



Alumni event „Ideas for Europe – DAAD alumni contribute to shaping Europe“ Workshop description

Workshop 1: Forced migration to Europe

Context:

Although there are fewer refugees arriving in the EU today than in the “crisis years” 2015/2016, the topic of forced migration is not off the EU table. On the contrary, the consequences of the current situation in Afghanistan, the continued instability in Syria and the conflicts in the Sahel region in Africa make it most likely that the topic remains a fundamental challenge for the EU. In 2019, 1,885 refugees and migrants died in the Mediterranean (cf. IOM). Member states have so far not been able to find a joint position on a more balanced approach that avoids putting the burden on countries with an external border and even more importantly, avoiding unnecessary deaths in the Mediterranean.

Potential questions to be tackled:

- How to ensure burden sharing and solidarity within the EU and respectively with the countries at the EU’s external borders?
- Is there a need for new reforms and/or new instruments beyond FRONTEX?
- Can partnership agreements with third countries (such as the ‘EU-Turkey deal’) help to control forced migration into Europe? Should the new Strategy with Africa address this topic?
- Which role could a stronger collaboration between EU and Africa, especially in education and science, play (e. g. the first ‘[Africa Initiative](#)’ under Horizon Europe)?
- How can higher education contribute to mitigating the impact of forced migration?
- What are the major challenges and what is the added value for hosting societies when integrating refugees and asylum seekers?

Workshop 2: Realising the European Green Deal

Context:

The European Commission under President von der Leyen announced '[The European Green Deal](#)' in December 2019, aiming for Europe to become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. A 55 % reduction of carbon emissions is the goal, and concrete measures were presented under the '[Fit for 55 package](#)'. Requiring action on all levels of society and business, the implementation of the European Green Deal remains a challenge. The EU needs to find the right balance between cutting emissions, investing in clean energy and sustainable solutions, but also in ensuring that nobody is left behind.

Potential questions to be tackled:

- Can the EU become the leader for a sustainable future? Does it have a real impact if Europe is acting alone?
- How can citizens be empowered to contribute to the Green Deal on an individual level (keyword: education for sustainable development)?
How to sustainably transform the economy, and what potential and challenges does that encompass? Which actors need to cooperate more closely in the future to implement the European Green Deal, and to what extent can universities contribute to this? How can the European Green Deal, alongside in a greener Erasmus+, be further reflected?
- How to ensure that no one (no region, no part of society) is left behind?
- What happens if the benchmarks set by the European Commission are not achieved as expected?

Workshop 3: The European Way of Life

Context:

With new populist political parties being established across Europe, the idea of European citizenship and the conventional understanding of “European values” has been challenged. New tensions have emerged in Europe on topics such as the rule of law, the freedom of speech, freedom of media and academic freedom. The European Commission has reacted by assigning a commissioner the portfolio ‘promoting the European Way of Life’, focusing on security issues (to counter terrorism and radicalisation, organised crime and cyber threats), fundamental rights (to fight discrimination and to promote gender equality), as well as judicial cooperation (to tackle human trafficking, smuggling and corruption; to create a European area of justice).

Potential questions to be tackled:

- How do we define the “European way of life”? How can this term shape future politics?
- What role does the “European way of life” play on a social and cultural level? And how can the increasing pressure of right-wing populism on liberal-minded civil society be countered?
- What are the so called “European values”? Is there a common definition or do we need to shape them together?
- How can we safeguard European values and how can they be better embedded legally? What role will the rule of law play in the future to ensure more democracy?
- What is the added value and what are the challenges of European citizenship? How can we further develop it?

Workshop 4: Study and research in Europe without borders

Context:

With international mobility growing significantly in numbers throughout the Bologna Process, it has become the norm for many European students and researchers. Additionally, more than 10 million people have been supported under Erasmus since the start of the programme in 1987. Further 10 million learners are expected to benefit under the new generation of the Erasmus+ programme (2021-2027), whose budget has nearly been doubled compared to the previous generation (2014-2020). However, much remains to be done to realise the joint European Education and Research Area, in which students and researchers can freely decide where to study or conduct research. Many obstacles persist for university cooperation and mobility, such as recognition of study periods abroad, different semester times, language, etc. The French President Macron gave the debate a new impetus in 2017 by proposing to establish '[European Universities](#).' In addition, the emergence of digitalisation under the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the sustainability agenda substantially altered the discussion on international mobility. Finally, inclusion and diversity, a more digital and greener Erasmus+ are the new horizontal priorities for the EU's education programme.

Potential questions to be tackled:

- Which impact does international mobility have on students' and researchers' life and careers?
 - a) Do they get easier/ a better job?
 - b) Does mobility of students and researchers make them more European?
- How will digitalisation influence international mobility in the future? Will it be possible to realise internationalization 'at home'?
- What is the impact of internationalisation in higher education? How can societies benefit more from internationally networked institutions and what potential lies in the European Universities Initiative? What will be the role and the tasks of a European University in the future?
- The EU's most popular education programme Erasmus+ is constantly being developed: What themes and features should Erasmus incorporate? How can more synergies with the research programme Horizon Europe be created?



Workshop 5: Europe´s role in the World

Context:

By joining forces, EU member states aim to have a stronger voice in international politics. The new European Commission has declared itself a “geopolitical Commission”, wishing to reinforce Europe’s global leadership role. The challenges are enormous: securing peace and supporting development - in particular in the EU's surrounding regions in the East and the South, spanning from Central Asia to Central Africa - as well as finding the right balance in dealing with difficult partners, such as China or Russia, and defining new relations with formerly close partners, such as the United Kingdom.

Potential questions to be tackled:

- How can the European Defence Union become a reality and how would it shape Europe’s global role?
- How can a complementarity with NATO be achieved and what is the future role of the Transatlantic Alliance?
- How can and should the EU deal with an economic superpower but undemocratic China?
- How can the EU strengthen cooperation with other regional multilateral organisations, such as ASEAN and the African Union, and with which priorities?
- How should collaboration with the United Kingdom post-Brexit, including research and education, look like?

Workshop 6: Digitalising and transforming the European economy

Context:

Whilst Europe's economy and society are being transformed by the development and increased use of digital technologies, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of digitalisation even further. This presents enormous growth potential for Europe, but it also needs to be managed. The EU's digital strategy aims to make this transformation work for people and businesses, while helping to achieve its target of a climate-neutral Europe by 2050. A particular challenge for Europe remains to ensure that no societal part or geographical region is left behind throughout process. The [digital compass](#) sets out the EU's digital ambitions for the next decade, focussing on four areas: skills, infrastructures, the transformation of businesses and of public services.

Potential questions to be tackled:

- The EU is far from being a digital pioneer compared to other global players: How can Europe turn into an inspiring actor for the digital transformation process?
- The state of the industrial digitalisation varies significantly between EU member states and regions as well as across sectors, between high-tech and more traditional areas. How to get all on board?
- What are the risks and benefits of digitalisation for European citizens?
- What role should European universities play in the digital transformation process?

How can institutions in education and training react to the demand from industries and enterprises for digital skills?

Workshop 7: Democracy in the EU and a joint reform process for the EU's future

Context:

Democracy in the EU and its member states is facing challenges such as rising extremism, disinformation and a perceived distance between people and their elected representatives. The “Conference on the Future of Europe” aims to facilitate a discussion about how to make the EU more democratic. New ideas and concepts can range from “soft” modifications to “hard” treaty changes. At the same time, the conference is a major pan-European democratic exercise in itself by being initiated as citizen-led series of debates and discussions about the key priorities and challenges for Europe's future - the first of its kind. The decisive point is the current political momentum to think openly about Europe's future shape, as it is part of the European Commission President von der Leyen's pledge to give Europeans a greater say on what the EU does and how it works for them.

Potential questions to be tackled:

- What are the best-suited channels to involve citizens in policymaking? How can we bring the EU closer to its citizens and how can we better explain the benefits of European integration?
- What role can the media play?
- What possibilities do you see to better embed European values, fundamental rights and freedoms in the institutional structures of the EU?
- Shall the European Parliament be strengthened in its competences? If yes, how?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of transnational lists for the European elections? How should the “Spitzenkandidaten” model (top candidate process for the election of the Commission President) look like in the future?
- What could be done to improve the decision-making process in the EU institutions?

Workshop 8: The (post-)pandemic EU: Insights, perspectives and lessons learned

Context:

After the first rapid border closures undertaken by EU member states, there was a movement for more European solidarity in reaction to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU finally reacted with the largest aid package in history in form of a new recovery instrument, called [NextGenerationEU](#), with two main goals: that all member states can recover from the COVID-19-caused crisis and that the EU emerges stronger from the pandemic by transforming its economies and societies, in particular with regards to the digital and green agendas. Moreover, the pandemic has brought the initiative for a [European Health Union](#) on the table.

Potential questions to be tackled:

- Lessons learnt: How will Europe deal with the next pandemic situation? How can Europe better prepare for the next (unforeseen) crisis?
- Which potential lies with the NextGenerationEU instrument in tackling future challenges on EU level?
- What implications does the Covid-19 pandemic have for international cooperation and exchange?
- What are the challenges and prospects for science communication and advocacy (the role, visibility and responsibility of scientists) in pandemic and post-pandemic times?
- How to adopt international mobility and cooperation in education and research to the conditions of global (health) crises?