

A MESSAGE FROM THE EPC

2 April 2025

Dear Friends of the EPC,

EUrope* is facing an existential challenge. Russia's war of aggression is threatening free and democratic Europe well beyond Ukraine. The international norms that anchor European democracies are under mounting assault by an ideology that equates might with right, while global trade and multilateral cooperation are unravelling. Our open societies are increasingly divided as liberal democracies are being attacked both from outside and from within. The security architecture that enabled Europe to change the course of our history for the better is under threat from without, and is at best a matter of evident indifference to the main power that helped to build it.

In this environment, the [role of think tanks](#) is more critical than ever. Independent, evidence-based analysis is essential to cut through the fog of misinformation and framing informed debate, while advocating for necessary choices that will inevitably involve painful trade-offs and sacrifices. But as the role of think tanks becomes more politically critical, they also become more exposed to the crisis of politics. Misinformation, defamation, divide-and-conquer tactics and hybrid threats (including cyber) are already levied against liberal democracy as a whole by well-organised and well-funded actors within and outside the EU. The crosshairs also target institutions – an experience the European Policy Centre (EPC) has already grappled with in recent months – and, ultimately, the individuals that staff them.

While learning to weather these pressures, think tanks must confront a shrinking democratic space. Organisational funding for think tanks that allows focusing on strategic issues is increasingly hard to come by. As Trump 2.0 facilitates the entwining of the loose threads of global illiberalism and declares the very existence of the EU to be inimical, shifting winds are likely to drive some corporates to drastically scale back funding for initiatives that support liberal democracy. At the same time, liberal democratic governments and institutions are under funding pressures, as well as shying away from funding activities that support liberal democracy, given the public attacks that this increasingly entails.

To us, none of this the above is an excuse for defeatism, but rather a rallying call for action. EUrope needs to decisively demonstrate its agency in safeguarding security and preserving security and prosperity for generations to come. The bold, realistic and decisive leadership we expect of EU and non-EU governments in confronting existential challenges requires empowered, more outspoken think tanks that refuse to be pressured into silence. It requires a strong transnational community of interlocutors to build a shared vision across EUrope and beyond. It requires non-official diplomacy with global partners, which an [increasingly lonely EUrope](#) cannot afford to lose.

Building on its long history at the forefront of European integration and its persistent intellectual honesty in diagnosing the [permacrisis](#) and the fundamental consequences of the watersheds of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Trump 2.0, the EPC has been

leading by example and will continue to do so in future. Since Russia started its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, we have strengthened our analytical and convening capacities to stand by Ukraine. With our analysis anticipating and following the US presidential elections we were at the forefront of identifying the multiple [threats Trump 2.0 poses](#) to Europe's economy, security, and democracy.

With our [DefSecEU project](#) we are providing groundbreaking ideas and convening leadership to support the strengthening of European defence. With our first ever [Brussels Economic Security Forum](#) (BESF) in June 2025, we will provide a high-level platform for conceptualising ways to salvage international economic collaboration and strengthen Europe's economic security. With the Northern Europe Platform we have launched a new push for stakeholder mobilisation to understand the threats and unleash the opportunities of this vast region that is vital to Europe's future. With our work on EU enlargement and internal reform we will continue our efforts aiming to widen and deepen European integration within and potentially outside the EU framework. With our work on sustainability, social Europe and migration, we will continue to set out evidence-based arguments for better policy on climate, the environment, social and health security and migration. With our work on the [supra-governmental avantgarde](#), we are developing concepts for European integration in a different era.

At the heart of our strategy is our transnational approach, connecting expertise and building capacity together with our partners from across Europe and beyond. We stand firm on our values of independence, multi-stakeholder engagement, ethical research as well as diversity and inclusion.


Times like these require institutional learning, courage and resilience from colleagues and partners, something the EPC is firmly committed to – now more than ever. We hope that we can count on your continued support to protect Europe's values, principles and interests in an effort to sustain prosperity, sustainability, security and democracy for current and future generations.

We would be very pleased to hear your ideas and suggestions on how the EPC, along with our friends and partners, can jointly navigate these critical times for Europe with determination and ambition.

On behalf of the EPC,



Declan Kelleher, Chairman
of the EPC Governing Board



Brigid Laffan,
President of the EPC



Fabian Zuleeg, Chief
Executive of the EPC

**Europe is a term coined by the EPC. It stands for both the institutional structure of the EU and the broader geo-political region of Europe. It encompasses the European Union, the European continent, as well as potential alternative forms of cooperation beyond the EU as we know it.*