

## Day 2 Summary

The second day of the Prague European Summit mostly focused on the challenges facing the EU in the wake of the European Parliamentary elections, and crises like Brexit, migration, and democratic backsliding of certain member states. The day kicked off with a keynote speech from the Czech Republic's State Secretary for European Affairs **Milena Hrdinková**. In addition to addressing the benefits of EU membership, Hrdinková mentioned the need for effective policies that will overcome the challenges posed by institutional complexities, such as redundant bureaucracy.

Many panels stressed how the growing populist movement is eroding the EU's core democratic values. In the panel *The Future of the European Neighborhood*, Political Director of Romania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs **Stefan Tinca** said that the EU's "ring of friends" has turned into a "ring of problems" thanks to migration, Brexit, and the rise of populism. While speakers emphasized the need for clearly defined strategic goals towards different European regions when it comes to issues like China's long-term influence or Russian interference, they also discouraged a one-size-fits-all approach.

The need to strengthen the rule of law was also mentioned in several panels. **Eric Maurice**, head of Brussels Office at the Robert Schuman Foundation, posed the question of whether the EU or its member states should change in order to address recent violations in Article 7 on the panel *Challenges to the Rule of Law and the EU's Fundamental Values*. Speakers discussed the integrity of elections and the democratic principles that are at stake because of non-adherence to rule-based order.

However, other panelists on *European Sovereignty and Strategic Autonomy: How Can We Make it Work?* pointed out that many see the EU as a catalyst for the negative impacts of globalization. In order to avoid being a passive object, the EU must use its tools and supersede the sovereign state. Concern was also raised about the lack of safeguarding the Euro's value against crises similar to 2012 during the *The Future Path of Euro* panel, but all panellists agreed that it is a resilient currency that would be able to bounce back.

The Brexit stalemate was characterized as a disconnect between a Eurosceptic government in Britain and an incentive-less EU to come up with a better agreement. In *Brexit: What Now?* **Roland Freudenstein**, Deputy Director at Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, said that asking Britain to return is a waste of energy because it would bring a very polarized country with many internal battles back into the EU. Suggestions on how to proceed included looking for ways to cooperate in other domains like social justice and military cooperation or going with a soft Brexit. However, all panelists agreed that the future was "clear as mud".



The impact of technological innovations on EU countries was another major theme of the conference. In the *Industrial Revolution 4.0 Effects' on European Societies* panel, speakers weighed in on the role of automation in creating a stable workforce. Chairperson of the European Union Affairs Committee **Kalle Palling** called for policies that will prepare the future workforce for the next five years when technology will “change as much as in the last hundred years”.

Issues regarding privacy surrounding data usage were also featured in *Data as a New Currency, Big Data Governance and Public Policy*. The discussion revolved around the need to balance governments and companies' usage of data to improve services and policy with the potential cost to privacy, especially when it comes to accountability and transparency. The panelists couldn't offer any conclusions on if governments and companies could be trusted with personal data, but they did emphasize the need for responsibility from everyone. Speakers at the *Big Data, Information and Politics: New Technologies in Focus* all had a positive approach to using Big Data but questioned if every country should have its own regulations. Some suggestions were creating an independent body to regulate personal data usage or having it protected under the EU with the same regulation for each member state.

Concerns about Europe's ability to have a technological edge over other countries came up in *Competitiveness of Europe in the Field of Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality*. Centre for Industrial Studies Senior Partner **Laura Delponte** pointed out that more than 250,000 tech workers left Europe for the United States and China in search of career advancement, which is disconcerting considering the projected growth of the AI industry. However, Director of Eticas Research & Consulting **Gemma Galdon Clavell** was skeptical on the ability to implement this tech effectively.

The Summit also touched on issues surrounding gender at the breakfast discussion *What Leadership Vision for the EU?* which focused on achieving women's rights and gender equality through policies that promote rights, resources, and representation. The speakers called for closer cooperation and shared responsibility in countering populist leaders, a bottom-up approach to bring gender equality into the political mainstream in certain countries, and more women in leadership positions across the EU.

