

Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.)

The European Way of Life

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About this Book

*“Unifying Europe is like trying to make
an omelette without breaking the eggs.”*

Paul Lacroix (1806–1884), French author

Europe spells crisis. A daily reading of the EU news necessarily gives rise to this impression. And Brussels spells bureaucracy, confronting citizens (so it is alleged) as a monstrous labyrinth of institutions. Yet neither political Europe nor this ominous “Brussels” exists without our nation-states, which have become too small and too weak on their own, and without we citizens, who value the freedoms enjoyed within the European Union, even if we rarely give the EU its credit due.

Europe spells success. As a project focused on peace, the European Economic Community (EEC) itself already a success story. As a narrative of freedom, the EEC prevailed over the dictatorships of the south and the former communist lands of the east. Political Europe has always known how to forge tomorrow’s successes from today’s crises—not always elegantly, but effectively.

In a monthly policy brief we call “Spotlight Europe,” the Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Europe Program analyzes current developments—crises, but also successes—in the European Union. Among the readers of the various German-, English- and Spanish-language editions are scholars, journalists, political decision makers, politicians and others whose interests draw them broadly to politics. Anyone can obtain “Spotlight Europe” freely on the Internet, with all the analysis publicly accessible.

From work on “Spotlight Europe” came the idea to create a book on current EU policy-making, reflecting the main emphases of the Bertelsmann Stiftung’s work on Europe. We thus look into the question of how the EU can become more democratic, how its customary policies have recently come up against limits, and how it must engage in the search for greater citizen participation. We consider how European countries can develop a new economic dynamic and how the EU must shape its relations with its neighbors. Finally, we ask why the EU, as an economic giant, continues to act as a dwarf on the stage of world politics.

We are pleased that *Joschka Fischer*, *Wolfgang Schäussel* and *Guy Verhofstadt* have enriched this volume with their ideas, or rather their politically engaged calls for more courage on behalf of the European Union. As aggressive and committed Europeans, they show what is possible under the motto: “Dare a Deeper Europe.”

The first chapter is dedicated to *Europe’s democracy* and the implications of the Treaty of Lisbon for the EU and the individual member states. In order to overcome crises like those of the recent years, the EU not only needs updated structures, but also new guiding ideas—in particular, greater internal solidarity and self-assertion. For *Jochim Fritz-Vannahme*, the paramount priority is the rule of the Three Musketeers: One for all, all for one. Whoever breaks this rule weakens both themselves and the whole.

With the election of former Belgian Prime Minister Herman van Rompuy as president of the European Council, the EU member states and heads of government have decided on a certain profile for this new office. This president will primarily be a mediator and “king” in the search for internal compromise, and less a face for Europe to the outside world. *Dominik Hierlemann* analyzes this office’s tasks and aims, as well as its functioning during the early months of 2010.

The Treaty of Lisbon has equipped national parliaments with more power in European decision-making than ever before. Germany’s Federal Constitutional Court declared the Treaty of Lisbon to be constitutional, but at the same time coined the new term “responsibility for integration” which all those involved in the processes of inte-

gration must observe. *Isabell Hoffmann* asks how the Bundestag will do justice to its new role in European policy-making against this background.

To *Dominik Hierlemann* and *Anna Wohlfarth*, the European Citizens' Initiative represents an innovation with explosive force. The Citizens' Initiative has thus far been a largely overlooked aspect of the Treaty of Lisbon. Yet what was often criticized as a placebo, or even as a form of mere illusory participation, could rapidly change the European Union and promote the development of European political parties.

Wolfgang Schüssel is convinced that the "European Way of Life" has the potential to develop an allure similar to that of the "American Way of Life"—if only we can overcome our hesitancy and self-pity, instead becoming conscious of our strengths and applying them with confidence. In his contribution, he also shows that Europe must become more dynamic if it is to keep up above all with Asia: "International comparison in this regard yields the sense that Asia has taken the pole position, that the United States is rolling up its sleeves and driving its Jeep pragmatically forwards (despite the various potholes), while Europe is trotting leisurely along in a horse-drawn carriage." Schüssel calls for Europe to create a new narrative for itself—a narrative of diversity, of opportunity, of ideas.

The second chapter, *Europe's Economy*, begins with an analysis of the economic crisis in Central and Eastern Europe. *Cornelius Ochmann* examines how the financial crisis affected the still-"young" EU member states, and how they handled it. In the European imagination, the "undisciplined, profligate, Roman-influenced South" is contrasted to the "reform-oriented, frugal, German-influenced North." But where, Ochmann asks, does the "flexible, Slav-dominated, new Eastern Europe" belong?

The Lisbon Strategy was yesterday; its successor is called "Europe 2020." To achieve sustainable growth, governance in particular must be changed. *Joachim Fritz-Vannahme*, *Armando García Schmidt*, *Dominik Hierlemann* and *Robert Vehrkamp* propose a benchmarking system of "naming and praising," develop the concept of a European Advisory Council, and press for more research funding in the EU budget.

Although the euro has now established itself as a world currency competitive with the dollar, 10 years after first taking a role in global financial and currency policy, Europe has yet to reach its potential. The current problem with the eurozone in the IMF: Instead of speaking with one voice following the euro's introduction, the European states have each retained their separate national identities and individual representatives within the IMF. *Robert Vehrkamp* shows that the EU is not only undermining its own interests in this way, but also is hindering modern governance reform with consequences for the IMF as a whole. Vehrkamp also develops a strategy for solving this conundrum.

In the most economically powerful EU states, the end of the crisis has already been proclaimed—or GDP, at least, has shown a positive economic trend. Yet some economists criticize the focus on the developments in classical economic indicators. Consequences for the environment, limits to raw materials, climate change, individuals' real life satisfaction, social cohesion and education are overlooked in this way. *Katharina Benderoth* and *Isabell Hoffmann* summarise the current debate, and show that looking solely at GDP today no longer permits valid statements to be made about the prosperity or the overall state of a society.

In his paper, *Guy Verhofstadt* considers the question of whether the European financial crisis was solely a tragedy, or in fact represents much more a moment of sudden insight. No individual state, not even the largest and richest, could cope with the global economic and financial crisis on its own. The countries of the EU, the most integrated region in the world, had to confront the crisis collectively. This is because Europeans are fundamentally in the same boat: not only politically, but also socially, economically and culturally; in the defense of their economies, their social systems and their prosperity; and in the preservation of their rights and freedoms, their rule of law and their environment. Verhofstadt provides an analysis of the events surrounding the Greek crisis, and points the way to a common European financial and economic policy.

The third chapter is titled *Europe's Worldview*, and deals with the European Union's relationships with its neighbors and its role in the

world. Thus, the first paper is called simply: “Hello, Neighbor.” *Cornelius Ochmann, Christian-Peter Hanelt and Armando García Schmidt* analyse the European Neighborhood Policy, the Union for the Mediterranean, the Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership: When it comes to coexistence with the neighbors to the east and south, the EU threatens to lose perspective. The authors say: It is time to go all-in and to bring together all existing approaches.

Cornie Shupe concentrates on Russia and its modernisation strategy—especially with respect to foreign and security policy. The world financial crisis has changed Russia’s willingness to cooperate and the general orientation of its foreign policy towards the West. Russia wants to regain its world power status through economic modernization. In addition, Russian President Medvedev’s proposal for a new European security architecture has revived the debate over relations between the European Union and Russia.

The Middle East is more than a hotbed of conflict, war and terror. For Europe, this region holds not only risks but also opportunities that hold the possibility of significant consequences for EU external relations, as well as repercussions for social development within Europe. In many countries in the Middle East, a dynamic social and economic modernisation is under way, providing support for a new middle class. It is Europe’s task to familiarize itself more deeply with this new middle class and to enlist it as a partner in a common policy of promoting conflict resolution, the rule of law, and a just social and economic development. *Christian-Peter Hanelt* points out the potential of and possible pathways for the EU’s Middle East policy.

Few Europeans are aware that human and forced-labor trafficking goes on in their midst. In this respect, thousands of people every year are brought into the EU, or detained inside the EU, and coerced by force into prostitution or unpaid labor. Perhaps more than any other form of crime, this modern form of slavery touches on the core of the European understanding of human rights and challenges the rule of law. *Armando García Schmidt* and *Christal Morehouse* show how the EU member states and the EU as a whole struggle to deal with this problem appropriately.

The Treaty of Lisbon should render the European Union fit for the 21st century in the area of foreign and security policy. To this end, the Treaty of Lisbon established the Office of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, with Baroness Catherine Ashton as the first holder of this post. The European External Action Service (EEAS) will support her in the fulfillment of her contractual duties. Did the EU genuinely carry out a change in the system here, or is this only a sham? *Stefani Weiss* examines whether the EEAS can bring any real added value for the EU and its member states.

The EU stands for the peaceful coexistence of almost all the continent's nations: The political union has expanded round by round, with each enlargement serving also to confirm it as a community of values. Yet, asks *Joachim Fritz-Vannahme*, what exactly are Europe's values, what is European, and where do the region's geographic or cultural borders lie? Politically, the EU is an open-ended project in search of itself and its final form. As a community of values, however, it is outwardly proud and self-assured, appearing as a union cut from the same cloth. But as a community of values, the EU must ultimately be respected by its own members, whether governments, parliaments or citizens. Only then will Europe also earn respect in the broader world.

In considering the debates in this book, *Joschka Fischer* offers a forecast. On the one hand, achieving a strong and integrated Europe is of seminal importance to our future. On the other hand, despite its great successes in the past and present, this vision of Europe is less popular than ever among most European peoples. What prompts this opposition, and how can we come to a clear vision of the Europe of the future? The former German foreign minister analyzes the present situation and draws his conclusion: A United States of Europe can be reached only through democratic majorities. The struggle to win these majorities will take time and require the expenditure of considerable energy—but if it is successful, it will at the same time mark the birth of a true European democracy. To fight for this goal is a task worthy of honor, especially since the alternative is all too clear to us.

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