ACADEMIC PREPARATION KIT

14th Regional Selection Conference of EYP CZ Olomouc 2023

EUROPEAN **YOUTH** PARLIAMENT
ČESKÁ REPUBLIKA CZECH REPUBLIC

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INTRODUCTION FROM THE ACADEMIC BOARD

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to Olomouc '23! This Academic Preparation Kit (APK) will serve as your companion for the pre-session period: in it you will find all the Academic related content and tasks needed at the session.

After this brief introduction you'll find an explanation of the structure of the European Union, as well as its functions.You will later on find the Topic Overviews: all the Chairpersons wrote their own document for each topic together with us, the Academic Board, with the aim of providing you with an easy to read and guide to your own topic! We strongly encourage you to read your own thoroughly and, while you are at it, you might as well get a peek at the rest of the work: you'll be more prepared for General Assembly and the debates to come!

Enjoy reading as much as we enjoyed writing this! Cannot wait to see you all in Olomouc!!!

Best Regards,

Nikola, Julia, and Michele
Academic Board of OLM 2023

THE EU AND ITS INSTITUTIONS EXPLAINED

The EU's structure and functioning can be quite complex due to its many Member States and areas of competence. This is a very brief summary which is going to be of help during the duration of the session on how the EU and some of its institutions work.

The EU is a political and economic union of 27 European countries that work together in various ways to promote common interests and objectives. The values of the EU are **human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and human rights**. It is built on the concept of countries working together and agreeing to let go of some control over their governments to reach common goals, standards, and laws. Each Member State is recognized as a sovereign nation with the authority to govern its domestic affairs. However, their participation in EU institutions and policies varies. This flexibility is due to the **principle of subsidiarity**, where decisions are made at the most appropriate level of government. Member States may have **exclusive, shared, or national competencies**.

The EU on its own has several institutions. Some of the most important institutions which will be relevant during the session's span are:

The institutional triangle

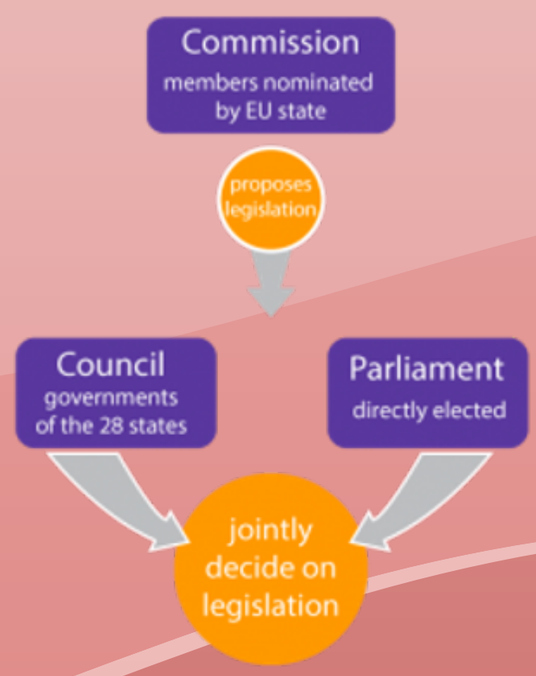
The **European Commission** is the **executive body** of the EU. It proposes laws and policies by drafting legislative proposals, which are then reviewed by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. It also enforces EU laws by monitoring their implementation in Member States and can take legal action against those not complying.

The **European Parliament** is the EU's directly elected legislative branch, where Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) represent the interests of EU citizens. It plays a key role in shaping and approving EU laws, and its members are elected by citizens of each Member State in European elections.

The **Council of the EU** (also known as the **Council of Ministers**) represents the **national governments** of EU Member States and, along with the European Parliament, forms the legislative process. It plays a pivotal role in adopting EU legislation, making decisions on various policies, and coordinating the positions of Member States.

The European Council

The **European Council** is often confused with the Council of the EU or the **Council of Europe**[1] because of their name similarities, however, the two serve two different, vital roles in the functioning of the EU. The European Council is a high-level body consisting of the heads of **State** of EU Member States. It provides the EU with strategic guidance and sets the broad political agenda, making important decisions on major issues like foreign policy, economic coordination, and institutional reforms.



1 The **Council of Europe** is NOT an EU institution. It is an international organisation that promotes human rights, democracy, and the rule of law throughout Europe. All EU Member States are Member States of the Council of Europe, but there are other European countries that are also a part of it.

EU decisions are made through a complex process of **negotiation and cooperation** among these institutions. Typically decisions involve the European Commission making legislative proposals, the Parliament and Council of the EU reviewing and amending them, and then reaching a compromise with all Member States.

Other institutions

The **European Central Bank** (ECB) is responsible for **managing the Euro's monetary policy**, including issues related to interest rates and the money supply. Its main aim is to keep prices stable, thereby supporting economic growth and job creation. The use of a common currency within the Eurozone simplifies trade and financial transactions between Member States but also requires coordination on economic and fiscal policies to ensure the stability of the currency.

The EU's **budget** is a financial framework that supports the implementation of EU policies and programmes. It is not set by the ECB but is rather adopted through the budgetary procedure by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. Member States **contribute** a portion of their Gross National Income (GNI) **to fund the budget**, and these funds are used to finance initiatives like agriculture subsidies, regional development, research, and infrastructure projects, promoting economic and social cohesion across the EU.

The **European Court of Justice** (ECJ) is the highest court in the EU and is responsible for **interpreting and ensuring the uniform application of EU law**. It resolves disputes involving EU institutions, Member States, or individuals by providing authoritative legal interpretations. It consists of judges from each Member State, who serve as impartial interpreters of EU law. In cases where EU law interferes with national jurisdiction, Member States should turn to the ECJ for guidance.

The EU conducts a **common foreign policy** in areas where Member States have agreed to pool their resources. While the EU has a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, individual Member States still maintain their **foreign policies in areas that are not under EU competence**, such as national security and defence. This dual structure allows the EU to speak with a more unified voice on certain global issues while respecting the national sovereignty of its Member States in foreign policy.

COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS (AFCO)

Blood Money: Countries such as Germany, France, or Switzerland are major arms exporters, often trading with governments regularly violating international law or human rights. Taking into account the aforementioned economic interests, what steps can the EU take to ensure no European weapons fall into the wrong hands?

By: Francesco Bertoli (IT)

Introduction

According to the European External Action Service (EEAS), in 2021 alone, EU Member States have exported more than **€25 billion worth of arms**, with little to **no regard for common policy** that is supposed to prevent weapons from falling into the wrong hands. Arms export is becoming a billion-euro business, and Member States are not taking into account that the reasons why military equipment is exported, should be **political**, and not merely economical: the risks of not making this distinction are a conflict, violation of international law, displacement and migration.

The Case Study

A report published in 2017 by Conflict Armament Research (CAR) exposed a **worrying chain of events**: weapons manufactured in Bulgaria were being sold to Saudi Arabia and the US, but actually ended up in the hands of Islamic State (IS) soldiers in Syria and Iraq. The report showed that the US issued **End User Certificates** (EUC) to European suppliers, which stated that the US would be the sole end user and **prohibited retransfer** without the supplier's consent. However the US contravened these agreements, since said consent was never given, which led the weaponry to end up in the hands of the very enemy group the US was trying to fight.

The Abstract

European countries are among the top exporters of lethal military equipment, comprising approximately **26% of global arms exports since 2015**. However, current control and monitoring mechanisms actually **enable problematic licensing and exportation** instead of preventing it. Despite these issues, arms trade is motivated by how **lucrative** the industry is, with consequent political complications being neglected. Although the authority to issue export licences lies with the single Member States, the criteria on which the latter base their decisions is strictly European. Therefore governments overseeing these weapons must guarantee **transparent**, responsible and accountable trading, preventing any diversion to unauthorised users like terrorists or criminals.

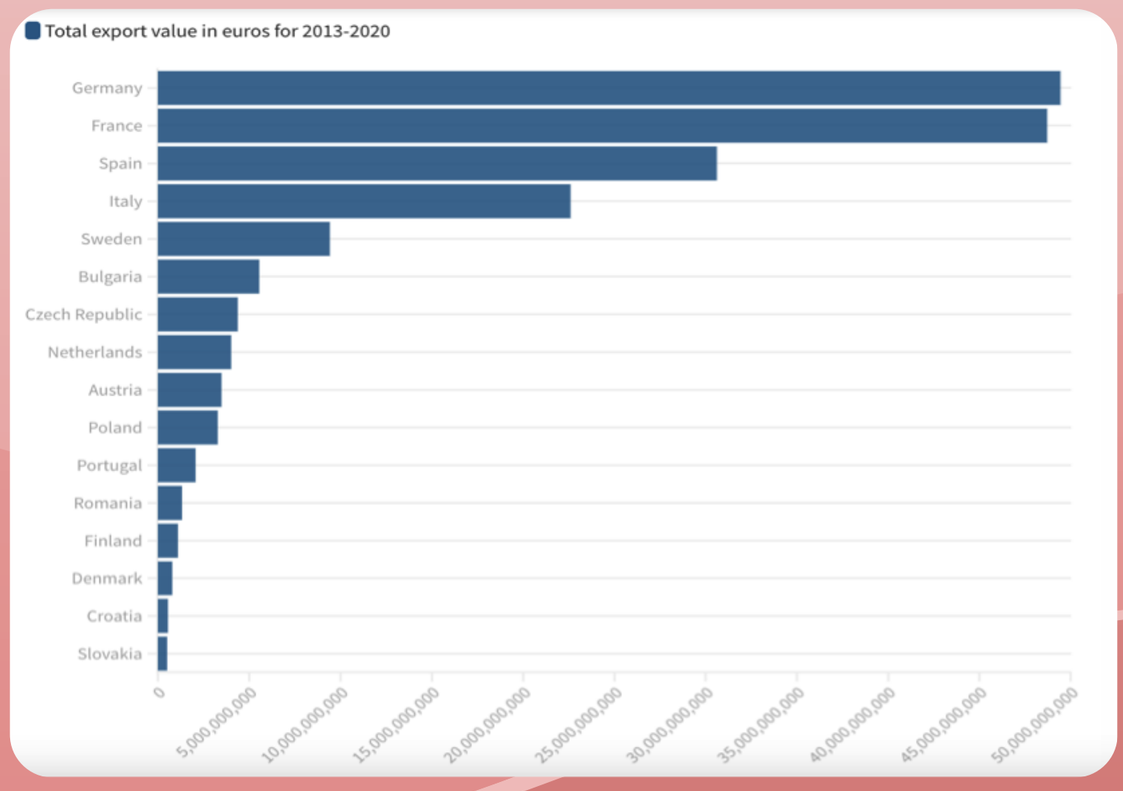


Figure 1: *COARM database and German national reports • Countries with export value over €500 million*

Stakeholders & measures in place

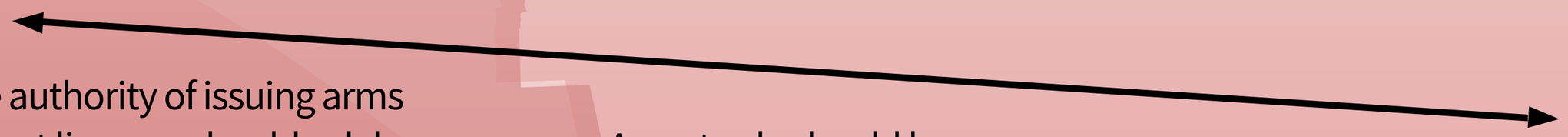
The European Commission is the executive arm of the European Union, it has the role of drawing up proposals for new laws and monitoring their implementation. It maintains **supportive competence** with the Member States over the control of arms exports. More specifically, **the Foreign Policy Instruments directorate-general** (FPI DG) is the department that carries out the Commission's policies on foreign and security policy, together with the **EEAS**. The latter, in 2020, launched an **online database** to favour the transparent consultation of Member States' arms export data.

The Council of the EU is the legislative body of the EU, together with the European Parliament, it is made up of government ministers who meet to discuss, amend and approve legislative proposals. It is the Council that decides which sanctions should be lifted or approved, such as **arms embargoes**. Most of the EU embargoes are still in force, but these do not stop military equipment from ending up in sanctioned countries and falling into the wrong hands.

The European Council defines the political direction of the EU as a whole. It is composed by the heads of government of each Member State, who all agreed on the **Council Common Position** on the definition of common rules on the export of military technology and equipment in 2008. The Position defines **eight criteria** that need to be considered when issuing export licences: **international obligations**, respect for **human rights**, the **internal situation of the country** of final destination, regional **stability**, **security**, and **peace**, National security of the Member States, buyer's respect for **International Law**, risk of **re-exportation** under **undesirable conditions**, and the danger of **impaired development** in the country of destination. Therefore, Member States have common goals, but **different ways** to implement them.

The 27 Member States, over which the EU has **supportive competence** in the field of arms export, have all ratified the **Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)**. This treaty is an international agreement designed to regulate the international trade in conventional arms. Its aim is to prevent and eliminate unlawful trade and diversion of these arms by establishing international standards that should govern arms transfers.

Topic spectrum



a) The issue of arms export licences should belong to the **Member States alone** which must preserve their **sovereignty**. The arms industry is highly profitable and can greatly benefit a country's GDP and overall economy. However, this would lead to **no control over the weaponry**, which would be likely to fall into the wrong hands.

b) Arms trade should be regulated by **non-binding policies and guidelines**, that leave the Member States

great freedom over their exports. This, however, could not be sufficient in preventing weapons from ending up in the hands of dangerous actors, and could lead to **poor coordination** between the different authorities.

c) Arms trade should be regulated by **binding regulations** that could prevent contraventions of export licences but would hinder the **Member States' sovereignty** on the issue.

Task

Now that you have read the Topic Overview, read this article and listen to the podcast at the end of it, then brainstorm **5 key issues**, focusing on practices that, according to you, should be avoided or that are **insufficient**.

EU rules on control of arms exports [Plenary Podcast]

Once you're done with this, I would ask you to make a tiny infographic on what you learnt, but make sure to keep it fun and simple!!

We will go over what you found during Committee Work, but I will contact you via e-mail asking you to send it over.

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS (DROI)

Home, A Place Where I Can Go: With at least 600,000 stateless people present in Europe, what steps should the EU take in order to assist Member States in addressing statelessness determination procedures and ensure the access of stateless people to their fundamental rights?

By: David Hynek (CZ) and Marco Enrietti (IT)

Introduction

The Case Study

Statelessness is often seen as an invisible problem with many European governments not being aware of its extent and impact on society. Having no nationality brings about a whole plethora of problems: an example of this would be Boban's story. Boban was born in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. After Yugoslavia got dissolved, Boban was left stateless. Furthermore, he faced discrimination because of his Roma descent, as he didn't have access to secondary education, the right to work, or to marry. He decided to migrate and claim asylum in the EU. His many asylum applications were rejected. He got regularised as a stateless person later, but he still wasn't allowed to stay in the country he migrated to. After many years, Boban is stuck in the same situation, unable to work, study, or start a family.

The Abstract

There are many factors that can contribute to making a person **stateless**. That is defined as "a person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law". In simple terms, this means that a stateless person does not have a nationality of any country. Some people are born with this status, but others become stateless later in life, which, in some cases, can deny them **basic human rights**, such as **medical care or education**.

There are more than 10 million stateless people in the world, with at least 600 thousand in Europe alone. The **1954 Convention relating to the status of stateless persons** defined statelessness as **"not being considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law"**. Still, there is a lack of homogeneity and clarity in EU Member States' definition of stateless people. Therefore, people without a nationality, who are not recognised as stateless, cannot get the protection they otherwise would (e.g. getting a **temporary residence permit**). One of the reasons for statelessness is gaps in Member States' **nationality laws**, which are sometimes discriminatory on the basis of race, ethnicity, or gender, with stateless people often not meeting the criteria to be granted citizenship. Another major reason is **state succession**. For example, with Yugoslavia's dissolvement in 1992, many of its citizens lost their citizenship and were not granted a new one in the successor states. The **Roma** people in particular suffered from

Figure 1: *Number of applications for international protection lodged by stateless persons in the EU*

Yugoslavia's collapse because of the ethnic discrimination in the successor states. Another reason is **loss or deprivation of nationality**, which sometimes occurs when a citizen is away from their country for too long. So, what can the EU do to ensure that stateless people in Europe can either get citizenship or have basic human rights even without a nationality?

Stakeholders & measures in place

National governments each have their own laws and methods of fighting statelessness. In most cases, there is a need for further legislation on the issue. That is why there are international bodies that have been trying to combat statelessness as well.

The **Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG-HOME)** is the European Commission branch in charge of migration and home affairs. In 2020, it presented the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, which aims to make a fairer and more effective asylum process.

The **European Council** is the EU institution that defines the EU's political direction and priorities. In 2015, it promoted the EU's aspirations to combat statelessness.

The **European Agency for Asylum (EUAA)** is an agency of the EU that assists people filing asylum applications in Europe. For example, the EUAA performs a number of activities related to statelessness such as collecting asylum data, or providing training for asylum officials in Europe.

The **European Network on Statelessness (ESN)** is a network that promotes a campaign to call upon European governments and the EU to legislate and provide for the rights and support of stateless people. Moreover, considering that 'statelessness is often overlooked in migration debates' they promote a review of the **asylum** and **migration policy**. Indeed, they show how that aspect is often neglected by the governments.

The **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** is a United Nations department that protects those who flee from conflict or persecution and those who are denied a nationality. Considering that statelessness appeared as a problem many years ago, the UN tried to involve the countries to join and party to the conventions. They started their campaign to reduce the number of stateless people with **the 1954 Convention**. It relates to the status of a stateless person and has the aim to give a legal definition of a stateless person. Moreover, it establishes 'minimum standards of treatment for stateless people in respect to a number of rights'. In 1961, the UN enacted **the 1961 Convention** on the **Reduction** of Statelessness. Which aims to prevent and reduce this phenomenon. Indeed, it asks that states should ensure the nationality of the country for all the children that are born in the country and 'sets out the very limited situations in which states can deprive a person of nationality'. Finally, in 2010, they promoted the **Global Action Plan to End Statelessness**. The #Ibelong is an important ten-year campaign to **eradicate**

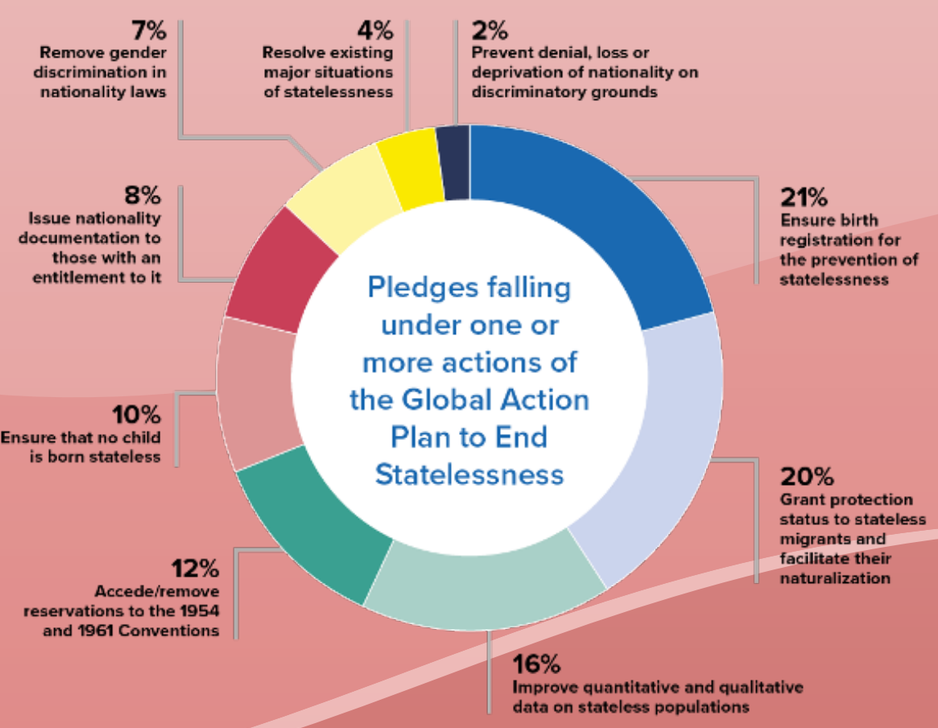
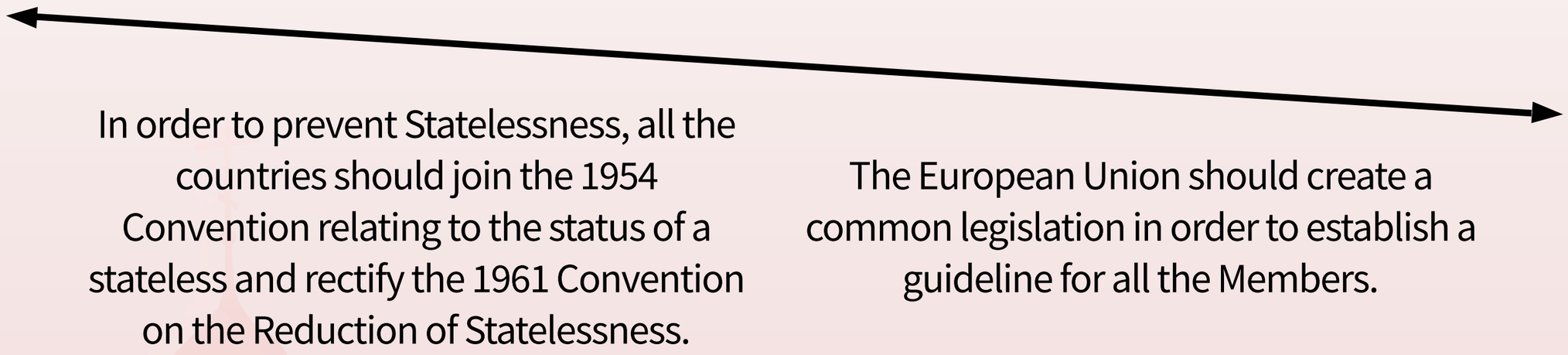


Figure 2: *The statistics about the involvement*

statelessness. Through **ten points**, the UN High Commissioner hopes to solve the problem of stateless people already existing and try to prevent the birth of new stateless children.

Topic spectrum



a) Considering that not all the European countries have acceded to the **Convention of 1954**, all Member States should do so without reservations. This way, recognizing statelessness, it would be easier to **guarantee** the rights and the procedures for the acknowledgement of people who suffer from the issue. Moreover, settling for the Convention of 1961 would also ensure that no more children would be born stateless. Giving them, as a right, the citizenship of the country of birth would prevent statelessness. In addition, all Member States should make sure that children possess a birth certificate and, throughout it, establish 'their legal identity and family links'. Finally, that would prevent the arbitrary detention that is very common without the identification of statelessness.

b) Member States, led by the European Commission, should reform **unique legislation** in order to **align** their laws, policies, and practices regarding statelessness. In fact, a common guideline about the procedures for the **identification** of that condition would ensure **protection** for them. In addition, they should have safe access to **justice** in order to activate all the procedures for asylum as stateless persons. After that, the way to get citizenship and the rights linked to it would become faster.

Task

1. Watch this video in order to understand what statelessness truly means and what it can cause: What does it mean to be stateless?
2. Here, you can check on your own how statelessness compares in each country: https://index.statelessness.eu/themes/statelessness-population-data?language=it
3. Feel free to learn more about the topic yourself if you wish! You will make us happy if you do ;)

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AND MONETARY AFFAIRS (ECON)

Trouble in heaven: With over two thirds of global offshore wealth accumulated in EU tax havens, off-shore tax havens within and outside Europe are a strain to Member States' public budgets. How should the EU and its Member States jointly address the criminal avoidance of taxes while respecting their citizens' right to privacy and foreign states' sovereignty?

By: Esterina Cusumano (IT)

Introduction

The Case Study

In October 2021, the ICIJ leaked financial documents, the so-called "**Pandora Papers**". Coming from 14 offshore service providers[1], they revealed the financial activities of individuals from more than 200 countries: amongst them, a number of European politicians, monarchs, and other relevant figures were caught in the scandal, such as Andrej Babiš, former Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, Juan Carlos I, former King of Spain, and Dominique Strauss-Kahn, former managing director of the International Monetary Fund.

These leaked documents proved the use of **offshore entities**[2], such as companies and other businesses, to manage wealth. Although these structures can be legal, they are often linked to illegal activities, such as tax evasion and money laundering.

The Pandora Papers caught the attention of the public and governments, renewing concerns regarding the existence and tolerance of **tax havens** and around the institutions and countries that practise **financial secrecy**. Thus, many countries and other stakeholders, such as the European Union, have started discussions on financial transparency and tax reforms in order to create stricter regulations on offshore finance and to enhance openness in global financial systems. Other countries started investigations on this matter and have considered taking legal action. As a matter of fact, in June 2023, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on lessons learned from the Pandora Papers and other revelations, proposing measures to fight tax evasion and money laundering.

The Abstract

The Pandora Papers exposed how businesses and wealthy individuals use off-shore tax havens[3] to evade taxes, protect their wealth, and minimise their tax obligations. In addition, a tax haven usually offers **financial privacy** to individuals and businesses, thus protecting the privacy of account holders. As a consequence, it is difficult for other countries to access financial information on these territories.

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1 Offshore service providers are companies operating in other countries that offer business and professional services at a lower cost than in the client's home country.

2 An offshore entity is a business activity in a foreign country that offers favourable financial and legal regulations.

3 A tax haven is a country or a jurisdiction that offers **extremely low tax rates** and favourable financial regulations which attract businesses and wealthy individuals that want to **reduce their tax liabilities**.

Stakeholders & measures in place

Stakeholders

Member States have their own tax authority and have the responsibility to enforce national laws within their jurisdiction. For example, in the Czech Republic, the national tax authority is the Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic. Moreover, Member States can choose to align with international tax standards and are obligated to harmonise their legislation with EU directives on the matter. For instance, in order to abide by the Anti Tax Avoidance Directive from 2016, Member States had to apply the measures in the directive starting from 2021.

The **Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union (DG TAXUD)** is a department of the European Commission responsible for developing and coordinating policies and regulations to ensure fair and efficient taxation and the free movement of goods, services, and capital within the EU.

The **European Anti-Fraud Office** (OLAF) is an independent, investigative body involved in the fight against fraud and corruption involving EU's financial interests. Its role is to protect the EU budget from fraud and ensure that EU funds are used efficiently and effectively. It also helps develop an EU anti-fraud policy.

The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development** (OECD) develops international tax standards and guidelines. In addition, it promotes international dialogue and cooperation. For instance, the **Common Reporting Standard** (CRS) was developed by the OECD to combat offshore tax evasion and promote the automatic exchange of financial account information among tax authorities. More than 100 countries, such as the Czech Republic, Belgium, and Germany, have committed to implementing the CRS, which enhances transparency and cooperation in the area of tax enforcement.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) advocate for transparency, fair tax policies, and accountability. They help raise awareness and influence policies by collaborating with other stakeholders. Some examples of NGOs are Oxfam, Tax Justice Network and Transparency International.

Measures in place

The EU Tax Haven Blacklist consists of a list of non-cooperative jurisdictions that do not comply with international tax standards. It promotes fair taxation to fight against tax fraud, evasion, and avoidance and supports dialogue and cooperation among countries.

The Common Reporting Standard (CRS) is an international standard for the automatic exchange of financial account information between countries and tax jurisdictions. It promotes financial transparency and information between countries and tax jurisdictions. It was developed by the OECD in order to fight tax evasion and guarantee fair taxation.

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Topic spectrum

Conflict 1:

Tax Evasion vs. Public Revenue: *Why should some people evade taxes, thus decreasing public funds used to invest in essential services?*

Individuals should be able to **protect** and increase **their own wealth** by choosing tax havens that offer lower tax rates than their home countries.

Tax havens and tax evasion impact the public revenue of countries, **depriving the public budget of money** that could be used to improve **essential services**, such as schools, healthcare.

Conflict 2:

Privacy vs. Transparency: *Where is the balance between one's own rights to financial privacy and the need for transparency to fight tax evasion?*

Each individual should be allowed to **protect** their own **financial privacy**.

Sharing information among countries and **financial transparency** in tax systems helps fight tax evasion.

Conflict 3:

Sovereignty vs. International Cooperation: *How should countries protect their national sovereignty while collaborating internationally to fight tax evasion?*

Some countries do not want to adhere to international tax standards and harmonise their tax policies because it may **undermine their national sovereignty** (due to it not being in their interest because of different economic circumstances, tax systems, and policy preferences). They want to protect their national interests.

It is necessary for countries to **collaborate** on an **international level** to tackle tax evasion effectively through agreements and treaties and common regulations.

Task

Let's act on it!: in order to better understand this topic, imagine you are one of the stakeholders involved in this issue. It could be a citizen complaining about the lack of public funding and essential services, a politician involved in the Pandora Papers scandal, or a member of Parliament drafting a speech on this issue.

What would you do? What are the reasons behind your actions? How does this issue affect your life, your future?

Write a small text explaining your new identity, your role in this matter. You can also record a video if you are comfortable or create a PowerPoint presentation!

Here are some links to start your research!

- What are the Pros and Cons of Offshore Tax Havens
- Inequality and Poverty: the hidden costs of tax dodging
- How Tax Havens Make Us Poor

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY (FEMM)

Material Girl: In the wake of economic crises, such as the one triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, women are disproportionately affected, facing an increasing amount of challenges regarding wealth gaps, living conditions, and gender bias in the job market. What measures can the EU take to uplift women economically and ensure gender equality?

By: Veronika Vrbová (CZ) and Ritaja Bhattacharjee (CH)

Introduction

The Case Study

After a quick glimpse at the country's situation, it might seem that more and more women in Italy are pursuing successful careers, especially in the law sector. The situation is however more complicated than that. According to a study conducted by the European Parliament's Committee on Legal Affairs (JURI), women are often pushed into the **background**, being positioned in **lower-level jobs**, therefore, earning a **lower salary** in comparison to their male counterparts. Following up on these findings, another study in 2018 proved that female lawyers' average income in the country was **half the income of their male counterparts**.

The Abstract

Crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have highlighted the high prevalence of gender inequality. While the disadvantages women faced during the crisis were **pre-existing**, they were aggravated during this time. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) offers evidence that while employment rates fell significantly for both men and women, the latter were disproportionately affected due to the **large loss of hours of work and increase in absences**. Moreover, governmental measures directed at tackling the pandemic had a more severe indirect impact on the economic sectors where women are overrepresented (i.e. gastronomy, hospitality, retail, care, or domestic work). Such loss could negatively impact their careers and even **widen the gender pension gap**[1] between men and women, leading to f**emale-dominated poverty in old age.**

Additionally, the Resilience and Recovery Facility (RRF), an instrument which is crucial for the EU's economic recovery after the pandemic, has been criticised for not presenting **gender equality as a core value in its regulations** and not requiring Member States to follow the European Union's dual approach to gender equality in their Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRPs).

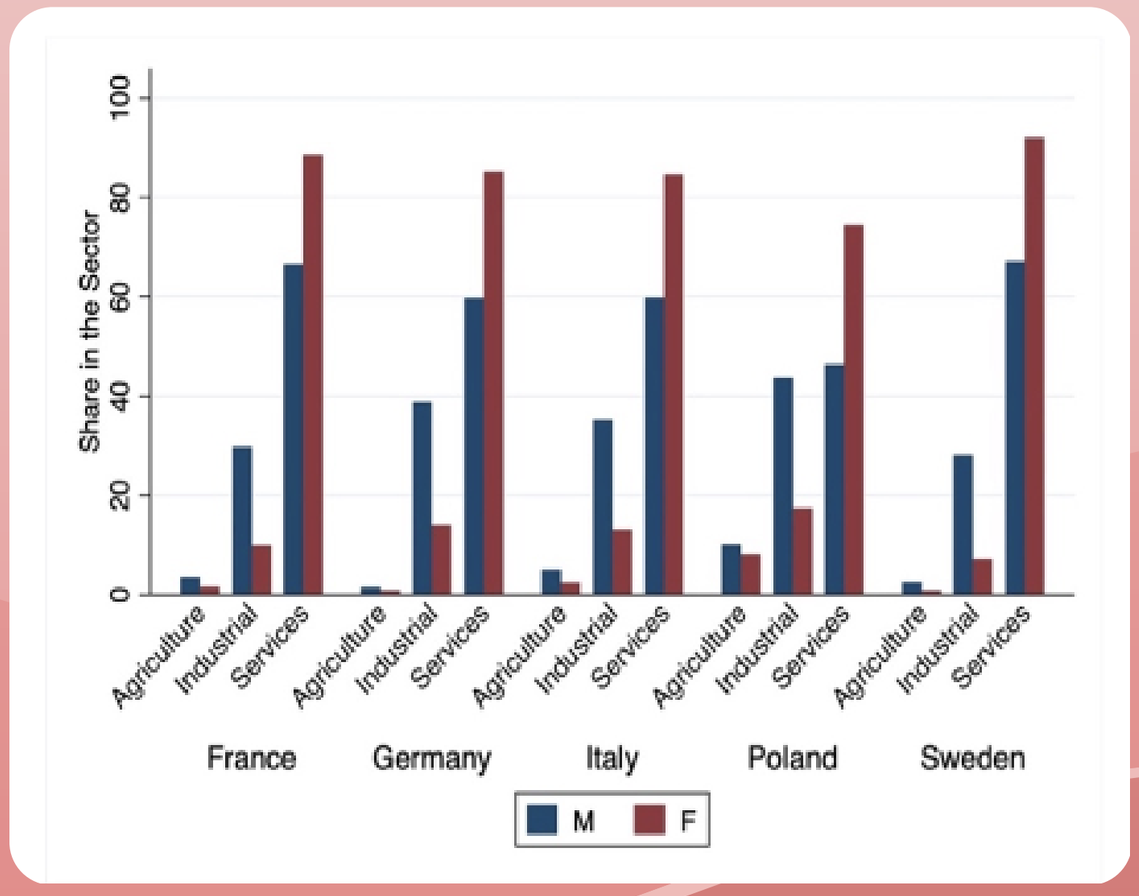


Figure 1: *Employment share of sector by gender in selected EU member states.*

1 The gender pension gap shows the percentage by which women's average pension income is higher or lower in comparison to men.

Moreover, Member States that **did not prioritise gender mainstreaming**[2] in the years prior to the pandemic faced an increase in female unemployment rates and, thus, a **higher likelihood of poverty** for women. Despite the high-level commitment of the European Parliament to gender mainstreaming, such as striving for the prevention of gender-based employment biases, the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) identifies several deficiencies in the implementation of these aims, such as a **lack of coordination** and **tools**, as well as a **lack of statistical data** and a **sufficient monitoring** and **evaluation system**.

Stakeholders & measures in place

In certain areas, such as the fight against social exclusion, **the European Parliament and the Council** may adopt incentive measures to support and complement the actions of Member States. They may also adopt **minimum requirements** in the form of directives, namely legislation which enables EU countries to adopt additional stricter provisions. Among others, these directives concern equality between men and women regarding their treatment in relation to employment.

Another central player in promoting gender equality within the EU is **the European Commission**. It is organised into departments with different policy areas, known as Directorates-General (DGs). The one covering the equal rights of men and women is called **Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST)**. It coordinates the implementation of actions aimed at achieving equality in various policy areas. Its responsibilities include overseeing legal matters, for example, monitoring gender equality laws and new regulations. DG JUST is also responsible for handling broader policy issues, such as raising awareness, providing funding, and sharing best practices among Member States. To facilitate knowledge exchange between the Member States, the European Commission organises The Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality.

In 2020, DG JUST presented the **Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025**, a comprehensive framework for addressing gender disparities. This strategy outlines ambitious objectives and action plans to advance gender equality across all EU policies. It mainly focuses on the gender pay gap, gender-based violence, gender balance in corporate decision-making positions, and challenging gender stereotypes.

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is an EU agency focusing on delivering high-quality research and information to support European institutions and Member States in combating gender inequalities. By providing evidence-based data and analysis, EIGE empowers policymakers to make informed decisions and formulate effective policies.

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the largest umbrella organisation of women's non-governmental associations in Europe,

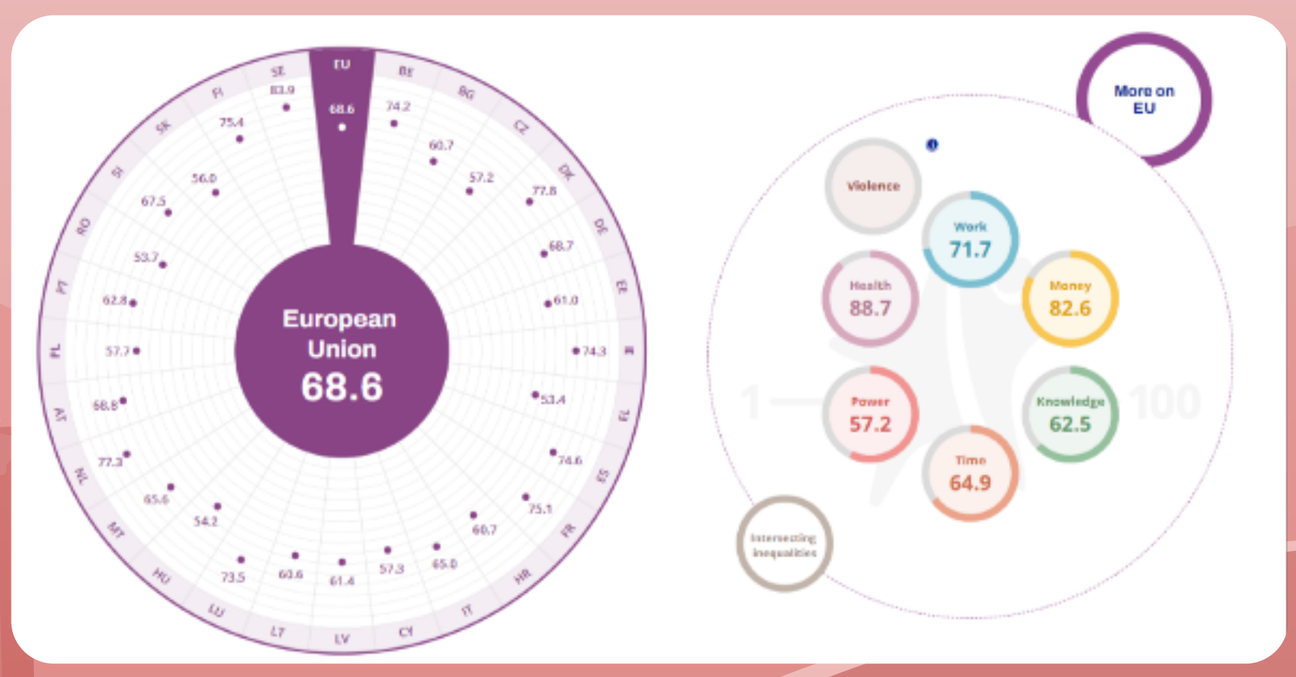


Figure 2: *Gender Equality Index in EU*

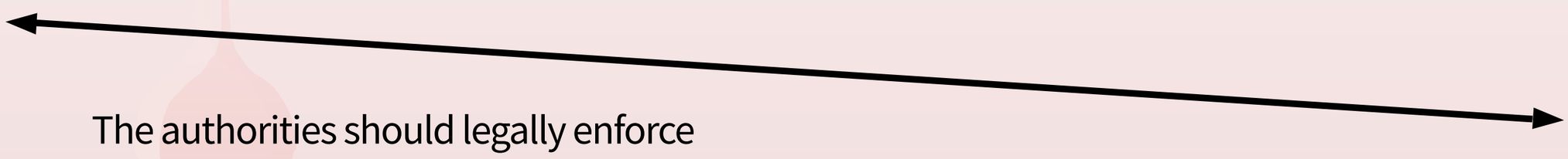
2 Gender mainstreaming is defined as the incorporation of a gender-equality perspective in policy processes by the actors normally involved in policy-making.

working for the interests of women and girls in all areas of life. It actively engages with policymakers, institutions, and civil society to promote gender equality, advocate for policy changes, and advance women's rights in various spheres of society. The EWL has pointed out the disproportionate impact of crises on women already in 2012. Their report describes how austerity measures[3] in Europe, which followed the financial crisis in 2008, pushed more women into poverty.

Topic spectrum

Conflict:

Are gender quotas[4] the right solution to gender segregation in the labour market?



a) **Legally enforced quotas** establish a minimum standard that all organisations must meet. This ensures that gender diversity is not limited to a select few progressive organisations. They also often lead to more rapid progress in achieving gender balance since they set clear targets that can be enforced with penalties or other legal consequences. However, introducing quotas does not address the root causes of gender equality. Furthermore, it can worsen the situation for women, as it places added pressure on them to prove they earned their positions through merit[5] rather than solely due to their gender.

b) **The middle-ground approach** acknowledges the importance of promoting gender diversity while allowing organisations flexibility in how they achieve it. It involves setting targets, promoting transparency, and offering incentives. This approach combines the advantages of voluntary action with measurable progress.

c) **The purely voluntary approach** offers advantages such as preserving meritocracy, avoiding tokenism, and upholding individual rights. It allows organisations to promote diversity authentically, without legal mandates, fostering a culture of inclusivity and reducing resistance. This approach is more likely to lead to a long-term, sustainable change. Nevertheless, a purely voluntary approach may not be sufficient to challenge deeply ingrained gender stereotypes and structural barriers in the labour market. Moreover, the EU may miss out on the full economic potential of a diverse and inclusive workforce, as voluntary efforts may not harness the talents of all individuals.

Task

Before the session, please work on this **Topic Man**, which will help you organise your thoughts on the topic.

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3 An official action by a government to reduce the amount of money it spends, or the amount of money that people in a country spend.

4 A measurement tool which establishes a defined proportion or number of places or seats to be allocated to women and/or men.

5 The qualities you have or have shown.

Additional research is not required, but feel free to do it. You may draw this on a piece of paper or work on it on your laptop, but please, send this to the email address veri.vrbova@seznam.cz by **November 29th, 23:59**.

You can answer the following questions in bullet points:

Head – What is the TO actually about, and what are the key aspects of it?

Hands – What are the main clashes within the TO? How/why do they clash?

Right foot – What are the root causes and problems, and what causes them?

Left foot – What are existing steps/measures that are in place, and what is currently being done by Member States/EU to address the issue?

Heart – What do you want to see in the world regarding the economic upliftment of women? What would be your perfect utopia?

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN ALL DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION, INCLUDING DISINFORMATION (INGE)

Truth Amidst Noise: Given the rise of sophisticated attempts at election interference, the integrity of European Parliament elections in June 2024 is considered to be at risk due to disinformation, cyberattacks, covert funding and many more. What steps can the EU take to ensure its resilience to foreign interference and protect the 2024 European elections?

By: Natalie Kranou (CY)

Introduction

The Case Study

Team Jorge, a group of Israeli contractors specialised in the use of malign cyber activities, including hacking, sabotage, and bot-run social media disinformation campaigns, has **successfully** manipulated 27 presidential elections worldwide.

This undercover group, operating with a precision that reminds a spy novel, executed what can only be described as disinformation black ops.[1]

Their aim? As you have guessed, to distort reality and manipulate public opinion, all with the explicit purpose of subverting democratic processes.

Figure 1: *Team Jorge*

Figure 2: *'AIMS' software*

Tal Hanan, who runs the covert group using the pseudonym "Jorge", told undercover reporters that it sold access to its software called "Advanced Impact Media Solutions" (AIMS) to unnamed intelligence agencies, political parties and corporate clients. This tool creates more than **30,000** automated profiles of virtual people with real accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Amazon, and Bitcoin.

Take this as an example of AIMS 'wonders': a blond-haired avatar named Shannon Aiken used an Amazon account to order intimate products to the house of a political rival of one of their clients, leaving the rival candidate's wife to believe he had been unfaithful. "After that, the story was leaked, and he couldn't go home. **The campaign turned around**," Tan Hanan said.

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1 **Black ops:** Black operations, covert military or political operations that may employ measures not generally authorised.

The Abstract

Foreign interference, disinformation, and attacks on democracy are likely to continue in ever-greater numbers and to become more sophisticated in the run-up to the European Parliament elections in June 2024, raising questions about the future of European democracy.

MEPs are concerned about the interference occurring on online platforms and during electoral procedures, **covert funding**[2] of political activities by foreign entities, and the existing resilience against cyberattacks.

The Parliament strongly condemns the alarming trend of "disinformation-for-hire", where providers offer disinformation services to both government and non-government entities, often via the dark web, with the intent of disrupting electoral processes.

There remains little formal discussion of the acceptability of new tools, such as AI and other techniques of election campaigning online that rapidly contribute to the spread of misinformation.

The importance of addressing this challenge cannot be overstated. Europe's political stability, unity, and democratic values are at stake. The European Parliament plays a vital role in shaping EU policies and regulations, **affecting not only Europe but also the world**.

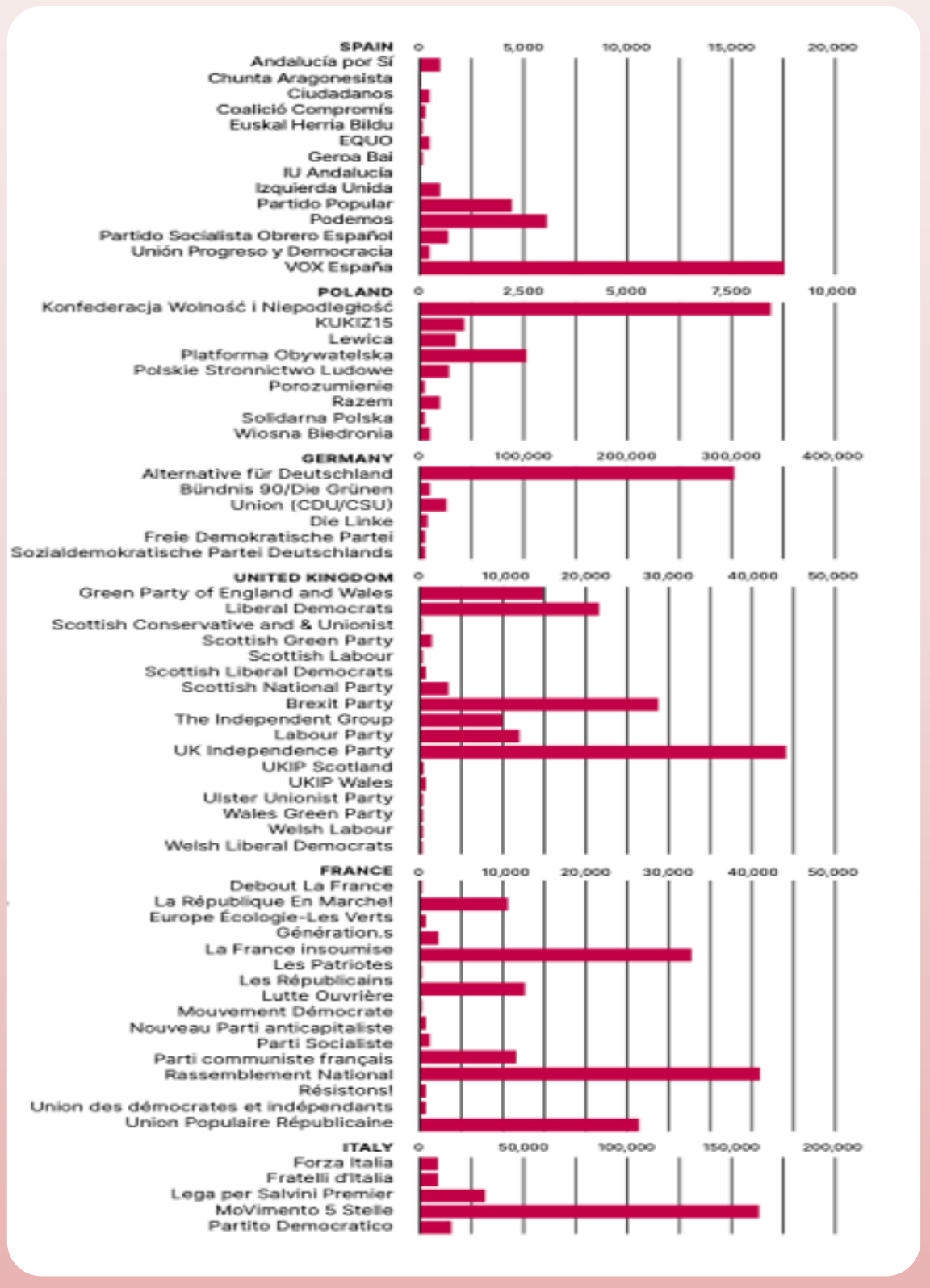

Figure 3: *Total cumulative likes, comments and shares on official party public Facebook pages during European parliamentary elections 2019 in Spain, Poland, Germany, the UK, France and Italy.*

Throughout the European parliament elections in 2019, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue revealed data on significant disparity in online engagement, where right-wing populist and far-right parties outperformed established parties, by having high user engagement, indicating the dominance of these parties in online discussions about the elections, proving social media's power

Stakeholders & measures in place

The European Commission has proposed the **Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA)** to regulate online platforms and strengthen their accountability regarding disinformation. These acts aim to combat the spread of false information and increase transparency on social media platforms.

Keep in mind

The European Commission does not have direct competence or authority in organising European Parliament elections or national elections in Member States of the European Union. The organisation of elections, including European Parliament elections and national elections, falls under the jurisdiction of individual Member States.

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2 Covert funding: Financial Loopholes Exploited by Authoritarians to Fund Political Interference in Democracies.

Each Member State has its own legal framework and electoral system for conducting elections. European Parliament elections are held every five years, and the specific rules and procedures for these elections are determined by each Member State according to its national laws.

The European Commission is one of the institutions of the European Union, responsible for proposing legislation, implementing decisions, upholding the EU treaties, and managing the day-to-day business of the EU. While it plays a crucial role in the functioning of the EU, it **does not have a direct role in organising elections at the national or European level**.

Local Communities, especially the more vulnerable ones, can be easily targeted with disinformation campaigns that exploit regional issues or concerns to create tensions and divisions among residents.

Here's an example: In Catalonia, an autonomous community in Spain, held a highly contentious independence referendum. The Catalan regional government proceeded with the vote despite strong opposition from the Spanish government, which deemed the referendum illegal and unconstitutional. Amidst this political tension, disinformation and fake news proliferated, shaping the narratives surrounding the referendum. The Spanish government accused Russian-based groups of spreading disinformation to sow discord and amplify the crisis. The authorities dissolved the Catalan parliament, dismissed the regional government, and arrested several pro-independence leaders, sparking outrage and protests. **The crisis highlighted the vulnerability of local communities to disinformation campaigns, as false narratives circulated, influencing public opinion on the issue.**

European Digital Rights (EDRi) is a network collective of non-profit organisations (NGO), experts, advocates and academics working to defend and advance digital rights across the continent. They have been actively monitoring disinformation campaigns and raising public awareness about the risks.

The **European External Action Service (EEAS)** has established the **EU Hybrid Fusion Cell**, an entity dedicated to countering hybrid threats, including disinformation. It provides early warning, situational awareness, and coordinated responses to potential threats.

The **EU Cybersecurity Act** enhances the certification of information and communication technology products, including those used in elections, to ensure they meet high cybersecurity standards.

Media Organisations play a crucial role in shaping public opinion but there are usually prime targets for disinformation campaigns.

Here's an example: During the 2017 French presidential elections, media organisations faced disinformation campaigns. False stories and manipulated images were circulated online, aiming to influence voters' perceptions of candidates. Le Monde one of France's most popular

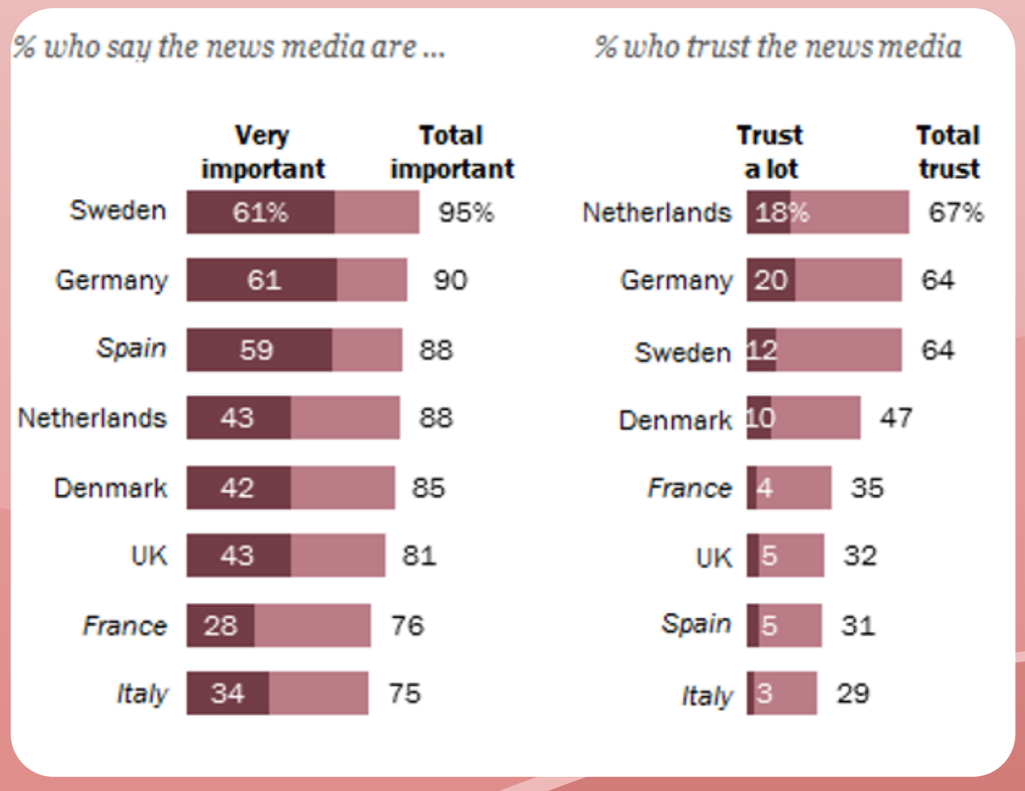

Figure 4: *A study from the Pew Research Center which reveals the news trust in eight European countries, including Denmark and Sweden.*

newspapers, played a vital role in calling out these false claims, emphasising the importance of media literacy.

The Action Plan against Disinformation focuses on proactive detection and response to disinformation campaigns, enabling the EU to coordinate actions against threats.

The EU has created a **Code of Practice on Disinformation** with tech companies, encouraging them to take voluntary measures against disinformation

Topic spectrum

Conflict:

Does AI contribute to election disinformation or is AI a way to identify foreign interference?

Using AI as an ally

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning algorithms can help identify and combat foreign interference

AI Enabling Adversaries

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning algorithms negatively contribute to foreign interference

Using AI as an ally:

One perspective argues that Artificial Intelligence enables authorities to detect and counter interference activities. Advanced AI algorithms can analyse vast amounts of data from social media platforms, news sources, and online activities to detect patterns indicative of disinformation campaigns. AI-driven tools can efficiently identify suspicious activities, track the spread of false information, and help cybersecurity experts and law enforcement agencies counteract these attempts at manipulation.

The EU should invest and collaborate with tech companies to develop advanced algorithms that can recognize and flag suspicious content in real-time and can significantly reduce the spread of fake news.

AI Enabling Adversaries:

Others believe that AI technology will contribute to election disinformation. AI algorithms can be manipulated to generate convincing fake news, deepfakes[3], and automated social media posts, amplifying misleading narratives and sowing discord among voters. In this view, malicious actors can exploit AI tools to disseminate false information on a massive scale, undermining the democratic process.

Task

Present in our committee groupchat something interesting you found about the topic in any medium you would like ex: (presentation,poster, text in newspaper format, video, illustration, etc).

The more creative and engaging, the better! *(trust me ;)*

Deadline November 26th, 23:59.

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3 Deepfake: a video or a photo of a person in which their face or body has been digitally altered so that they appear to be someone else, typically used maliciously or to spread false information.

COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY, RESEARCH AND ENERGY (ITRE)

Power Play: The 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change set the goal of "holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below two Degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels". What role, if any, should nuclear power play in reaching this goal and ensuring a sustainable and reliable energy supply for Europe?

By: Baptiste Orteu (FR)

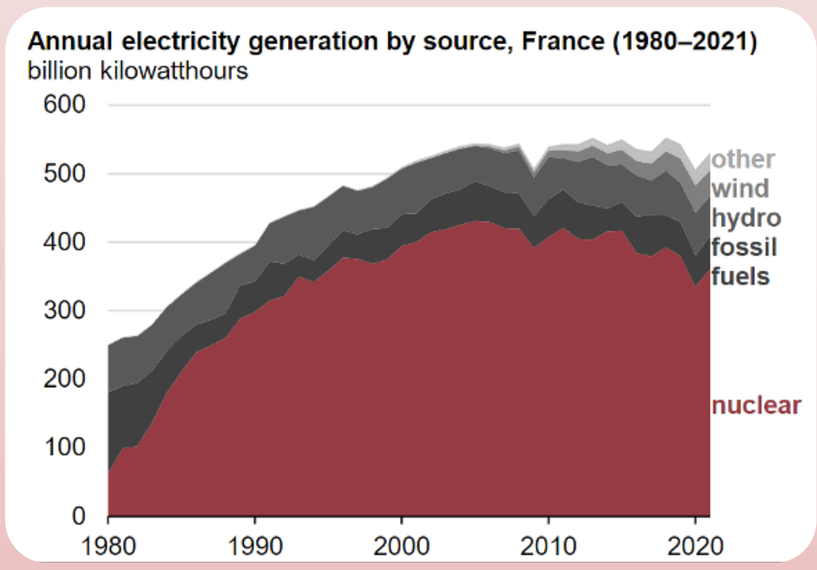
Introduction

The Case Study

France is one of the **European leaders in terms of low-carbon energy** production per capita, although it is far from being the leader in the sector of **renewable energy** compared to countries such as Sweden or Finland. French energy policy since the 1950s has led to a complex network of **56 power plants** that represent a major part of the country's **energy mix**. It stands as a strong economic tool for the country and an indefatigable **strength** to resist international instability and better cope with disruptive events such as the **Russian invasion**.

The Abstract

The story of the Man and the Nuclear power is **way longer** than we think, but it is only since the **1950s** that countries started building nuclear power plants and it is nowadays part of the modern society landscape, from the energy to the pop culture.



Data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, International Energy Statistics—France and published on their website.

Nuclear energy only represents **10% of the international energy share** of electricity and **22% of the European share**. Compared to **coal** and **gas** which represent the major sources of energy in Europe (44%), nuclear power does not produce any direct carbon emissions.

Another advantage is its rather efficient energy production rate compared to its competitive energy production costs...

Extract from the Simpsons, a cartoon TV Show directed by Matt Groening

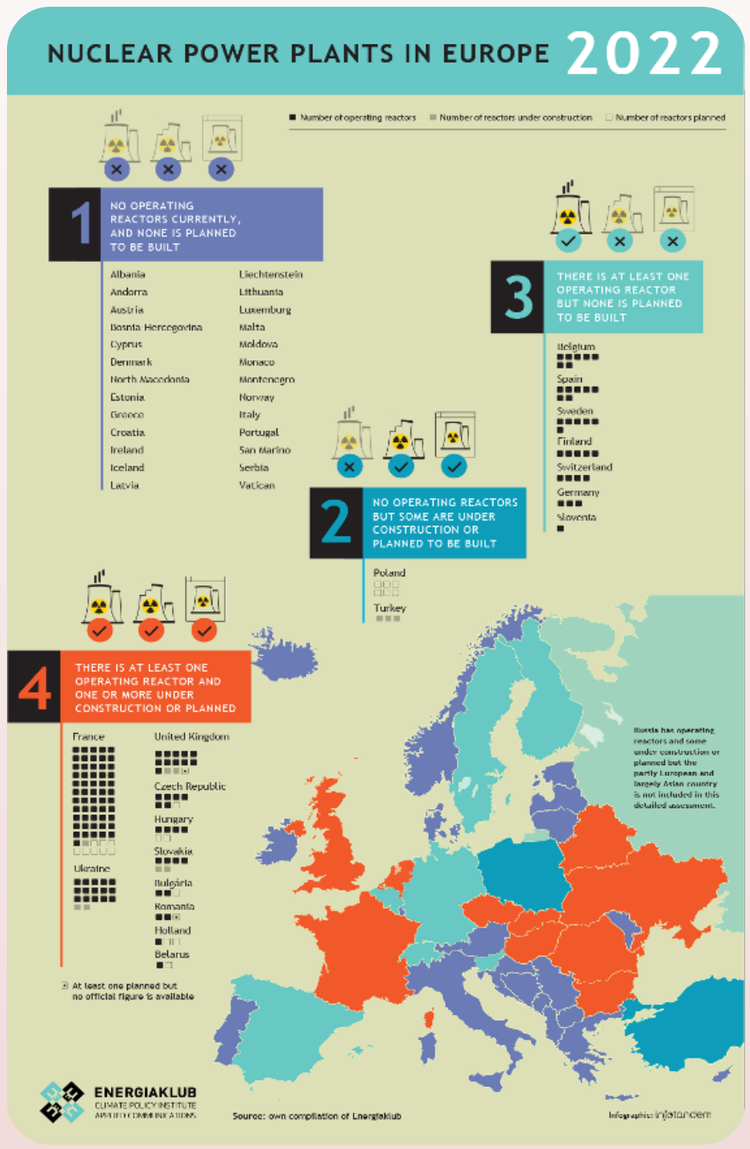
On the other hand, aside from being a source of electricity, nuclear energy is a topic of **very sensitive debate** in a lot of countries. Its **safety** is something that many are concerned about, especially in the aftermath of the Chornobyl and Fukushima incidents. In light of these events, a lot of countries started withdrawing from nuclear power, one example being Germany.

In present days, nuclear power policy in Europe follows four main paths:

1. **withdrawal**: countries that are slowly shutting down most of their nuclear power plants,

2. **maintain**: countries that are not opening or closing any nuclear power plants,
3. **development**: countries that are already nuclear energy producers and continue developing their networks,
4. **entry**: countries that want to build their first power plants and accede to nuclear power.

Moreover, Europe is now facing a **new problem** due to the amount of dangerously **ageing** nuclear power plants. After **30 years**, a nuclear power plant becomes **more and more dangerous**, and renovating a large number of old power plants might be a financial burden to many European countries.



Data from Energiaklub published on 28/07/2022

Stakeholders & measures in place

In the European Union, energy is a **shared responsibility** between Member States and the EU. However, nuclear power gathers a lot of non-state actors that are directly involved in the decision-making process.

- The **European Commission** is the executive branch of the EU responsible for shaping EU strategies and proposing new EU laws and policies. The Directorate-General in Charge of Energy (DG ENER) is one of the many departments of the European Commission and is in charge of policy-making in terms of collective decisions among the 27 members of the Union.
- The **European Council** sets out the political direction of the EU, and it is composed of 27 heads of Member States, the European Council President and the President of the European Commission. It also sets guidelines for the Member States. Its role in the debate of Energy is to conclude agreements of coordination among the different members of the Union such as the creation of the Energy Union to improve European energy independence.
- The **International Atomic Energy Agency** (IAEA) is the main intergovernmental organisation that manages advising countries on various aspects of nuclear power around the world. It is also in charge, through the **Global Nuclear Safety and Security Network** (GNSSN), of paying attention to international nuclear safety.
- The **European Atomic Energy Community** (Euratom) is an intergovernmental group directed by the European Commission and the European Council to harmonize the peaceful use of nuclear energy in the European Union. It aims to facilitate physical and scientific investments in the nuclear industry all through Europe and aims to increase the safety of nuclear power through the very heterogeneous European nuclear network.

Furthermore, the EU and Member States already worked on different measures concerning nuclear power:

- The creation of the **European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group** (ENSREG) in March 2007 was the first step to ensure nuclear safety and more recently, in 2017, it was completed with the **European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation** with a budget of 300 million € to secure the European power plants.

- The European Union opened **three renovation programs** (Kozloduy, Bohunice, Ignalina) with a strong budget to renovate the power plants of the ex-Soviet Union area.
- Since 2015, every three years, the Commission has asked the Member States to submit **a plan for nuclear waste management** to uniformise the criteria of waste management among the different countries.
- Between 2021 and 2025, a **budget of 1.38 Billion EUR** to progress in the scientific work on nuclear fusion which creates less nuclear waste than the current nuclear fission.
- The **Paris Agreements** are one of the drivers of worldwide ecological policies. It fixes a certain number of goals in terms of the environmental impact of man and aims to achieve a worldwide ecological transition. The main goal is to limit climate change to the increase of 1.5°C, to do so the signatory countries agreed on decreasing their carbon footprint, but also to create a more resilient model of society.

Topic spectrum

Conflict 1:

Is nuclear power the best sustainable option for Europe?

Nuclear power is a low-carbon energy allowing Europe independence in terms of electricity than is clean.

Nuclear power can be very dangerous from its extraction from the ground to the production inside of the power plant.

a) Nuclear energy **is the most competitive energy source** if we make the balance between **low-carbon emissions** and energy production.

b) The research on nuclear energy, **from fission**[1] **that creates wastes to fusion**[2] **that doesn't**, progresses more and more. Nuclear security is a very well-structured system, and most of the precedent accidents were caused by human mistakes.

c) The production of energy by nuclear power plants creates a lot of health security issues from the **Uranium extraction** to the possible risk during the production (Fukushima or Chornobyl)

Picture by Yomiuri Shimbun after the Fukushima Incident, 13 March 2011, two days after the explosion and the tsunami. Published in the French newspaper Sud Ouest.

1 The fission is an atomic reaction of breaking an atom to create energy, the inconvenient wastes.

2 The fusion is an atomic reaction of merging atoms to create a new one and create energy out of this reaction, it creates a new atom that can be use then.

Conflict 1:

What is the veracity of independence related to nuclear power?

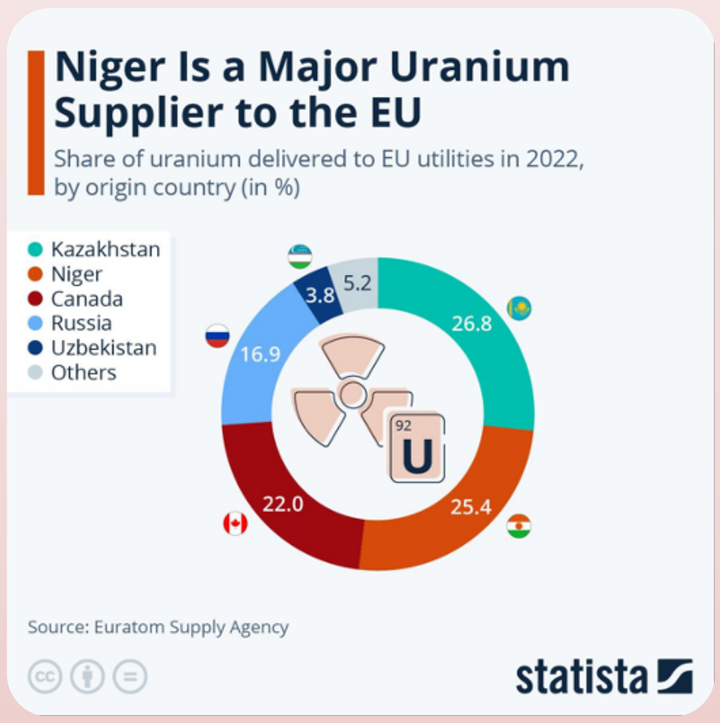
Nuclear energy is cheap and gives Europe energetical independence in situations such as the Russian conflict.

Nuclear energy comes mostly from unstable and authoritarian countries, and also from unsafe mines and ex-colonial spaces.

a) Nuclear energy is a way to gain **cheap energy** and economic and political independence and become **independent from gas and coal**.

b) There exist other partners that could provide us with **Uranium that matches our values**, even if it would **affect the state of the uranium market**.

c) Most of the Uranium comes **from illiberal, authoritarian or dictatorial regimes** that can play on these strategic resources in the diplomatic and political balance. Furthermore, a large part of Uranium comes from ex-colonial spaces[3] between ex-metropole and ex-colonies.



Data from the Euratom Supply Agency and published in 2023 by Statista.

Task

Now, this part is dedicated to the preparation of the subject. There are multiple ways to understand a subject, but the one that was chosen for this work is to go through pop culture first.

Here are a few short extracts from different TV Shows and Movies that explain more about nuclear power. (Be careful, most of these explanations are very simplified).

- **The Simpsons, episode 3, season 1:** "Homer's Odyssey". *This extract tells us about how nuclear energy is produced.*
- **Chernobyl, episode 5, season 1:** *This extract tells us about nuclear safety and how the Chornobyl explosion happened.*

If you want to get a more scientific insight into how nuclear energy is produced, watch this video: **How do nuclear power plants work?** - M. V. Ramana and Sajan Saini, TedED.

Now, I invite you to look at two different documentaries presenting the 3 different aspects of **the nuclear debate**.

- **France VS Germany: the Battle for Nuclear**, from Into Europe, published in May 2023. *It tells us about the European debate on Nuclear power.*

3 Relationships where there is a dominance from a developed and rich country over a country that is poorer, less developed or weaker.[1] Relationships where there is a dominance from a developed and rich country over a country that is poorer, less developed or weaker.

- **Do we Need Nuclear Energy to Stop Climate Change?**, from Kurzegesagt, published in April 2021. *It gives an overview of nuclear energy.*
- **3 Reasons Why Nuclear Energy Is Terrible!**, from Kurzegesagt, published in April 2015. *It gives us details about the dangers of nuclear energy in general.*

Now that your brain is full of information about nuclear energy, go through the Topic Overview again, and maybe do some more research should you feel like you need to.

It is time to build your **first opinion** on the subject before you have any debates with others.

COMMITTEE ON SECURITY AND DEFENCE (SEDE I)

Peace Signs All Around: Considering the amount of distress, uncertainty, and fear the acts of terrorism in Brussels, Nice, Berlin, and London have caused since the launch of the European Counter Terrorism Centre in January 2016, what further steps should the EU take to prevent acts of terrorism within its borders?

By: Salomé Nogues (FR)

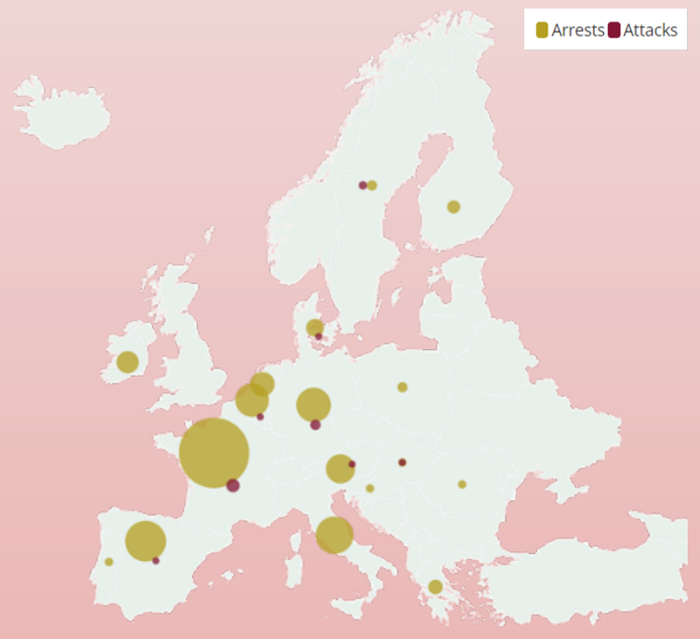
Introduction

The Case Study

"I stood there frozen, I didn't move. [...] It was a man who came, pushed me, told me to stop running if I wanted to stay alive" told a witness of the **Brussels shooting** that happened on October 16, 2023. The city found itself plunged into chaos when two supporters of the **Swedish football team** got fatally shot. A **terrorism inquiry** has been opened by the **Belgian Federal Prosecutor's Office**. The assailant used to define himself as a fighter for Allah. The Swedish Prime Minister declared "All indications are that this is a terrorist attack aimed at Sweden and Swedish citizens". Sweden has been enduring several **threats** in the past months from **Islamist organisations** due to Quran burnings occurring on its territory, at gatherings allowed by the police.

The Abstract

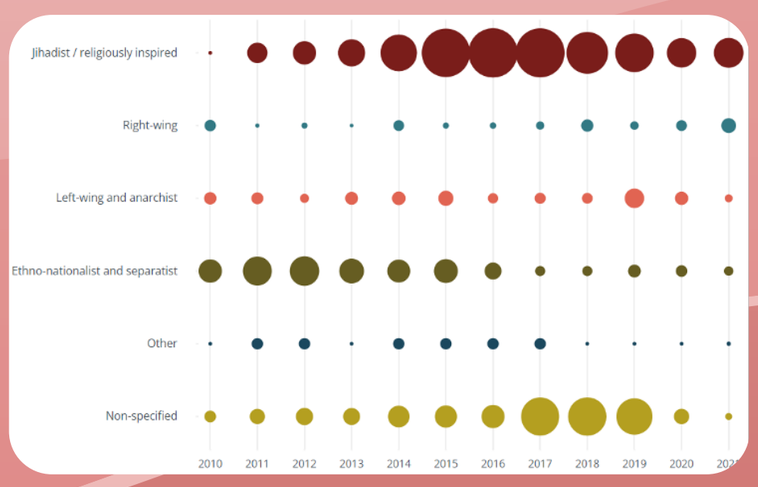
…. Over the last few years, it is more than evident that society has advanced and that, thanks to **globalisation**, there has been a constant **adaptation and coexistence** between **cultures and customs**. According to the newest European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT), even though terrorist attacks have decreased in comparison to other years, they remain a threat in countries such as France, Belgium and Germany, among others.



Source: Europol's annual EU terrorism situation and trend report (2021)

Additionally, the problem is a real powder keg as terrorism can present itself in various forms and for **different** motivations: right-wing, left-wing, anarchist, ethno-nationalist and separatist attacks, as well as other and non-specified which endanger today's society. Therefore, It has become an urgent issue within the EU both to keep **reducing its number** and to prevent the **numerous consequences** it has for our society.

As the years have gone by, the EU has found itself involved in even more challenging situations, having to face and respond immediately to the different attacks and threats **experienced in the Member States**. Thus, the problem dates back to the 1990s, where in France, spontaneous attacks, especially of a **jihadist nature**, were already beginning to be seen, which, despite not being new to the rest of the world, did represent, and continue to be, a **risk** to the EU.



Source: Europol's annual EU terrorism situation and trend reports (from 2011 to 2021)

Stakeholders & measures in place

Considering everything mentioned above, there are a series of **organisations and actors** that have an essential role in the **development of measures** to oppose terrorism in the EU. There are generally three main actors who carry out the policy-making process within the EU, the European Commission (EC), the European Parliament (EP) and the European Council.

Consequently, the main stakeholders for this topic are the following:

- The **Council of Europe** is an international organisation shaped by 46 European countries whose mission is to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law across Europe.
- The **European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol)** is the EU's law enforcement agency which helps national law enforcement authorities in EU Member States.
- The **Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG-HOME)** is the Directorate-General (DG) in charge of dealing with terrorism. What is more, it focuses on the 2020 Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU, which is a part of the new Security Union Strategy.
- The **Member States** have, as far as terrorism is concerned, the **main responsibility** for ensuring security and correct compliance with the laws and, the EU has full capacity to offer **tools**, **coordinate** and even provide **financial support** to bring solutions.

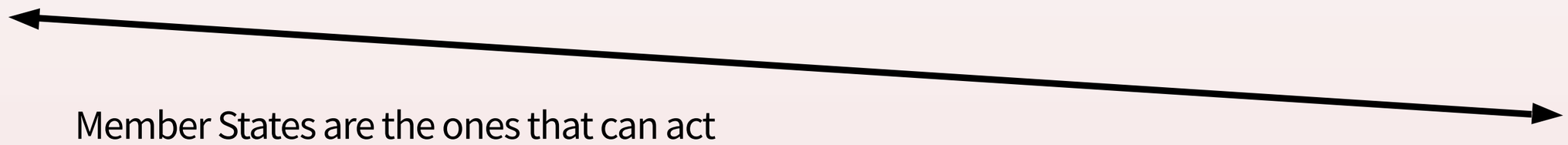
As a consequence, some of the measures taken and already implemented within the legal framework of the EU are:

- The **Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism (CDCT)** is an intergovernmental body organised by the Council of Europe to fight against the terrorism issues that exist in the different Member States through tools that will ultimately be used in the **2023-2027 Counter-Terrorism Action Plan**.
- The **2020 Counter-Terrorism Agenda** is another of the actions taken to anticipate and protect European citizens in the coming years. It is based on preventive measures that aim to guarantee safety and protection.
- The **Regulation (EU) 2021/784 of the EP and of the Council of 29 April 2021** has been developed due to the rapid advancement of technologies and the new terrorist threats that are emerging as a consequence.
- The **Global Terrorism Database (GTD)** is an open-source database that contains data on terrorist incidents worldwide with yearly updates. The GTD already has more than 200,000 cases and includes systematic data on both national and international terrorist acts.

Topic spectrum

Conflict:

Who is the stakeholder that bears the most responsibility to tackle this problem most effectively?



a) In matters of terrorism, **Member States** are the ones who, initially, have greater decision-making capacity because they suffer attacks internally and ensure their **citizens' safety**.

b) Although the problem originally falls on the Member States, given that they are officially the ones to act on it, without the **cooperation and support provided** by European institutions such as the DG-HOME, it would be impossible to put an end to the attacks that have occurred or be able to carry out control at an international level. Therefore, both stakeholders have the necessary capacity, both legal and financial, to stop terrorism, thus **making their presence essential for European citizens**.

c) **DG-HOME** is, without a doubt, the one that can act decisively since it is part of the EC and, as such, exerts more pressure, not only at an international level but also nationally, since without the development of proposals and common measures, there is no use fighting against such a **globalised** problem.

Task

In this last section of the TO, you will be asked to do a series of mini-tasks related to our topic. However, before doing so, I propose the following tasks to do, so that when I reach out to you, everything is ready and we can work little by little before the session! Therefore, to facilitate your understanding and to help you comprehend everything mentioned above here you have a few tasks:

1. **Search on the internet for a piece of information** related to terrorism in Europe. It could be, for example, an article on a new attack attempt, a podcast about data that has recently been published, or even a documentary on current problems that are directly related to terrorism. Try to make them as up-to-date as possible so that we can work with current data and stay informed of everything new that is happening in Europe! The idea is to sum it up simply to share what it taught you with the rest of the committee.
2. **Write** simply what you believe are **the three most relevant consequences** that terrorism generates in today's society. They can be of a political, economic, legal, or health nature... It consists of organising in bullet points the three main effects that it has for Europeans.
3. And last but not least, here you have a **Google Form** that I have made for you to fill in. It will help me to know how to help you better!

COMMITTEE ON SECURITY AND DEFENCE (SEDE II)

Phishing Emails: With the Norwegian and Finnish parliaments recently facing cyber attacks, and rampant misinformation campaigns being spread on social media, what can the EU do to protect Europeans from disinformation and data theft by third countries?

By: Nikita Jetmarová (CZ)

Introduction

The Case Study

On July 12th, 2023, **the Norwegian government** suffered yet **another cyber attack** coming from an external **third-party** supplier targeting twelve of their ministries. **The Nordic countries** have been struggling to **cyber-secure** their state sectors for a few years now, unfortunately to no avail. The **number of cyber-attacks** between 2019 and 2021 **has tripled** and with **another attack** on the Norwegian Parliament in June 2022, it was not possible to develop any **cyber-space protector** in the meantime.

For the Nordics, this ever-growing threat means the necessity to rapidly **intervene** in their **cybersecurity systems** and be completely vigilant in terms of **contact with external sources** in the governmental cyberspace. This recent cyber-attack in July **highlighted more underlying threats** that can follow up as consequences of these interferences. Cyber attacks are a **large threat to national security** since there is a high chance of diverse **defence strategies being leaked**, which can cause a massive issue, particularly if the country is currently in a state of war. Fortunately, these consequences did not hit the Norwegian government this time, since the **Ministry of Defence and Military has its own cyber system**, which remained without the attack. Another problem that arises from these attacks is the **cyber vulnerability from a long-term perspective**. In 2019, Norway had **implemented a national cybersecurity strategy**, as well as other countries. However, if there is an enormous **breach in the course of this strategy's duration**, there is a need to make **amendments** or, in worse cases, **change the whole core** of the strategies, which may appear to governments as **another overwhelming issue**. Moreover, cyber-attacks are not only afflicting technological procedures, but they also play a role in the **political sphere**. The constant attacks can **undermine the governmental authorities** or organisations since their **efforts to prevent these breaches** are not as **effective**, **relevant**, and mainly **not publicly aware**. This can challenge many governmental representatives, as for example, **Erik Hope, the director of Norwegian Ministries' Security and Service Organisation**, or **Áslaug Arna Sigurbjörnsdóttir, Iceland's Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation**, who have both **expressed their remorse** regarding the repeated **cyber-attacks** and have emphasised on their **efforts to improve the cyber security region of Nordic countries**.

The Abstract

With the rise of technological advancements worldwide the **threat of cyber-attacks** is becoming an increasingly more **relevant topic**, which has an impact on all members of **today's digitalised society**. Our everyday presence in the **cyber-space** and access to the worldwide platform has simplified many aspects of our lives. However, all **innovations** bring new kinds of **danger**, and there is always a possibility to **take**

advantage of them. This creates a space for **cyber-wars**[1] and **cyber-weapons**[2] to originate.

The Nordics have become a valuable **target** for many **cyber hackers** since their recent engagement in the world's affairs. Many cyber threats from the **proxies**[3] **of the Russian government** had been rising in response to **Finland and Sweden joining North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**. Another reason referring to cyber-attacks on Norwegian ministries, including the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy in July 2023, is the **current conflict between European and Russian powers** regarding the **supply of gas.** With **Norway** now being the **largest EU gas exporter**, its governmental systems and information storage have become the **primary target** for cyber hackers, primarily from **third-world countries**, but the **threats are also rising from Russian hacker groups**.

Together with cyber-attacks, there have also been **rising consequent threats** in the form of **disinformation campaigns**[4] spreading on all types of media. **The Nordic countries**, primarily **Sweden and Finland**, have announced a **rapid increase** in **disinformation campaigns**, predominantly coming from **Russian sources**. **Daniel Stenling**, the head of counterintelligence of the **Swedish Security Service (Säpo)**, stated that *"**Russia** regards Sweden as part of Europe, NATO and the collective West. This means that we must **prepare ourselves for an increase in the number of security-threatening activities from Russia**".* **Finnish governmental and private sectors** had been also **attacked by external hacktivists**[5] and the offensive is **predicted to** most likely **repeat** in the future. The **main goal** of spreading disinformation campaigns is to **weaken the new position of Sweden and Finland in NATO** to **maintain** an advantageous **geo-political status quo**[6] for Russia. The **disinformation campaigns** are usually **based** on **claims of abuse or harassment** of people with a "**Russian background**" **in Finland, blackmail of politicians**, or **deep fake videos of** "**real people**". Furthermore, **disinformation campaigns** usually **originate from misleading media outlets** or **social media robots** spreading topics including the **corruption within NATO** or **NATO's increase in power** in Europe representing **a threat to the Russian government**. At the end of August 2023, **the Swedish Minister of Civil Defence, Carl-Oskar Bohlin**, **cautioned** that "*the country continues to be **targeted by sophisticated information and influence campaigns by Russia and Iran***". However, this was **not the first warning**, the initiating accusation was made a month before, in July 2023. These **misinformation campaigns**, according

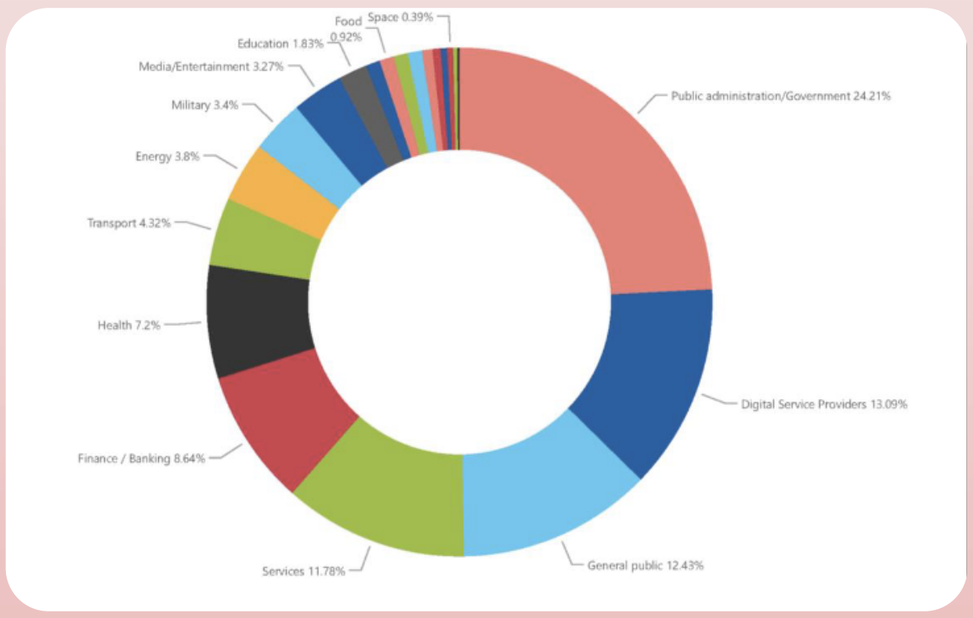


Figure 1: *Targeted sectors per number of incidents between July 2021 and June 2022, showcasing that the sector that suffers the greatest amount is public administration and government*

1 Cyber war is conducted in and from computers and the networks connecting them, waged by states or their proxies against other states.

2 Cyber weapons are software and IT systems that, through ICT networks, manipulate, deny, disrupt, degrade, or destroy targeted information systems or networks.

3 Proxy- authority given to a person to act for someone else, example can be voting for them in elections; "My brother is voting for me by proxy in the school elections. ", "a trusted agent has proxy for her"

4 Disinformation campaign is a targeted, organised information attack on a company, a party, an institution or an individual, whereby a large amount of demonstrably false or misleading information (disinformation) is published, which serves the purpose of manipulation and is deliberately disseminated on a large scale.

5 Hacktivist/Hactivism is the act of misusing a computer system or network for a socially or politically motivated reason- individuals who perform hacktivism are known as hacktivists.

6 Status quo is the present situation, how it is right now.

to Nordic authorities, are **undermining the internal stability of the country**, potentially negatively **influencing political decisions** and, therefore, this **can arise in larger geopolitical tensions** in the future.

Stakeholders & measures in place

The European Commission (EC) is an executive arm of the **European Union (EU)**, separated into distinct departments, and its function is to implement pertinent **legislation**. The EC has been striving to **strengthen cyber security** within Member States for many years and has finally managed to do so by the execution of new **cyber defence acts in 2023**. At the beginning of September, the **EU Parliament** passed the **Cyber Resilience Act** and **Digital Operational Resilience Act (DORA)**, paving the way for further executions regarding cyber-defence. These laws also serve as **amendments** to the **EU's Cyber-Security Strategy from 2020**.

Another legislation that was proposed in 2016 and implemented in 2023 is the **NIS2 Directive**, which ensures a **higher level of cybersecurity** by providing **legal measures** for private and public entities to act upon. Moreover, in June 2021, **the President of the EC, Ursula von der Leyen, proposed a vision** to establish a **new platform**, the **Joint Cyber Unit**. **Its purpose is** to coordinate the **EU's collective response** to large-scale **cyber-attacks** and violations. This platform should serve as a resource for **one of the six priorities of EC for the years 2019-2024, *"A Europe Fit for the Digital Age"***.

The EC had also **created** many **bodies** based on its implementations regarding cyber security and safety, such as the **European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA), the European Cyber Security Organisation (ECSO), and the European Cybersecurity Competence Centre (ECCC)**. **ENISA** has also expressed its **concern** regarding the **disinformation campaigns and operations** in cyberspace and how this spreading **afflicts future numbers of cyber-attacks**.

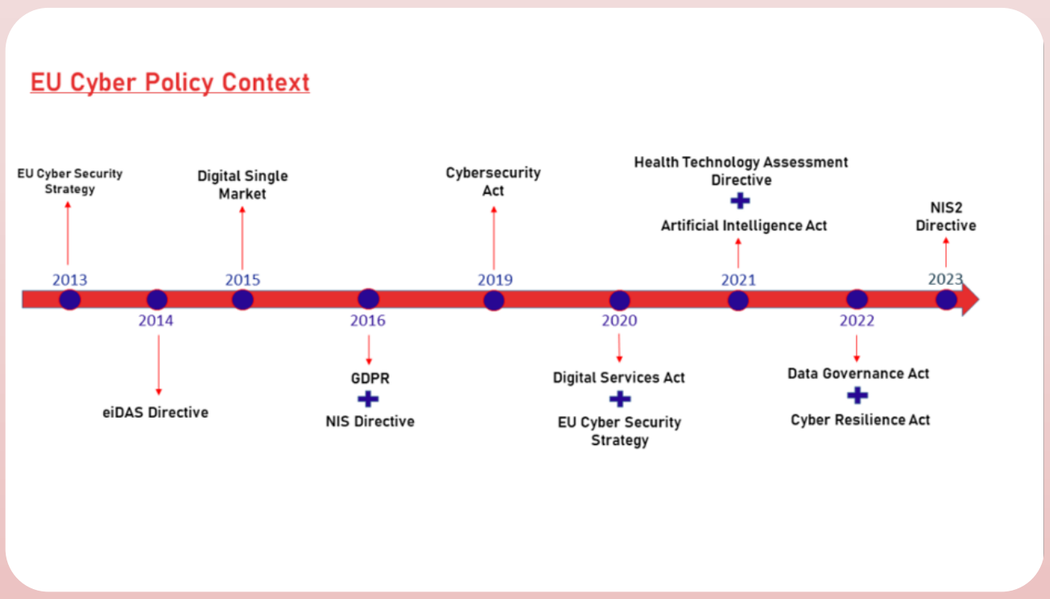


Figure 2: *Timeline showing the EU's Cyber Policy Context evolution in the last 10 years*

The Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO) is a collaborative unit **among the Nordic countries** debating issues and crises in the **defence area**. The Cooperation proposes **technical solutions** and discusses cross-border intensive **collaboration**. **This** ensures **secure cyberspace** with mutual intelligence and **collaborative responses** to possible **external threats**. **NORDEFCO** elaborates on creating both **offensive** and **defensive responses** to outer attacks **targeting** the **Nordic countries** and this will run as a part of the **proposed vision of NORDEFCO for 2025**.

Nordic Co-operation is a **regional partnership association** between **Nordic countries** and includes an **inner forum**; **the Nordic Council**. The **former president of the Nordic Council**, for 2022-2023, **Erkki Tuomioja**, had intensively **supported** the topic of **cybersecurity** at a **summit** in **December 2022** and had **entrusted** the **cyber threat issues** upon **NORDEFCO** to propose **new legislative** in their **vision**. In addition, the **Nordic Co-operation** has been also dealing with the spread of **fake news**[7] **and disinformation** in campaign forms. **Nordic authorities** expanded on the **underlying issue** of **cyber threats**, which they stated as *"an external attempt to undermine the democracy and unity of Nordic countries".*

From a different perspective

How and in **what ways** can we **secure European cyberspace**? That is the arising question in terms of **cyber**

7 Fake news are false stories that appear to be news, spread on the internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views.

security. There are many **different outlooks** regarding the reinsurance of **safe cyberspace** coming from various **organisations and associations**.

The first **outlook** is a concept of **regional mutual cyber security**. The **main goal** of this mutually **shared protection** is to ensure a large **network of defensive resources**, in case of attacks from **external** influences, for all its members. This solution has been proposed by the **European Army Interoperability Centre (FINABEL)** in its **strategy to secure cyber safety within the EU**, released in **2021**. This strategy was also **supported by Erkki Tuomioja**, the former **president** of the **Nordic Council**, with his recent **statement** from March 2023 *"A **common cyber security** approach for the region would be a **positive** development".* This regional cyber security would be **maintained** by common **associations**, such as the **EC** or **NORDEFCO**. The **EC** will also shield **strategies to prevent disinformation**, such as **The Code of Practice on Disinformation**, updated in **2022**, which **expands on regional mutual cyber security**.

Another **strategy** to secure European cyberspace is the **Public-Private Partnership (PPP)**. This partnership works on a **collaboration** between a **governmental body** and the **private sector** to reach a **common goal**, in this case, to establish a **secure cyber defensive network**. In 2016, a **trial PPP strategy** was launched by the **European Parliament**, but with the increase in cyber activity, an **update** of this launch **would be needed**. **ENISA** has also **shielded** this **partnership** proposal and is planning on **expanding the collaboration** in the future.

Many **countries** have also decided to **rely on themselves** and implemented the **strategy** of **national cyber security**. This concept supports the **independence** of each country as a single unit and, therefore, ensures a **secure cyber network within** it. This strategy was **supported by many governments in the EU**, including the Latvian or German government, since the cyber system does not involve a **large database of multiple governments but only one**. This secures the **protection of government databases** from all possible accesses and prevents any breaches of cyber security gates or leakage of critical information. This strategy is **promoted**, for instance, **by Iceland** with their **cyber security strategy for years 2022-2037**, as they prefer having cyberspace **secured** by their **own protecting factor**s. **The German government** released their **National Cyber Security Strategy** in 2021 with a **paragraph 5.2.3.** dedicated to the ensuing **spread of disinformation consequent to cyber attacks**. *"**Propaganda and disinformation** can be particularly **dangerous** if they are **disseminated** as a **result of cyber-attacks** on **credible platforms**".* This **amendment** ensures **higher efficiency of the strategy** since the focus is also on **preventing consequent causes**, such as **disinformation campaigns**, rather than solving just the **direct actions** in forms of **cyber-attacks**.

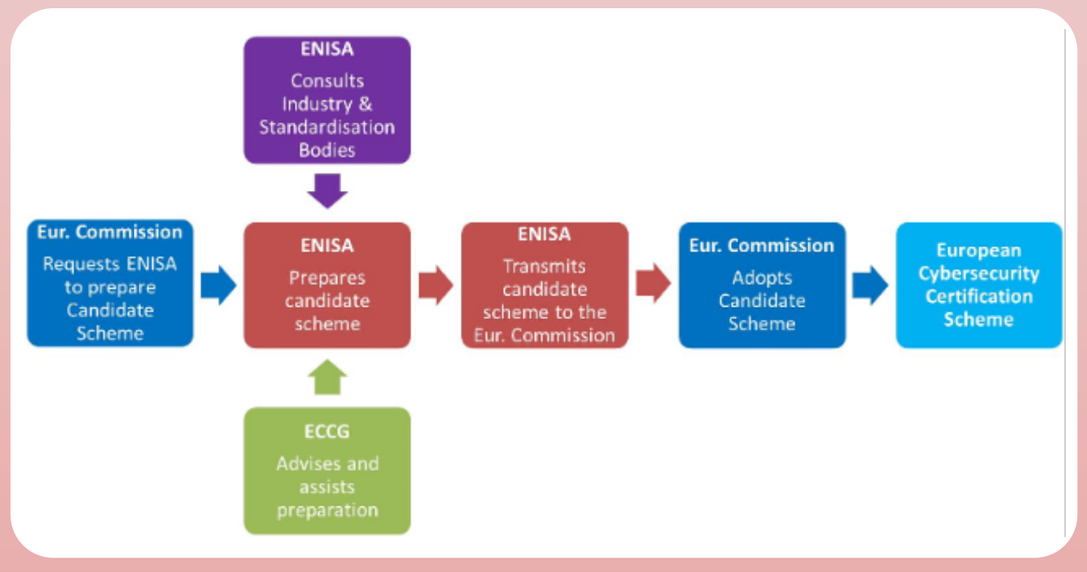


Figure 3: *An overview of a how a European cybersecurity certification scheme is adopted by the ENISA organisation*

Task

Evaluation time: As you have **read** ***"from different perspectives"***, **select one** out of the three **strategies** presented and **give your reasoning** on **why** you think that **strategy** would be the **most efficient to cyber**

secure the Nordic countries or the whole of Europe. **Write** between **5-10 sentences** explaining **why you decided on that strategy**. You can **use** the **sources from the passage** or the **ones below**:

➔ Public-Private Partnerships in National Cybersecurity Strategies

➔ Public-Private Partnerships in Cybersecurity

➔ National Cybersecurity Strategies Guidelines & tools — ENISA

➔ New EU's Cybersecurity Package: ambitious proposals, daring tasks and deeper cooperation

***STAR TASK:** if you **want** to **broaden your knowledge** even more, you can also **research** the **definition of a "distributed denial-of-service attack" (DDoS attack).**

Do not forget to have fun, and in case you have any questions do not hesitate to contact me!

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