



IDEASLAB
2022 SPECIAL REPORT

PEACE AND PROSPERITY FOR EUROPE

An impossible dream?

INTRODUCTION

Organised by CEPS, one of Europe's most independent and reputable think-tanks, the aim of [Ideas Lab](#) is to provide a high-level intellectual forum for exchanges concerning the wide range of current and pressing issues faced by the EU. The discussions are open, insightful and impactful, with the active involvement of policymakers, researchers and representatives from industry and civil society.

The [ninth edition of Ideas Lab](#), which took place on **1 June 2022** at **BluePoint Brussels**, was the first time since the outbreak of the pandemic that we returned to a more traditional in-person format. We welcomed over 200 participants and 50+ speakers in Brussels for a [packed programme](#), specifically the 'Next Generation' of Europeans alongside more seasoned experts in EU policymaking across many different fields. The event was organised against the backdrop of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which has a ripple effect far beyond the continent.

The culmination of the day was an interactive spotlight session with our CEPS ['Young Thinkers'](#) on how the EU can re-establish peace and prosperity in this new and dangerous world.

During the session, we welcomed **Štěpán Černý**, Director-General for European Affairs at the Government Office of the Czech Republic, who presented the priorities of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU that will run from July to December 2022. Following this, he, alongside our Director of Research, **Steven Blockmans**, took a series of hard-hitting questions from a select group of our Young Thinkers.

Other key speakers that featured in the 2022 edition of Ideas Lab included:

- **Olha Stefanishyna**, Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine for the European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine
- **Sergii Marchenko**, Ukrainian Minister of Finance.
- **Denys Kudin**, Ukrainian First Deputy Minister of the Economy
- **Eva Maydell**, Member of the European Parliament
- **René Repasi**, Member of the European Parliament
- **Maarten Verwey**, Director General, DC ECFIN, European Commission
- **Pierre Delsaux**, Director General, DG HERA, European Commission
- **Erkki Maillard**, Senior Vice President of European Affairs and Adviser to the CEO, EDF Group
- **Anton Hemerijck**, Director of Research, EUI
- **Bhaswati Mukherjee**, Former Ambassador of India to the Netherlands

This short report provides a succinct summary of the key sessions that took place during the day. For more information on Ideas Lab, please contact **Andrea Bittnerova**, CEPS Senior Events and External Relations Manager at andrea.bittnerova@ceps.eu.

AN IDEAS LAB ‘CURTAIN RAISER’ – A TRANSFORMATIONAL MOMENT?

In his welcoming words, **Joaquin Almunia**, Chairman of the Board of CEPS, questioned the common belief that the EU is forged in crisis. After weathering what feels like so many crises over the past 15 years, the EU’s swift and decisive response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine has, for the most part, been welcomed as the EU *finally* getting a crisis right. But does the war signal a paradigm shift for the EU in policy terms?

In advance of Ideas Lab 2022, and to help set the scene for of the current geopolitical and economic landscape, CEPS published a special report entitled [‘A transformational moment? The EU’s response to Russia’s war in Ukraine’](#).

Harnessing our broad inhouse expertise, we gave our CEPS contributors a simple instruction – to dive deep into their specialist areas and provide their perspective on whether the invasion and subsequent crisis is a true ‘game changer’ in terms of the EU’s immediate and ongoing policy response.

Or, to put it another way, will 2022 be viewed by future historians as a year of genuine transformation, a transformation fuelled by the largest conventional conflict in Europe since the end of the Second World War? The answer given by our experts is more sobering than many would like to believe.



WHAT DO EUROPEANS EXPECT FROM THE EU NOW:

WHAT DO RECENT ELECTIONS AND OPINION POLLS TELL US?

This traditional scene setting session, in cooperation with [Bertelsmann Stiftung](#), explored how well the EU has coped with the myriad of challenges it has had to face over the past few years and what European citizens now expect from the EU.

Are people willing to make sacrifices for their security? Do they feel protected from the economic fallout from the war?

To answer these questions, and more, we invited **Isabell Hoffmann**, Senior expert from Bertelsmann Stiftung and **Tara Varma**, Senior Policy Fellow from the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) to present the first polling results on what citizens expect from their governments and the EU.

They were joined by **Olha Stefanishyna**, Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine, as well as [Eva Maydell](#) and [René Repasi](#), Members of the European Parliament.

SOME KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

- The images of war and Ukraine's suffering have had a real impact on European public opinion. Europeans very much support political actions to assist Ukraine.
- Europeans are completely disillusioned by the current international system – according to [ECFR research](#), 71 % of respondents in 12 Member States didn't believe the international system was working and 58 % didn't believe their national system was working to tackle major societal issues.
- However, a majority of respondents said that the European level was appropriate to tackle major international challenges and there is a high level of support for common European actions. Amongst the main priorities that citizens want the EU to tackle is border security.

Responding to these findings, **Eva Maydell**, highlighted how since the Russian invasion, the idea of a 'democratic country' has been reinforced and populism has taken a blow as a result. On his part, **René Repasi** wondered about whether this supposed decline in populism would be replicated come winter, when Europeans will suffer from the economic consequences of the war in terms of higher food and energy bills. Economic and social reforms, fiscal rules and the possibility of a 'NextGenerationEU 2.0' could be solutions to ensure that European citizens' expectations are met.

Olha Stefanishyna, Ukraine's deputy prime minister, also joined the discussion whilst on a whistlestop tour of EU capitals before the June 2022 European Council.

She passionately argued how granting Ukraine EU candidate status would be an historic decision and would be the first stone that would set the basis for a stronger EU, highlighting that Ukraine was fighting against one of the largest armies in the world.

She also raised the issue of how Europe should react when the Putin regime in Ukraine finally ends and that Ukraine wanted to be at the centre of formulating the EU's response as an equal Member State.

Finally, the panellists were asked to say in one word – yes or no – if indeed we are experiencing a 'transformational moment'. All concurred that yes, this is a transformational moment... even if it won't lead to perfect change.

To watch the session in full, click [here](#).

SPOTLIGHT SESSION

PEACE AND PROSPERITY FOR ALL OF EUROPE – WELCOMING OUR CEPS YOUNG THINKERS TO THE CENTRE STAGE

The CEPS [Young Thinkers Initiative](#) was launched at the 2021 Ideas Lab, with the aim to select 30 brilliant young minds from over 20 different countries to engage in a series of events throughout the year. The project, which is supported by the US Mission to the EU, aims to provide students and young professionals with a platform to express fresh and innovative ideas, and engage with key European decision makers.

The 2022 cohort participated in a Brussels trip with mentoring sessions and visits to the European Parliament amongst other activities. These efforts culminated in the final spotlight session of the 2022 Ideas Lab, where four of our Young Thinkers (with all the others enthusiastically showing their support from the audience) asked a series of questions to a prominent European decision maker willing to take on the challenge. The decision maker in question was **Štěpán Černý**, the Director-General for European Affairs at the Government Office of the Czech Republic, supported by **Steven Blockmans**, CEPS Director of Research.

Our four Young Thinkers who posed the hard questions were [Selin Kumbaraci](#), [Keire Murphy](#), **Stella Meyer** and [Giorgi Ukhurgunashvili](#).

In his keynote speech, **Černý** kicked the proceedings off by outlining the key priorities of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU that began on 1 July and will run until the end of 2022. These can be summarised in five 'baskets':

- Ukraine - how to end the war? How to rebuild Ukraine? How to help all of the Ukrainian refugees who have fled the fighting?
- Energy security and high energy prices
- European defence and security
- The resilience of the European economy
- The resilience of democratic institutions



Keire grilled **Štěpán** and **Steven** on what future enlargement could look like and whether the notion of '[staged accession](#)' should start to be discussed. **Štěpán** acknowledged that Ukraine's accession will take time but the first step is candidate status and then a larger discussion on how to integrate Ukraine into the EU. **Steven** argued that the revised 2020 accession methodology is still insufficient and that tangible socio-economic benefits need to be extended (or withdrawn) sooner to candidate countries. This could be done in stages, whereby the assessment of a country's performance on specific conditions is done in a more refined and evidence-based manner. He contended that relegating technical details to technocrats would help to stop these issues becoming politicised.

Selin asked **Štěpán** specifically on how the Czech Presidency will leverage its position to improve Member States' coordination and reconcile decarbonisation and energy security. **Štěpán** agreed with her statement that one-size-fits-all is not a suitable approach and that the Czech Presidency aims to manage this debate to avoid a total breakout of the 27 on energy policy and to address social costs.

Giorgi wanted to know how the EU can devise a single narrative against hybrid threats, specifically asking whether there are any plans to increase systemic cooperation with the neighbouring countries on both cybersecurity and disinformation. **Štěpán** said that the EU must identify both rivals and allies and only then can the EU devise more strategic communications on both topics. **Steven** argued that the most important thing is to collect data and analyse them collectively. One option could be to include neighbouring countries which are fighting disinformation – quite literally – on the cutting edge in designated PESCO projects.

Stella was interested to hear about how the Czech Presidency would help and support countries that are struggling to implement the digital agenda and how it would resolve the 'digital divide'. **Štěpán** emphasised investment in infrastructure and the digital benefits that arose as a result of the pandemic. **Steven** followed up by stating that one concrete way to close the digital divide is Member States' digital investment through the Resilience and Recovery Facility (RRF).

To watch the session in full, click [here](#).

OTHER SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

FROM IDEAS LAB 2022

The Economic Outlook for Ukraine: From survival to reconstruction

We heard directly from **Sergii Marchenko**, Ukraine's finance minister, and **Denys Kudin**, Ukraine's first deputy minister of the economy, who outlined how they are trying to keep a war economy running and argued for further assistance from the EU.

The audience also heard some harrowing accounts of how local mayors and entrepreneurs in Ukraine have been attempting to keep their local economies running. Of particular note were the interventions from the mayor of Melitopol in the occupied Zaporizhia region, and the deputy mayor of Lviv, a city that has had to cope with an unprecedented number of arrivals from other regions of Ukraine affected by the fighting.

The implications of soaring energy prices and how to address them

The war in Ukraine has sent energy prices soaring and the EU has downgraded its winter forecast for GDP growth by 1.3 % for this year as a result. This panel discussed the various possible ways to alleviate the pain being felt across Europe by individuals, households and businesses.

Maarten Verwey, Director General of DG ECFIN emphasised the need for price policies and income policies, with the latter being more important. Breaking the demand for imported fossil fuels should also be a priority and he was confident that even with the war, the drive to decarbonise the European economy will continue.

Other points of view included the need to support low-carbon energy sources by increasing investment and reducing taxation on low-carbon technologies, and to increase interconnectivity, such as by linking the Iberian Peninsula and France due to Spain's important role in securing Europe's energy supply.



Does EU migration diplomacy work ?

This session explored how EU external migration policies and arrangements aimed at containing migration and asylum from non-European countries work in practice. It examined key issues characterising EU migration diplomacy instruments with Turkey, Tunisia, Niger, and Serbia. Particular attention was paid to the effectiveness, fairness and consistency of agreements and arrangements with international refugee and human rights standards and the principles laid down in the UN Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration.

One of the key takeaways was the notion that as a result of the controversial strategies being implemented through its migration diplomacy, the EU risks becoming increasingly dependent on authoritarian regimes. To avoid this negative outcome, the EU's asylum and refugee protection policies need to become more credible *vis-à-vis* third countries and it needs to shift from a short-term and emergency-driven mindset towards a long-term strategy based on formal and legally-binding multilateral commitments.

Future scenarios for global health security governance: How to break the cycle of 'panic and neglect'? (a PERISCOPE project session)

This session focused on the lessons learnt from the pandemic and what can be done better to prepare for the next health crisis.

Overall, Covid-19 and its consequences have made us challenge traditional policy focusing solely on economic growth and productivity, with more emphasis now being put on other factors, such as individual and societal wellbeing. However, the pandemic has also deepened long-term inequalities across individuals, companies and sectors.

Looking to the future, preparedness is key and the EU needs to improve its capacity to detect emerging risks at global level, increase R&D investment, standardise and stockpile medical equipment and provide isolation facilities. At local level, communities should be engaged in the preparation process, aided by innovative digital tools.



***Violent extremism in enabling environments:
Why local resilience is more robust than we think and how
we can go about supporting it (a [PREVEX](#) project session)***

This session focused on what the EU can do to prevent violent extremism in the Balkans, the Middle East & North Africa.

The results of the PREVEX study, which included extensive fieldwork, were presented during this session. It shows that despite living in highly enabling environments, the overwhelming majority of people in these regions reject radicalisation. Supporting community resilience is key and the EU should continue to engage with local leaders to create a functional and cooperative atmosphere.

The positive cases of Stolac and Trebinje in Bosnia & Herzegovina demonstrate local resilience and interethnic and interfaith dialogue through music and sport, for example. Addressing specific local issues such as education and resource sharing is another takeaway from the study in the context of the Sahel region. However, these geographies nevertheless remain vulnerable to destabilisation and radicalisation – with the war in Ukraine, PREVEX’s work has only just begun.

***Social investment in the EU:
Policy shift or smoke and mirrors?
(an [EuSocialCit](#) session)***

The Covid-19 crisis was defined as a ‘gamechanger’ for the EU policy debate on Social Investment (SI), increasing consciousness among policymakers on its role in enhancing people’s resilience to shocks and supporting economic and social convergence. As argued by speaker **Anthon Herijck** of the European University Institute (EUI); ‘Covid-19 was a gamechanger... and the cards are now stacked in a way that the Social Investment discussion can prosper.’

We heard how this shift has been highlighted by the different EU actions launched in response to the pandemic, such as the creation of the RRF. On top of this, already tight European labour markets have definitively shifted the collective imaginary on the importance of SI and of the collaboration of countries at the EU level to face such shocks. In short, SI is no longer a ‘bad-weather-only’ proposal.





CEPS would like to thank its Ideas Lab 2022 sponsors

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Ideas Lab will return in 2023! We look forward to seeing you there.

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