



# WORKSHOP

Maastricht and the future of Europe: Discovering the rights and obligations of European Citizenship

**CERV Programme . Network of Towns**

## MEETING 2

Moletai (Lithuania)

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MUNICIPALITY OF MOLETAI  
(LITHUANIA)



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Like many other current EU member states, Lithuania's accession to the European Union was based on the assumption that membership would create better conditions for realizing the interests of the population. Although the accession to the EU gave the member states many opportunities, the sudden increase in interest rates of the European Central Bank and the increasing EURIBOR became a fundamental challenge for the population. Inflation began to accelerate not because of a too fast-growing economy, but because of other factors, firstly because of the pandemic and the energy crisis, caused by the war in Ukraine. The increased interest rates reduced the demand for housing loans across Europe, the affordability of real estate decreased.



MUNICIPALITY OF  
MOLETAI (LITHUANIA)

How did the Maastricht Treaty change the lives of EU member citizens?

The Maastricht Treaty introduced citizenship of the Union - all citizens of the European Union can move freely within the European Union, there are no internal borders and, as a result, travel is much easier. In addition, there are no obstacles to live, work or study in another EU country and vote there in local and European Parliament elections without renouncing your citizenship. However, unfortunately, the laws of the European Union countries regarding the granting of citizenship to immigrants are not the same: some are more open, others are more restrictive. We already see that immigrants turn to countries where it is easier to obtain citizenship, and then cross internal borders to those that offer better conditions of settlement and benefits. To overcome this challenge, to unify access, the legal framework is still being developed.

All citizens of the European Union have the right to study, work or retire in any country of the European Union. As a citizen of the European Union, every country in the European Union must treat its citizens in the same way as it treats its own citizens when it comes to work, social security and taxes. Exchange programs of the European Union help students to successfully acquire education and provide excellent opportunities to gain experience in foreign countries. Working people are helped to improve their work activities, traveling, exchanging delegations, creating websites. In today's job market, one of the biggest challenges is finding, recruiting and retaining the best people. The European Union without borders becomes a challenge for countries and states; after getting an education and becoming good employees, people often take advantage of attractive and motivating job offers, move to work and build a life in other countries.

EU membership has had a positive effect on the quality of goods and services. Consumers can rely on the same minimum quality, safety and health standards in all Member States thanks to the EU's comprehensive consumer protection rules. The standards that products in EU stores must meet are among the strictest in the world, both in terms of quality and safety.

EU food and environment also meet the highest quality standards in the world. Health protection is the objective of all EU laws and standards in the agricultural and food sectors. The EU has created some of the strictest environmental protection standards in the world, reducing environmental pollution and rationally saving natural resources. A challenge for mass textile producers - members of the European Parliament propose to expand their responsibility and oblige them to cover the costs of collecting, sorting and processing the production.

Today's European Union is a powerful economic and political unit supporting peace and justice throughout the world. The EU occupies a leading position in global trade. Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises make up the absolute majority of all EU enterprises (90%). Thanks to the EU, we are protected from the negative aspects of globalization, but small and micro-enterprises face constant challenges to stay afloat. The European Union is responding by supporting small businesses and creating rules to ensure that large companies pay their fair share of taxes.

Despite the emerging challenges, we can safely say that the community, which has developed unified systems, is constantly improving and bringing opportunities to the citizens of the European Union.

# NAVIGATING THE FUTURE: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S POST-2024 ELECTION CHALLENGES

As the dust settles after the 2024 European Parliament elections, the continent stands at a critical juncture, poised to address a myriad of challenges and opportunities. The newly elected Parliament faces an array of pressing issues, from economic harmonization to geopolitical complexities. In this opinion piece, we delve into the multifaceted landscape awaiting the European Parliament, exploring the paths to progress and the hurdles that lie ahead.



ASOCIACIÓN XUVENIL  
TIRABOLEIROS  
ASOCIACIÓN  
TIRABOLEIROS (SPAIN)

## Harmonization of Fiscal Policies:

At the heart of Europe's economic agenda lies the quest for fiscal harmonization—a delicate balancing act between unity and diversity. While the European Union has made strides in aligning member states' fiscal policies, disparities persist, hindering the realization of a truly integrated economic bloc. The post-2024 Parliament must navigate these divergent interests with tact and diplomacy, fostering consensus while respecting national sovereignty. By promoting dialogue and cooperation, the Parliament can lay the groundwork for a more resilient and equitable fiscal framework, bolstering Europe's economic cohesion in an uncertain global landscape.

## Strengthening the Agro-Food Industry:

Amidst shifting consumer preferences and environmental concerns, Europe's agro-food industry stands at a crossroads, poised for transformation. The post-2024 Parliament must prioritize the sector's sustainability and resilience, charting a course towards a more secure and innovative food system. From supporting small-scale farmers to incentivizing sustainable practices, legislative action can drive positive change, ensuring that Europe remains a global leader in agro-food production. By harnessing technology and fostering collaboration, the Parliament can unlock the industry's full potential, safeguarding both economic prosperity and food security for future generations.

## Geostrategic Considerations:

In an increasingly interconnected world, Europe's geopolitical landscape is rife with challenges and complexities. From geopolitical tensions to transnational threats, the continent faces a myriad of security concerns that demand a unified and proactive response. The post-2024 Parliament must prioritize strategic cooperation and dialogue, forging partnerships that promote stability and prosperity on the global stage. By leveraging its diplomatic prowess and soft power, Europe can assert its influence and shape the course of international affairs, advancing shared values and interests in an ever-evolving geopolitical arena.

## Conclusion:

As the European Parliament embarks on its post-2024 journey, the road ahead is fraught with both promise and peril. By embracing collaboration and innovation, the Parliament can overcome the challenges that lie ahead, steering Europe towards a brighter and more prosperous future. With bold leadership and a steadfast commitment to the common good, the Parliament has the power to shape history, forging a path of progress and prosperity for generations to come. In this pivotal moment, let us seize the opportunity to build a Europe that is resilient, inclusive, and forward-looking—a beacon of hope and unity in an uncertain world.

## THE NEW CHALLENGES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION BEFORE THE UPCOMING EUROPEAN ELECTIONS



MUNICIPALITY OF  
PILEIA-HORTIATIS

MUNICIPALITY OF  
PILEIA HORTIATIS  
(GREECE)

It is just a few months before the European Parliament elections in June where around 370 million voters will have the chance to decide for their national representatives in the EU's legislative assembly. Nowadays and for the years to come new challenges are faced. Electing 720 MEPs to have their say on these matters that truly affect EU citizens is crucial.

The last years, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic and war in our neighborhood, new uncertainties arise in security, economy, climate and health issues. Special funds were attributed to mitigate the economic and social impact of the pandemic and special measures were taken to manage migration from conflict zones.

The question is what's at stake in the forthcoming European Parliament elections. Some issues of the agenda that are of great interest for the European voters could be summarized as follows.

### Climate - Energy

The EU Parliament adopted in July 2023 the target for a collective reduction in energy consumption of at least 11.7% at EU level by 2030. In line with EU's 2050 climate neutrality goal under the Green Deal, the European Commission proposed the first package of measures to speed up transition towards a circular economy. The proposals include boosting sustainable products, empowering consumers for the green transition, the review of the construction product regulation, as well as a strategy on sustainable textiles

### Security -Migration

The war in Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas conflict threatens both regional and international security, while migration and refugee concerns demand strategic attention from the EU's incoming leadership. Especially for states bordering the conflicted nations or states in the frontline of migration addressing those issues in the EU parliament is crucial.

In the terms of security also cybersecurity, data protection and telecommunications are issues to be tackled by the EU.

### Digital transformation- Artificial intelligence

The digital transformation is one of the EU's priorities. The European Parliament is helping to shape the policies that will strengthen Europe's capacities in new digital technologies, open new opportunities for businesses and consumers, support the EU's green transition and help it to reach climate neutrality by 2050, support people's digital skills and training for workers, and help digitalise public services, while ensuring the respect of basic rights and values.

In its 2021 report the EU Parliament called on the Commission to further tackle challenges posed by the digital transition and especially take advantage of the opportunities of the digital single market, improve the use of artificial intelligence and support digital innovation and skills. Regulations surrounding artificial intelligence will likely be on the agenda to balance innovation with ethical considerations. The EU is an important legislator for regulating AI development.

The European Union faces a series of crucial challenges that require a strategic and visionary approach to ensure its sustainability on the global stage, as new elections approach.

The challenges cover a wide range of areas, from the economy and security to social and environmental issues. It will be imperative for the European Union to guarantee its autonomy and resilience by adopting proactive and immediate measures.

At first, through significant and strategic investments in innovation, research and development, the European Union must strengthen its economy and reduce its dependence on other countries, by boosting key sectors and promoting European competitiveness in the global market.

It is essential to promote a smart business policy that supports European companies and stimulates the creation of high-quality jobs.

In security matters, it is essential that the EU develops autonomous defense and security capabilities, promoting a comprehensive approach that includes not only military measures, but also diplomatic, economic and developmental ones.

This means strengthening the cooperation between member states in the field of defence, optimizing common military capabilities and increasing investment in research and development of security technologies.

In the context of climate change, the European Union must lead the way towards a greener and more sustainable economy. With massive investments in renewable energies and energy efficiency, the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices and the implementation of ambitious emission reduction policies.

The European Union must also play an active role in building a global low-carbon economy, setting high standards and encouraging international cooperation.

As a key factor, in terms of social cohesion, the EU must step up efforts to combat poverty, social exclusion and inequality, along with promoting gender equality and ensuring equal opportunities for all European citizens.

Through the implementation of robust welfare policies, the strengthening of education and health systems and the empowerment of marginalized communities.

Lastly, but just as importantly, addressing governance and democracy issues must be high on the agenda in order to affirm the legitimacy and effectiveness of its institutions.

It is essential to promote democratic values and fundamental rights throughout the EU, as well as to defend the rule of law against any internal and external threats. This involves consolidating transparency, accountability and citizen participation in decision-making.

In conclusion, the upcoming European elections offer a crucial opportunity for the European Union to build its future in a positive way. Using a proactive and cooperative perspective, the EU must position itself as a relevant global player.



UNIÃO DE FREGUESIAS  
D FOZ DO SOUSA  
E COVELO (PORTUGAL)

# THE NEW CHALLENGES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION BEFORE THE UPCOMING

The European Union (EU) stands at a critical juncture as it approaches the European Elections of 2024, particularly in Malta. The political landscape of Europe is evolving rapidly, marked by shifting alliances, emerging challenges, and the need for decisive action on various fronts.

As Malta prepares to cast its vote, it must grapple with a host of pressing issues that will shape the EU's trajectory in the coming years. This essay explores the significant challenges facing the EU in 2024 and the implications for Malta in the context of the upcoming elections.



KUNSIGĠ LOKALI  
TAS-SLIEMA

MUNICIPALITY OF  
SLIEMA (MALTA)

## Challenges of Economic Recovery:

One of the foremost challenges confronting the EU is the task of economic recovery in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has inflicted severe economic damage, exacerbating inequalities and disrupting traditional economic models.

Malta, like other member states, faces the daunting challenge of revitalizing its economy while ensuring resilience against future crises. Issues such as job creation, sustainable growth, and fiscal stability will feature prominently in the electoral discourse as Maltese voters evaluate the candidates' proposals for economic recovery within the EU framework.

## Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability:

Another pressing challenge for the EU is addressing climate change and promoting environmental sustainability. As the effects of climate change become increasingly evident, there is a growing imperative for ambitious policies to mitigate carbon emissions, protect biodiversity, and transition to renewable energy sources.

Malta, with its vulnerability to rising sea levels and changing weather patterns, has a vested interest in EU-wide initiatives aimed at combating climate change. The European Elections provide an opportunity for Maltese voters to support candidates who prioritize environmental sustainability and advocate for robust climate action at the European level.

## Migration and Border Security:

Migration remains a contentious issue within the EU, with debates revolving around border security, asylum policies, and burden-sharing among member states. Malta, situated at the crossroads of migration routes in the Mediterranean, grapples with the challenges of managing migrant flows while upholding humanitarian principles.

The European Elections will be pivotal in shaping the EU's approach to migration, with implications for Malta's stance on border security and refugee protection. Voters in Malta will scrutinize candidates' positions on migration issues, seeking solutions that balance humanitarian concerns with the imperative of safeguarding Europe's external borders.

## Democratic Governance and Rule of Law:

The EU faces internal challenges related to democratic governance and the rule of law, particularly in light of recent controversies surrounding the adherence to democratic principles in some member states. Malta itself has faced scrutiny over issues such as press freedom, judicial independence, and anti-corruption efforts.

The upcoming European Elections provide an opportunity to reaffirm the EU's commitment to democratic values and institutional integrity. Maltese voters will assess candidates' commitment to upholding the rule of law and ensuring accountability within the EU institutions.

As Malta prepares for the European Elections of 2024, the EU confronts a myriad of challenges that will shape its future trajectory. From economic recovery and climate action to migration management and democratic governance, the issues at stake are multifaceted and interconnected.

The outcome of the elections will not only determine Malta's representation in the European Parliament but also influence the EU's policies and priorities for years to come. As voters in Malta weigh their options, they must consider the candidates' visions for addressing these challenges and advancing the interests of both Malta and the European Union as a whole.

## THE NEW CHALLENGES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION BEFORE THE UPCOMING EUROPEAN ELECTIONS



MUNICIPALITY OF  
GALLODORO  
(SICILY – ITALY)

The 21st and 22nd of March 2024 marked the conclusion of the European Council summit. The body was composed by the leaders of 27 member states, which defines the future priorities of the European Community. This is an important meeting, occurring at the end of a legislative term, serving as a programmatic declaration regarding the upcoming objectives. Therefore, before delving into the heart of the electoral campaign, it is useful to understand what the European citizen will be voting for and briefly how the European legislative apparatus functions.

Due to the transnational or supranational nature of Europe, it is not always obvious to know the distinctions and roles of each institution. The European Union is based on seven institutions. The aforementioned Parliament, Commission, and European Council have decision-making power and act by coordinating with each other: the Commission proposes laws, the Parliament approves them, and together with the European Council, they adopt them. The other institutions are the European Central Bank, the Court of Justice, the Court of Auditors, and finally the Council of the European Union. The latter brings together the ministers of the member countries and should not be confused with the European Council, which instead gathers all heads of government.

Italy, in the 2024 European elections, will vote for its representatives in the European Parliament for the next five years. The 704 members (plus the president elected by the assembly in office for two and a half years) are elected by universal suffrage directly by the citizens using a proportional method: the 76 seats assigned to Italy are calculated basing on the population, divided into 5 geographical constituencies, whose elected members will be representatives.

In addition to the power to discuss, approve, or modify legislation proposed by the Commission, which elects the president, the European Parliament also has an important control function, ensuring that all other institutions are accountable for their actions.

The Europe of the future, the new challenges, the current legislature leaves to the next election some successes, but also new challenges, some of which are decisive. It had the task of dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic and planning the subsequent economic recovery. The summit concluded on March 22nd, has indeed placed at the center of the debate the future position in foreign policy regarding the two conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, internal economic policy regarding agriculture and digital and climate transitions, steps taken in the fight against illegal human trafficking.

In addition to this, the successful implementation of ongoing projects such as the Next Generation EU program with a deadline of 2026, of which the Italian National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) is a part, or the discussion on the modalities for implementing the Green Deal, the European pact to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, falls to the upcoming legislature. What is decided today will have effects not only in the next five years but will also influence life in Europe in the future.

According to the Eurobarometer, the tool through which the EU gauges the "pulse" of its citizens, 61% of Europeans say they are optimistic about the future. To improve further, two things are needed: awareness of the new challenges and, above all, being well-informed.

Thank you for listening.

Prof. Currenti Filippo Alfio  
Mayor of Gallodoro, Italy



## THE NEW CHALLENGES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION BEFORE THE UPCOMING EUROPEAN ELECTIONS



ASSOCIAZIONE  
TUMBARINOS  
(SARDINIA - ITALY)

One year after the polls, many European citizens show interest, according to a recent survey, in the topics: War in Ukraine, cost of living and fight against climate change. Indeed, among the priorities for the relaunch of the Union are the issues of climate, immigration, energy, wars, enlargement of the Union, the economic crisis generated by the pandemic, and the cost of money.

But also to overcome the principle of unanimity in the decisions that the Council takes in the EU.

Landings on the southern coasts of the EU are increasing, and with them also deaths at sea: the first quarter of 2023 was the one with the most deaths in the last six years, according to the International Organization for Migration. There have recently been proposals from the European Union on this topic which need to be discussed and which will be an important topic in the next European elections.

The European Council is the least transparent body I know. Within a few years we will be in 36 countries. If things remain as they are now, it means that a single country can block initiatives that all the others have laboriously carried forward and can do so for years.

Hence the need to initiate a constitutionally relevant and federal reform of the political system of the European Union as soon as possible.

The management of the EU investment budget must also be reviewed to favor a European industrial policy, a common defense and a European investment in the energy and environmental transition. But this cannot happen if each country continues to hold 99% of its Union investment budget.

The EU must implement its own energy and industrial policy in order to compete with other powers such as China or the United States. We need a common European defense.

The same goes for intelligence services and cyber security. The world is changing and decisions will have to be made on possible new international scenarios.

In addition to the war in Ukraine and the ecological transition, migration policy will undoubtedly be an important topic for parties during election campaigns.

Pier Gavino Sedda - Associazione Tumbarinos di Gavoi - Sardegna - ITALIA

## THE EUROPEAN UNION'S NEW CHALLENGES AHEAD OF THE NEXT EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

At a time of war in Ukraine, in a tense geopolitical context, faced with the prospect of EU enlargement, the challenges of climate change and migration in a gloomy and uncertain economic reality, the forthcoming European elections, often marked by abstentions, will be important for the future of Europe.

Given the scale of the political, economic and environmental crises, the clearest message for the citizens of the various Member States is certainly that of a strong, united Europe, capable of protecting them.

However, will the various governments succeed in mobilising the public for this election, which is generally marked by a high abstention rate?

In France, as in other countries, it is therefore crucial to raise public awareness of the importance of the European Parliament and to promote active participation in the elections from 6 to 9 June.

The issue of abstention in European elections is even more acute in the French Overseas Territories, where geographical distance can sometimes create a feeling of disconnection. It is therefore essential to make European issues relevant and accessible in these territories, to explain the role of the European Parliament, to take stock of European policy and to make people aware of the importance of their vote in the election of their MEPs.

The first challenge to be met is to ensure a significant turnout for these elections.

The way the European Union functions over the next five years will depend on the outcome of these elections, and will have an impact on migration policies and on major challenges such as the Green Pact and the question of EU enlargement.

In France, as in other EU countries, recent protests against the European Green Pact, the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), environmental standards, restrictions on the use of plant protection products, and imports of Ukrainian agricultural products illustrate the mistrust many farmers have of European policy.

One of the EU's challenges is to restore confidence among these groups of citizens, who may be tempted to support anti-European sovereignist parties.

Better explaining to the public that, thanks to the European Green Pact, net greenhouse gas emissions will have fallen by around a third between 1990 and 2021 will help them to better understand and accept the new environmental standards.

In terms of defence, the inability of the Member States to agree on a common security strategy is another challenge to be taken up in the elections next June.

What direction will the EU take after the June elections?

Will this Europe be a strong and united Union?

Will it be an enlarged Europe, open to immigration?

Will it favour new trade partnerships?

Or will it be a Europe that is fragile, frigid and inward-looking?

As a founding member, France must play a leading role in promoting democracy and European cooperation, while taking account of the specific characteristics of its overseas territories.

"To the ballot box, citizens! "



Association "La Didine"



France  
(Overseas)

ASSOCIATION LA DIDINE  
(MARTINIQUE – FRANCE)



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