

12th German-Nordic-Baltic Forum 2020
Digital Edition
**“2020 as a Stress Test for the European Union:
Challenges in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic”**

Opening Discussion
Tuesday, 27th October 2020
(15:00-16:15h; CET)

Programme

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15:00-15:10 **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Dr. Mika Aaltola, Director, Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA), Finland

Dr. Funda Tekin, Director, Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP), Germany

15:10-16:15 **Keynote Discussion with**

Tytti Tuppurainen, Minister for European Affairs and Ownership Steering, Prime Minister's Office, Finland

Michael Roth, Minister of State for Europe, Federal Foreign Office, Germany

including commentaries by

Piret Kuusik, Junior Research Fellow, Estonian Foreign Policy Institute, Estonia

Calle Håkansson, Associate fellow, PhD candidate, Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI), Sweden

Maša Ocvirk, Young Representative of #EngagEUrCouncil

Moderation

Dr. Funda Tekin, Director, Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP), Germany

Topics of the Forum

1. European Green Deal

Economic reconstruction during and after the Corona pandemic needs to be in line with the European Green Deal, despite the challenges that the COVID-19 crisis has posed to its implementation. While the European Commission reiterates that the Green Deal remains a priority, political debates have shifted towards the expected economic recession and recovery programmes, which may also affect investments in climate-friendly policies. It is essential that the European Union (EU) continues to be on track to achieve substantial emission reductions by 2030 and actively supports the goals set by the Paris climate agreement.

How can the EU pursue its climate agenda in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis? Should there be fiscal flexibility for investments that clearly advance the EU's climate agenda? How can the EU cooperate with third countries in the Baltic and Nordic area in order to implement the Green Deal and the targets of the Paris agreement?

2. The European Union and Multilateralism

The Corona crisis has affected the entire world. However, for this global crisis to be seen as an opportunity for a renaissance of multilateralism and for it to be resolved as a global challenge, a common understanding and a stronger geopolitical orientation of the EU is needed. Corona has revamped discussion on the EU Strategic Autonomy. Economic, technological and security dependencies of the EU are once more in the focus (including security of supply, see also topic 4 below). This discussion has been emphasized by the ongoing power competition between China and the United States, which leaves the EU caught between a rock and a hard place. The EU's external relations are increasingly changing not only with regard to the US, especially in view of the upcoming 2020 elections, but also with regard to Russia. The new European Commission President and former German defence minister Ursula von der Leyen has a plan to boost the EU's role on the world stage, reiterating that she will lead a "geopolitical Commission". However, the EU's preferences for multilateralism are extremely difficult to pursue.

In view of ever-increasing global challenges, what strategies can lead to a renaissance of multilateralism? What strategies should the EU adopt to preserve its strategic autonomy in a more competitive global environment?

3. The Resilience of the European Union

The fragile solidarity in the EU requires resilience-building processes to enable the long-term sustainability of social justice outcomes. Welfare is the field where solidarity is most keenly felt and, accordingly, the most potent terrain for positive European impact. However, the EU's specific powers in the social sphere are limited. Especially in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, concrete action is needed to strengthen resilience, solidarity and social justice in Europe.

How can we learn from the COVID-19 pandemic and what concrete action is needed to achieve these goals?

The COVID-19 crisis has further exacerbated existing trends: since 2019, some governments have been attempting to undermine the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law. Measures to contain the corona pandemic are exacerbating these trends in some EU member states. How can the EU effectively counteract the further erosion of the rule of law and thus continue to credibly promote rule of law principles worldwide?

4. Economic Recovery of the European Union

In March 2020, the European Commission announced that it would use all the instruments at its disposal to ensure the necessary supply to the health systems in the Member States without jeopardizing the internal market or value chains.

What concrete measures are needed to achieve this?

Moreover, travel restrictions or plant closures as measures against the virus have serious consequences for the Single Market as well as for the global economy. Long-term investment strategies and existing supply chains should be rethought.

Is the corona virus the game changer for the EU internal market and globalisation?

