

**SECOND TAORMINA/ MESSINA CONFERENCE
(ORGANIZED BY TAOBUK FESTIVAL AND VISION)**

LA METAMORFOSI DI EUROPA



**EUROPE IN A POST PANDEMIC WORLD – ONE YEAR ONWARDS
LOOKING FOR THE IDEAS TO CONTINUE THE DEBATE ON THE
FUTURE OF EUROPE IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

17th – 21st JUNE 2021

CONCEPT PAPER (7th FEB 2020)

At the beginning of October 2020, the time of the first MESSINA/TAORMINA CONFERENCE, the perception was that the worse of the COVID19 pandemic was over. We were wrong and, in fact, the conference took just in time before Europe was overwhelmed by a

second wave which has proven much longer and more damaging than the first¹.

After the second wave, even the historical decision of drafting an unprecedented plan for recovery (the NEXT GENERATION EU) which will be financed by the European Commission own resources seems to have become too little and too late: 750 billion EURO are dwarfed by the stimulus that, in comparison, the US has injected in their economy (Congress has already spent 4 trillion USD and it is now considering an additional 2 TRN of emergency spending); and even more discomfoting is the evidence that not even one euro of the package will be spent before the summer.

Yes, the NEXT GENERATION EU was a big decision, but it fully describes a mechanism (it took more than six months for the proposal of the Commission to be first approved by the Council and then by the Parliament) which is simply too slow to react to emergency.

Europe is structurally bad to respond to shocks and, in some dramatic instances (the handling of the vaccination policy at European level), it even seems that things would may be better managed at the level of single member states.

Time has come for a new start, for a new metamorphosis of EUROPA². After all, 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 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.

In 1955 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. It is time now for a new start and this is why Vision and Taobuk decided to scale up the conference and make of it one of the key debates in what promises to be a very topic year.

¹ Two thirds of the 750 thousand deaths and six seventh of the 35 million cases cumulated in the EU until today (7th FEB 2021) and since the start of the COVID19 pandemic, took place after the first week of October.

² Europa is the mythological Phoenician princess whose seduction from JOVIS gave birth to the kingdom of CRETE and to idea of the WEST as civilization.

The first conference in Messina/ Taormina produced a manifesto and an agenda on three specific themes – the role of EUROPE in the battle for global digital leadership, new forms of participation to make EU the lab of the democracy of the future, cluster of integrations as a new institutional mechanism to give to the EU both more efficiency and legitimacy.

The manifesto and the WG conclusions will be further discussed within the NEXT GENERATION SERIES, a series of events that Vision launched in Christmas 2020. This will be the starting point of the conference and the objective will be to produce more ideas and have a real impact.

Vision³ together with TAOBUK⁴ is thus calling a three days meeting – on the 18th June - in MESSINA where thirty intellectuals, policy makers, journalists, historians and visionaries will gather to generate and discuss some ideas⁵ which may trigger a debate on the future of EUROPE with the objective to provide a contribution to “crafting the future”.

Chair people will be Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director of the PARIS based UNESCO where she is in charge of the Education directorate; and former minister for Universities, Research and Education in Italy; and Bill Emmott, former editor of The ECONOMIST and author of the FATE of the WEST.

The debate will be articulated in four plenary sessions plus five workgroups discussing the issues which seem now crucial to how to start thinking about a new European project. They will be followed by more presentations of books and reports on the future of EUROPE within TAOBUK festival.

All the WG will be presented by those responsible for the "Introduction" of each WG on Friday, the 18th June at 11:30 am in Messina, just after the plenary session "Where are we one year after? Next Generation EU, the retreat of populism and the great pandemic war?". On this occasion, all the details regarding the various WGs (both logistic and contents) will be provided.

³ More info on VISION at www.thinktank.vision

⁴ The TAORMINA BOOK FESTIVAL. One of the most internationally recognized Book Festival in Europe <https://www.taobuk.it/>

⁵ Outlined by the VISION paper on “Europe beyond the union in a Post-pandemic world. Ten ideas to kick off a debate”. March 2020. Accessible at https://www.thinktank.vision/images/2020/10_ideas_europe/10_Ideas_for_Europe_13-03-20.pdf

The five working groups will then be: Information is power - a policy on global digital platforms as the raison-d'être of 21st century states; The next generation EU and how to go from the Hamiltonian to the Jeffersonian moment; Europe and the welfare for the 21st century; Erasmus, civil service and European media: looking for an agenda of positive actions; Europe as a lab for democracy: from theory to experimentations and decisions.

The results of the five WG will be reported back to the plenary on Saturday the 19th at 12.30 as for the tentative agenda and will become an input towards the CONFERENCE new manifesto which will be conveyed to the President of the Commission and to the Council and which will feed next events.