



28th Freudenstadt Symposium on European Regionalism: The clock is ticking: Europe, Brexit – and Climate

13 – 15 July 2018 | Hotel Teuchelwald | Freudenstadt | Black Forest | Germany

This year *Freudenstadt* featured the following sub-themes:

- Quo Vadis Europe – A view of European ideas and ideals across the regions
- Is it too late? Climate Change – Europe's decarbonisation. Policies and Technologies
- The clock is ticking – The Brexit dilemma within and between the islands of Britain and Ireland.





What is at stake?

Establishing a framework for the issues addressed in this Symposium requires a brief analysis of what remains of the European Union project, its principles and its implications. Today, this special geopolitical project, called the European Union, has become the most developed example of the postmodern state.

The 19th century was characterised by the expansion of the French and British empires, the unification of Italy and Germany, and the dominant positions of Austria/Hungary and Russia. During that century, states needed to be large enough to control the range and level of natural resources available, while at the same time, the balance of power between states needed to be monitored and there was an ever-present risk of war. At the end of the 20th century states realised that prosperity was not based on their access to resources, but on their presence on the world market. The Scandinavian countries are an important example of this phenomenon.



The most important function of the post-modern state is to maintain social stability through internal and external coercion. The EU member states, therefore, accept transparency and a centralised order, in which the European institutions facilitate common interaction between the internal affairs of the member states. The EU's project is not to create a Federation, but to make states adapt to the global stage and act together.





Quo Vadis Europe?

For the participants in the Freudenstadt Symposium 2018, global challenges can only be faced together and therefore European democracy must focus on regionalism in particular, allowing citizens to participate directly in political decisions. Being united in diversity is what would allow Europe to maintain and increase its social security, its economic stability, and its democracy.



Views and opinions on the future of the European Union differ among its 28 members. That is why, this year, some speakers have debated the current political situation in the EU member states.



In the case of France and Germany, the economic and political situation appears to be stable. A notable example is Emmanuel Macron's victory last year in France, this event was an important landmark after Donald Trump's victory in the US, and the rise of populism and extreme right-wing movements in Europe. As France's youngest ever president, Macron leads the "La République en marche" movement, which supports deep reforms of the French economy and the centralisation of the European Union.

The UK has always been a role model for the Nordic countries, but now that Brexit is getting under way, the question arises as to which example will Sweden, Denmark, and Finland follow? Denmark will soon need to see Germany as a potential partner country.



Diversity is a fact and so is the reality of a two-speed Europe. While Greece still suffers from a deep economic crisis, Spain, Italy and Portugal are still slowly recovering from the economic recession. The situation in Spain differs from that of populism in Italy, as none of the main Spanish parties' questions that country's membership of the European Union or promise restrictions on immigration.

Have Eastern European states' relations with the EU worsened in the last four years? Different politicians and people in Hungary agree that Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has significantly altered the Hungarian political system, using state resources to favor his party's members and supporters, and limiting those of the opposition.



Is it too late? Climate Change



When it comes to fighting climate change, the European Union has shown a strong commitment in recent decades, and therefore continues to be considered one of the world's leaders in this area. But why are policies and the deployment of innovations not close to the needs of people and industry? What needs to be improved so that a European policy framework motivates society to change?

The participants in the Freudenstadt Symposium 2018 discussed this topic through the perspective of pilot projects, they agreed that these projects can be used as a microcosm to understand the interactions between different key variables.

The concept of a potential all-electric island on the Aran Islands in Ireland demonstrates the importance of considering the role of the community in in such pilot ventures. In order to achieve a successful outcome, it is important to ensure the commitment of all inhabitants to work on common objectives such as energy efficiency and common investments in renewable energy initiatives. This requires greater community awareness than was the case with the Irish demonstration project.

German energy policy has focused in particular on three factors: reliability of supply, cost-effectiveness, and environmental performance. A common framework is established and sets out specific objectives. However, it seems that producers, consumers, and policy-makers continue to work without common motivation and without the same interests.



A concrete example is the case of energy efficiency implementation projects in the industrial sector. The benefits are clear: more than 57 per cent of the required GHG emission reductions in the G20 countries can be achieved through energy savings.

Companies recognise that additional measures are needed to achieve the 2020 climate targets. According to the 2018 survey of the German Industry Energy Efficiency Index, 31 per cent of participating companies agreed on the need for greater incentives for investment in energy efficiency.

The technical feasibility of technologies for energy flexibility in factories has been demonstrated. Nevertheless, the majority of managers do not decide to invest in these technologies, as there is no specific budget for these types of projects, many of which have a high return on investment.

The transition of industrial energy is mainly a mindset issue. A change is needed in the decision-making process for investments in low carbon technologies. This could allow companies to define more clearly their business model and its environmental impact.



BREXIT

It has been two years since the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum took place and slightly more than 50 per cent of the UK electorate supported the proposal to be the first state to leave the EU. The BREXIT negotiations are proceeding as set out in article 50 of the Treaty on European Union.



The 2018 Freudenstadt participants agreed that for both the British and EU citizens, this is not a simple matter. The UK has become the first country to invoke Article 50, a legal provision that no one ever thought would be used. This article stipulates a two-year period for negotiations. The deadline for completing the BREXIT negotiations is 29 March 2019.



At the Symposium, participants had the opportunity to review and discuss the Chequers Statement of July 6. Prime Minister Theresa May presented a plan that sought to appeal to both sides of the negotiation. With this agreement, the UK would stay very close to the EU in a number of different ways. For instance, in relation to trade in goods the British government expected to sign a common rulebook with the EU, thereby allowing ongoing alignment of regulatory features between the UK and the EU. This would mean essentially staying in the EU single market for goods, which would avoid tariffs and delays at the border. However, at the same time, the UK wants freedom, particularly when it comes to striking new trade deals with other countries around the world.



Unfortunately, BREXIT has the potential to threaten the post Good Friday/Belfast Agreement of 1998 developments on the island of Ireland. As members of the EU, the United Kingdom and Ireland have already shared some sovereignty with common codes, laws and standards. This has masked an invisible border, but BREXIT has raised doubts about this.



On April 10, 1998, the Good Friday Agreement ended decades of violence in Northern Ireland. Avoiding a hard border and a ban of customs check were not mentioned, because it was taken for granted. BREXIT means regulations for customs, goods standards and VAT –which do not apply when both parts of the island of Ireland are members of the EU.

It seems that it will not be plain sailing for the UK to leave the EU, as this will have various political and economic consequences. This British decision to abandon its previously agreed treaties and pursue its economic and political freedom, serves to remind us of the existence of a fourth authority in our post-modern society, that is, regulation. Regulations establish common frameworks that allow countries to function in the so-called globalised world.

We thank this years' impulses and moderators (in order of appearance):

John Kay (Keynote); Andras Vag, Jacob Lund, Nicole Razavi MdL, John Clifford*, Christine & Richard Thayer, Wolfgang Wettach (Quo Vadis Europe). Rod Janssen, Stefan M. Buettner, Ivan Bogdanov, Frank Conlan, Chris Harvie (Is it too late? The Climate changes). John Osmond, Robert McColl (Bookie night). Patrik Buchmüller, Patricia Conlan, John Osmond, and Ian Chisholm (The Clock is ticking).*



As a Mexican exchange student, participating in the Freudenstadt Symposium represented a unique experience to complement my academic and professional experience in one of the leading countries of the European Union: Germany. The discussions offered a focus on how the cultural context and historical background of each European region has a great influence on its EU policy perspective.

It was very interesting and enriching to see how the participants defended their own opinion, they all have a special professional background that gives them the opportunity to perceive political challenges through different interests and experiences. However, they all share a common purpose, which is to promote understanding and solutions that require common action. The Symposium is the remark of how society can organise itself to build and discuss the existence of an effective postmodern state.

The current global trend fosters regional collaboration and union, so events like the Freudenstadt Symposium are needed to think about how our younger generation will face the challenge of modifying and adjusting our own national and individual identity. Do we want our future to be shaped as was the case with our past or do we want a future different from it? After the days in Freudenstadt, I go home with a special commitment to the values and principles that define my role in my social context.

summarised by Jesús Herrera Luna

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Save the date for upcoming events:

- **Freudenstadt 28 ½ - An Edinburgh Evening**
Thursday 15 November 2018 – 18.00 till late
Summerhall, 1 Summerhall, Edinburgh EH9 1PL, Scotland
www.summerhall.co.uk
- **29th Freudenstadt Symposium on European Regionalism**
Friday, 12 July 2019 (17.00) – Sunday, 14 July 2019 (14.00)
Hotel Teuchelwald & Spa, Schömberger Str. 9, 72250 Freudenstadt, Germany
<http://www.hotel-teuchelwald.de/>.

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