

AGENDA for the 8th annual high-level international conference
(as of 9 March 2023)

THE BALTIC-NORDIC EU CONVERSATIONS 2023

More United than Ever?

17 March 2023

Venue: Saeima (the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia), "Baltiešu zāle", 6/8 Jekaba street, Riga

8.30–9.00: Morning coffee and registration

9.00–9.15: Opening addresses

- ✓ **Edvards Smiltēns**, Speaker of the Parliament of Latvia
- ✓ **Zane Petre**, Head of the European Commission Representation in Latvia
- ✓ **Dr. Kārlis Bukovskis**, Director of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs

9.15–9.45: Opening KEYNOTE CONVERSATION

Russia's continued attacks on Ukraine resulted in a strong response from the EU in the form of sanctions against Russia, political isolation of aggressor and massive political, financial, military and humanitarian support to Ukraine. In addition to the suffering of the Ukrainian population, the war is indirectly affecting the socioeconomic situation of EU citizens, including energy crisis and high inflation. The aim of this conversation is to outline the instruments and policies that the European Commission has to mitigate the negative effects of the war on the EU's businesses and citizens.

Moderator: **Dr. Juha Jokela**, Programme Director of the European Union research programme at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs

- ✓ **Valdis Dombrovskis**, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission

1st PANEL CONVERSATION: 9.45–11.00: Conversation on the EU's Political Realities

It has been one year since Russia's attack on Ukraine, which has pushed almost all the EU member states closer together, and it is one year before European Parliament elections. Although disagreements and differences in opinions remain, the recent enlargement of the Eurozone, the fact that three more countries have become the EU candidate countries and the EU's defence assistance to Ukraine have been very positive signals for continued European integration. The aim of the panel conversation is to outline the next steps that the EU has to undertake to secure the synchronicity of its member states and the prudent functioning of its institutions.

Moderator: **Jakob Hallgren**, Director of the Sweden Institute of International Affairs

- ✓ **Dr. Andris Sprūds**, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Latvian Parliament
- ✓ **Katja Geršak**, Executive Director at the Centre for European Perspective (Slovenia)
- ✓ **Adam Balcer**, Program Director at the College of Eastern Europe, Heinrich Böll Stiftung

Coffee break: 11.00–11.30

2nd PANEL CONVERSATION: 11.30–12.45: Conversation on the EU's Economic Resilience

Russia's war against Ukraine comes at a time when the world is still recovering from a global pandemic. With energy and gas strains mounting, the full extent of the economic fallout resulting from the conflict remains unknown. The EU continues to come up with new initiatives – such as EU taxonomy and the preparations for a European Sovereignty Fund – to boost the EU's economy while investing into green technologies. The aim of the panel conversation is to outline these plans and their viability in today's economic realities.

Moderator: **Morten Hansen**, Head of Economics Department at the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga

- ✓ **Dr. Roberts Zile**, Vice-President of the European Parliament
- ✓ **Stef Blok**, Member of the European Court of Auditors, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Netherlands
- ✓ **Dr. Zsolt Darvas**, Research Fellow at the Bruegel

Interim KEYNOTE CONVERSATION: 12.50–13.30: Conversation on the EU's Place in the World

The EU's relationships with both Western and non-Western countries have always had their ups and downs. But an increasingly hostile world has been emerging recently, and challenges to the modern rule of law and multilateral diplomacy-based world order have become more imminent than before. The aim of the panel conversation is to outline how the world could look in five years and what the EU's place in it will be.

Moderator: **Dr. Edijs Bošs**, Associate Professor, Rīga Stradiņš University

- ✓ **Dr. Alexander Stubb**, former Prime Minister of Finland, former Vice-President of the European Investment Bank, Director of the School of Transnational Governance at the European University Institute (*online*)

Light lunch: 13.30–14.00

Six ONLINE CONVERSATIONS from COPENHAGEN, HELSINKI, RIGA, STOCKHOLM, TALLINN, and VILNIUS: 14.00–15.00, 15.00–16.00, 16.00–17.00 (Eastern European Time)

14.00–15.00 (Online): Conversation on the EU's Climate and Energy Policies – hosted by the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA)

The climate challenges are mounting. Every year, more and more severe weather conditions are emerging, and the world is gradually waking up to the inevitable. The EU has been on the frontlines of dealing with mounting climate and environmental issues for decades. Meanwhile, energy needs have become even more dire with the acceleration of plans to de-peg from Russian supplies. The aim of the panel conversation is to outline the viability of the EU's climate policies in the context of the current re-examination of energy supplies.

Moderator: **Dr. Marco Sidi**, Senior Research Fellow at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Adjunct Professor in World Politics at the University of Helsinki

- ✓ **Rebecca Harms**, former Member of the European Parliament
- ✓ **Luke O'Callaghan-White**, Senior Researcher at the Institute of International and European Affairs (Ireland)
- ✓ **Veronika Slakaityte**, Researcher at the Danish Institute of International Affairs
- ✓ **Yana Zabanova**, Analyst at the European Stability Initiative

14.00–15.00 (Online): Conversation on the Rule of Law in the EU – hosted by the Latvian Institute of International Affairs (LIIA)

Differences in opinion on how things should be domestically governed are traditional elements of the European Union as a democratic project. Meanwhile, the general, embedded principles of good governance, the rule of law, human rights, and “checks and balances” are the commonalities pre-agreed between the member states when they started the

European integration project. Differences in interpretations and understandings have riddled the EU for some years now. The aim of the panel is to outline the potential solutions to the EU's disagreements on domestic governance principles.

Moderator: **Imants Lieģis**, Senior Fellow at the Latvian Institute of International Affairs, former Minister of Defence of Latvia

- ✓ **Dr. Lucia Mokra**, Chairperson of the TEPSA Board, professor at Comenius University
- ✓ **Zoltan Pogatsa**, lecturer at the University of West Hungary

15:00–16:00: (Online) Conversation on the EU's Future – hosted by the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI)

After several rounds of deepening and widening its integration, the European Union has changed enormously. The direction of further changes is still being discussed. The prospect of further enlargement, plus the policy challenges facing the Union, make the question increasingly urgent. The aim of this conversation is to outline how the membership applications of Ukraine and other countries may reshape the future of the EU itself.

Moderator: **Dr. Nicholas Aylott**, Head of Europe Programme at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs

- ✓ **Dr. Nicoletta Pirozzi**, Head of Programme on European Union at the Istituto Affari Internazionali
- ✓ **Dr. Johannes Pollak**, Chairman of the Executive Board at the Institute of for European Politics

15:00–16:00: (Online) Conversation on the EU's Military Power – hosted by the International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS)

In its response to Russia's war in Ukraine, the EU has adopted a more geopolitical profile. Milestones in EU defence have included the innovative use of the European Peace Facility to finance military assistance to Ukraine, the decision to launch the Military Assistance Mission to Ukraine, the beginnings of a new military capabilities agenda, and Denmark's opting in to CSDP. At the same time, Finland and Sweden's decisions to seek to join NATO have underlined the Alliance's role as Europe's sole provider of hard security, with implications for the debate about European Strategic Autonomy and the implementation of the Strategic Compass. The aim of the panel is to outline the potential role of the EU as a military power in the emerging European security architecture.

Moderator: **Tony Lawrence**, Head of Defence Policy and Strategy Programme at the International Centre for Defence and Security

- ✓ **Erika Ellamaa-Ots**, Permanent Representative of Estonia to the EU's Political and Security Committee
- ✓ **Tania Lařici**, Policy Officer at the European External Action Service
- ✓ **Mihai Sebastian Chihaiia**, Policy Analyst in the Europe in the World Programme
- ✓ **Sandra Dias Fernandes**, Assistant Professor at the University of Minho

16:00–17:00: (Online) Conversation on the EU's Role in the Future of Ukraine - hosted by the Institute of International Relations and Political Science (TSPMI)

Russia's war against Ukraine poses the greatest challenge to the European security architecture since the end of the Cold War and is a threat to Ukraine's statehood. The EU has been unwavering in its support for Ukraine, swiftly adopting far-reaching sanctions against Russia, providing military assistance for the first time ever, and granting Ukraine the status of an EU candidate country. Yet there are significant divisions among EU partners, whether on arms supplies, the scope of sanctions, or visa bans. Some countries – including the Baltic and Nordic states – have sought to maximise pressure on Russia, while some other EU members have been more hesitant. The aim of the panel conversation is to outline the EU's vision on Ukraine's future.

Moderator: **Dr. Ramūnas Vilpiřauskas**, Jean Monnet Chair professor at the Institute of International Relations and Political Science at the Vilnius University

- ✓ **Matti Maasikas**, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine
- ✓ **Dr. Zanda Kalniņa-Lukařevica**, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia

✓ **Dr. Sławomir Dębski**, Director of Polish Institute of International Affairs

16:00-17:00: (Online) Conversation on the EU's Migration Policy – hosted by the Think Tank EUROPA (TTE)

The humanitarian catastrophe of the war in Ukraine saw millions of people being given asylum in the European Union during the past year alone. Meanwhile, some neighbouring countries are still using migration as hybrid warfare element in attacks on the European Union. The migration system is still one of the “hottest potatoes” in the hands of EU politicians. The aim of the panel conversation is to outline the potential solutions for improving the EU migration system.

Moderator: **Dr. Ditte Maria Brasso Sørensen**, chief analyst at the Think Tank EUROPA

- ✓ **Dr. Jean-Louis De Brouwer**, Director of the European Affairs Programme at the Egmont Institute
- ✓ **Dr. Karolina Czerska-Shaw**, Assistant Professor at the Jagiellonian University

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