



Taormina/Messina conference¹

2nd – 4th OCTOBER 2020

THE FUTURE OF EUROPE IN A POST PANDEMIC WORLD

MANIFESTO AND CONCLUSIONS FOR FURTHER DEBATES

The MESSINA/TAORMINA CONFERENCE “THE FUTURE OF EUROPE IN A POST PANDEMIC WORLD” co-organized by TAOBUK (The Taormina Book Festival) and Vision (the THINK TANK), thanks to the support of the University of Messina, has taken place in the very days while the continent was confronting the second wave of the Pandemic from CORONA VIRUS. This has been the greatest crisis since 1945, a crisis that not only promises to accelerate the pre-existing technology-driven mutations that have been overthrowing mainstream practices and assumptions but could also produce disruptive transformations in its own right.

As this still new crisis has been unfolding, it has become clear that the emergency has the potential to radically remake the fundamentals both of the European Union and of the whole Western European way of life. It could do so in a dramatically constructive way. Or, equally, in a dramatically destructive way.

The European Commission’s decision to propose an ambitious, unprecedented plan for recovery (the 750 billion Euro NEXT GENERATION EU) which will be financed by the European Commission own resources is certainly the sign that COVID19 has triggered a sense of urgency which has not been seen before. However, the EU needs more: it needs objectives and decision-making mechanisms which can bring a great 20th century project into the new century.

¹ The first day of the three days conference was hosted by the University of MESSINA. We thank the Rector, Professor Salvatore CUZZOCREA, the faculty and the staff for the support. We are particularly thankful to Marcella DARIGO for the translation services.

Moreover, the pandemic has exposed fundamental weaknesses in what Europeans thought was their main strength. Despite believing that they live in the portion of the globe that enjoys the highest quality of life, the most developed welfare and some of the best health-care systems, in fact many European countries – notably Italy, Spain, France, Belgium, Sweden and the Netherlands – have been the worst hit in terms of casualties and cases, and now have to face a huge welfare burden with broken public finances.

History teaches that after the global wars of the twentieth century, new “world orders” have been crafted: the one conceived in 1919 after the first conflict around the “League of Nations”, was less successful than the one drafted in 1948 and which culminated in the foundation of the UN, the IMF, the NATO and, ultimately, in Europe, of the European Economic Community (EEC) as the embryo of the current European Union.

We believe that the time has come for a new start. Sixty-five years ago it was a conference in MESSINA to decide the creation of the institutions (the EEC and the EURATOM) which paved the way to the ROME treaty. In 2020,TAOBUK Festival together with the think-tank Vision has called a three days meeting in MESSINA and TAORMINA where thirty intellectuals, policy makers, journalists, historians and visionaries have gathered to generate and discuss some ideas which may trigger a debate on the future of EUROPE with the objective to provide a contribution to “crafting the future”.

The conference is meant to be the first of a series which will feed institutions with fresh ideas on how to renew the European Union. The ten propositions which we believe are worthwhile to be developed and pushed forward are:

1. The Messina-Taormina conference warmly welcomed the agreement to form the Next Generation EU fund and project as a sign of awakening, one that indicates that in response to a crisis European governments retain the ability to throw aside old taboos and create new visions
2. While the Next Generation fund is necessary, however, it is not sufficient and it may arrive late, as the second wave of the COVID19 Pandemic could soon demonstrate. The Messina-Taormina conference believes that this welcome first step must be used to commence a new way of thinking and operating, at BOTH European and national levels. Crucially, it must not be considered simply an “emergency” measure, to be abandoned once the COVID crisis is considered solved. It must be the beginning of a new operating system for Europe.
3. The new way of thinking and operating needs to encompass new approaches to INNOVATION, to EDUCATION, to PUBLIC INVESTMENT, to DECISION-MAKING, and to DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY.

4. The pandemic has reminded Europeans of the advantage of clear central control and co-ordination of policies, and the damage done by the multiple vetoes and complexity which defeat projects and block long-term visions. But both at national and European level, centralisation can work only when combined with open and constant democratic participation, and with information and consultation devolved to the lowest appropriate levels. The Messina-Taormina conference believes that a new drive for subsidiarity combined with greater democratic participation, including through the sort of consultative assemblies used in some member-states (eg Ireland), is essential
5. At European level, the dominance over the past 30 years of inter-governmental decision making has enhanced national democratic control, but at the cost of effective collective decision-making. For collective decision-making to work effectively enough to satisfy public aspirations, the Messina-Taormina Conference advocates a new reduction of VETO powers. The requirement for unanimity is the greatest obstacle to decision-making and action at EU level.
6. The Messina-Taormina conference calls for a radical extension to the use of multiple integrations, also known as variable geometry, as the most practical solution to veto powers and divergent national interests. Such clusters of integration may also incorporate associated neighbours such as Turkey, the UK, North Africa and the Middle East.
7. At European level, politics, movements, parties, need to become TRANSNATIONAL, with membership, funding, policy generation, procedures, all raised to a new BORDERLESS level.
8. INNOVATION represents Europe's greatest hope but also its greatest weakness. Investment in R&D at national level needs to be raised to Chinese, Japanese and US levels. This must be done by creating greater incentives for private investment in R&D, including through "challenges" and innovation hubs. The market remains the greatest driver of innovation, and Europe needs to double down on its pro-competition leadership in the battle against monopoly and the preservation of FREE MOVEMENT OF DATA
9. EDUCATION represents Europe's past glory but now needs a reset to make it represent Europe's future. This is needed at national level as well as with a new expansion of ERASMUS to provide transnational experiences and education for every high school and tertiary education student. We also believe that ERASMUS may become a free and mandatory element of school curricula and a first step towards a true European citizenship seen as a bundle of new rights and civil duties. Consideration should also

be given to extending the ERASMUS idea to public servants. In addition, specific policies – both at national and European levels – need to be drafted to deliberately create a European wide debate through both traditional and new media.

10. PUBLIC INVESTMENT has been seriously neglected, in health, in education, in infrastructure, in the internet. Angela Merkel has rightly and often referred to Europe as a Welfare Superpower: the Pandemic shows the urgency to conceive a Europe-wide policy to manage emergencies as well as to modernise national health systems. Next Generation EU must become structurally integrated in future EU planning but also act as a rallying point for national programmes of increased public investment. The Messina-Taormina conference believes that for eurozone members, public investment needs to be governed by a separate agreement to the Stability and Growth Pact, which should be confined to current spending rather than capital investment.

The MESSINA/ TAORMINA CONFERENCE was the opportunity to discuss and generate some bold ideas on the Future of Europe. Participants in the CONFERENCE believe that the conclusions of the MANIFESTO are worthy of further development and for proposal to the European institutions, though they do not necessarily agree with every finding and recommendation. Participants join the VISION series of conferences on EUROPE in their individual, not institutional, capacities.

The conference participants included: Francesco Grillo (Director Vision think tank), Stefania Giannini (Conference Co-Chair and Assistant Director for Education, UNESCO and former Minister for Universities, Research and Education in Italy), Antonella Ferrara (President and Founder TAOBUK - Taormina International Book Festival), Bill Emmott (Conference Co-Chair and Author of the FATE of the WEST and former editor of The Economist), Romano Prodi (Former Prime Minister of Italy and Former President of the European Commission), Giuliano Amato (Judge of Italy's Constitutional Court, Former Prime Minister and Former Vice President of the Convention on the Future of Europe), Sebastien Maillard (Directeur Notre Europe, Institut Jacques Delors), Luciano Fontana (Editor of Corriere della Sera), Raffaele Stancanelli (Member of the European Parliament), Maria Costanza Cau (Researcher, VISION), Nicola Saldutti (Editor-in-chief Economy, Corriere della Sera), Elvira Terranova (Journalist, Adnkronos) Cleo Li CALZI (Professor Leadership Management, LUMSA University), Francesco Lapenta (Founding Director of the John Cabot University Institute of Future and Innovation Studies and Mozilla-Ford Research Fellow), Carlos Moedas (former European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation and Member of the Advisory Board of the "Futures of Education" Initiative), Paola Bonomo (Former Principal McKinsey, Vice Chair Italian Angels for Growth), Alfio Antonino Puglisi (PhD Political Economy at KCL), Koert Debeuf (Director of the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy Europe), Fabio Masini (Jean Monnet Chair for European Economic Governance, Roma Tre, Secretary of the European Federalist Movement), Carmela Panella (Professor International Law UNIME),

Sandro Gozi (Former Italy's Minister for European Affairs and MEP elected in France), Kalypso Nicolaidis (Professor of International Relations and governing body fellow at the St Antony's College – European Studies Centre, OXFORD University), Alessandro Morelli (Professor of Institutions Public Law, UNIME), Xuē Xīnrán (Writer of *The Good Women of China* and Journalist), Matthew Caruana Galicia (Investigative Journalist, MALTA), Franziska Brantner (Member of the Bundestag and leader of Alliance 90/ The Greens), Stefania Baroncelli (Professor Public and European Union Law at Free University of Bozen-Bolzano), Ruggero Aricò (vice Chair Confindustria Assafrica e Mediterraneo), John Hooper (Italy and Vatican correspondent of The Economist), Michele Geraci (New York University and head of Italy – China workforce), Elizabeth Strout (Pulitzer Prize 2009), Alexandra Borchardt (Head of Digital Journalism Fellowship Hamburg Media School, Senior Research Associate, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford) , Lorenzo Fioramonti (MP and ITALY's Former Minister for Schools, Universities and Research), Francesca Pellegrino (Professor of European Law, Università of Messina), Antonio Negro (Researcher, VISION).

The Manifesto used as an input the plenary sessions and below reports from the three Working Groups on

1. **Working Group 1:** Global Digital Platforms as the Raison-d'être of 21st century
2. **Working Group 2:** The Next Generation EU and a Pragmatic Approach to Multiple Integrations
3. **Working Group 3:** Europe as a Laboratory for transnational policies and ideas to save liberal democracies

Attached you find the reports of the WORKING GROUPS.

ANNEX – REPORT FROM THE WORKING GROUPS AND PLENARY SESSIONS

WORKING GROUP 1: GLOBAL DIGITAL PLATFORMS AS THE RAISON-D'ETRE OF 21ST CENTURY - CHAIRS/ INTRODUCERS: Francesco Lapenta, Carlos Moedas, Paola Bonomo, Alfio Puglisi, Elvira Terranova.

Digital platforms create value by connecting two or more group of consumers and/or businesses. Few dispute that organizations have more data than ever at their disposal. Data can be categorised in three broad categories: personal, financial and technological data, becoming a new form of power for companies. In particular, platforms offer for free services that are valued by consumers, and in exchange obtain data from which they can infer either purchase intent or insights into consumers' tastes, purchasing habits, political preferences,

and so on. Micro-targeting based on this rich data trove is the foundation of the modern digital advertising industry. Firms implement software features to reduce costs (e.g., by partial automation of content moderation) and look for new data as a source of revenue. Potential benefits for consumers lie in better tailored-product and services, whereas risks are mostly in the form of information asymmetries, and data misuse and security. In the EU, the importance of data privacy was recognised as part of the EU GDPR (a first global effort), allowing citizens – among other rights - the right to oblivion.

The tech ecosystem is a global ecosystem. While the last 20 years of globalization have seen unprecedented numbers of people worldwide raise their standards of living, in Western countries the gap between rich and poor has widened and social mobility, according to most measures, seems to have decreased, partly due to unbalanced globalisation. Today, even if knowledge and education are more widely available than ever, inequality in technology also means a technology literacy gap, and in the Western world fears are rising of the “squeezing the middle class”. Considering their scale and scope, tech giants such as Google, Facebook and Amazon can be considered as “gatekeepers”, having erected *de facto* barriers for new entrants in their markets. Problems regarding digital platforms have been highlighted in several areas: market power, taxation, content regulation, labour practices, data regulation, and regulation of the use of AI against bias and other negative consequences.

Global digital platforms are the 21st century version of the infrastructures – railways, airports, harbours and highways - through which goods, services and ideas used to be exchanged: further development and regulation of those strategic infrastructures, so that access to all could be granted to everybody, was crucial to allow previous industrial revolutions to fully unfold their potential through specialization. We believe that one of the core missions of the European Commission of the future would be to first conceive and then implement a strategy so that the digital infrastructures become democratically accountable, quasi utility platforms where firms and citizens are equipped – both technologically and in terms of awareness/ skills – to share in the value currently generated by their data for the gatekeepers.

How can governments address innovation and market failures? We assessed comparatively how USA, China and Europe address innovation. According to OECD, in 2018 the USA invested well over 2.82% of GDP in research and development, China 2.15% (increasing their 0,8% in 2000), the EU28 2% (from 1,6%). For the US this represents an absolute value of \$533bn, well above Europe \$374bn and China \$296bn. Much of this is privately funded research at rather different degrees: in the EU government was funding 30%, in the USA it was 22% and surprisingly the percentage was even lower in China at 20%.

More interestingly, in the disbursement of public funding, USA, China and Europe apply three different models of innovation: Europe applies a science-based and values-based model of innovation, the USA applies a technology-based model, and China applies a customer-driven,

efficiency-driven model. Furthermore, the fragmentation of the European market (languages, habits) and the insufficient collaboration among national authorities cause further loss of opportunity (a simple example: the European Union could and should have responded to the Covid-19 pandemic with one European contact tracing app. Instead, due to the EU's lack of health competence, we have many national apps, making travel less safe than it could have been with a unified approach to data collection and data governance).

The importance of innovation in the EU is widely recognised, but it remains an unfulfilled opportunity for governments and the EU itself to support economic growth and new job creation. In the research (“upstream”) area, the European Research Council is a public body for funding of scientific and technological research conducted within the European Union with a budget of 13 billion euro. The forthcoming European Innovation Council (EIC) – currently in its pilot phase - is a practical example of EU innovation policy being introduced by the European Commission to support the commercialization of high-risk, high-impact technologies in the EU. The European Innovation Council will be fully implemented from 2021 under Horizon Europe. The future model for innovation in the view of the European Commission will be based on the collaboration between government, the private sector, the non-profit sector, supranational organization and fundamental science.

In this context, the EIC framework envisaged an EU innovation hub where companies can experiment with new products and services based on “challenges”, adapting the model successfully pioneered by DARPA and other US institutions decades ago. The importance of the selection of these challenges cannot be overstated: in accordance with the values-based approach, the challenges should put at their centre the wellbeing and health of the European people and the whole planet, in accordance with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Challenges should be forward-looking (e.g., not aim to replicate today's gatekeeper platforms with “bad copies” from European players) and aim to fill gaps where Europe's scientific superiority can result in actual leadership (e.g., in the area of quantum computing, it will have to be evaluated whether the gap with US and Chinese companies and institutions can be bridged and ultimately overcome, or if Europe should rather focus on other challenges). Support from authorities to innovators should imply that regulators help entrepreneurs build compliance into the business models of firms (“compliance by design”), using regulatory tools (sandboxes, exemptions, sunset clauses...) that do not unnecessarily obstruct innovation but, on the contrary, nurture and sustain it. In this way, government can also monitor the business models of small and big firms with new ways of enforcement, especially in the area of Sup-Tech and Reg-tech.

Governments should ensure that citizens are educated in the responsible use of technologies. In this context, EU innovation policy should place education at its heart, fostering – as technologies keep evolving - continuous learning among both teachers and students. Furthermore, the “challenge” approach can only be fruitful if a rich entrepreneurial

environment generates innovation ideas and innovative companies: therefore, a further focus of education must be an entrepreneurial mindset, where creativity is prized above mere learning, interdisciplinarity is foundational, risk-taking is appreciated, failures are accepted, and one can learn from mistakes in order to be successful in the future. Education especially in technology needs to be interdisciplinary and be equal and accessible in order to address social inequality (as in the Finnish experience).

To conclude, we live in data-driven world, where governments need to develop an innovative ecosystem that supports the supply and demand of innovation, firms and individuals should be able to experiment with new products and services in hubs, EU institutions such as the EIC need to choose right “challenges” linked to concrete societal problems and missions, and finally schools and universities need to develop educational and research programs that promote a science-based, technological and entrepreneurial culture.

WORKING GROUP 2: THE NEXT GENERATION EU AND A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO MULTIPLE INTEGRATIONS

CHAIRS/ INTRODUCERS: Fabio Masini, Koert Deboeuf, Carmela Panella, Cleo Li Calzi.

The group focused on five major issues:

1. What we learnt from the pandemic? Among other things, we learnt that our everyday life crucially depends on a set of collective (public) goods, such as sanitary systems, local transport, cultural and social infrastructures, global value chains, etc. These collective goods have a multi-layered nature (local, regional, national, continental, global). The vision that we shared is that in the post-Covid era there will be a demand for highly efficient, sustainable, resilient major local (urban) systems, connected by transport, digital and logistic infrastructures (from local to global).
2. Is the Next Generation EU enough to match these demands? The answer is ‘no’. It might serve to fill past gaps and hopefully prepare for some future, but we must make the EU capable to structurally continue this joint financial effort, beyond the emergency. From this point of view, all available instruments should be considered in a creative way, included an extended and different use of the ESM and of the EURATOM Treaty, which is still alive, although most people do not know this.
3. One way for the Next Generation EU and/or any other stabilization and growth-enhancing fund to go beyond the emergency is the debate on own resources. Which should not be focused on national contributions, but on genuine resources for the EU (on plastic, carbon emissions - included border adjustment tax, financial transactions, etc). Otherwise, no Hamiltonian moment will ever take place.

4. Collective decision-making in the EU should stop being left to the retaliations implied in the unanimity. It is of paramount importance to lift the veto power in any EU collective decision-making procedure. If this is not viable, variable geometry in European integration becomes essential. Such differentiated integration may be implemented through enhanced cooperation, or outside the current Treaties. Functional clusters of different degrees of integration can be designed among EU countries, within a “concentric circles” architecture depending on competences and values shared EU countries. Those willing to share a stronger (but more focused on specific areas) supranational integration should be allowed to do it. In some instances, popular endorsement should be looked for prior to join “cluster of integrations” to make such decisions stronger and avoid ambiguities and this would apply especially if they are realized outside the treaties. Such different “speed” of integration might help solving also the issues related to countries such as UK or Turkey, North Africa and Middle East etc.

5. Some countries (like Italy is a good case study and it will be the most severe test of the NGEU) have a specific issue of country credibility. The Recovery Fund is the chance to make strategic and synergic choices on value-added infrastructures and projects. This requires a strict monitoring of the governmental action by the ruling classes. In turn, this is possible only if education and competences return to be central, and if the ruling class is ready to take up his own responsibilities in the governance, if not the government, of the country.

WORKING GROUP 3: EUROPE AS A LABORATORY FOR TRANSNATIONAL POLICIES AND IDEAS TO SAVE LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES –

CHAIRS/ INTRODUCERS: Sandro Gozi, Maria Costanza Cau, Kalypso, Alessandro Morelli, Ruggero Aricò, Francesco Grillo

The group focused on five major issues:

1. Political legitimacy the Union and crisis of liberal democracy: multifaceted issue
2. EU democracy exists. Formally. Partially in practice too. But we need to put flesh on the bones: we need to work on substantial political legitimacy.
3. National politics is no longer capable enough to address global issues. And this is one of the reasons of the crisis of liberal democracy at national level. European democracy is not legitimate enough to do so either. And this is one of the obstacle to a new comprehensive action of the EU. And we need to save both, National democracies and EU from populism and from globalization.

4. This is why we need to build up a new transnational political space, to create a substantial legitimacy.

HOW?

1. Political way: Europeanize national political movements - promote transnational political movements.
 - a. New use of digital technologies to regenerate and widen participation and political processes within political movements. To this end:
 - b. Promote a new transitional dimension of politics: “transnational quotas” in National lists to the European elections (ex: Renaissance/EnMarche! list in France in EP 2019 elections: 7 nationalities represented, elected MEP of 3 nationalities)
 - c. Introduce transnational lists in a single/more European constituency/ies in EP 2024 elections
 - d. Make the most of the innovative potential in terms of citizen participation of the Conference on the Future of Europe
 - e. “In parallel”: Improve relation and decision-making process within the key institution: European Council.
2. Policies Way:
 - a. Sustainable and Innovative policies:
 - b. Digital and ecological transition and education as factors of economic developments and of new "citizens participation".
 - c. Organize deliberative budget assemblies on the different territories to define the specific projects to implement the recovery Plan priorities
 - d. “Quality of life” policy approach: well Beyond GDP, towards new “welfare European policies”

It will be important to use a "multi-channel", experimental approach to some of these innovations.

For instance e-voting would be introduced in some areas so that it can be tested (leveraging on ESTONIA's experience); it may then scaled up to electronic petition (for referenda, for instance) and to allow members of elected assemblies to express themselves; and it should be paralleled by physical means to vote for whoever prefers to stick to traditional modes.

PLENARY SESSION “EUROPE AS A VALUE BASED PROJECT”

CHAIR: Laura Silvia Battaglia (Writer of *Lettere da Guantanamo* and Journalist)

Together with Matthew Caruana Galizia, Xue Xinran, Jeffrey Archer, we worked on EUROPE AS A PROJECT BASED ON COMMON VALUES. And the points on which all the speakers agreed are the need from Europe not to negotiate its values in terms of protection, respect, guarantee of democracy, in the face of nascent dictatorships inside or outside Europe, to engage in the defense of human rights for the weakest members of its society, such as women and migrants, the need to care about the poorest social class, often without a voice and often listened only by the extreme right, and the need to watch over freedom of expression and of the press, when it is deeply affected, as was the case, in Malta, with the murder of the journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia.

Vision will follow up the CONFERENCE with further initiatives with its fellow partners and sponsors. The intention is to renovate the greatest POST WORLD WAR dream and bring its values to the 21st century.