

EUCOPAS Dissemination Event

Report

Full steam ahead? Reflections on the Future of the European Union
and Developments in EU-Turkey Relations

13 December 2018 | Cologne

Institut Français Köln | Sachsenring 77 | 50677 Cologne

Thursday, 13.12.2018	
14:30h	Welcome Ahmed Ahouani, Institut Français Cologne Stefan Bildhauer, University of Cologne Wolfgang Wessels, CETEUS / Europa-Union Köln

Ahmed Ahouani, deputy director of the Institute Français Cologne inaugurated the CETEUS Annual Meeting by welcoming the participants. He stated that the Institute Français Cologne and the University of Cologne are in a long reaching tradition since the French Republic and the University of Cologne made a contract for the foundation of the Institute in 1952 with the aim to improve the new post-war bilateral friendship. From then on the Institute should have been a place to foster the French-German Friendship, which is also an affair reaching out to the other countries in the European Union, according to Ahouani.

In his contribution, Wolfgang Wessels added the fact, that Wilhelm Riphahn, a popular architect who influenced Cologne’s street panorama enormously during the first half of 19th century, designed the institute is an indication for the prestigious start for the French-German friendship in Cologne and the bets placed on it back then. Wessels recapped the evolution of the European Union and the French-German Tandem briefly before Stefan Bildhauer from the International Office at the University of Cologne give a résumé about the University’s 100 year long-reaching history. Bildhauer linked European topics such as Erasmus programme and national diversity to the University of Cologne and underlined the importance of an international dialogue as if it happens at CETEUS. Finally, Wolfgang Wessels introduced the first panel “Future of Europe: Challenges and Priorities for 2019-2024”.

15:00-17:00h	Future of Europe: Challenges and Priorities for 2019-2024 Chair: Alina Thieme, CETEUS Ralf Kanitz, Federal Ministry of Economics and Energy Olivier Rozenberg, Sciences Po Paris Anja Thomas, Sciences Po Paris/ Oxford University
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The first panel – chaired by *Alina Thieme*, CETEUS, University of Cologne – dealt with the future

of the European Union especially with challenges and priorities for 2019-2024 and their implications for the relationship between Germany and France.

In the first part of the panel, *Olivier Rozenberg*, Sciences Po Paris, discussed the development of France's role within the European Union. He characterized France as a strong "number two" behind Germany and highlighted the important influence of France within the Council of the EU and the European Commission. On the opposite, Rozenberg stressed the enduring weaknesses of the member state on the domestic level (public support for the president, budgetary deficit, extreme views on the EU) as well as on the European level (energy of French politicians in the EU is placed on budgetary policy field, limited influence of French MEPs). As to the future role of France within the EU, Rozenberg predicts continuity for French EU policies with an uncertain outcome of Macron's two main priorities (economic governance and defence). Further, he characterizes the Franco-German couple as a "grey zone".

Ralf Kanitz, Federal Ministry of Economics and Energy, Berlin, takes up Rozenberg's arguments by analysing the French-German relationship from a German perspective. From his point of view, the main difference between French and German politics within the EU is the extent to which they can be realized. While the ideas of the French president Emmanuel Macron are identified as "big", "comprehensive" and "far ahead" without a concrete concept how to implement them, the German approach seems to divide goals in "small steps" with regard to their practicability. The negotiation strategy of the two member states in the Commission is following the same logic. Kanitz analyses the future of the European Union also from a legal point of view. In light of the decision of the European Court of Justice – that the UK is able to revoke its decision to leave the EU – one scenario outlined by Kanitz is that this decision might be an invitation to other member states to "safely" try to leave the European Union. He further questions the role of the European Court of Justice in the future with regard to the ongoing infringements in Hungary and Poland.

Anja Thomas, Oxford University, synthesizes the given views on the future of the European Union and the challenges on the European and national level. With regard to the Brexit, she stresses the change of institutional power on the EU level and the change of voting rates in the Council. In her opinion, the Franco-German couple is still important and able to push policies. Main challenges for the future are especially taxation and the revocation of article 50. In the course of the Brexit, Germany loses one "partner" in market liberalisation, which might have a

crucial impact on the deepening of the single market, financial services, trade negotiations and the fostering of globalisation. In general, Thomas outlines three possible scenarios after the Brexit: “Back to the future” (strong Franco-German leadership with a firmer and more credible EU pushing for more reforms), “strong German hegemony” and third “degeneration” (extreme differentiation within the EU).

17:00-17:45h	Poster Session of CETEUS’ projects: Lessons learnt for the Development of Transnational Teaching Curricula
18:00 – 19:30h	<p>Die Ratspräsidentschaft Österreichs: Schnitzel, Sachertorte und Veltliner</p> <p><i>Johannes Pollak, Webster Vienna Private University</i></p> <p>Begrüßung: Wolfgang Wessels, CETEUS/ Europa-Union Köln</p> <p>Moderation: Tobias Kunstein, Universität zu Köln / Europa-Union Köln</p>

In the evening of the first conference day, Prof Dr Wolfgang Wessels and Prof Dr Johannes Pollak took the opportunity to draw a conclusion on the Austrian Presidency in the Council of the European Union in 2018. The discussion moderated by Dr Tobias Kunstein and organised by CETEUS as well as the Europa-Union Cologne was entitled “Schnitzel, Sachertorte und Veltliner”.

As director of the Webster Vienna Private University as well as professor for political sciences in Vienna Prof Pollak was able to provide detailed insights into the various aspects that characterised the Presidency. What is more, priorities of the current Austrian national conservative government regarding European politics were discussed. Pollak stressed that despite the Austrian government’s ability to use big words – especially related to migration policies – it failed overcoming the split the EU suffers. In fact, he expressed his apprehension that the Presidency has even increased disenchantment with the EU. With regard to the structuring of the presidency as such, Pollak particularly criticised the high financial and personnel effort organising a presidency especially entails for smaller member states.

In addition, Prof Wessels broadened the discussion by depicting trends in the EU’s institutional framework. In particular, the increasing dominant position of the European Council as crisis

manager has resulted in a substantial loss of power the Council has to face. What is more, Wessels outlined potential developments in 2019 standing out by various national and regional elections and – what was emphasised the most – the European Parliament elections in May. As a strategy for lessening dangers of populist and Eurosceptic parties he recommended highlighting concrete EU projects instead of just focussing on single problems.

In total, the discussants summed up that due to the underperformance of the Austrian government in the past half-year substantively little could be achieved. This was especially related to the nationalist political approach of the government that showed little interest in promoting urgent issues in the EU, but also due to the development that the presidency of the Council of the EU has essentially lost importance in previous years. Both experts agreed on the necessity for reforming this concept. Whether a reformed and thus strengthened European Commission, as Pollak proposed, or specific committees that Wessels brought into the discussion are more likely to take over the presidency's work more effectively has to be substance for future debates.