builds on the momentum of the Draghi, Letta and Heitor reports. Considering the growing global techno-nationalism characteristic of Donald Trump's return, it argues that competitiveness is no longer a luxury but a condition for resilience. In order to hold fast to the idea of a "scientific, technological, and industrial continuum public policy," the new report calls for accelerated reforms.



ISSUE 4:

## Develop a Strategy to Attract Intra - and Non-European Talent

### Setting the Scene and Key Challenges

In the age of the free movement of people, the intellectual capital offered by the free flow of talent should not be left untapped. If it is to sharpen its geo-political character, Europe must highlight the value of science and engineering, improve the working conditions of scientists and researchers, and deploy a smart strategy to be the best “talent attractor” amongst great powers.

- The European Union is facing an impending demographic decline, coupled with fierce global competition for skilled professionals, especially in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields.

- Yet, many of Europe’s brightest minds – scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs – are leaving for better (-paid?) opportunities in the US, China, and other regions. High taxes, bureaucratic red tape, and limited funding options drive talent away, weakening Europe’s innovation capacity.

- However, since his re-election, President Trump has taken several actions that have undermined the science enterprise in the US. The EU then has a

unique opportunity to lead globally in adopting a continuum approach to innovation and science, seamlessly integrating research, technological advancement, and market delivery to directly enhance the welfare of its citizens.

- Yet even though EU programmes like Horizon Europe fund great projects, complex application processes and bureaucratic requirements leave many countries and innovators behind. Eastern and Southern Europe, in particular, struggle to access these funds, widening the innovation gap within the EU.

- In innovation, Europe is nurturing “fat cats and puppy dogs” instead of fostering “hungry young” scientists and entrepreneurs with innovative potential.

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### The EU’s Recent Track-Record

- The Union has established various initiatives to address these needs. Prestigious programmes such as the European Research Council grants and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions have boosted Europe’s scientific standing, though their scale is still relatively modest.

- The Horizon Europe Programme is currently the EU’s flagship research and innovation initiative, running from 2021 to 2027, with a budget of approximately EUR 95.5 billion. It is also structured around a continuum approach between research infrastructures, competitiveness, and the response to societal challenges.

- Meanwhile, instruments like the Blue Card directive aim to streamline work permits for highly skilled third-country nationals, but the directive’s uneven imple-

mentation has limited its overall impact.

- Similarly, start-up visas and tech hub programmes exist in certain Member States, but they vary in their requirements and benefits.

- The European Innovation Council has emerged as a potentially strong funding body yet remains insufficient in terms of scale and focus to solve the talent shortfall.

- European Missions, though ambitious and essential to reinforcing the continuum, have thus far been criticised for excessive bureaucratic complexity—often resulting in protracted approval processes and inefficient resource allocation.

## II. Science and Technology as Key Drivers for Competitiveness and Growth

- To reinforce its own defence, the EU has also put together a European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS) to strengthen its Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB).
- However, EU Member States still fall short of their

target to produce 35% of military equipment through European cooperation. The European Commission and EEAS raised the goal to 40% in 2024; yet the actual share remains at just 18%. Collaborative European defence R&T investments are also well below the 20% target, standing at only 6%

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### Recommendations

- To strengthen its innovation eco-system, the EU must develop targeted strategies to attract back European researchers who have built successful technologies abroad.
- One step in achieving this is to support “Moon-shot” projects. Publicly advertised and imbued with prestige, these high-risk/high-reward projects are attractive also because they promise researchers once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to make ground-breaking discoveries. Key moon-shot areas include carbon capture, synthetic biology, and nuclear fusion.
- The EU should develop a comprehensive STEM educational strategy. To achieve this, the EU must promote the quality of its universities to compete with their American counterparts, especially as the latter are entering a period of significant challenges (funding, political pressure, etc.). The EU should take a page from the US playbook by investing in robust international marketing, and challenging global rankings.
- This strategy could also involve the introduction of an EU-wide graduate work visa programme for international students, similar to the Optional Practical Training (OPT) programme in the US, which provides longer stays for STEM students. It is also crucial for the EU to introduce a universal “Talent Visa” that streamlines residency and work-permit processes for highly skilled professionals and entrepreneurs, reducing administrative complexities.
- Another vital step is forging deeper ties between universities and the private sector, ensuring that academic discoveries rapidly transition into industrial applications. This is true and particularly relevant for defence innovation and R&D.
- In this line, the EU should establish strategic partnerships with Global-South countries by offering their researchers advanced scientific training programmes in European institutions. These programmes would be designed to ensure that trained scientists return to their home countries to foster local innovation eco-

systems, while maintaining strong institutional and professional ties with EU teams. In return, the EU should improve its position to access critical raw materials and biodiversity resources for research, as well as to preferential entry into emerging markets.

- Ultimately, to foster innovation, the EU must bring together a diverse range of stakeholders – innovators, entrepreneurs, policy makers, SMEs, and industry leaders – to critically reassess existing regulations and bureaucratic processes that may hinder creativity and technological advancement. This process should not solely cater to large corporations pushing for deregulation but instead aim for a balanced and realistic assessment of how regulations impact innovation. It is essential to distinguish between regulations that genuinely stifle innovation and those that provide a stable, predictable framework conducive to growth. This can avoid blanket deregulation that simply increases profit margins for large corporations without meaningful benefits to innovation eco-systems.
- A key and immediate priority is the rapid implementation of a 28th legal regime for setting up a company, designed as an inclusive and optional framework open to all businesses. Beyond the 28th regime, the EU must also take a bolder step by implementing a comprehensive European Code of Business Law, establishing a Simplified European Private Company regime. This approach will allow corporations to scale at the European level from the outset, fostering a more integrated and competitive single market.
- As a result, the EU should establish a clear and positive narrative – both internally and externally – that emphasises its strengths in infrastructure, diversity, cultural openness, and potential for ground-breaking research. To achieve this, the EU could champion a pan-European “Talent Ambassador” initiative, selecting high-profile European entrepreneurs, Nobel laureates, and innovators to tour universities and tech conferences worldwide, showcasing success stories and the practical benefits of building a career in the EU.

ISSUE 5:

## Equipping the EU with an Industrial Policy worthy of a Global Power

### Setting the Scene and Key Challenges

Europe faces a global competitiveness gap, especially in the industry and tech sectors. This is especially the case vis-à-vis the US and China and it is impeding Europe's geo-political influence in an age when industrial and technological superiority is the keystone of power. Addressing the competitiveness gap is absolutely crucial. Failing to do so will likely result in overall scientific, technologic and economic decline, with growing quality job losses and other major social and political consequences.

- In fact, competitiveness is undergoing a fundamental transformation, propelled by ecological imperatives and new digital capacities – both of which require sovereign technological infrastructures. This shifts traditional measures of economic strength (e.g., manufacturing output) towards metrics that prioritise sustainability, digitalisation, and innovation.

- Many established Europe industrial activities thus risk becoming obsolete if they fail to invest sufficiently to move up the value chain and manufacture higher added-value products.

- In 2023, the EU's global R&D expenditure stood at around 2.2% of GDP—significantly behind those of the US (3.6%), South Korea (4.8%), and also China (2.4%).

- More significantly, while EU public R&D spending

is comparable to US levels (both at 0.7% of GDP), the gap stems from markedly lower private sector investment in Europe.

- For the private sector, venture capital (VC) is vital for financing high-risk/high-growth innovation. Yet, the EU claims just 5% of global VC funds raised, dwarfed by the US at 52% and China at 40%.

- Securing funding beyond Series B is also especially challenging in the EU, underscoring the critical need for large-scale contracts that guarantee both survival and growth of innovative companies.

- One of the most visible results of these weaknesses is that Europe is now losing competition against China in areas once seen as strategic priorities – electric vehicles, PV cells, and wind-turbine manufacturing.

### The EU's Recent Track-Record

- The EU has already in place several research and innovation instruments (e.g., the European Research Council, the European Innovation Council, IPCEIs) which contribute to boost science–industry collaboration.

- However, while the Single Market has anchored growth for decades, its rules and cross-border financing mechanisms have not fully kept pace with accelerating technological and environmental shifts. The EU has incrementally used public procurement and standard setting to steer markets, but results so far are uneven, and large-scale industrial alliances have only partially flourished, suffering from an EU competition policy from a bygone era.

- In fact, European industry excels in advanced R&D,

precision engineering, and specialised manufacturing, but struggles in highly capital-intensive, low-margin sectors requiring scale. High labour and energy costs, plus heavy dependence on imported raw materials, impede competitiveness. Subsidies alleviate some inefficiencies but fail to resolve structural gaps – the Northvolt case is a sad but speaking example.

- Europe's innovation strategy remains heavily top-down, focusing on regulatory or problem-oriented targets over financial viability. Yet genuine progress depends on empowering individuals and talents – fostering eco-systems that spark creativity. Initiatives like Helsinki's Slush illustrate how nurturing entrepreneurial communities can drive sustainable innovation.



## II. Science and Technology as Key Drivers for Competitiveness and Growth

- Still, the new EU Competitiveness Compass and Clean Industrial Strategy create a unified framework that establishes clear and robust benchmarks – ranging from innovation outputs to efficiency gains – for guiding Europe’s industrial modernisation through digitalisation and decarbonisation. By translating these

metrics into ambitious sustainability goals and specific measures (like low-carbon processes and circular-economy principles), they ensure that Europe’s industrial competitiveness remains innovation-driven, ecologically responsible, and aligned with the continent’s strategic objectives.

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### Recommendations

- The EU must build a next-generation Industrial Policy that goes beyond subsidising legacy activities. Industrial policy must support innovation not only in processes but also in products, skills, and societal change. On the demand side, the EU needs to deploy participatory tools, innovative standards and public procurement; on the supply side, it should adapt competition to enable the emergence of European champions in key industrial sectors (the Airbuses of tomorrow) as well as finance rules.

- Public action should emphasise the synergy between fundamental and applied research and restore total R&D expenditure to the long-standing 3% of GDP target.

- This requires: i) doubling budgets for the European Research Council (ERC) and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), so that all top-tier proposals are funded rather avoiding rejection of excellent proposals for lack of resources; ii) reinvesting revenues from the European Innovation Fund back into the fund itself.

- Restructuring the European Innovation Council (EIC) in line with the ERC’s proven governance model, composing it in a balanced way of high-level scientists, industrialists and investors with a broad experience. This independent Council should be supported by an independent executive body that is close to the innovators journey and enable a transition from fundamental research to the industrialisation acceleration. More focus is needed on areas and topics essential to strategic sovereignty.

- European-scale industrial policy depends on Union-wide integrated supply chains capable of competing with the US and China, while providing balanced opportunities for diverse European regions. To spread benefits, the EU should also integrate an “Inclusive Growth Lens” into industrial policy. It would ensure that new investments and supply chains benefit less-developed regions in the EU, tackling territorial im-

balances while creating a larger, more unified consumer market.

- An active trade agenda must further buttress this new industrial policy. European supply chains require more robust bilateral and multilateral deals to secure critical inputs and diversify export markets. Using the full toolbox of trade policy, not only tariffs but also public procurement, standards and taxation, is crucial and should be coordinated at European level.

- The EU must step up the transition to clean energy sources as well as the decarbonisation of all relevant sectors, in particular the industry that could leverage its efforts there to muscle up its competitiveness. This is also vital to strengthen EU energy autonomy, security and affordability, reducing production costs in all sectors.

- To launch industrial plans for more mature sectors such as cars, transportation, machinery and pharmaceuticals where Europe needs urgently to update technological solutions to protect relevant brands and a large number of quality jobs.

- A concrete example is that of Europe’s car industry, which needs a comprehensive plan to deliver affordable, high-quality electric vehicles that can compete with US and Chinese rivals. This broader mobility vision must integrate charging infrastructure, consumer choice, and inclusive energy policies—ensuring Europe’s industrial renaissance truly underpins economic resilience and social well-being.

- To develop industrial plans for sectors where Europe can keep or gain technological leadership by using a Mission approach and counting on a reformed European Innovation Council as well as on an EU Tech Sovereignty Fund inspired from the US DARPA model. A comprehensive review of the EU’s VC landscape should also identify its shortcomings and propose reforms that allow scale-ups and frontier innovation.

ISSUE 6:

## Developing Sovereign Technological Infrastructures and the Conditions for Leadership in the Fields of AI and Quantum

### Setting the Scene and Key Challenges

Geo-politics is increasingly shaped by deep-tech, and the risk is now high for a winner-takes-all culture to condemn the losers in the deep-tech race to mere roles of passers-by, if not digital colonies. The sovereignty of technological infrastructure should be a top priority for Europe, especially in the wake of the US Administration's latest moves hindering the solidity of the transatlantic community. The leading economies in the next decade will be those who will have fully embraced AI and quantum computing and ensured full control of the IT infrastructure.

- Europe remains highly dependent on foreign providers for essential digital, cloud, and next-generation internet infrastructures. In fact, since the advent of the internet, American and more recently Chinese digital platforms have obtained dominance, shaping global digital ecosystems according to their strategic interests. This dependence weakens European data sovereignty and security.

- Europe has not invested sufficiently in undergirding technological layers such as microchips, clouds, and advanced telecommunication networks. Market fragmentation prevented the emergence of large-scale European tech players.

- At the same time, the US and China are heavily subsidising and strategically supporting their technology industries.

- Consequently, the EU's investment in digital R&D significantly trails behind theirs. The EU allocates approximately 7% of its investments to software and digital applications, whereas the US contri-

butes 71% and China 15%.

- The digital industry is wide, but AI and quantum technologies, in particular, hold the potential to reshape nearly every sector of the economy, from healthcare and transportation to finance and defence.

- Regarding AI, one of the root causes of its limitation at European level is the fragmentation of Europe's data pools, hampering start-ups and research labs. At the same time, the Trump Administration is keen on using AI as a tool for world hegemony.

- Meanwhile, quantum computing – encompassing everything from quantum communication to cryptography – remains in its early stages but promises a massive competitive edge for whoever masters it first. Europe, despite excelling in academic research on quantum physics, has struggled to secure the scale of funding that can compete with efforts in the US or China.

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### The EU's Recent Track-Record

- Although the EU has introduced several data-governance frameworks, including the Digital Services Act and the Data Governance Act, these focus on creating a safe and ethical digital environment with regulations, not on creating capacities and nurturing champions.

- Initiatives such as GAIA-X and IPCEIs on Microelectronics aim to bolster EU-based cloud, chip, and

semiconductor capacities, but progress has been uneven and slow.

- While the AI Act and the European Chips Act represent steps towards digital sovereignty, the EU still lags behind the US and China in the AI leadership. The EU's regulatory-first approach has not translated into technological leadership at all, leaving Europe vulnerable in the global race for AI supremacy.

## II. Science and Technology as Key Drivers for Competitiveness and Growth

However, we take note of the published AI Continent Action Plan by the European Commission. We welcome the ambitious vision and insist on the necessity of the deployment roadmap mobilising the best talents in the world.

- The European Innovation Council has helped some promising AI and quantum ventures get off the ground, though late-stage funding remains scarce.

- In early 2025, the EU announced a EUR 200 billion AI investment plan, with EUR 500 bn from public funds and EUR 150 billion from private investors. This includes building AI "giga-factories" to develop advanced models. At the same time, the European Commission also withdrew draft regulations on AI liability and tech patents following industry demands. Regulatory sandboxes will also allow start-ups and small enterprises to experiment with AI technologies.

- The EU has made strides in sponsoring high-performance computing clusters and quantum test beds with the Quantum Flagship and HPC (High-Performance Computing) Joint Undertakings to foster research collaboration, yet these projects are still in their infancy.

- In April 2025, the European Commission has proposed an AI Continent Action Plan aiming at developing AI capabilities in a selected list of Data spaces and building on a European wide network of AI factories, Gigafactories, EU cloud, European Digital Innovation Hubs, a EU Data Union and an Apply AI Strategy. This Plan will count on TechEU Scale-up Fund and an InvestAI Facility and will be governed by AI Board of Member States, EU AI Research Council and EU AI Office.

Building on this Plan, some further recommendations are presented below.

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### Recommendations

- The EU must launch this TechEU Scale-Up Fund as a European Sovereign instrument. It shall identify and directly support 500 high-potential European companies with venture capital, coaching, and market access to drive growth with clear short-term goals (e.g., deploy AI infrastructure in 12 months).

- The EU must also build up all the levels of a European Digital Stack, comprising broadband infrastructures, semi-conductor capabilities, advanced computational capacities, cloud services, big data repositories, and AI development aligned with European values.

- As part of this, the EU shall put in place a mandatory "comply-or-explain" framework for public procurement to ensure 50% of cloud spending is allocated to EU providers by 2030. To facilitate this shift, the EU should invest EUR 500 million annually for 5-7 years to support the initial phase.

- The EU should establish Special Economic Zones (SEZs) dedicated to innovation and experimentation, such as creating AI hubs. These zones would offer regulatory flexibility, tax incentives, and infrastructure, fostering cutting-edge R&D.

- To close the AI and quantum gap, Europe must launch major "moon-shot" programmes, akin to DARPA-like initiatives, that embrace higher risk

tolerance and are geared towards radical technological advancement.

- Consolidating and interlinking HPC resources across EU countries could create a single quantum eco-system accessible to both research institutes and companies.

- Encouraging large-scale public procurement in AI-intensive areas, such as healthcare or defence, will also stimulate innovation and yield commercial spinoffs.

- At the same time, regulatory frameworks must find the right balance between safeguarding ethical standards and enabling rapid experimentation.

- The EU should consider launching a bold, public-facing "Next Frontier" competition (modelled on DARPA Grand Challenges) in AI and quantum. It would award substantial prizes and guaranteed follow-on contracts for breakthroughs that address Europe's key societal goals – e.g., climate resilience, advanced health diagnostics, or secure quantum communications.

- Finally, linking technology initiatives with broader security and defence strategies could secure more consistent long-term budgets and ensure that technological infrastructures serve dual-use purposes.



“After winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012, the EU had to learn the hard way in the following years that this prize seemed undeserved from the perspective of many parts of the world. The lesson from this must not be passivity, but the active pursuit of playing a powerful role in the peaceful reconciliation of conflicting international interests.”

**Wolfgang ROHE,**  
Chair of the Board of Management  
and Executive Director – Mercator Stiftung





## III. GATHERING THE RESOURCES TO FINANCE THE EU'S AMBITIONS

In its first report in 2024, the Conclave argued that meeting Europe's strategic goals – defence, digital sovereignty, climate action – would require not just large-scale investments, but also transfers within and between European societies. It diagnosed the mismatch between rising public expectations and the EU's limited budgetary tools, calling for new revenue streams, more flexibility in the Stability and Growth Pact, and a permanent capacity for joint borrowing. In 2025, the report reiterates these structural recommendations, especially as the EU prepares to renegotiate its Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). The difference now is the urgency:

the scale of the transformation required has grown, and the political and social consensus needed to support it is more fragile. As such, the report places even greater emphasis on the need to engage citizens – not only as beneficiaries but as participants in the EU's economic and social overhaul. The Conclave's call for Europeans to “put their money where their priorities are” thus becomes a rallying cry for renewed democratic ownership of the European project, with public goods, fairness, and solidarity at its core.



ISSUE 7: Geo-politics

## Increasing and Diversifying the Union's Resources

### Setting the Scene and Key Challenges

To achieve its ambitions, the EU will need to fundamentally reassess its funding model and demonstrate a spirit of innovation to increase its resources without asking more from its Member States. It is vital that citizens engagement support the principle of a financially more resourceful EU, which is why the narrative matters crucially: more resources to the EU does not mean more transfers from capitals to Brussels, but the materialisation of a more visible “power body” of the EU: to achieve more and strengthen the bloc’s resilience, security and competitiveness, the EU needs more financial leeway.

- The EU is facing unprecedented funding needs. The systemic threat from Russia and the foreseeable withdrawal of the US as a guarantor of European security require Europeans to drastically increase their defence spending. Building up Europe’s own critical infrastructure to develop European resilience and technological sovereignty (clean tech, nuclear fusion, AI) also require a huge amount of public and private money. Finally, there is widespread consensus in the scientific community that Europe would have to invest significantly more in the green transformation to become climate-neutral by 2050.

- Consequently, the EU's geopolitical credibility is now directly tied to its fiscal capacity. Without a financial backbone to support defence, innovation, and the green transition, Europe will continue to punch below its weight on the global stage.

- Yet, most public expenditures in Europe continue to be allocated at the Member States levels, with the EU accounting for only a small fraction – approximately 3% of the total public spending across the Union. The Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021–2027, the EU’s long-term budget, allocates EUR 1.2 trillion (1.12% of GDP), including EUR 393 billion for the Cohesion Funds to reduce regional disparities. The Next Generation EU (NGEU) recovery package adds EUR 750 billion (0.71% of GDP), bringing total

spending to 1.8% of GDP annually. It remains low and this limits the EU’s capacity to drive transformative projects, which require coordinated, large-scale investments.

- National budgets are also constrained as debt levels in some Member States are reaching market-concerning highs.

- Private money is also limited as capital markets in the EU remain largely fragmented along national lines, meaning businesses and investors face different rules depending on the country. This hampers the development of a truly integrated European Capital Market Union (CMU), making it more difficult for companies, especially SMEs, to raise funds across borders.

- In fact, Europe’s ability to leverage its €34 trillion pool of private savings is further hindered by underdeveloped equity markets and risk-averse institutional investors.

- Eventually, a reliance on ad hoc measures each time a crisis emerges risks undermining long-term strategic planning, especially if national governments attempt to protect domestic social spending first and foremost.

### The EU's Recent Track-Record

- In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, the EU made a breakthrough by launching the NGEU fund and the SURE instrument, both of which involved borrowing at the European level. This allowed for the swift, equitable distribution of resources, particularly benefiting countries with limited fiscal space. Furthermore, the principle of ‘money for reform’, which has been individually defined with the Member States via national spending plans, has provided a potentially powerful tool that the MFF in its current form does not yet have.

- European policymakers have also revised the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) in 2024, but it did not bring about a lot of changes with the new debt sustainability analysis only coming in addition to the original 60% debt and 3% deficit targets.

- Still the escape clause of the SGP has been activated in March 2025 as European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen proposed the "ReArm Europe" initiative, aiming to mobilise up to EUR 800 billion over an indicative timeline of four years to



strengthen EU defence. It allows Member States to raise defence spending by 1.5% of GDP without breaching fiscal rules, generating up to EUR 650 billion in fiscal space. The initiative also includes EUR 150 billion in EU-backed loans, repaid by individual Member States, with additional funds sourced through reallocations within the EU budget.

- To further mobilise private funds to support its objectives, the EU followed steps towards completing the Banking Union. Currently, it rests on two pillars: the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM), and the Single Resolution Mechanism (SRM). However, the absence of a common European Deposit Insurance Scheme (EDIS) leaves the union incomplete. This inconsistency can erode confidence during financial crises, leading to capital flight from perceived weaker banking systems.

- In the same line, aiming to harness the EUR 34 trillion pool of EU private savings, the Pan-European Pension Product (PEPP) was created in March 2022. Designed to offer EU citizens a simple and long-term European savings product, the PEPP has unfortunately met with tepid success thus far. Both supply (with few providers offering PEPPs) and demand (as PEPP remains largely unknown to EU citizens) have remained too low to gain momentum.

- Also, launched in 2021 as a cornerstone of the post-COVID recovery strategy, the InvestEU Plan, building on the success of the Juncker Plan (EFSI) from 2014, it addresses critical investment gaps by mobilising both public and private financing. Backed by a EUR 26.2 billion EU budget guarantee, and an ambitious target to attract over EUR 372 billion in investments by 2027, InvestEU consolidates a range of EU financial instruments into a single, streamlined programme.

### Recommendations

- The EU must first decide what it actually wants to spend its money on before determining how much money it needs and how to mobilise it, be it debt or taxes, be it European or national, be it public or private. Nevertheless, a number of reforms should be tackled early on and should be part of the upcoming MFF negotiations from the outset.

- One such reform is about breaking the taboo on EU-level taxation. The EU needs to move forward with carbon border taxes, digital levies, and financial transaction taxes, ear-marked for cross-border infrastructure and competitiveness.

- Additionally, greater flexibility in the EU budget is essential to allow the reallocation of unused funds during the MFF period, ensuring that resources can be swiftly redirected to address emerging challenges and opportunities.

- Simplifying the EU's complex system of funds and speeding up disbursements can also further improve efficiency, allowing the Union to focus on genuinely high-impact projects with strong cross-border value.

- As a key lesson learned from NextGenEU, the new MFF should adopt a performance-based approach, ensuring that funds are disbursed only when a country achieves agreed-upon milestones and targets.

- If the EU and its Member States can reach an agreement on specific joint cross-border defence and armament projects, they could consider repeating the NextGenEU approach of joint borrowing, beyond what the Commission announced in March 2025. Introducing targeted common project bonds would be

a legally feasible and politically viable option worth exploring.

- However, particularly in the area of defence, national budgets will have to continue to play a decisive role in the future. Against this background, the European fiscal rules should be adjusted again so that Member States have the opportunity over a certain period of time to meet new NATO spending targets without being held back by European debt rules. The use of escape clauses only partially solves this problem, as they are designed as short-term emergency options and are not intended to ensure structural long-term expenditure. They could also use joint borrowing to launch a European Sovereign Competitiveness Fund to support long-term strategic projects in AI, and in energy resilience.

- Furthermore, the EU could introduce an even bolder "Golden Rule for Productive Investments" framework. This would exempt certain growth-enhancing investments – such as in infrastructure, green technologies, digital innovation, and education – from deficit calculations, provided they meet strict criteria.

- Regarding private investments, to revamp InvestEU for high-impact and riskier projects while attracting private investment, the EU should create specialised high-risk windows for frontier technologies and climate innovation. Inspired by the EIC Accelerator and DARPA, these windows would fund bold, transformative projects with a mission-driven approach. A tiered risk-sharing mechanism, with the EU covering 20-30% of initial losses, would help de-risk private participation.

ISSUE 8:

## Putting Citizens back at the Heart of European Democracy and Narrative

### Setting the Scene and Key Challenges

To support the above-mentioned transformative investments, Europe must shift from a consumption-driven economic model towards a more strategic, investment-oriented approach. Such a transition can only succeed if citizens are actively engaged and convinced of the long-term benefits. Democratic participation cannot be an option: it is a condition to turn Europe into a geo-political power.

- Yet, this shift poses a fundamental challenge to the European way of life, which has long been shaped by consumption-driven economic growth. Asking citizens to embrace a new model centred on investment and long-term gains requires a clear and transparent process that protects social and economic stability.

- Trust in EU institutions will be paramount in navigating this transition. In fact, at the heart of the European project lies the rule of law, which serves as a cornerstone of stability, transparency, and predictability. The EU's reputation as a "Community of Law" strengthens business confidence and public trust, reinforcing the need for governance that adheres to clear, democratic, and legally sound decision-making. By maintaining transparency and procedural

integrity, the EU can ensure that citizens feel both informed and included in shaping Europe's strategic future.

- Yet, political disillusionment, populism, and declining confidence in EU institutions are also on the rise throughout the continent at times of economic stress for citizens, partly also fuelled by sophisticated misinformation campaigns. Many citizens, particularly young people, feel that European-level governance lacks clarity or transparency. They feel "consulted but not heard."

- Additionally, recent popular demands for participatory democracy and open dialogue have not found permanent channels for citizen engagement, nor has a unified European media space been achieved to support a genuinely pan-European public sphere.

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### The EU's Recent Track-Record

- While the above challenges point to deep-rooted scepticism and a fragmented public sphere, the EU has taken steps that lay a foundation for renewed civic engagement and institutional trust:

- Since 2015, the "East Stratcom Task Force" within the European External Action Service (EEAS) has spearheaded efforts to counter foreign-led disinformation, principally from Russia. This unit underscores the EU's recognition that accurate, accessible information is indispensable for both safeguarding democracies and winning public trust.

- The European Democracy Shield, proposed by EC

President Ursula von der Leyen in 2024, is a comprehensive initiative designed to protect EU democracies from internal and external threats, including foreign interference and disinformation.

- The activation of Article 7 against Poland and Hungary has had limited tangible effects. Despite ongoing proceedings, both countries have continued to implement policies that challenge EU principles, particularly regarding judicial independence and media freedom. While the EU has exerted financial pressure, such as withholding funds, these measures have not led to significant policy reversals. The process has been slow and complicated by the

requirement for unanimous agreement among Member States to impose sanctions, with some countries, including Hungary and Poland themselves, using their veto power to block further action against each other.

- The Conference on the Future of Europe showcased large-scale participatory methods, underlining the public's appetite for meaningful engagement. This process has demonstrated that citizens across Member States are ready to help shape the EU's

direction, provided the mechanisms are accessible and taken seriously by policy makers.

- Building on these measures is essential, but they also highlight those stronger channels for civic involvement – coupled with a dynamic, multilingual media ecosystem – are still missing. Against this backdrop, the EU needs to scale up and refine existing initiatives in order to embed citizens more firmly in the Union's decisions and overarching narrative.

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### Recommendations

- A substantial civic-education campaign, integrating Europe's strategic transitions –green, digital, and security – into curricula at various educational levels, could enhance public understanding of the Union's role. Investments in machine translation technologies and support for a multilingual media environment should be prioritised to enable cross-border debates among EU citizens.

- The EU must double down its efforts to craft a compelling story about its purpose: emphasising resilience, shared research breakthroughs, and cultural richness. This approach should be anchored in tangible local projects and experiences, so that people see and feel the EU's benefits in their day-to-day lives. Steps to achieve this could encompass:

#### A

Transforming the SURE mechanism into a permanent public insurance instrument for short-time work schemes (STWs) would enhance the EU's labour market resilience and economic stability;

#### B

Doubling the Social Climate Fund to EUR 190 billion would further mitigate the socio-economic impact of transitioning to a low-carbon economy. The expanded fund would directly support vulnerable households, micro-enterprises, and transportation users facing rising energy costs. Ensuring social inclusivity

in the green transition is vital to maintaining broad public support and achieving equitable growth;

#### C

Multiplying citizen conferences to critically evaluate and redesign taxation and social spending frameworks, with a focus on environmental sustainability and socio-economic equity. By fostering transparent dialogue and inclusive decision-making, this approach will build public consensus around the essential transition from consumption-driven GDP growth to sustainable investments, even if it necessitates adjustments to certain welfare provisions.

- By anchoring policy decisions in citizen engagement – strengthening trust, ensuring transparency, and enhancing social protections – the EU can secure the popular backing required to undertake pivotal transformations in defence, climate action, and innovation. In turn, a truly participatory democratic model will help consolidate or even restore faith in EU institutions and foster a shared sense of purpose among Europe's diverse societies.

- The EU needs to establish a "European Media Grid", a transformative initiative to protect and strengthen Europe's information infrastructure. This unified digital framework will interconnect diverse national media eco-systems, ensuring seamless cross-border information flow, pluralism, safeguard against disinformation, manipulation and monopolistic practices and prepare Europe for the AI era.



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**Peter GRK**

Diplomat, Secretary General of the Bled Strategic Forum

**Maria João RODRIGUES**

former Minister of Employment of Portugal and MEP,  
final negotiator of the Lisbon Strategy, the Lisbon Treaty  
and the European Pillar of Social Rights

**Grégoire ROOS**

Head of Political Dialogue & Policy Innovation,  
BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt

**Daniela SCHWARZER**

Political scientist, member of the Executive Board  
of the Bertelsmann Foundation

**Erika STAËL von HOLSTEIN**

Chief Executive Officer of Re-Imagine Europa

**Loukas TSOUKALIS**

President of ELIAMEP Athens,  
Professor Sciences Po, Paris

**António VITORINO**

Former European Commissioner and former Director  
general of the International Organization for Migration

**Malte Tim ZABEL** (deputy member)

Co-Director of the Program Europas Zukunft  
at Bertelsmann Stiftung

The Conclave Board is assisted by:

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EuropaNova managing Team:

**Michaël CHRISTOPHE**,  
Executive Director of EuropaNova

**Isabelle NÉGRIER**,  
Advisor to the President of EuropaNova, Conclave  
Director and former Executive Director  
of EuropaNova (2023 - January 2025)

**Gilbert BOURSEUL**,  
Operation Coordinator

Conclave Project Assistants (EuropaNova):

Laure BUISSONNIER, Mareike DALMANN,  
Victor DELPHIN-SCHUBERT, Aïda NOËL,  
Katarzyna PSUJEK

Note Taker and synthesis: Victor GOUT (EuropaNova)

Note Takers:

Bled Strategic Forum (BSF): Matej GREGOREC  
Re-Imagine Europa (RIE): Chloe Mc DOWELL,  
Joao Carlos NUNES, Laura OLMEDO,  
Sorhna PERROT, Marialena STAGIANNI

# PARTICIPANTS IN THE SECOND CONCLAVE

Alphabetical order

## **Ms Greta Karoline ADAMEK (Germany)**

Citizen Ambassador of the Conference of the Future of Europe (CoFoE)

## **Mr François ARBAULT (France)**

Director, Coordinator for Defence, European Commission

## **Mr Laurent BART (Belgium)**

Brigadier General in the Belgian Army and Director of Operations at the European Union Military Staff (EUMS)

## **Mr Piero BENASSI (Italy)**

Ambassador of Italy (ret.), former Permanent Representative of Italy to the EU, Columnist at La Repubblica adviser on Artific

## **Mr Lennart BLECHER (Sweden)**

Deputy Managing Partner and Head of Real Assets at EQT Group adviser on Artific

## **Ms Marieke BLOM (Netherlands)**

Chief Economist and Global Head of Research at ING Bank

## **Dr. Malgorzata BONIKOWSKA (Poland)**

President of the Center for International Relations, Professor of International affairs and European studies, Warsaw University

## **Mr Antoine BORDES (France)**

Vice-president Artificial Intelligence, Helsing

## **Mr Jean-Pierre BOURGUIGNON (France)**

Mathematician, former President of the European Research Council, member of the Academia Europaea

## **Mr Jean-François Van BOXMEER (Belgium)**

Chairman of Vodafone and Chairman of the European Round Table for Industry

## **Mr Mansef CAMPOS (France/Portugal)**

Citizen Ambassador to the Conference of the Future of Europe (CoFoE)

## **Mr Michaël CHRISTOPHE (France)**

Executive Director of EuropaNova

## **Ms Annemie De CLERK (Belgium)**

Citizen Ambassador of the Conference of the Future of Europe (CoFoE)

## **Mr Antonio COSTA (Portugal)**

President of the European Council

## **Mr Oliver COSTE (France)**

Entrepreneur and Businessman

## **Dr. Christine DURINX (Belgium)**

Co-managing Director at the Life Sciences Research Institute VIB

## **Mr Philippe ÉTIENNE (France)**

Ambassador of France, former Ambassador in Germany and the USA, former Permanent Representative to the EU, former Sherpa of the French President of the Republic, President of the mission for the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII

## **Mr Jörn FLECK (Germany)**

Senior Director at Atlantic Council

## **Ms Mariya GABRIEL (Bulgaria)**

President of Robert Schuman Institute, former European Commissioner (2017-2023)

## **Mr Aart Jan De GEUS (Netherlands)**

Former Minister of Social affairs of The Netherlands, former OECD Deputy Secretary General

## **Mr Anthony GOOCH GALVEZ (Spain)**

Secretary General, European Round Table for Industry (ERT)

## **Mr Peter GRK (Slovenia)**

Secretary General, Bled Strategic Forum

## **Mr Frank HEEMSKERK (Netherlands)**

Executive Vice-President, ASML

## **Mr Manuel HEITOR (Portugal)**

Director of Technology Policy Lab, Lisbon, former Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education

## **Mr Philippe HUBERDEAU (France)**

Secretary General, Scale-up Europe

## **Ms Sophie JAVARY (France)**

Vice-Chairman CIB EMEA At BNP Paribas

## **Ms Kerstin JORNA (Germany)**

Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship & SMEs, European Commission

## **Ms Ilhame KADRI (Morocco)**

Chief Executive Officer of SYENSQO

## **Mr Johannes KINDLER (Germany)**

Lawyer at Bird & Bird LLP



**Dr. Magdalena KIRCHNER (Germany)**

Director of the Center for Europe in the World at Stiftung Mercator

**Mr Guillaume KLOSSA (France)**

Writer, Executive President of EuropaNova, Co-founder of the Conclave, President of T-Life

**Pr. Stéphanie LACOUR (France)**

Professor of Bioengineering at EPFL (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne)

**Mr Gabrielius LANDSBERGIS (Lithuania)**

Member of the Lithuanian Parliament, former Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Ms Simona LESKOVAR (Slovenia)**

Ambassador, Program Director of the Bled Strategic Forum

**Ms Esther LYNCH (Ireland)**

General Secretary, ETUC

**Ms Isabelle NÉGRIER (France)**

Adviser to the President of EuropaNova

**Mr Stjepan OREŠKOVIĆ (Croatia)**

Entrepreneur, Majority Shareholder of Bosqar Invest

**Mr Dimitri PAPALEXOPOULOS (Greece)**

President and Managing Director, Titan group

**Ms Katarzyna PISARSKA (Poland)**

Chair, Warsaw Security Forum - Chairwoman of the Council, Casimir Pulaski Foundation

**Ms Maja PISCEVIC (Serbia)**

Nonresident Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council

**Mr Yury REVICH (Austria)**

UNICEF Austria Ambassador, Violinist Composer

**Ms Maria João RODRIGUES (Portugal)**

Former Minister of Portugal, former member of the European Parliament, European treaties negotiator, Chairperson of the Advisory Board of Re-Imagine Europa

**Mr Wolfgang ROHE (Germany)**

Chair of the Board of Management and Executive Director at Stiftung Mercator

**Mr Grégoire ROOS (France)**

Head of Political Dialogue and Policy Innovation, BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt

**Mr Oliver RÖPKE (Austria)**

President, European Economic and Social Committee

**Mr Michiel SCHEFFER (Netherlands)**

President of the Board, European Innovation Council

**Mr Margarítis SCHINAS (Greece)**

Former Vice-president for « Promoting our European Way of Life » of the European Commission

**Mr Henri SCHRICKE (France)**

Vice-Admiral and former Military Representative to NATO

**Ms Géraldine SCHWARZ (France/Germany)**

Journalist, writer and documentary filmmaker

**Ms Kadi SILDE (Estonia)**

Director of European Engagement – Helsing

**Daniela SCHWARZER**

Political scientist, member of the Executive Board of the Bertelsmann Foundation

**Ms Erika STAËL Von HOLSTEIN (Sweden)**

Chief Executive, Re-Imagine Europa, Founder of the Narratives Observatory combatting Disinformation and polarization in Europe Systemically (NODES)

**Mr Loukas TSOUKALIS (Greece)**

President of ELIAMEP Athens, Professor Sciences Po Paris

**Mr Huub VERHOEVEN (Netherlands)**

Citizen Ambassador of the Conference of the Future of Europe (CoFoE)

**Mr Peter VESTERBACKA (Finland)**

Entrepreneur, Founder, FinEst Bay Area

**Dr. Reinhilde VEUGELERS (Belgium)**

Economist and Professor of Managerial Economics, Strategy and Innovation at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven – Scholar, Bruegel

**Mr Lucio VINHAS De SOUZA (Portugal)**

Chief Economist and Director of the Economics Department of Business Europe

**Mr António VITORINO (Portugal)**

Former European Commissioner, former Director general IOM

**Ms Agnieszka WYKOWSKA (Poland)**

Professor, Head of unit “Social cognition in human-robot interaction”, Italian Institute of Technology

**Malte Tim ZABEL (Germany)**

Co-Director of the Programm Europas Zukunft at Bertelsmann Stiftung (deputy member)

**Alexander De Croo,**  
Prime minister of Belgium  
(October 2020-February 2025),  
Bourgmestre of Brakel



# CONCLAVE

Biographies



## Guillaume Klossa

Guillaume Klossa is an actor and thinker of the European project, a political advisor and an entrepreneur. Strategist and expert in European affairs, he is the founder and president of the board of the Conclave and of EuropaNova, a Paris-based European think tank. He served as a special advisor to the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union during president Sarkozy's mandate, and later as a sherpa of the European Council reflection group on the future of Europe chaired by president Felipe Gonzalez. More recently, he has advised Andrus Ansip, vice-president of the European Commission, on artificial intelligence and platform regulation. His entrepreneurial spirit also led him to create and preside over T-life, a Deeptech company that aims to revolutionize biological diagnosis through physics and AI. His career also includes senior executive positions in globally leading companies like Bureau Veritas and Hill+Knowlton Strategies (WPP), as well as in international organizations like the European Broadcasting Union, which operates Eurovision. He has co-authored impactful reports on topics including Europe's reindustrialization, digital sovereignty and artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and treaty reform. He has been instrumental in several European endeavours, such as the Treaty of Lisbon, expanding the Erasmus program, organizing the first Eurovision debate for candidates to the presidency of the European Commission, drafting the post-British-referendum EU roadmap, and paving the way to the regulation of systemic digital platforms. He initiated the May 9, 2016, call for a *"Roadmap for a New European Renaissance,"* which led to the creation of the Civico Europa citizens' movement and the WeEuropeans consultation, reaching 38 million citizens across 27 European countries. A former professor at HEC Paris, Sciences Po, and the College of Europe, he currently lectures at ESCP Business School and is also a columnist in several media outlets, essayist, and author. His latest book *Fierté européenne, manifeste pour une civilisation d'avenir* (preface by Jean-Claude Juncker), reviewed by philosopher Slavoj Žižek, was a finalist for the 2022 European Book prize against Antonio Scurati's *M.* A graduate of HEC Paris Grande Ecole (MBA), Sciences-Po Paris (MPA), and the LSE (CEMS Master), he is committed to knowledge transmission and is the creator of the European Young leaders program.

## Piero Benassi

is an accomplished Italian diplomat with a rich career in international relations. Graduating in Political Science from the University of Padua, he embarked on his diplomatic journey in 1984 at the Directorate General for Economic Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His career saw him serving as the Second Commercial Secretary in Havana, First Secretary of the Embassy in Warsaw, and First Counselor at the Italian Embassy in Berlin. He further distinguished himself as the Head of Staff of the Undersecretary of State, and as Ambassador to Tunisia from 2009 to 2013 and to Germany from 2014 to 2018. In 2018, he was appointed as the Diplomatic Advisor to the President of the Council of Ministers G. Conte and in 2021, he took on the role of Secretary of State with responsibility for the secret services in the second Conte government. His diplomatic service culminated with his appointment as the Permanent Representative to the European Union from 2021 to 2023.

## Jean-Pierre Bourguignon

is a mathematician, presently Honorary Professor at the Institut des Hautes Études Scientifiques in Bures-sur-Yvette (France) and emeritus Directeur de recherche at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). He has been the President of the European Research Council (ERC) from 2014 to 2019, and then by interim from July 2020 to August 2021. His main interests are science policy and the support of the next generations. He has an extensive international experience with Asian countries, in particular China and Japan.

## Ambassador Philippe Étienne

is a distinguished French diplomat, deeply involved in European and international relations. His diplomatic career is highlighted by his tenure as Ambassador of France to key nations including Romania, the European Union, Germany, and the United States. Additionally, he served as the Sherpa and diplomatic advisor to French President Emmanuel Macron from 2017 to 2019. His extensive experience in European affairs is underscored by his 20 years dedicated to this field, including a 13-year tenure at the French permanent representation in Brussels. Here, his roles varied from advisor on internal market and competition law to deputy permanent representative, showcasing his deep involvement in shaping EU policies. His chairmanship of Coreper I in 2000 and his appointment as permanent representative further cement his status as a pivotal figure in European diplomacy.



Guillaume  
Klossa



Piero  
Benassi



Jean-Pierre  
Bourguignon

**Aart Jan de Geus**

holds a Master's in Law from Erasmus University Rotterdam. His career began in the Dutch Christian Trade Union (CNV), where he advanced from a lawyer to the Vice Chairman position. After serving four years as a partner at Boer & Croon, a consultancy firm based in Amsterdam, he was appointed Minister of Social Affairs and Employment for the CDA (Christian Democrats) in 2002, under Prime Minister Balkenende. In this role, he was responsible for significant reforms in social security, pensions, and the labor market. From 2007, he served as the Deputy Secretary-General of the OECD in Paris. During this time, he oversaw the annual Ministerial Council meetings and led the *"Making Reform Happen"* project. In 2011, he moved to Germany to join the Bertelsmann Stiftung. He served as its Chairman and CEO from 2012 to 2019, focusing on socio-economic and European projects. Notably, in 2016, the *"Europe Reforms Labour Markets"* report was published under his leadership, along with the development of international indices like the European Social Justice Index and the global SDG-index. Upon returning to the Netherlands in 2020, he became the Chairman and CEO of the Goldschmeding Foundation, where he stayed until 2023. During his tenure, he developed national programs focusing on inclusive labor markets, sustainable work, and a humane economy. Besides his executive roles, Aart de Geus has been a member of various supervisory and advisory boards. He was the Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Triodos Bank from 2014 to 2022. Currently, he is the Chairman of the academic institute for CDA (WI-CDA) and a member of CvT, the supervisory authority over the Dutch Bar.

**Peter Grk**

has been Secretary General of the Bled Strategic Forum since 2016. He is also National Coordinator for the Western Balkans at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia. With more than 20 years of experience in the diplomatic service, Peter Grk has held posts in Ankara, Copenhagen and Brussels. During Slovenia's EU Presidency (2008), he served as Chair of the Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM). He was also posted to New York (2011) as Political Coordinator at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Slovenia to the UN and served as an advisor in the Cabinet of the Foreign Minister of Slovenia (2009 to 2011) and as Chief Foreign Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister of Slovenia (2013 to 2014). He holds a degree in political science.

**Maria João Rodrigues,**

a former Portuguese Minister of Employment under Prime Minister Antonio Guterres, is a European politician with extensive experience in various European institutions. Her roles have included positions in EU Presidencies, the Council, the European Council, the European Commission, and, more recently, the European Parliament, where she served as Vice- President of the S&D Group. In this capacity, she was responsible for general coordination and interfacing with other EU institutions. She has played a significant role in several key European initiatives such as the Lisbon Treaty, the Lisbon and Europe 2020 strategy (the EU's agenda for growth and jobs), Eurozone reform, interfacing with EU strategic partners, the roadmap for the EU's future, and more recently, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the plans to respond to the COVID crisis. Currently, she is the Chair of the Advisory Board of Re-imagine Europa, a Brussels-based think tank. Academically, she has been a professor of European economic policies at the European Studies Institute – Université Libre de Bruxelles and at the Lisbon University Institute. She also served as the chair of the European Commission Advisory Board for socioeconomic sciences.

**Grégoire Roos**

is geopolitical analyst, currently serves as the Head of Political Dialogue and Policy Innovation at the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt. In this capacity, he coordinates all Europe-related programmes, with a focus on geopolitics, economic transformation and democracy. After working at UNDP Regional Center for Africa, Mr Roos joined the financial industry as a senior business and market intelligence analyst, focusing on the impact of technology and geopolitics on markets and society. Mr Roos was a visiting fellow at Globsec in the fall of 2020 as a recipient of the Visegrad Fund scholarship, is a member of the German Marshall Fund's Transatlantic Leaders network and a reserve officer in the French Navy. A long-time associate of the St. Gallen Symposium, Mr Roos has conducted regular in-depth interviews with international public figures from politics (Lech Walesa, Frederik de Klerk), defence (James Stavridis), academia (Niall Ferguson) and science (Jane Goodall).



Philippe  
Étienne



Mariya  
Gabriel



Aart  
Jan de Geus



Peter  
Grk



Maria  
João Rodrigues



Grégoire  
Roos

## Appendix 3 - CONCLAVE Board

### Prof. Dr. Daniela Schwarzer

is currently a member of the Executive Board at the Bertelsmann Stiftung and also holds the position of honorary professor of political science at Freie Universität Berlin. Until April 2023, she was the Executive Director of the Open Society Foundations in Europe and Central Asia. Previously, from 2016 to 2021, she directed the German Council on Foreign Relations. Her earlier tenure includes being part of the Executive Team at the German Marshall Fund of the United States from 2013 to 2016. From 2004 to 2013, she worked at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik), leading its Europe research division starting in 2008. Earlier, from 1999 to 2004, she served as the opinion page editor and France correspondent for Financial Times Deutschland. She is renowned as an expert in international and European affairs, with a focus on geoeconomics, foreign policy, democracy, and governance dynamics. In 2023, she co-chaired the working group on EU reform, convened by the French and German governments. Additionally, she was a visiting professor at the Harvard Kennedy School in the autumn of 2022. Between 2020 and 2022, she served as a special advisor to Josep Borrell, the High Representative of the EU and Vice President of the European Commission. She has also provided advisory services to the French Prime Minister's Centre d'Analyse Stratégique and to the French and Polish EU presidencies.

### Erika Staël von Holstein,

Chief Executive of Re-Imagine Europa (RIE), has over a decade of experience in linking science, society, and policy. She's a fellow at PlusValue, a UK company specializing in social innovation, and a board member of the Citizen Communication Platform, a Swedish project for enhancing citizen communication. She also supports Luc Van den Brande's work, Special Adviser to President Jean-Claude Juncker, on the "Outreach towards Citizen" Strategy. Until September 2016, she chaired the Advisory Board of REIsearch, a non-profit European platform co-funded by

the European Commission. This initiative demonstrated how technological tools and networks could assist policymakers in making evidence-based decisions for societal benefit. From 2010 to 2015, she was the Executive Director of Atomium – European Institute for Science, Media, and Democracy, focusing on topics like Responsible Research and Citizen Engagement. She is a frequent speaker and moderator at European conferences, addressing issues like science in policy and citizen engagement, including events at the European Parliament and the European Commission.

### Loukas Tsoukalis

was born in Athens. He studied economics and international relations at the University of Manchester, the College of Europe in Bruges, and the University of Oxford, where he obtained his doctoral degree and taught for many years. He later returned home as Professor of European Integration at the University of Athens and was subsequently elected to the Eleftherios Venizelos Chair at the European Institute of the London School of Economics. He was also the long-serving head of the economics department at the College of Europe in Bruges. He has held visiting professorships at the European University Institute in Florence, King's College London, and the Kennedy School at Harvard University. He has advised former presidents of the European Commission and the European Council. He is now Professor at the Paris School of International Affairs (Sciences Po) and Emeritus Professor of the University of Athens. He is also President of the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), Greece's leading think tank. An author of many books translated into several European languages, in 2021, Oxford University Press published a Festschrift in his honor with contributions by leading personalities from academia and politics across Europe. His latest book, "Europe's Coming of Age," was published by Polity Press in 2023. He is an active European public intellectual.

### António Vitorino

has served in the Portuguese Parliament (1980-2007), where he has been Chairman of the Constitutional Affairs Committee (1985-1986) and of the European Affairs Committee (2005-2006), and in the Portuguese Government as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence (1995-1999). He has also served as EU Commissioner for Justice & Home Affairs from 1999 to 2004 and as Chairman of the Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs Committee of the European Parliament (1994-1995). As a representative of the European Commission he was a member of the Praesidium of the Convention of the Charter of Fundamental Rights (1999-2001), as well as of the Convention on the Future of Europe that drafted the Constitutional Treaty (2002-2003). He has also been the Director-General of the International Organization of migration (IOM) from 2018 to 2023. He was a Judge at the Portuguese Constitutional Court from 1989 to 1994 and holds a Degree in Law from the Universidade Clássica de Lisboa in 1981 and a Master in Law & Political Science in 1986.

### Dr. Malte Tim Zabel

is Co-Director of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Europe's Future Program, which pursues projects on the EU's sovereignty, a coherent internal market, and European public opinion. Before joining the Europe team in mid-2021, Malte headed the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Office of the Executive and Supervisory Boards and worked as advisor to its CEO on a number of strategy related topics. Prior to starting out at the Bertelsmann Stiftung in 2016, he worked as an advisor for a member of the German Bundestag for three and half years. Malte has studied political science and European studies and holds a Ph.D. from the University of Bonn. His dissertation focused on the development of Euroscepticism in the context of European integration and contextualized it with the EU's increasing politicization.



Daniela  
Schwarzer



Erika  
Staël von Holstein



Loukas  
Tsoukalis



António  
Vitorino



Dr. Malte  
Tim Zabel

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## Appendix 3 - CONCLAVE Managing Team

### Isabelle Négrier

is Advisor to the President of EuropaNova as a volunteer. Former Executive Director of EuropaNova (2023-January 2025), the operator and organizer of the Conclave, she holds a degree in political science and an ESCP diploma in business administration. President of the humanitarian association CŒUR, Citizen Open European for Ukraine Roofs, she was previously head of international public relations at EDF and development director for Paris director of the Agence Parisienne du Climat, the Société de la Tour the Eiffel Tower and the Electric Mobility Agency.

### Michaël Christophe

joined the EuropaNova team in January 2025 and succeeded Isabelle Négrier as Executive Director of EuropaNova after the Conclave. Graduate of Sciences Po, he became State civil servant in 2000 as a Public finance inspector. After working at the General Secretariat for European Affairs (in the Prime minister's office) on the budget and the financial perspectives of the European Union, enlargement and the French presidency of 2008, he became diplomatic adviser to several ministers, in the areas of sustainable development and then of sports (2009-2012). After serving as Secretary general of a State agency regulating online gambling (2012-2016), he worked in the international office of the General Director of Public Finances and was appointed in 2018 diplomatic adviser to the President of the French Economic, Social and Environmental Council. Since 2021, he has served as Director of Public affairs for the Federation of Private Employers, whose president also chairs the European Federation for Family Employment and Home Care.

### Oliver Coste

joined the Conclave team as an expert. He is a former civil servant, a corporate executive in the tech industry, an entrepreneur, and an author. After starting his career at the European Commission, working in DG Competition and

on the creation of the euro, Oliver joined the office of the French Prime Minister, where he played a key role in the launch of Airbus as a company. He later transitioned to Alcatel-Lucent, where he managed several telecom activities worldwide and founded a satellite-based mobile television business. He also led a U.S. division of Atos, a \$12bn IT system integrator. He co-founded and managed several startup companies, among which a satellite-based mobile television business and later a video chat solution for e-commerce, which was adopted by Microsoft, IBM, and SoftBank. Most recently, he served as an advisor to Penguin Computing, a leading provider of AI supercomputers for companies like Meta.

Having lived in France, Germany, and Belgium, Oliver has been based in New York City since 2014. In 2022, he published Europe, Tech and War, which received the prestigious Strasser Prize from France's Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques. In September 2024, he published Cost of Failure and Competitiveness in Disruptive Innovation through Bocconi University. His expertise contributed to Mario Draghi's 2024 report on Europe's competitiveness. Oliver holds U.S., French and Swiss citizenship.

### Greta Karoline Adamek

was born in 1999 in the Ruhr area of Germany. She has trained as a design assistant and studied Social and Cultural Anthropology and Political Science at the Freie Universität Berlin. During her studies she was a Citizen Ambassador at the Conference on the Future of Europe. There she participated in the panel on Strengthening the Economy, Social Justice and Employment; Education, Youth, Culture and Sport; and Digitalisation. In the plenary session of the conference, she was a member of the working group on education, youth, culture and sport. She currently works as a policy advisor to former MEP and current Member of the German Bundestag Axel Schäfer. There she is responsible for the work of the Committee on European Union Affairs.

### François Arbault

is Director for Defence industry at the European Commission since 1st January 2021. He previously exercised various responsibilities within the Commission, the most recent being the policy coordination of the "European Green Deal" in the Secretariat-General, and his participation in the negotiation of the Withdrawal Agreement of the United Kingdom from the EU at the "Article 50" Task Force. François had previously been the Head of the "Public procurement strategy" and the "Industrial Property" units in the Commission, after he was successively a member of the cabinets of Commissioners Jacques Barrot and Michel Barnier (2008-2013). François joined the Commission in 1995 after he graduated in law and political science, and studied European affairs at the College of Europe. After having worked notably at the Competition Directorate-General, he was seconded from 2003 to 2005 as a legal clerk ("référénaire") to the Court of Justice of the European Union, where he was a member of the cabinet of the Portuguese judge at the General Court. François was also a member of the Legal Service of the Commission (2005-2008).

## participants >



Isabelle  
Négrier



Michaël  
Christophe



Oliver  
Coste



Greta  
Karoline Adamek



François  
Arbault

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## Lennart Blecher

born 1955, Head of EQT Real Assets' Advisory Teams and Deputy Managing Partner of EQT AB Group and Chairperson of EQT Real Estate. Based in Zurich. Mr. Blecher joined EQT Partners and the EQT Infrastructure Advisory Team in 2007. Prior to joining EQT Partners, Mr. Blecher was a Managing Director and Senior Banker at UniCredit/HypoVereinsbank. From 2002 to 2004, Mr. Blecher was a Managing Director of Acquisitions at GE Commercial Finance. From 1996 to 2002, Mr. Blecher was President and Business Area Manager of ABB Structured Finance and Chairperson of ABB Export Bank. From 1987 to 1996, Mr. Blecher was legal and general counsel at ABB Financial Services. Mr. Blecher is a board member of Nordkap Holding AG and Volito Group AB. Mr. Blecher has managed teams globally and has been involved in financing and investing over the last twenty-five years. Mr. Blecher holds a Master of Laws from Lund University and post graduate studies from the Academy of US and International Law at University of Dallas, USA.

## Marieke Blom

is Chief Economist and Global Head of Research at ING Group since 1 August 2022. She is also Chief Economist at ING in the Netherlands. Marieke has worked at ING since 2014. Her research team in Amsterdam covers a broad range of themes: from monetary policy and the housing market to specific sectors, sustainability and technology. Marieke is a member of the board of the Dutch Royal Economic Society (KVS). She is also a member of the Advice Committee of the National Growth Fund. She regularly appears in the media. Before joining ING, Marieke worked as a senior manager at start-up Amsterdam consultancy "De Argumentenfabriek". She was a political advisor at the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA). She started her career as a trainee and economist at ABN AMRO in 1999. Marieke holds a Master's degree in monetary economics and wrote her thesis at the research department of the Dutch Central Bank. Marieke lives in Amsterdam with her husband and two daughters.

## Dr. Małgorzata Bonikowska

PhD. Political scientist and EU expert (member of Team Europe), President of the Centre for International Relations - a leading Polish independent think tank in foreign affairs, co-founder and President of the THINKTANK Leaders Hub - network for managers and leaders from business and public administration. Dr Bonikowska specializes in European affairs and international relations with focus on European

Global Strategy. She works as associate professor at Warsaw University - Centre for Europe and at Vistula University - Department of Business and International Relations. She regularly comments on European and foreign affairs for Polish and international media. Dr Bonikowska graduated from Warsaw University (neo-philology), Academy of Performing Arts in Warsaw (history of culture), Sorbonne University in Paris (history and European Studies), in 1996-97 she was a visiting scholar at Political Sciences Department and School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) of Columbia University in New York under the umbrella of the Fulbright Program, studying government and public affairs. She completed two PhD programs - in Poland (Polish Academy of Sciences) and Italy (International Doctoral School, San Marino Republic). After working as a journalist in Polish Public Television (1995-1998), dr Bonikowska joined the Ministry of European Integration as Head of the European Information Centre as well as Adviser to the Minister (1998-2001) coordinating the network of the EU information centers in the country. In 2001-2007 she worked for the European Commission as expert and Director of the EU Information and Communication Program - first in Poland (3 years) and then in Bulgaria (3 years). In 2007-2017 she was senior advisor at the Centre for Human Resources Development under the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, being responsible for projects co-financed from the European Social Fund. She has been working as consultant and advisor to the several Ministers (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health) and as expert in several projects in the countries under the EU Enlargement and Neighborhood policies. Dr Bonikowska is fluent in English, French and Italian, with good knowledge of Russian. She is author of over 200 publications as well as tutor of over 100 MA and BA thesis.

## Jean-François van Boxmeer

holds the position of Chairman at Vodafone Group plc and also serves as the Chairman of the European Roundtable for Industry (ERT). He initially joined ERT in 2005, served as its Vice-Chairman from 2016 to mid-2020, and became Chairman in May 2022. Additionally, he is the Chair of the Vodafone Nominations Committee and a member of the ESG Committee. Before these roles, van Boxmeer was the Chairman of the Executive Board and Chief Executive Officer of Heineken N.V. from 2005 to 2020. His career at Heineken N.V. began in 1984 in the Netherlands. In 1987, he moved to Africa to undertake Sales and Marketing roles,

first in Rwanda and then in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He returned to Europe in 1996 as President & General Manager of Zywiec S.A. in Poland and was appointed Managing Director of Heineken Italia in 2000. In 2001, he joined the Executive Board of the Heineken Group, assuming worldwide responsibility for the supply chain and technical services, as well as overseeing operations in North-West Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Central and Eastern Europe. Upon becoming Chairman of the Executive Board and Chief Executive Officer in 2005, he led Heineken through a period of substantial growth, establishing it as the most geographically diverse brewer in the world, the largest in Europe, and the second largest globally.

## Mansef Campos

is a Master's student in History of Security and Defense at Sorbonne University, with a strong passion for European cooperation and diplomacy. Holding a bachelor's degree in history, he has specialized in European defense, further enriching his academic journey through an Erasmus mobility program in Belgium, where he studied history, anthropology, and political science. In 2021, he played a key role in the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE) as a citizen ambassador and spokesperson, contributing to the drafting of proposals on CFSP, energy, and the EU's external relations, which he presented at the European Parliament. Recognized as a 2024 Young Talent of Diplomacy, he is currently undertaking a European citizenship education program with the Jacques Delors Institute and participating in an MA-PhD seminar entitled "History of European Cooperation since 1919" within the Alliance 4EU program.

## Annemie De Clerck

is a retired Belgian educator with a rich career in primary education and school administration. She initially spent a decade teaching primary education before advancing to headmaster of various primary schools and later overseeing a school community of 27 primary schools. Her last 15 years in her career were dedicated to policy-making and support roles in education. In 2021, she was selected as a citizen participant in the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE), where she engaged as a member of citizen panel 2 and as an ambassador of the panel. Her focus on democracy and 'citizen participation' within the theme of the conference demonstrated her commitment to enhancing European Union cooperation and responsibility sharing. Her skills in supervising change processes and her abi-



Lennart  
Blecher



Marieke  
Blom



Dr. Małgorzata  
Bonikowska



Annemie  
De Clerck



Jean-François van  
Boxmeer



Mansef  
Campos



António  
Costa

lity to connect people, honed during her active career, were instrumental in her contributions to the CoFoE.

## António Costa

is the President of the European Council, elected on June 27, 2024. Costa holds a law degree from the Faculty of Law at the University of Lisbon, along with postgraduate degrees in European Studies and in Contract Litigation, Mediation, and Arbitration from the Catholic University of Lisbon. His political career began in 1982 as a member of the Lisbon Municipal Assembly, a position he held until 1993. He worked as a lawyer from 1985 to 1995 and again from 2002 to 2004, and served as a member of the Portuguese Parliament from 1991 to 2004, as well as a member of the Loures Municipal Chamber from 1993 to 1995. Costa held several key ministerial positions, including Secretary of State (1995-1997), Minister for Parliamentary Affairs (1997-1999), and Minister of Justice (1999-2002). He was also the leader of the Socialist Party's parliamentary group from 2002 to 2004 and served as Vice President of the European Parliament from 2004 to 2005. In March 2005, Costa was appointed Minister of State and Minister of the Interior, before becoming the Mayor of Lisbon from 2007 to 2015. He was also a member of the Committee of the Regions (2010-2015) and President of the Lisbon Metropolitan Council (2013-2015). Costa served as the Prime Minister of Portugal from 2015 to 2024 and was the Secretary General of the Socialist Party from 2014 to 2024. He is married and has a son and a daughter

## Christine Durinx

is Managing Director of VIB, an excellence-based entrepreneurial research institute in life sciences uniting 1900 researchers located in Belgium. VIB's basic research leads to new and innovative insights into normal and pathological life processes. The institute is currently establishing a new research center in AI/computational biology. Previously, Christine was Executive Director of the SIB Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics and co-chair of the ELIXIR data platform. During her period at SIB, she gained broad experience in the management, including for personalized health, and their long-term sustainability. Christine also acts as an advisor and expert on a number of national and international committees, and is an experienced board member and chairwoman. During the first decade of her career, she worked for several pharmaceutical multinationals, in local and international roles.

## Jörn Fleck

serves as senior director with the Europe Center at the Atlantic Council with primary responsibility for the center's European Union (EU) efforts, programming related to Western Europe, Brexit, and US-EU trade relations. Jörn also leads outreach to US and European legislators as well as the Council's Transatlantic Digital Project which seeks to promote closer US-EU cooperation on digital policy matters. Jörn previously was director at the Transatlantic Policy Network (TPN) and helped to launch TPN's annual signature event Transatlantic Week which has become a major event in the transatlantic calendar. He continues to support TPN programming and promotes cooperation between both organizations. Prior to joining TPN, Jörn was chief of staff for a British member of the European Parliament (MEP). In this role, he worked extensively on US-EU relations, trade policy, and EU foreign and security policy. Jörn further served as the staff lead for the MEP's rapporteurship for the 2007 EU general budget. Jörn holds an MA in international commerce and policy from the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University and a BA in politics and international relations with first class honors from the University of Kent at Canterbury in the United Kingdom. Jörn is a German national.

## Anthony Gooch Galvez

has over 30 years of experience as a senior international official. During his 15-year tenure as a Director at the OECD, he focused on strategic policy development in response to global crises, including reforms in international tax standards under the G20 mandate, and contributing to the implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change. He was instrumental in creating the OECD Better Life Index and played a key role in expanding the OECD's membership to 38 countries. He also established the OECD Global Parliamentary Network, which facilitated worldwide legislative involvement in tax reform and artificial intelligence. As Director of the OECD Forum and its Network community, he led initiatives for stakeholder engagement and youth inclusion. Previously, as an EU Commission official, trade negotiator, and diplomat for 14 years, he coordinated the EU/Mexico FTA negotiations, served as EU Trade Spokesman, and advised Commissioner Pascal Lamy. He participated in significant trade negotiations, including the WTO Ministerial Meetings and managed key trade disputes. He holds an MA from Cambridge University, a Postgraduate degree from Sciences Po, and is an IESE Business School graduate.

## Frank Heemskerk

born 1969, is an executive and Dutch politician with a diverse career in both the public and private sectors. Throughout his career, Heemskerk has demonstrated a commitment to both public service and private sector excellence, with significant contributions to economic policy, international trade, and industrial strategy. He is currently serving as Executive Vice President of Public Affairs & Countries at ASML (2024-present) and is a member of the Supervisory Boards of KPN (2023-present) and CPB (Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis, 2021-present). Heemskerk's previous roles include Secretary-General of the European Round Table for Industry (ERT) from 2019 to 2024, Executive Director of the World Bank Group in Washington, DC (2013-2018), and Member of the Executive Board of Royal HaskoningDHV (2011-2013). He served as the Minister for Foreign Trade of the Netherlands from 2007 to 2010, overseeing trade policy, telecommunications, ICT, consumer policy, and tourism, and was a Member of Parliament for the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA) from 2003 to 2006, where he was the spokesperson on financial supervision, economic affairs, and healthcare reform. Heemskerk began his career at ABN AMRO Bank, where he held various positions from 1995 to 2003, including Vice President for the Middle East at ABN AMRO Asset Management. Additionally, he served as a Visiting Lecturer in Geo-economics at Leiden University's Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs from 2018 to 2023 and was Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Meesman Index Investing (2019-2024). Heemskerk earned a degree in economics from the University of Amsterdam in 1994, spent an Erasmus year in Leuven, Belgium, and pursued executive courses at Harvard Business School (2017) and Stanford University Graduate School of Business (2023).

## Manuel Heitor

is a professor at Instituto Superior Técnico (IST), the engineering school at the University of Lisbon, and served nearly 13 years in the Portuguese Government, including as Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education (2015-2022) and Secretary of State (2005-2011). In 2023, he was appointed by the European Commission to chair the expert group for the interim evaluation of the Horizon Europe programme, leading to the 2024 publication of the report "Align, Act, Accelerate: Research, Technology and Innovation to boost European Competitiveness." He previously served as deputy-president of IST (1993-1998) and has been a research fellow at the University of



Christine  
Durinx



Jörn  
Fleck



Anthony Gooch  
Galvez



Frank  
Heemskerk



Manuel  
Heitor



Texas at Austin's IC2 Institute since 1995. A founding member of the Science and Technology Council of the International Risk Governance Council (IRGC) and of Globelics, he also established IST's Center for Innovation, Technology and Policy Research (IN+) and coordinated its doctoral programs in "Engineering and Public Policy" and "Engineering Design and Advanced Manufacturing." Heitor holds a Ph.D. from Imperial College London in combustion research, completed post-doctoral training at the University of California, San Diego, and has held visiting positions at Harvard University and NYU. He has published over 130 scientific articles, authored six books, and co-edited more than 20 books. Recognized globally, he received an Honorary Doctorate from Carnegie Mellon University in 2022, was named an "IST Distinguished Professor," and is a member of several prestigious academies, including the European Academy of Cancer Sciences, the Royal Academy of Engineering in Spain, and the Serbian Academy of Engineering.

## Philippe Huberdeau

is a graduate from Ecole Polytechnique (X91), Philippe Huberdeau began a career as a diplomat in the Quai d'Orsay specializing on European affairs and international economic issues, notably international trade and economic sanctions on Russia and Iran. Philippe also taught European studies at Sciences Po for six years and worked for the European Commission at DG Trade (WTO unit). In 2017 he published the book "Is European construction irreversible?" with an introduction from former Italian Prime minister Enrico Letta.

After having organized the G7 Summit in Biarritz in 2019, he was appointed Secretary general of Scale-Up Europe a Pan-European initiative launched by President Macron with the support of all member states and the European Commission aiming at building in Europe 10 Tech champions worth euro 100bn each by 2030. The initiative already produced major advances benefiting European Scale-Ups, such as awarding an ambitious euro 10bn mandate to the European Innovation Council in support of deeptech projects, or creating a euro 4.8bn Fund of Fund managed by the EIF to build a late stage venture investment capacity on the continent.

## Dr. Ilham Kadri

is the CEO of Syensqo. Dr. Kadri is a world citizen, a scientist, a businesswoman and a humanist. Her career spans more than three decades and over four continents. Under her leadership, she delivered purpose-led transfor-

mations leading to sustainable and profitable businesses. Dr. Kadri is a board member at L'Oréal and at AO Smith, and serves as a Chair of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), she is a member of the European Round Table for Industry (ERT) and a permanent member of the World Economic Forum's International Business Council (WEF). Since 2024, Dr. Kadri is also the President of CEFIC, the European Chemical Industry Council. Ilham Kadri is a chemical engineer and holds a doctorate in Polymer Reactive Extrusion.

## Johannes Kindler

is a lawyer at the international law firm Bird & Bird, where he primarily focuses on energy law and infrastructure financing in this sector. Johannes is a co-author of a manual on infrastructure financing. Before joining Bird & Bird, Johannes spent the majority of his professional career within the German federal government. After seven years at the Ministry of Economic Affairs, he advised Chancellors Kohl, Schröder, and Merkel on industrial policy, energy, financial markets, and foreign trade. Between 2007 and January 2012, Johannes served as Vice President of the German regulator, the Federal Network Agency (BNetzA), and Vice President of the Council of European Energy Regulators (CEER), as well as a member of the Board of Directors of the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER). He studied law at the University of Freiburg in Germany and at the École Nationale d'Administration (ENA).

## Sophie Javary

brings over 30 years of experience in investment banking, having been involved in a wide range of transactions including privatisations, equity capital markets, M&A, and debt deals. Starting her career at Bank of America in Paris, she later joined Rothschild in 1994 to head equity capital markets, becoming a General Partner in 2002 and managing ABN AMRO Rothschild in Paris from 2001 to 2008, before becoming head of European restructuring and joint head of debt advisory until 2011. In 2011, she joined BNP Paribas as a Senior Banker, later overseeing all corporate finance activities in EMEA. Appointed Vice-Chairman CIB EMEA in 2018, she now focuses, as an executive sponsor, on strategic advice and investment banking business development. She has also been a senior advisor on major transactions like the privatisation and IPO of La Française des Jeux and OVHcloud IPO. She is also a member of the Board of Directors of EuropaNova.

## Kerstin Jorna

is a German national and a civil servant at the European Commission where she has held various positions, amongst others as Head of Cabinet of several Commissioners and different Director posts. Ms. Jorna is the Director-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs. Before, Ms. Jorna was Deputy Director-General for Economic and Financial Affairs. Mrs. Jorna also held positions on the Board of the European Investment Bank, the European Investment Fund as well as the European Innovation Council Fund.

## Magdalena Kirchner

is the Director for Europe in the World at Stiftung Mercator GmbH, appointed in January 2024. She previously served as Country Director for Jordan and Yemen at the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Dr. Kirchner studied political science and history at the Universities of Heidelberg and Aarhus and holds a doctoral degree from the University of Heidelberg. Her research focuses on conflict research and foreign policy analysis in the context of international crisis management.

## Stéphanie Lacour

serves as the Vice-President for Strategic Initiatives (VPS) at EPFL. She is also a prominent figure in the Neuro-X Institute and leads the Laboratory for Soft Bioelectronic Interfaces (LSBI). Her work focuses on advancing interdisciplinary research at the intersection of neuroscience and bioengineering.

## Gabrielius Landsbergis

is a Lithuanian politician and diplomat who served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the 18th Government of Lithuania under Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė (2020-2024). A member of the Seimas (Parliament) from 2016 to 2024, he has also been the Chairman of the Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats since 2015. From 2014 to 2016, he was a Member of the European Parliament. Landsbergis previously served as a diplomat at the Lithuanian Embassy in Belgium and Luxembourg, as well as at the Office of the Government. He holds a Master's degree in International Relations and Diplomacy (2005) and a Bachelor's degree in History (2003) from Vilnius University. Fluent in Lithuanian and English, he has played a key role in shaping Lithuania's foreign policy.

## Brigadier General Bart Laurent

BE Army, Graduate from the Royal Military Academy, he started his career in the Grenadier's Regiment in Germany, then company



Philippe  
Huberdeau



Dr Ilham  
Kadri



Johannes  
Kindler



Sophie  
Javary



Kerstin  
Jorna



Magdalena  
Kirchner



Stéphanie  
Lacour

commander in the Carabiniers Prins Boudewijn-Grenadiers Regiment in Leopoldsburg. After attending the Senior Staff Officer's Course in 1999, he is appointed Project Manager for the multinational Antitank-project within the Army Headquarters. He was then selected to attend the German National General Staff Officer's Course at the German Führungsakademie in Hamburg (46. LGAN). Appointed to the Belgian Land Component's Operational Command in Brussels in 2005, he was responsible for the planning and conduct of all large-scale national and international exercises as well as for the preparation of the EUBG 2009-2. He was sent to the UN HQ in New York in 2007, in support of the UNIFIL operation in South-Lebanon. In 2009 he was Senior National Representative of the Belgian ISAF-contingent in Kunduz, Afghanistan (OMLT and PRT). In 2010, he commanded the Regiment Carabiniers Prins Boudewijn-Grenadiers, with which he deployed again to Kunduz, (ISAF OMLT) in 2012. In 2013, he returned to the Land Component's Operational Command to work on the preparation of the European Union Battle Group 2014-2. In 2014 as a Colonel and after having attended the Senior Course at the NATO Defense College, he takes command of the Joint Operations Division within the Operations and Training staff department in the Belgian Defense Staff. Mid 2017, he is appointed Brigadier General and deploys to Mali as Mission Force Commander of the European Training Mission (EUTM) MALI until Feb 2018. In 2018, he joins the NATO Joint Forces Command HQ in BRUNSSUM (NLD) as ACOS J5. From September 2019 until September 2023, he assumes responsibilities as Director of Operations within the European Union Military Staff in Brussels.

During the evacuation operation from Afghanistan in August 2021, he deployed to Kabul to lead the EU evacuation operation and the liaison with all stakeholders present on Kabul Airport, and to coordinate the evacuation efforts from EU Member States. Of his main operational tours are former Yugoslavia, twice in Afghanistan and Mali. Besides Belgian national honorific decorations up to Commander in the Order of Leopold, he is awarded with the Spanish "Grand Cruz del Merito Militar con distintivo blanco", with the French "Médaille de la Défense nationale, échelon or", with the Malian "Médaille d'Officier de l'Ordre national à titre étranger", in 2022 with the French decoration of "Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite" and in 2023 with the Ukrainian decoration for Support to the Ukrainian Armed Forces. In April 2024, after his retirement from the military, he joins the EEAS Crisis Response Center as mili-

tary expert. Bart Laurent is married to Daniëlle. They are blessed with a daughter and a son.

## Simona Leskovar

Ambassador. Programme Director of Bled Strategic Forum. Simona Leskovar was Ambassador of Slovenia in the UK and Permanent Representative to the IMO from September 2020 until August 2024. Prior to this appointment, she was State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovenia. Ambassador Leskovar is a career diplomat with 28 years of service in Slovenian diplomacy. She served as Slovenian Ambassador to Japan and Republic of Korea, was Deputy Permanent Representative at Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the UN in New York, and head or member of several Slovenian delegations and missions to various conferences and events within the UN. Her first post as a diplomat was in Washington DC. Ambassador Leskovar held a position of the EU adviser to Foreign Minister during the first Slovenian EU Presidency in 2008. She was later Director of Young Bled Strategic Forum (2015) and National Focal Point for Responsibility-to-Protect. Simona Leskovar studied international relations at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, and at the Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael in The Hague. Ambassador Leskovar initiated the MFA programme 'Young Ambassadors', a mentoring project aimed at encouraging young women to consider a career in diplomacy and international relations. Ambassador Leskovar was awarded for her outstanding work and achievements in London as Diplomat of the Year from Europe 2024. She has been a guest lecturer at the University of Ljubljana and UCL (United College of London).

## Esther Lynch

is the General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation. Previously, Ms Lynch was Deputy General Secretary at the ETUC from 2019 to 2022, following four years as Confederal Secretary. Esther led on social dialogue, collective bargaining and wage policy, trade union rights, gender equality. She has extensive trade union experience at Irish, European and international levels, starting with her election as a shop steward in the 1980s. Before coming to the ETUC, she was the Legislation and Social Affairs Officer with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), where she took part in negotiations on Ireland's National Social Partner Agreements. As Deputy General Secretary and as Confederal Secretary she led successful actions aimed at improving workers and trade union rights in legislative initia-

tives such as the Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages, the Transparent and Predicable Working Conditions Directive and the Whistle-blowing Directive, she also ran a successful campaign that mobilised support for the European Pillar of Social Rights and the ETUC's 'Europe Needs a Pay Rise' campaign. In addition to securing the adoption of 15 legally binding occupational exposure limits to protect workers from exposure to carcinogens, as well as concluding social partners' agreements on digitalisation and on reprotoxins. A lifelong feminist, Esther is pushing for measures to end the undervaluing of work predominantly done by women.

## Stjepan Orešković

is a scientist and entrepreneur dedicated to blending the positive values of both fields. M+ Group, a publicly listed company (MRUL) where he is a majority shareholder, grew to become a leading European CX industry player with over 13,600 employees in 62 markets globally in only five years. The group was recognized with Frost & Sullivan's 2022 European Entrepreneurial Company of the Year Award as a leader in promoting and implementing ESG sustainability goals. Stjepan was recently honored with the prestigious Transparency International Nikola Tesla Award for Ethical Business. He is a regular member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts. He has served as the principal investigator or director of research projects with Harvard Medical School, London School of Economics - LSE Health, Bocconi University, the University of Trieste, and Ljubljana University. He is currently the principal investigator for Pfizer's Global GRAND Project (2018-2023), which involves research teams from Harvard Medical School - Massachusetts General Hospital, Ljubljana, and Zagreb School of Medicine.

## Dimitris Papalexopoulos

is Chairman of Titan Cement International (TCI), a cement and building materials producer established in 1902, employing about 5,500 people and operating cement plants in 10 countries with activities in many more. He chairs the Energy Transition & Climate Change Committee of the European Roundtable for Industry (ERT), is a member of the General Council of the Bank of Greece, Vice Chairman of the Board of the Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research (IOBE), and serves on the boards of the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) and "Endeavor Greece." From 2020 to 2024, he was Chairman of the Board of the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV). He holds an



Gabrielius  
Landsbergis



Bart  
Laurent



Simona  
Leskovar



Esther  
Lynch



Stjepan  
Orešković



Dimitris  
Papalexopoulos



Katarzyna  
Pisarska

MSc in Electrical Engineering from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETHZ) and an MBA from Harvard Business School. Before joining TITAN, he worked as a consultant for McKinsey & Company in New York and Munich. Fluent in Greek, English, French, and German, he is married and has three children.

## Professor Katarzyna Pisarska

is a Polish social entrepreneur, civic activist and scholar. She is the Founder of the European Academy of Diplomacy (2004) and Co-Founder of the Casimir Pulaski Foundation (2005), the Warsaw Security Forum (2014) and the International Center for Ukrainian Victory (2022). She is also an Associate Professor at Warsaw School of Economics and Head of the Advisory Council to the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Polish Parliament. For her leadership accomplishments in the non-for-profit sector, in 2014 Prof. Pisarska was recognized as a Young Global Leader (YGL) by the World Economic Forum and later selected to serve on the YGL Advisory Group. She was a Munich Young Leader (2021/2022) with the Munich Security Conference. She was also named "99 under 33" most influential world foreign policy leader by the Diplomatic Courier in Washington D.C. In addition to her social entrepreneur work, Prof. Pisarska pursues a career in academia. She is an Associate Professor at the Warsaw School of Economics and a CPD Faculty Fellow at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. Previously, Prof. Pisarska was a Fulbright Visiting Fellow at Harvard University (2007), a Visiting Scholar at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (2010), at the Australian National University (2015), at the University of Southern California (2019) and at the University of Malaga (2022/2023). She specializes in EU foreign policy, Eastern Partnership, EU-Russia relations, and public diplomacy, among others having authored the monograph "The Domestic Dimension of Public Diplomacy – Evaluating Success through Civil Engagement" (Palgrave 2016).

## Maja Piscevic

is a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council and representative of the Atlantic Council in the Western Balkans. Previously, Piscevic she served as vice president at the EastWest Institute in New York City. In her role, she designed the ongoing Balkan Dialogues program focused on promoting a constructive dialogue among experts and policymakers from the Western Balkans, EU, and the U.S. in pursuit of promoting democracy, rule of law, and lasting solutions to conflicts in the Balkans. A trained attorney, she

is recognized as a leading advocate for economic integration and political stability in the Western Balkans. In 2012, she graduated from the Stanford University Program on Development, Rule of Law, and Democracy, chaired by Professor Frances Fukuyama. She has received multiple certificates of appreciation and meritorious honors from the US State Department and USAID.

## Yury Revich

is an Austrian violinist and composer that has been honored with the ECHO Klassik Award and the International Classical Music Award, with his recording of the Saint-Georges double concertos reaching the TOP 100 of the US Billboard Classical Charts and he is UNICEF Austria Ambassador. Yury is a violinist from 4 generations of violin players in his family since the 19th century. He performs as a soloist and composer at concert halls such as Carnegie Hall, La Scala in Milan, the Berliner Philharmonie, Vienna Musikverein Golden Hall, Salle Pleyel, London's Cadogan Hall, Vienna Konzerthaus, Alte Oper Frankfurt, Prinzregententheater Munich, Tonhalle Zurich, Gewandhaus Leipzig, BOZAR Brussels, among many others. He performed together with Martha Argerich, Daniil Trifonov, Andrea Bocelli, William Orbit, Rupert Everett, Sumi Jo, Paul Badura-Skoda, Steven Isserlis etc. He composed music for the new film by Oscar-nominated and Emmy-winning director Oren Moverman. Three tracks from his album featuring music by Chevalier de Saint-Georges were included in the soundtrack of Bridgerton (Netflix) of all seasons. In 2023, his first symphony, "Kaleidoscope," was successfully premiered in London, with other pieces premiered by the Berlin and Munich Symphony Orchestras. He was commissioned to compose and perform for the main stage of the Dubai World Expo and Art Basel Paris+. Commissioned by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), he created a piece bringing together 100 musicians from around the world to perform for our planet Earth. He was ranked in the Top 100 of the Billboard Classical Charts and the Top 20 of the official German charts. His piece "Nocturne" served as the soundtrack for VOGUE's short film about Ukrainian ballet dancers. Yury founded an Austrian campaign "All for Autism," the multidisciplinary festival "Festival Nights" (www.fnights.com/2023), and actively supports Ukrainian children through his work with UNICEF. Yury passionately collaborates with various art forms, intertwining them with music.

## Dr Wolfgang Rohe

was appointed as Executive Director of Stif-

tung Mercator in 2014. He previously held various positions at two of the most influential science organizations in Germany. From 1992 to 2002, he worked with the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) in Bonn, initially in the Department for Collaborative Research Centers and then as Head of the strategic planning unit. In 2002, he moved to the German Council of Science and Humanities (Wissenschaftsrat) where he served as Head of the Research Policy Department and since 2005 also as Vice Secretary General. Wolfgang Rohe holds a Ph.D. in German philology.

## Oliver Röpke

is President of the EESC since April 2023, President of the EESC Workers' Group from 2019-2023, and Member of the EESC since 2009. As EESC President Mr. Röpke has been a strong advocate for freedom, democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and social justice in the digital era. Mr. Röpke also headed the Brussels office of the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB) and took on several senior positions, including representative of ÖGB to the EU institutions and to the executive committee of the ETUC. Mr. Röpke has a legal background and holds a law degree from the University of Vienna."

## Michiel Scheffer

is the President of the European Innovation Council (EIC) Board. A Dutch national, he has three decades of experience in business, academia, and public policy. He is equipped with a wide network in the world of research and innovation and has a remarkable professional experience of more than 20 years in the field of innovation, including on breakthrough technologies, disruptive innovations, and start-ups impact investment.

## Margaritis Schinas

is the former European Commission Vice-President for Promoting the European Way of Life (2019 - 2024). Schinas began his career in the European Commission in 1990 holding various roles before being elected as a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) in 2007. He later returned to the European Commission, and became the Chief Spokesperson under President Jean-Claude Juncker from 2014 to 2019. During his tenure as Vice-President, Schinas was tasked by President Von der Leyen to coordinate the Commission's policies on migration, security, health, education, culture, and skills, promoting integration and solidarity across the European Union.

Born in Thessaloniki, Greece, Schinas holds a



Maja  
Piscevic



Yury  
Revich



Wolfgang  
Rohe



Oliver  
Röpke



Michiel  
Scheffer



Margaritis  
Schinas



Henri  
Schricke



degree in Law from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, a Master's in European Administrative studies from the College of Europe in Bruges and a MSc on Public Policy from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

## Henri Schricke

is a Vice Admiral in the French Navy and former representative of NATO, born in Edinburgh in 1963. He has had a distinguished career and has been honored with the Legion d'Honneur (Officer) and the Ordre National du Mérite (Commander). He is married to Elisabeth and has three grown-up children: Clémence, Matthieu, and Paul.

## Géraldine Schwarz

is a German-French journalist, author, and documentary filmmaker based in Berlin. Her first book, *Those Who Forget*, has won several awards, including the European Book Prize, Germany's Winfried Peace Prize, and Italy's NordSud International Prize for Literature and Science. The book is being translated into eight languages.

## Kadi Silde

is the Director of European Engagement at Helsing and a Millennium Leadership Fellow at the Atlantic Council. She previously worked for NATO as the Chief Operating Officer (interim) and Head of the Transition Team at the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) from July 2022 to January 2024. Prior to her roles at NATO, Kadi served as the Undersecretary for Defence Policy at the Ministry of Defence of Estonia.

## Dr. Lúcio Vinhas de Souza

is since September 2024 the Chief Economist and Director of the Economics Department of BusinessEurope in Brussels, Belgium. A Portuguese national, he is also currently a Member of the Board of the National Economists Club and is associated with the CSIS' Geoeconomics Council, both in Washington, DC. Before that, he was a Visiting Professor at Brandeis University and a Fellow at Harvard University in the United States. Previously, Dr. Vinhas de Souza was an Advisor to the leadership of the European External Action Service, the Head of the Economics Department of an internal advisory body to the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and Managing Director and Global Chief Economist of Moody's Investors Service at its headquarters in New York City. He holds a Ph.D. in Economics from the Erasmus University in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and Master and

Bachelor degrees in economics from the NOVA University in Lisbon, Portugal. He has over a 100 different publications in several languages and has spoken in hundreds of events for diverse audiences around the world.

## Peter Vesterbacka

is an entrepreneur from the Finest Bay Area based in Helsinki, Finland. Branded communities co-created and initiated by Peter include the HP Bazaar, Mobile Monday, and Slush to name a few. He was the Mighty Eagle at Angry Birds for many years taking that brand to unprecedented heights. In 2011 Time Magazine named Peter one of the 100 most influential people on the planet.

## Huub Verhoeven

is a Cybersecurity Consultant and former Citizens' Participant Ambassador to the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE). During the conference, Huub Verhoeven was actively involved in ensuring that citizens' voices were heard and not drowned out by the influence of experienced politicians. Even though the conference has ended, they remain committed to keeping pressure on the proposals that came out of the discussions. With a background in cybersecurity, he has worked with companies like Randstad, E.ON, Action, and Enexis (a leading energy infrastructure provider in the Netherlands). They specialize in digital security, Identity and access Management, risk management, and compliance, helping organizations protect themselves against cyber risks. Huub Verhoeven holds a Bachelor of Applied Science and a Master's in Cybersecurity from Radboud University Nijmegen. This education, combined with hands-on experience, allows them to effectively navigate the intersection of technology, policy, and business.

## Professor Dr. Reinhilde Veugelers

is a full professor at KULeuven (BE) at the Department of Management, Strategy and Innovation. She is a Senior Fellow at Bruegel (Brussels) since 2009 and a Senior Non-Resident Fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics (Washington DC), since 2020. She is also a CEPR Research Fellow, a member of the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Sciences and of the Academia Europaea. From 2004-2008, she was on academic leave, as advisor at the European Commission (BEPA Bureau of European Policy Analysis). She served on the ERC Scientific Council from 2012-2018 and on the EU-RISE Expert Group advising the commissioner for Research. She is currently a member of the

Board of Reviewing Editors of the journal Science and a co-PI on the Science of Science Funding Initiative at NBER. With her research concentrated in the fields of industrial organization, international economics and strategy, innovation and science, she has authored numerous well cited publications in leading international journals. Specific recent topics include novelty in science and technology development, global innovation value chains, young innovative companies, innovation for climate change, industry science links and their impact on firm's innovative productivity, evaluation of research & innovation policy.

## Professor Agnieszka Wykowska

leads the "Social Cognition in Human-Robot Interaction" unit at the Italian Institute of Technology in Genova, Italy. Her research specializes in human-centered robotics and AI, with a focus on healthcare applications. Additionally, she plays an advisory role in European science policy and decision-making. She is a delegate to the European Research Area (ERA) Forum and is involved in the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA), contributing insights into the societal impact of science. Her academic background includes cognitive neuroscience from the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich and philosophy from the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. She has a PhD in psychology and was awarded an ERC Starting grant in 2016 for her work in human-robot interaction. She serves as the Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Social Robotics and is the President of the European Society for Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience (ESCAN), also holding a position on the board of the Association of ERC Grantees.



Géraldine Schwarz



Kadi Silde



Lúcio Vinhas de Souza



Peter Vesterbacka



Huub Verhoeven



Reinhilde Veugelers



Agnieszka Wykowska

# Speakers at the Intercontinental Conference: “What relations should we envisage with Europe by 2040?”

## Alexander De Croo

is currently serving as the Bourgmestre of Brakel. He previously held the position of Prime Minister of Belgium from 2020 until early 2025 and has also served in various other government roles, including as Minister of Finance. A member of the Open VLD party, he succeeded his father, Herman De Croo, in several leadership positions. Before his current role, De Croo served as the Mayor of Brakel from December 2, 2012, to January 12, 2019.

## Dr. Abdelmalek Alaoui

is a Moroccan economist, author, and CEO of Guepard Group, a strategic communications firm. He has advised numerous African and European clients, including S&P 500 and CAC40 companies, as well as government leaders.

## Dr. Antoine Bordes

is the Vice President Artificial Intelligence at Helsing. He has a deep knowledge of AI R&D from his 9 years of experience building out the Fundamental AI Research (FAIR) laboratory of Meta, the last 3 years as FAIR's co-managing director.

## Gautam Chikermane

is Vice President at Observer Research Foundation. His areas of research are grand strategy, economics and culture. His last books are Reform Nation (HarperCollins, 2022), and Reading Sri Aurobindo (Penguin, 2022). Based out of New Delhi, he speaks to audiences across the world on the economic, geopolitical and spiritual rise of India.

## Jörn Fleck

serves as senior director with the Europe Center at the Atlantic Council with primary responsibility for the center's European Union (EU) efforts, programming related to Western Europe, Brexit, and US-EU trade relations. Jörn also leads outreach to US and European legislators as well as the Council's Transatlantic Digital Project which seeks to promote closer US-EU cooperation on digital policy matters.

## Martin Quencez

is the managing director of geopolitical risk and strategy. He has held key roles at the German Marshall Fund, focusing on transatlantic security, defense cooperation, and foreign policy. A co-author of GMF's Transatlantic Trends report, he is also an associate researcher at the European Council on Foreign Relations and has taught at Sciences Po.

## Nicholas Vinocur

based in Brussels, serves as POLITICO's Editor-at-Large and co-author of the Brussels Playbook. Previously, he directed policy coverage and Pro teams, and led the publication's technology reporting in Europe. Educated in France and the U.S., Vinocur combines transatlantic insights with a commitment to journalism's role in safeguarding democratic values, earning recognition as a thought leader in political and policy-driven journalism.

## Dr. Huiyao (Henry) Wang

is the founder and president of the Center for China and Globalization (CCG), a leading Chinese non-governmental think tank. He has served as a counselor to China's State Council and is vice chairman of the China Association for International Economic Cooperation under the Ministry of Commerce.



## Moderators >





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# Preparatory Workshop with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte

On 16th January 2025, the Conclave Board had the opportunity to organize a preparatory workshop on Europe's defence with selected Conclavers and, as guest of honor, NATO Secretary General.

They discussed the role of the EU, its member States, and its defence industry, as key partners in a transatlantic NATO. These exchanges were enriched during a Conclave follow-up meeting on March 4 in a select committee on defence and security. We thank the valuable contributions made by General Christophe Gomar, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Security and Defence of the European Parliament, Vice-Admiral Henri Schricke and Brigadier General Bart Laurent.





Mark Rutte is the 14th Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) since October 1, 2024.



Before assuming this role, he served as the Prime Minister of the Netherlands from October 2010 to July 2024, making him the longest-serving Prime Minister in Dutch history. During his tenure, he led four coalition governments, navigating the country through significant challenges including the economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the war in Ukraine. Rutte was instrumental in strengthening the Netherlands' role within NATO and the European Union and was a strong advocate for European and transatlantic values.

# Partners of the second European CONCLAVE



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**The Conclave, as a new annual gathering, offers an open invitation to prospective partners passionate about shaping the future of Europe.**

Our Partner's participation is about becoming part of a movement that envisions a dynamic, forward-thinking Europe. By supporting this new annual tradition of strategic foresight and intellectual exchange, they contribute to a richer, more inclusive dialogue that reflects the diverse perspectives essential for a holistic European vision.

We extend our special thanks to the Head of Cabinet of the President of the European Council and his team, as well as to the Office of Prime Minister of Belgium and the Belgian Permanent Representation to the Council of the EU.

**Special thanks for their exceptional welcome to Fondation Roi Baudouin, Maison Ernest Solvay and Stanhope Hotel (Brussels).**

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