

European Union: What Keeps Us United

By Colette Mazzucelli, NYU New York

As a former Bosch Fellow in the German Foreign Office and member of the Global Diplomacy Lab, it is my pleasure to thank the organizers of the Bled Strategic Forum for the invitation to participate this morning with distinguished panelists and engaged colleagues in our audience.

Over fifteen years ago, my first visit to Slovenia was to meet with experts at the Distance Learning Center in Maribor. Their vision underlined a commitment to lifelong learning. A journey the next day to Carinthia in Austria provided the chance to speak in German about an external perspective on the European Union.

As my remarks were shared in German, a colleague, Dr. Miroslav Polzer, translated the ideas simultaneously into Slovenian for the community in Carinthia. Even before Slovenia became an EU member state, that experience taught me the meaning of a people's Europe, a Europe of community, of unity in diversity.

In 2002, I felt Slovenia in Maribor's innovation. In 2018, I feel Slovenia in Bled's dialogue.

Shada Islam, in her remarks for this panel, explains: "The real heroes of the 21st Century are not national politicians but local ones, those working in Europe's provinces, villages, towns and cities and dealing with the day-to-day problems of citizens."

The BSF 2018 Concept Paper asserts that "the key principle of managing our mutual dependence has been, or should be, solidarity, as proven from the outset of the integration process." In this context, a sustained commitment by leaders and citizens in local areas to resilience is essential for European unity.

Forced migration and populist rhetoric nurture an exclusive nationalism, which often leads to the "othering" of refugees. A culture of fear perpetuated by extreme Right leaders threatens values, which are the foundation of postwar integration in Community Europe.

Resilience, "the capacity of a system, enterprise, or a person to maintain its core purpose and integrity in the face of dramatically changed circumstances" (Zolli

Simon & Schuster, 2012, p. 7.) asks leaders and citizens to craft through diverse experiences a European integration narrative that confronts present challenges.

A 21st century narrative that speaks to the capacity for resilience is still one drawn from 20th century experience – “never again.” Recent events in Chemnitz illustrate the necessity to demonstrate solidarity against the Far Right whose rise is an alarming global as well as European phenomenon.

The completion of the internal market and the creation of the Euro are symbols of European unity. Yet, these significant achievements have not inspired solidarity on behalf of European identity; the free movement of persons creates fear of migration and terrorism; tensions in the Eurozone divide North from South.

As the EU Commissioner for Transport explained yesterday, a forward-looking European construction project has the responsibility to engage citizens who communicate and listen in networks embodying a plurality of voices, the plurality that comprises a people’s Europe.

This need to demonstrate solidarity in civil society requires the recognition that to be a citizen in the European Union confers responsibilities as well as rights. A fundamental right at the heart of solidarity in this era of globalization involves personal data, as defined by The Data Union.

Personal data is each person’s natural resource, which fuels the labor of the economy. The time has come to create ethical and equitable income equality from the labor that each person has contributed as input to our collective productivity. Civil society is at the heart of a movement for economic and social inclusion.

In this era, identity takes on meaning in myriad ways. Resilience in our commitment to data dignity is essential in the European Union to keep us united. Thank you.