

## Imagining the future of Europe as a European Republic <sup>(128)</sup>

Posted on [12 Dec 2017](#) at [11:02](#)

On the day the new ECB main building was inaugurated, protesters lined the streets of Frankfurt. It was that day, 18 March 2015, when Prof. Ulrike Guérot saw a burning European flag. In a recent seminar at the ECB, she elaborated how this moment inspired her to start a European movement.



Guérot, a political scientist at Danube University Krems, has been involved with the European project in various roles in academia and policy think tanks; starting back in the 1990s when she contributed to the “Schäuble-Lamers” paper on “Core Europe” and deepening the EU. Today, her name is associated with the project on the [European Republic](#) and the Berlin-based think-tank [European Democracy Lab](#). Her proposal is to radically rethink the European Union that today falls short of the promises made to be a Union of Citizens and not just a Union of States.

She started her project by arranging the flags of European countries like a barcode, furnishing them with the headline “The European Republic is under construction”, printing these on postcards, and leaving them behind wherever she was when travelling Europe. The intention was to spark a counter-narrative about Europe, one which focused not on ‘more or less integration’ but on the sovereignty of Europeans. And she found out that the idea of a European Republic was intuitively understood and sparked positive emotional reactions, except among the ‘old establishment’.



### Republic, res publica or how we organise the public good

The economic, social and political crisis which has overshadowed the last decade of Europe highlighted the inherent flaws of the European project and demonstrated the lack of sovereignty of the citizens, Guérot said. National interests continuously override public interests, undermining legitimacy and accountability for the citizens.

Guérot argued that to recreate legitimacy in Europe, we have to recreate democracy. With this as a premise, some of the concepts that are used in the European debate – with the nation-state as basic units that argue over how much power to give to Brussels – are not helping the debate, but instead are hindering fresh thinking. What is needed is an emancipation from these concepts, and think about the public good – the *res publica* – of all European citizens.



In Ulrike Guérot’s reasoning, if a core feature of a nation is that people in it are economically and socially interdependent and that the solidarity among them is institutionalised, then the Eurozone would certainly qualify. She therefore proposes, now that we have complemented the Single Market with the single currency, to complete it by creating a single

democracy: a European Republic, where all European citizens are truly equal. This encompasses full parliamentarisation, equality before the law, electoral and fiscal equality, as well as equal access to social rights.

### A special seminar for a special audience

Although she frequently fills town-halls discussing the European Republic with citizens from all across Europe, Prof. Guérot was honoured to be invited to elaborate her thoughts to ECB colleagues. She appreciated the work of our institution, and praised the role of the ECB in resolving the crisis.



Her lecture sparked a lively discussion with colleagues. Guérot pointed out that Europe lacked the required ‘can-do’ attitude and that leaders needed to prove capable to make bold political decisions even when this went against their ministers’ narrower views. We need to simply produce convergence, Guérot said, for example, by announcing a common tax ID or social security number for each citizen by a concrete date. This would first spark outrage but eventually administrations, businesses and citizens would adapt to the new system.

Critics of her ideas argued that further “centralisation” to the European level may be counterproductive. She responded that a European Republic would not necessarily constitute acts of centralisation and did not need a single identity. On the contrary, projects such as a European unemployment insurance scheme or the comprehensive installation of broadband internet connections, instead prove to be manifestations of decentralisation.

Guérot explained that recent anti-European sentiments were spread top-down and not bottom-up. It was German elites that had created the sentiment that Germany was economically so successful that it could ‘go it alone’ and did not need Europe. Disingenuously, they now pretended that it was not them but the German people that did not want Europe anymore. Prof. Guérot’s idea was to instil a positive narrative around Europe that initiates a debate. Taking into account the different meta-trends of European societies (nationalism, anti-globalism, etc.), it is important to offer such a utopia that guides us in our path dependency, since “without a compass you go in circles”, she concluded.



The seminar was well attended and many colleagues expressed their interest in Mrs Guérot’s ideas. If you cannot make it to her next event in Frankfurt ([Ein Kompass für Europa](#)) but still wish to discuss the idea of democratising Europe with an interested audience, please feel free to add a comment. Log in with your Windows credentials using the link below.

This entry was posted in [Communications, Conferences & Events, International and European relations](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).

---

**Leave a Reply**

You must be [logged in](#) to post a comment.