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What lies ahead for young people after Britain departs the EU?

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One member state has decided to leave the European Union. This has come as a unilateral decision, even if after notification of this intention by the British government it has become a joint undertaking. It will mean multidimensional long term changes not only to the UK. Also the EU will have to absorb the institutional and legal, political, citizens related, social and economic consequences. Without doubt Brexit means a change. But we probably all agree that European integration process, with dominating consensus on avoiding to decide its *finalite politique*, has always been about change. The Union has always had the capacity to move forward regarding its architecture, policy objectives, and the way it functions. Not only in reaction to crises but to make it respond better to the internal and external demands.

Europe of today continues to be about change. Demands for change come from global world, from our internal needs to evolve, to adjust, to complete the unfinished business when political will might be back.

Global world brings risks to security, internal and external, hence the need to make a decisive step forward in the area of defense. The global world brings economic opportunities but also challenges to European competitiveness. We can say that still between us and US we share 40% of global trade, we can still say that six of ten biggest global companies are also either American or European and in general western firms outperform others. But today, global importance depends increasingly on who is setting global standards. For this we used to have a partner. US used to be for us a stable point of reference and partner. Today we are not sure anymore whether we share the same political values. President Trump goes against global

system based on multilateralism, openness, commitment to trade, he has actually triggered global trade war.

This is a moment for serious action on our side to use this chance to ensure for ourselves a seat at the global table. I would see it as our global responsibility, definitely not neutral to our interests.

Indeed, one member state is leaving EU and Brexit means for us that with or without the Brits we have to continue reforming the Union, making it more resilient but also improving its capacity to cope with global problems and exploit global opportunities.

So yes, I would say we need a fresh impetus. This global challenge is definitely an important driver of change. We can see it with more clarity than ever that the Union protects and strengthens our sovereignty in global world.

But there are other drivers of change. As regards internal reforms, without doubt a lot remains to be done. Unfortunately we are divided on many reforms. Political cohesion is lacking, or at least it is far from the critical mass required for serious, still lacking reforms of the architecture and functioning of the euro zone.

Some people say in the context of the euro zone unfinished business that we have three options. We can relaunch it, and here I would say we started this exercise after 2008 crisis, we just have to complete the unfinished business here. A second option is about dismantling the common currency area. We can of course dismantle it, and here while a possibility for this to happen exists, it is not a realistic option even for those populists who use it as a content-less buzzword. And for some there is a third option, a traditional European option which is consolidation. My personal preference is the first option, I would add that this time around we have to do it in a genuine dialogue with citizens. My guess is, however, that when European Council meets at the end of June, they will go for the third option. My hope is that in their common wisdom national leaders will at least add to this consolidation lack of ambition the word "dynamic". This would allow us a better exploitation of the close relationship between a well-functioning euro area and the European single market. They reinforce each other.

We could see over the recent years how important for many of us is this aspect of European integration which makes us as citizens feel that Europe is fair and willing

to protect our social model. We must work together not only on economic but also on social convergence. You might remember that for us, Europeans solidarity used to be a cherished, unqualified European value. We might end up in a reciprocal lack of solidarity soon if we continue with a cherry picking approach to it. This I regret deeply and I see it dangerous.

I hope you have seen the recent eurobarometer on people's attitudes to the European Union. Those opinions demonstrate that people feel attachment to the European integration. Winning public support matters today more than ever and is more difficult than ever. It is not easy. There are strong populist forces in Europe and European populism has always linked with nationalism. There are nationalist political leaders in Europe.

I regret and worry that across Europe we are discussing nationalism, xenophobia, jingoism, populism, we talk about how they undermine democracy in Europe but also how a dysfunctional democracy facilitates those currents in our life. We see member states where governments practice democracy bending the rule of law. We see democratic regression and ethnic and cultural identity tensions. We see that building democratic institutions and having free elections is not enough when there is lack of political democratic culture.

We continue demonstrating insufficient tolerance of the Other, aggravating already serious risks of the collapse of long treasured ideals, embarking more and more often on a rather disgraceful way of doing politics, facing helplessness and anger of citizens. Skilful politicians, not only those labelled populists, build on it anti-European feelings and turn people against Europe.

For the first time in the history of European integration, there is a risk that political demands inspired by nationalism can take Europe backward. That is why the change Europe needs requires a deep reflection. Sense of urgency is stronger and more spread this time around.

Nationalism is the main threat to the future of Europe. We know it far too well. European history has been marred by nationalistic impulses, leading to bloody prolonged wars which eradicated entire generations.

European integration replaced nationalistic impulses with feelings of European universalism. It is hard to imagine something less sexy or romantic than steel and coal. Still it made us friends. It made Europe a peace project. And Europe continues to be above all a peace project. But we somehow missed this moment when the initial legitimation became irrelevant for new generations, unfortunately also for European and national leaders.

Of course nothing is perfect in Europe and those who complain about Europe are right. But this is exactly why we have to work together to refresh democracy and European sovereignty. And this cannot be done with populists and nationalists but against them. I come from this part of Europe where people rejected, through a huge effort, the reality without democracy and freedom and decided through a huge effort, the reality without democracy and freedom and decided through referenda to become part of a common political Europe.

We who love Europe we have left clearly too much public space to populists, nationalists, anti-Europeans, euro-sceptics. They have grabbed patriotism from us who feel Poles, French, Hungarians or Greeks. But who also feel Europeans. If you look at who is now in the Council or European Council you would see that many, if not most, politicians who form today political elites in power or in opposition they have not participated ever in building Europe, in creating it, do not feel co owners and responsible for it.

Brexit has allowed us, European citizens of member states to discover the real meaning of the European citizenship. The fight of those EU 27 citizens who have chosen UK to live and work there, and of UK citizens whose choice is EU 27, their fight for maintaining European citizenship has been a proof of great value of the Union for them.

Those citizens who have not been attracted by skilful populist politicians, they see the importance of our openness to the global world, the importance of our active presence in coping with global challenges like climate change. They see that regarding security we can be effective only if we are together.

Communicating Europe has never been done effectively. It has actually been our major weakness. Of course European citizens anno domini 2018 are very different from those of sixty or even ten years ago. And of course information technology

revolution gives communication different meaning and form today. Still the essence of communicating Europe stays, it is about facts and emotions. It is about engagement. I strongly believe that every generation has the right to ask their own question what Europe is for, why we need it. But do not make reflection on your link with Europe only social media based reflection, important as they are. Come to meetings, talk to real people, also those who know the price of the lack of European integration. Europe needs to be talked, discussed, criticized and praised. Engage with Europe, feel responsible for it. Tell those who make decisions today what Europe you would like to see around.

Young people want to be active in exploiting growth potential of such global drivers as technology, and in particular in digital revolution. I looked some time ago at some of the voices of the young people who spoke their opinions under the hashtag #NewNarrativeforEurope. Having read it, my hint is that the New Europe will be younger, driven by the convictions and visions of the Erasmus generations. Young people do not care about history all that much. What they care about is precisely defined in their comments there: better protection of personal freedoms and space for broadening public expression, increased mobility and making European travel a means for intercultural understanding, adopting new technologies in the cause of direct democracy, instituting a broad European education, better inclusion of young people in mainstream European parties, fighting extremism, well developed social dimension, including integration of immigrants and taking advantage of their potential for resolving conflicts in other parts of the world, making the EU a force for good in the world.

In other words, young EU citizens want to reclaim ownership of the European project and make it a force for good in the world. Very soon they will take the mantle of leadership from us, who still remember the beginnings of the Union and the historical events that led to its birth.

This New Europe will be different from ours – perhaps less institutional and relying more on what Goethe called “elective affinities”. Through all the years we were talking about the democratic deficit in the EU, Jacques Delors was calling for finding the “soul of Europe”. We all have felt, that we have to work more on developing the emotional connections between people in the Union to make it really organic.

Now, I think that we have such a chance and we have to take this opportunity to make this New Europe more inclusive, secure and globally relevant.

Brexit is an additional thing to do that came to Europe. I still sometimes have this hope that somebody will call from London and call it all off but I know that is not an option we can choose, and it does not look like there is still political space for such a decision on the island. We'll all be smaller after Brexit. On 31 March next year we will wake up with a new third country around the corner. Of course it will be a sort of special third country but still a third country. Just around the corner. With huge market strongly interlinked with the Union's one and with a lot of bilateral links with member states. If we have by that time a withdrawal agreement then there will be a transition period but only then. Transition would be a prolongation of current situation except for institutional participation. Uncertainty dominates today not only about withdrawal deal, still to be negotiated, with 20-25% most difficult issues to be decided yet, also about transition which cannot be taken for granted and about the future where we do not know yet the option favored by the Brits. We see however that red lines continue to be on the top of their agenda, leaving a very limited scope for choices. We see it clearly today that there is this difficult political sequencing chain - without the agreement of the Irish border issue there is no withdrawal agreement. Without withdrawal agreement there is no transition period. And there is a no deal scenario also possible, even though for most of us it is not an option we would choose. But the likelihood that it can happen does exist. Preparation for the future have to consider the no deal scenario. This is a big challenge for businesses who have to take preparedness seriously.

Let me also say that a serious weakness of negotiations relates to the relatively week political dimension lack of the negotiations. In particular for the last two three months we could see mostly their technical strand active.

Where we are today? Without sufficient sensation of urgency on the British side I would say. What is still left for negotiations regarding separation related issues is definitely the most difficult. We have not touched yet the governance issue. The Irish border issue is far from final deal. Favorite option for the future relationship framework has not yet been announced by the British side. We know that it will have to be some sort of a free trade agreement to which services will have to be added.

There will have to be a some sort of a custom union which will have to include agriculture. There will be cooperation agreements on security, both internal and external. It is expected that there will also be frameworks for cooperation in the area of research, aviation and fishery, to name the most important. But the Union will certainly insist on ensuring a level playing field and will introduce some autonomous measures where needed, for instance equivalence decisions in the area of financial services and capital markets.

But Europe has to continue reforming, changing with the Brits or without them. We started without them and we will carry on without them. Nevertheless, Europe is different after the British referendum and will be even more different after the Brexit itself. The full effects will be known in many years from now. And if I think of the biggest challenge for the Brexit negotiations I would say that this is the capacity of both sides to identify common interests for the long term future. It is true that Brexit has been a unilateral decision. Triggering the article fifty is a unilateral decision but this is the moment when the process stops to be unilateral. Now we are co-responsible for the future of the European continent. There is also a common interest between EU and UK, not only between the twenty seven.

The good side of Brexit is that it does not allow us to get asleep at the wheel. It is true that Brexit bells have been tolling for quite a while and have been ignored. But they are not funeral chimes. Unfortunately, Brexit comes in a moment when the propensity to march into folly of intergovernmentalism seems rather high. This is neither safe nor reasonable.

What Brexit as a momentum for reforms teaches us? It seems to tell us that euro zone will become the EU. So focusing on euro zone makes political sense. With the departure of the biggest non euro country, major areas of EU integration will be more influenced by euro zone countries, in particular in the context of political dynamics in central and Eastern Europe.

Of course, the fact that City will be less influential, will not in itself give the monetary union stronger foundation. That also means that existing discrepancies when it comes to euro zone reforms between North and South will have to be overcome. Strengthening Eurozone both in terms of its architecture and democratic governance though obvious leads to heated political debates. These debates are read but the

public at large as a lack of political will to move forward. This turns people against Europe.

Let me finish with a short summary of what I hope the EU Beyond Brexit will look like. Beyond Brexit, Europe of the 27 cannot be defined by regrets that usually follow complicated divorce proceedings, as well as not by a sense of guilt nor by easy triumphalism either.

Beyond Brexit is a new opportunity for the EU to reinforce its cohesion, implement new governance modes and install necessary reforms in particular policies.

EU Beyond Brexit, will be more attuned to subsidiarity and legitimacy, inclusive in its outreach to citizens and their concerns.

Beyond Brexit, the EU will also be more cohesive in its response to external challenges. The uncertainty as to the coherence of the transatlantic ties will add an impulse to intensifying the integration process and infuse it with dynamism.

People need that EU is fit, capable of meeting complex challenges and preparing exciting projects that would bring in new enthusiasm on the part of citizens.

There have been national leaders who mislead British citizens before the referendum. Who ignored facts and made false promises. Who created anxiety, concerns and fears. We could see leading politicians bad mouthing the EU, creating atmosphere of distrust, challenging the legitimacy of Europe.

But the global reality makes it very clear, soon none of the European states will individually be relevant in the global world. Each country individually is a small boat on a big ocean. If we want to make globalization based on fairness we have to be open and cooperate with others. We need political will but also wisdom and knowledge about the world and how can Europe position itself among other global protagonists.