



VMUN 2026

European Union

BACKGROUND GUIDE



Vancouver Model United Nations

The Twenty-Fifth Annual Session | January 23rd-25th, 2026

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Dear Delegates,

My name is Eaton Li, and it is my pleasure to serve as your Director for the European Union (EU). I am a Grade 10 student at Vancouver College and alongside your Chair Yasmin Kahkesh and Assistant Director Kaylie Chan, we would like to extend a warm welcome to you to the twenty-fifth annual session of VMUN. We hope that you will enjoy this experience as much as we will.

Every time I step into a committee room, whether that was at my first conference, where I walked into the committee room blindly, or after several experiences, I am always extremely excited. From heated committee discourse to late-night talks with my friends, Model UN has truly been a wonderful and unique experience, which I am grateful for. I hope that you may feel the same way about this sport as well. Through practice, you will strengthen your public speaking, critical thinking, and communication, among other things.

The European Union will be addressing two urgent issues in the status quo: *the Erosion of Democratic Values* and *Reducing Economic Dependence*. Below, you will find the background guides for these topics, where valuable information will be at your disposal. Beyond that, we would appreciate further research into the topics for a fruitful and diverse debate.

I hope that you may succeed in your preparations for this conference. Please note that, should there be any questions, comments, or concerns, the entire Dais team is at your disposal. If you have questions, comments, or concerns, do not hesitate to contact us at eu@vmun.com. I hope we can have an amazing conference!

Best regards,

Eaton Li

EU Director

Position Paper Policy

What is a Position Paper?

A position paper is a brief overview of a country's stance on the topics being discussed by a particular committee. Though there is no specific format the position paper must follow, it should include a description of your positions your country holds on the issues on the agenda, relevant actions that your country has taken, and potential solutions that your country would support.

At Vancouver Model United Nations, delegates should write a position paper for each of the committee's topics. Each position paper should not exceed one page and should all be combined into a single document per delegate.

For EU, position papers, although strongly recommended, are not required. However, delegates who wish to be considered for an award must submit position papers.

Formatting

Position papers should:

- Include the name of the delegate, his/her country, and the committee
- Be in a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) with a 12-point font size and 1-inch document margins
- Not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders
- Include citations and a bibliography, in any format, giving due credit to the sources used in research (not included in the 1-page limit)

Due Dates and Submission Procedure

Position papers for this committee must be submitted by **January 12, 2026, at 23:59 PT**. Once your position paper is complete, please save the file as your last name, your first name and send it as an attachment in an email to your committee's email address, with the subject heading as "[last name] [first name] — Position Paper". Please do not add any other attachments to the email. Both your position papers should be combined into a single PDF or Word document file; position papers submitted in another format will not be accepted.

Each position paper will be manually reviewed and considered for the Best Position Paper award. The email address for this committee is eu@vmun.com.

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Addressing the Erosion of Democratic Values

Overview

Democracy is “a form of government in which the people elect representatives to make decisions, policies, and laws”.¹ Beyond this, several key principles indicate a strong democracy: the “holding of periodic free and fair elections” to allow voters to consistently and reliably choose their government representatives, a “pluralistic system of political parties” to represent the large quantity of differing political opinions,² and the use of secret ballots to ensure that voters may cast their ballots without fear.^{3,4} Finally, the Rule of Law guarantees that everyone—even those in power—are equal under the law, allowing judicial courts to apply the law unhampered by political influence.⁵

Democratic ideals slowly diffused through Europe during the Enlightenment,⁶ but it was the Second World War that truly pushed Europe to democratize. Western European states united in the fight against autocratic Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.⁷ The Cold War further reinforced this shift; following the collapse of the Soviet Union (USSR), many Eastern European countries originally controlled by communist dictatorships underwent significant reforms.⁸

The EU was formed in 1993 with the signing of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). This foundational document establishes democracy as a fundamental value in Article 2, affirming the bloc’s commitment to a representative government.^{9, 10}

Recently, however, many have become concerned about the strength of democracy in the EU.¹¹ Several governments have been criticized for their lack of transparency or accountability,¹² and electoral integrity is being

¹ “Democracy,” Merriam-Webster, Accessed August 1, 2025, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/democracy>.

² Lee Drutman, “More Parties, Better Parties,” New America, Last updated July 3, 2023, <https://www.newamerica.org/political-reform/reports/more-parties-better-parties/introduction-the-case-for-more-and-better-parties/>.

³ “Democracy,” United Nations, Accessed August 1, 2025, <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/democracy>.

⁴ “Rule of law: why it matters,” European Council, Last reviewed September 26, 2024, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/rule-of-law-why-it-matters/>.

⁵ “The rule of law and why it matters,” Provincial Court of BC, Accessed August 1, 2025, <https://provinciacourt.bc.ca/about-court/court-independence-judicial-education/judicial-independence/rule-law-and-why-it-matters>.

⁶ “The Enlightenment,” Lumen Learning, Accessed August 1, 2025, <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-hccc-worldhistory2/chapter/the-enlightenment/>.

⁷ European Parliament, “A road to unity: the EU’s history,” Posted 2024, 13:51, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oxl4KVBfviE>.

⁸ “Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, 1989,” Office of the Historian, Accessed June 29, 2025, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/fall-of-communism>.

⁹ “Democracy in the European Union (EU),” ValuesatVet, Accessed June 29, 2025, <https://valuesatvet.si/files/2025/06/Democracy-in-the-European-Union.pdf>.

¹⁰ “Founding agreements,” European Union, Accessed August 1, 2025, https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/principles-and-values/founding-agreements_en.

¹¹ Kyriakos Klossidis, “Parliament calls for action against the erosion of EU values in member states,” News | European Parliament, February 28, 2024, www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20240223IPR18084/parliament-calls-for-action-against-the-erosion-of-eu-values-in-member-states.

¹² Ibid.

called into question due to undemocratic practices such as gerrymandering and vote buying.¹³ All of this has created public distrust, undermining governmental legitimacy in many countries. In Western Europe, the rise in popularity of far-right parties in long-time democratic states also raises concerns of potential democratic erosion,¹⁴ as far-right extremism has affected democratic values in the past. While the EU has taken action to combat the erosion of democracy, including the suspension of EU funds through the conditionality regulation, more must be done.^{15,16} Delegates need to address the erosion of democracy in the status quo, but also prevent potential erosion from occurring persistently.

Timeline

September 2, 1945 — The Second World War ends. Europe, particularly Western Europe, feels the threat that undemocratic practices pose. Several leaders voice the need for a commitment to democratic values, due to the threat that authoritarianism posed during the Second World War.¹⁷ On the other hand, Eastern European states and some Central European states are heavily influenced by the USSR and form communist totalitarian governments.¹⁸

May 5, 1949 — Several Western European countries establish The Council of Europe. This council represents the first step towards the commitment to democratic values, as it is the first European institution explicitly made to uphold democracy.¹⁹ The Council of Europe also plays an important role in determining the criteria for countries to join the EU, which includes having democratic institutions.²⁰

April 18, 1951 — The Court of Justice is formed as a byproduct of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). Today, it is known as the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and serves as the judicial branch of the EU.²¹ Specifically, it reviews cases where governments or institutions act beyond their authority, including breaches of the Rule of Law.²²

¹³ Svetoslav Todorov, "News Calls Grow to Declare Bulgaria's Elections Illegitimate Over Alleged Fraud," *BalkanInsight*, November 5, 2024,

<https://balkaninsight.com/2024/11/05/calls-grow-to-declare-bulgarias-elections-illegitimate-over-alleged-fraud/>.

¹⁴ Ruth Green, "The year of elections: The rise of Europe's far right," *International Bar Association*, September 30, 2024, <https://www.ibanet.org/The-year-of-elections-The-rise-of-Europes-far-right>.

¹⁵ Zselyke Csaky, "Freezing EU funds: An effective tool to enforce the rule of law?" *Centre for European Reform*, February 27, 2025, <https://www.cer.eu/insights/freezing-eu-funds-effective-tool-enforce-rule-law>.

¹⁶ Gábor Scheiring, "I Watched Orbán Destroy Hungary's Democracy. Here's My Advice for the Trump Era," *Politico*, November 23, 2024, <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2024/11/23/trump-autocrat-elections-00191281>.

¹⁷ "A road to unity."

¹⁸ "Warsaw Pact," *Britannica*, Last updated May 7, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Warsaw-Pact>.

¹⁹ Marie-Thérèse Bitsch, "History of the Council of Europe (2013)," *Council of Europe*, Accessed August 1, 2025, <https://book.coe.int/en/books-on-europe/5863-pdf-history-of-the-council-of-europe.html>.

²⁰ "Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood," *European Commission*, Accessed June 29, 2025, https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/glossary_en.

²¹ "Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU)," *European union*, Accessed August 1, 2025, https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/search-all-eu-institutions-and-bodies/court-justice-european-union-cjeu_en.

²² *Ibid.*

March 25, 1957 — The European Economic Community (EEC) form the European Commission as its executive branch.²³ It serves as a core institution of the EU today and continues to reinforce democratic values. The Commission is the primary body responsible for EU funds and oversees the implementation of EU legislation.²⁴

December 26, 1991 — Following the political fragmentation of several states within, the USSR officially dissolves. The newly formed countries and countries that were once part of the Eastern Bloc are now independent of Soviet political influence and control; some, such as the Baltic states, turn towards democracy.²⁵

February 7, 1992 — The EU is formally established with the signing of the TEU. Article 2 of the TEU declares democracy one of the foundational values of the EU.²⁶

December 7, 2000 — The European Parliament, Council of Europe, and the European Commission proclaim the Charter of Fundamental Rights (CFR) of the European Union. This charter reaffirms EU institutions and member states' commitment to democracy.²⁷ With the signing of the Lisbon Treaty in 2007, the CFR becomes legally binding, guaranteeing participation in democracy.²⁸

January 1, 2021 — The Rule of Law Conditionality Regulation comes into effect. This allows the EU to take appropriate measures in response to a breach of the Rule of Law that has affected or may affect the financial interests of the EU, including withholding funds from a state.²⁹

June 8, 2023 — The European Commission proposes the EU Body for Ethical Standards following the Qatargate corruption scandal in late 2022.³⁰ Its purpose is to develop ethical standards for the EU institutions and target institutional corruption. However, it receives widespread criticism, particularly around its inability to launch independent investigations or to impose sanctions or penalties.³¹

²³ "Treaty of Rome," European Parliament, Accessed June 29, 2025, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/the-parliament-and-the-treaties/treaty-of-rome>.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "Fall of Communism."

²⁶ "CONSOLIDATED VERSION OF THE TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION," Official Journal of the European Union, October 26, 2012, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF.

²⁷ "Extension: About the Charter of Fundamental Rights," EU Learning, Accessed June 29, 2025, <https://carleton.ca/ces/elearning/politics/human-rights/extension-about-the-charter-of-fundamental-rights/>.

²⁸ Katharina Massay-Kosubek, "The Treaty of Lisbon," European Parliament, Accessed June 29, 2025, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/5/the-treaty-of-lisbon>.

²⁹ "Rule of law conditionality regulation," European Commission, Accessed June 29, 2025, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/protection-eu-budget/rule-law-conditionality-regulation_en.

³⁰ "Interinstitutional Body for Ethical Standards for Members of Institutions and Advisory Bodies of the EU," European Commission, Accessed August 1, 2025, https://commission.europa.eu/about/service-standards-and-principles/ethics-and-good-administration/interinstitutional-body-ethical-standards-members-institutions-and-advisory-bodies-eu_en.

³¹ Pia Engelbrecht-Bogdanov, "Watered-down EU ethics body lacks credibility," Transparency International EU, June 8, 2023, <https://transparency.eu/transparency-international-eu-watered-down-eu-ethics-body-lacks-credibility/>.

December 12, 2023 — The European Commission adopts the “Defence of Democracy” package. It mainly addresses the enhancement of transparency and accountability mechanisms for foreign governments influencing policies and decision-making, intending to prevent foreign interference in the democratic process.³²

March 17, 2025 — The sixth edition of the Liberties Rule of Law Report—a non-governmental organization (NGO) initiative meant to monitor the state of the Rule of Law in the EU—is published. It highlights the growing concern with justice systems, media freedom, corruption, and more across several EU states.³³

Historical Analysis

Aftermath of the Second World War

The end of the Second World War is generally seen as the foundation for the rise of modern democratic values in Europe, specifically Western Europe.³⁴ Europe experienced the rise of authoritarian and fascist countries; particularly Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany,³⁵ who threatened to topple democratic countries present.³⁶ Fascism is a political ideology and far-right ultranationalist movement that expects subservience to the state, fundamentally giving complete power to the dictator.³⁷ Once the Second World War concluded, much of Western Europe became resolute in maintaining democracy.³⁸ Eastern Europe, on the other hand, witnessed the formation of communist autocratic states, which were encouraged by Soviet influence during the Cold War.³⁹ Furthermore, the U.S. established closer relations with Western Europe, which the USSR felt as a threat to their goal of global dominance.⁴⁰ The U.S. established the Marshall plan, an aid program that provided Western Europe with billions of dollars to rebuild the economy,⁴¹ and strategic defence coordination through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Although the Marshall plan was also offered to Eastern European countries, the USSR rejected it.⁴² In response to the U.S.’s actions, the USSR established the Eastern Bloc through the Warsaw Pact, a defence and military treaty comprising eight Eastern European states.⁴³ These states were controlled by the USSR in all aspects and acted as a buffer between Western Europe and the USSR.

³² “Defence of Democracy – Commission proposes to shed light on covert foreign influence,” European Commission, December 11, 2023, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_6453.

³³ Eleanor Brooks, “Democratic Race to The Bottom But Some Shoots of Hope,” Liberties, March 17, 2025, <https://www.liberties.eu/en/stories/rolreport2025-main/45330>.

³⁴ “A road to unity.”

³⁵ Robert Soucy, “Fascism,” Britannica, Last updated July 21, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/fascism>.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ “The Soviet Socialist Republics,” Lumen Learning, Accessed August 1, 2025, <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-hccc-worldhistory2/chapter/the-soviet-socialist-republics/>.

⁴⁰ “Warsaw Pact.”

⁴¹ “Marshall Plan (1948),” National Archives, Last reviewed June 29, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/marshall-plan>.

⁴² “Soviet Union rejects Marshall Plan assistance,” History, November 13, 2009, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/july-2/soviet-union-rejects-marshall-plan-assistance>.

⁴³ Ibid.

Fallout of the Cold War

Once the Cold War ended with the dissolution of the USSR on December 26, 1991, the states that were once under Soviet rule, as well as the satellite states, were free.⁴⁴ Some immediately transitioned towards democracy, some had already begun the process beforehand, and others took more time to do so.⁴⁵ Many of these states had fragile democracies because of weak democratic institutions and susceptibility to corruption,⁴⁶ and saw the continuation of corrupt practices that fostered oligarchies, lack of judicial independence, and overall disregard for the Rule of Law.⁴⁷ These issues have continued to this day; some post-communist societies continue to struggle with sustaining democracy.⁴⁸



Figure 1: Modern European states that were a part of the USSR or heavily influenced by it from 1949 to 1989.⁴⁹

Case Study: Democracy in Romania

Following the ousting of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu in 1989, Romania began its transformation to democracy. Romania serves as a prime example of how the legacy of communism continues to affect democracy in former Eastern Bloc countries. Essentially, Romania's democratic institutions are still fragile, leading to two issues. One, the public has little trust in the government; polls found that only 8.9 percent of Romanians had

⁴⁴ "Fall of Communism."

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Will Halm, "Deterioration Through Dichotomization: Party Systems, Polarization, and Democratic Backsliding in Post-Communist Eastern Europe," Wesleyan University, April 2022, https://digitalcollections.wesleyan.edu/_flysystem/fedora/2023-03/24020-Original%20File.pdf.

⁴⁷ Kazimierz M. Ślomoński and Goldie Shabad, "Guest Editors' Introduction: Reconfiguration of Eastern Europe after the Fall of Communism: An Overview," *International Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Fall, 1998): 3-14, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20628535?seq=1>.

⁴⁸ "Decades after the USSR collapsed, Eurasian countries struggle to maintain democracy," NPR, April 20, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/04/20/1093698130/decades-after-the-ussr-collapsed-eurasian-countries-struggle-to-maintain-democra>.

⁴⁹ K.N.C., P.K., and A.C.M., "Hammer and scythe: The ebb and flow of Russian/Soviet influence," *The Economist*, March 20, 2014, <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2014/03/20/hammer-and-scythe>.

confidence in political parties and just 9.8 percent had confidence in the Parliament.⁵⁰ This distrust undermines the legitimacy of the government—which is crucial for any democracy—and allows ultranationalist figures to easily influence the people by offering a populist alternative to mainstream parties.⁵¹ Furthermore, the weak democratic institutions prevent meaningful resistance against these leaders. The second issue Romania faces in its democratic reforms is ongoing corruption. Even after the fall of the authoritarian government, many former members of that government seamlessly joined the current Romanian government.⁵² Romania continues to experience extensive influence from political elites, and millions of euros meant for improving infrastructure have been diverted to these elites.⁵³ Romania serves as an example of how former Eastern Bloc countries continue to face democratic challenges because of their history.

Past EU Involvement

Article 7 of the TEU

Article 7 serves as a check to ensure that member states align with the fundamental values of the EU, including democracy and the Rule of Law among others;⁵⁴ it states that if a member state risks a serious breach of these values, certain rights, such as representation in the European Council, may be suspended at the discretion of the Council.⁵⁵ Since the TEU was signed, Article 7 has been invoked twice: first against Poland in 2017 due to the undermining of judicial independence,⁵⁶ and second against Hungary in 2018 due to the dismissal of the Rule of Law.⁵⁷ Notably, however, neither of these cases resulted in concrete action.

Article 7 has the outstanding weakness of requiring unanimity to determine whether or not a state is violating Article 2 in the first place. Although the article does not allow the disputed state to vote, every other state needs to vote to invoke the article.⁵⁸ This allows for loopholes in the system; namely, Hungary and Poland have vowed to protect each other from EU sanctions.⁵⁹ Although Article 7 has some merit, further reform is necessary.

⁵⁰ Lauren Chadwick, “Thirty years on, what is the legacy of communism in Romania?” Euro News, December 25, 2019, <https://www.euronews.com/2019/12/25/thirty-years-on-what-is-the-legacy-of-communism-in-romania>.

⁵¹ Ana Dima, Marius Stan, “Where are you going, EU democracy? The dangerous case of Romanian elections,” Global Voices, March 11, 2025, <https://globalvoices.org/2025/03/11/where-are-you-going-eu-democracy-the-dangerous-case-of-romanian-elections/>.

⁵² Maria Szin, “Will Romania ever break away from its past?” East Anglia Bylines, May 2, 2025, <https://eastangliabylines.co.uk/news/world/will-romania-ever-break-away-from-its-past/>.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ “THE PROTECTION OF ARTICLE 2 TEU VALUES IN THE EU,” European Parliament, Accessed August 1, 2025, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU_4.1.2.pdf.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ “Timeline - Article 7: the story so far,” European Council, Last reviewed February 6, 2025, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/article-7-procedures/timeline-the-story-of-article-7/>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ “CONSOLIDATED VERSION.”

⁵⁹ Kim Lane Scheppele, “Can Poland be Sanctioned by the EU? Not Unless Hungary is Sanctioned Too,” Verfassungsblog, October 24, 2016, <https://verfassungsblog.de/can-poland-be-sanctioned-by-the-eu-not-unless-hungary-is-sanctioned-too/>.

Rule of Law Conditionality Regulation

The Rule of Law Conditionality Regulation is another layer of protection for the Rule of Law to fight against corruption, adopted in 2020.⁶⁰ This mechanism was introduced in 2021 and is activated when breaches of the Rule of Law pose a risk to the EU's financial interests. Intuitively, its primary objective is to safeguard the financial integrity of the bloc. However, it is also very useful to protect states against corruption and uphold democracy because it can be used as a financial punishment. The Rule of Law Conditionality Regulation has only been used once, against Hungary in 2022, when the EU froze EUR 6.3 billion in funds to Hungary due to their weakening of the Rule of Law.⁶¹ If Hungary continues to fail to meet the criteria for lifting the funding freeze by the end of 2025, another EUR 1 billion would be suspended.⁶²

Alternative Suspension of Funds

Alternative suspension of funds to EU states includes the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) and the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR).⁶³ The RRF was an initiative to strengthen EU states following the devastating impacts of COVID-19, largely through granting loans.⁶⁴ However, the distribution of funds required states to meet certain criteria, including upholding the Rule of Law; consequently, EUR 59.8 billion worth of funds to Poland were suspended, and EUR 10.4 billion worth of funds to Hungary were suspended.⁶⁵ The CPR was another regulation that was created in 2018; it states that member states must abide by the Charter of Fundamental Freedoms, which establishes democracy as an EU principle, when using EU funds. This regulation resulted in the suspension of EUR 76.5 billion to Poland, and EUR 21.9 billion to Hungary.⁶⁶ While the suspension of funds has generally led to some reforms towards democratic values and rule of law procedures, the viability of this approach as a solution to the erosion of democracy is called into question, given that no significant progress has been made in Poland and Hungary.⁶⁷ These countries can still access other funds from both the EU and foreign countries to lessen the impact of the EU's suspension.

Generally speaking, the EU has only used financial punishments against rule of law violations and democratic backsliding in extreme cases, although it has occurred many times. This occurs because the EU is built on a foundation of mutual trust in each individual country.⁶⁸ This means that countries have faith in their peers that their legal system can deal with challenges itself. Additionally, the EU has been criticized for infringing upon national sovereignty, causing countries to be hesitant about financial punishment. This has generally led to the inability of the EU to impose financial punishments upon member states.⁶⁹

⁶⁰ "Rule of law conditionality regulation."

⁶¹ Csaky, "Freezing EU funds."

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Marion Ho-Dac, "The Principle of Mutual Trust in EU law in the Face of a Crisis of Values," The European Association of Private International Law," February 22, 2021, <https://eapil.org/2021/02/22/the-principle-of-mutual-trust-in-eu-law-in-the-face-of-a-crisis-of-values/>.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Rule of Law Reports

The European Commission has published a Rule of Law Report annually since 2020.⁷⁰ This report is a collaborative effort that assesses the Rule of Law in different countries in four areas: the justice system, the anti-corruption framework, media pluralism and freedom, and other institutional issues related to checks and balances.⁷¹ This report is a tool used to fight corruption, as it is a reliable and effective method of identifying positive and negative developments in terms of the Rule of Law.⁷² This report promotes discourse regarding the Rule of Law and encourages collaboration to address issues. The Rule of Law Report has seen mixed success. It helps states insofar as it gives guidance and recommendations to member states on how to uphold the Rule of Law.⁷³ The 2025 iteration of this report found that 57 percent of the recommendations made in the 2024 report were followed up.⁷⁴ However, the report lacks enforcement; it is unable to create any meaningful change in certain states that refuse to cooperate. In these cases, reports continue to make the same recommendations, and there is no enforcement when member states do not comply.⁷⁵

Whistleblower Protection

Regarding the issue of whistleblower laws, the EU passed Directive 2019/1937 in 2019.

This directive bound member states to do three things: give whistleblowers established channels of information, investigate reports, and protect whistleblowers from retaliation.⁷⁶ The purpose of these actions was to allow whistleblowers more freedom to report on corruption in the government and private companies. It was meant to prevent targeting of these whistleblowers, thus increasing their likelihood of reporting corruption, thereby upholding the Rule of Law.⁷⁷ This was a landmark decision because many countries did not have legislation that provided whistleblowers with this kind of protection.⁷⁸ In 2019, the Whistleblowing International Network (WIN) and Transparency International tracked EU member states' progress on the directive.⁷⁹ By the deadline at which all countries were meant to have implemented the directive into their legislation, December 2021, only five member states had done so. Even a year later, only 13 achieved the goals,⁸⁰ indicating the need for further action.

Current Situation

Several member states of the EU are facing erosion of democratic values; this includes countries such as Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and others. The subsequent analysis applies to many, if not all, of these countries.

⁷⁰ "What does the Commission do to uphold the rule of law?" European Commission, Accessed June 29, 2025, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/rule-law/what-does-commission-do-uphold-rule-law_en.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² "2024 Rule of Law Report," European Commission, Accessed June 29, 2025, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/rule-law/annual-rule-law-cycle/2024-rule-law-report_en.

⁷³ "News EU's Rule of Law Report Finds 'Positive' Progress but Too Little by Usual Suspects," Reporting Democracy, July 8, 2025, <https://balkaninsight.com/2025/07/08/eus-rule-of-law-report-finds-positive-progress-but-too-little-in-usual-suspects/>.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Marie Terracol and Ida Nowers, "EU countries continue to fail whistleblowers," Transparency International, December 19, 2022, <https://www.transparency.org/en/blog/eu-countries-continue-to-fail-whistleblowers>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Terracol, "EU countries continue."

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Governmental Corruption

In the past few years, corruption has become rampant in European governments. Per the Corruption Perceptions Index 2024, the collective EU average corruption has worsened over recent years.⁸¹ This has occurred in Eastern European countries like Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia, but also Western European countries including Germany and France, as well as Nordic countries like Norway and Sweden.⁸²

Since Viktor Orbán became prime minister of Hungary in 2010, the country has seen a shift towards authoritarianism. Hungary has faced issues with finances, having misused EU and government funds towards corrupt deals, and often taking bribes from elites.⁸³ For instance, Lőrinc Mészáros, a childhood best friend of Orbán, has become one of the most influential oligarchs in the country.⁸⁴ His relationship with Orbán has allowed him to secure beneficial government deals easily and build up his wealth; meanwhile, government officials like Orbán enjoy the backing of rich elites that he created himself.⁸⁵ Corruption also manifests through bribery within the government. For instance, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) cancelled a mission in Hungary addressing bribery in 2024, because the government did not try to address the issue whatsoever.⁸⁶ The Orbán government hadn't done anything about the risk of foreign bribery, and lacked a clear strategy for investigating cases of bribery.⁸⁷ Attacking corruption within member states is an effective method to uphold democratic values.

A major aspect of governmental corruption is the strength of government institutions. Across states that experience the erosion of democracy, one trend is a weak judicial system through a lack of judicial independence. The judicial branch is one of the three branches of government, along with the legislative branch and the executive branch.⁸⁸ The purpose that the judiciary serves is to uphold the law and the values of the government to ensure that the Rule of Law reigns supreme.⁸⁹ Judicial independence refers to when the judiciary does not experience interference from the other branches of government or other actors that may affect the decisions of the judiciary.⁹⁰ An autonomous judicial system is crucial to uphold a democratic state; if a judicial system experiences interference, it undermines legal decisions. The judiciary is a key aspect of a democracy because they are a check on government authority and power.⁹¹ Through judicial reviews, the court of law can determine whether or not certain government decisions are valid or allowed. In corrupt states, there is often a lack of judicial independence, leading to shortcomings in terms of fair decisions.

⁸¹ "CPI 2024 for Western Europe & EU: Leaders' hollow efforts cause worsening corruption levels," Transparency International, February 11, 2025,

<https://www.transparency.org/en/news/cpi-2024-western-europe-eu-leaders-hollow-efforts-cause-worsening-corruption-levels>.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ákos Keller-Alánt, Tibor Rácz, Krisztián Simon, "How the Hungarian "Zuckerberg" is keeping Orbán's system alive," Heinrich Böll Stiftung, May 3, 2017, <https://www.boell.de/en/2017/05/03/how-hungarian-zuckerberg-keeping-orbans-system-alive>.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ "CPI 2024."

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ "Judicial Branch," Legislative Assembly of BC, Accessed August 1, 2025,

<https://www.leg.bc.ca/learn/discover-your-legislature/constitutional-framework-governance/the-branches-of-government/judicial-branch>.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ "Judicial independence," Supreme Court of Canada, Accessed August 1, 2025,

<https://www.scc-csc.ca/about-apropos/work-travail/independence-independance/>.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Case Study: Judicial Independence in Poland

An example of judicial independence issues is reforms under Poland's Law and Justice (PiS) party. In 2015, PiS won both the parliamentary and presidential elections, taking power in the legislative and executive branches of the country. The judicial branch was the only governmental branch that was not under their control.⁹² Over the years, PiS slowly changed the makeup of judges in the country. Notably, in 2017, a new law gave the ability to appoint and dismiss judges to the executive and legislative branches, under PiS control, resulting in the erosion of judicial independence.⁹³ The constitutional court of Poland and other courts have had more than 3000 new judges appointed since then, all of whom are selected as loyalists to the party.⁹⁴ This has led to Poland experiencing worsening judicial independence over the years. The court essentially cannot serve as a check on the PiS anymore.⁹⁵ Examples of this include the court's ruling that the European Court of Human Rights could not question Polish judges and their appointment, as well as a ruling that measures taken against the Polish judicial system by the top EU court contradicted the constitution.⁹⁶

Although action has been taken to combat corruption in certain countries, such as the usage of the Rule of Law Conditionality Regulation, it has not been enough. The inability of the EU to prevent the erosion of democracy in a few states has already led to emboldened leaders in other states.⁹⁷ Delegates may consider harsher action against corrupt practices to fight corruption.

Case Study: Gerrymandering in Hungary

Some governments manipulate elections by controlling certain aspects of elections, such as electoral boundaries or government institutions, that can determine what party is in power. One illustration of this is gerrymandering. Gerrymandering refers to the manipulation and redrawing of electoral boundaries in an election to favour one party over another.⁹⁸ This often leads to a party having more share of seats than the share of the votes in parliament. Since Orbán took power in Hungary, he has used gerrymandering to control elections and ensure he remains in power.⁹⁹

⁹² "Poland elections: Conservatives secure decisive win," BBC News, October 26, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34631826>.

⁹³ "Poland reforms are part of plan that severely undermines independence of judiciary, says UN Special Rapporteur," OHCHR, December 22, 2017, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2017/12/poland-reforms-are-part-plan-severely-undermines-independence-judiciary-says>.

⁹⁴ Rob Schmitz, "Poland's judiciary was a tool of its government. New leaders are trying to undo that," NPR, February 26, 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/02/26/1232834640/poland-courts-judicial-reform-donald-tusk>.

⁹⁵ "Explainer: Polish government seeks to restore independence of Constitutional Tribunal," Reuters, Accessed August 1, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/polish-government-seeks-restore-independence-constitutional-tribunal-2024-03-04/>.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Abby Poprocki, "Viktor Orbán's Hungary: Corruption, Repression, & Democratic Backsliding," Princeton Political Review, December 5, 2024, <https://www.princetonpoliticalreview.org/international-news/viktor-orbns-hungary-corruption-repression-amp-democratic-backsliding>.

⁹⁸ Julia Kirschenbaum and Michael Li, "Gerrymandering Explained," Brennan Center | For Justice, August 10, 2021, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/gerrymandering-explained>.

⁹⁹ "A wild gerrymander makes Hungary's Fidesz party hard to dislodge," The Economist, April 2, 2022, <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2022/04/02/a-wild-gerrymander-makes-hungarys-fidesz-party-hard-to-dislodge>.

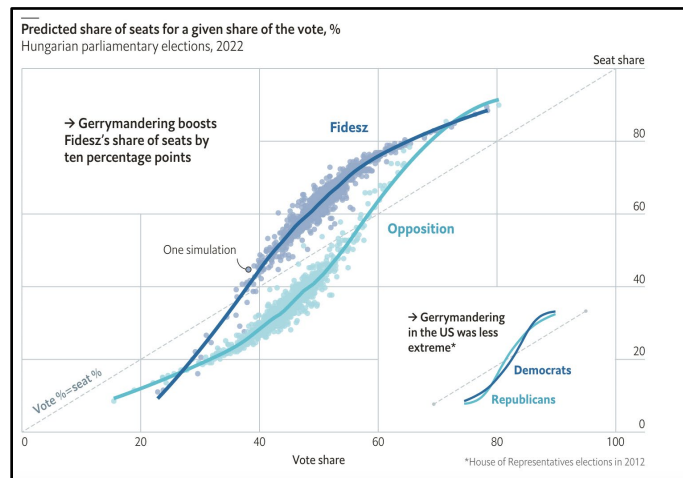


Figure 2: The share of seats held by Fidesz and the Opposition compared to the share of votes in the Hungarian parliament, 2022.¹⁰⁰

This diagram shows the result of gerrymandering; in 2022, if Fidesz, led by Viktor Orbán, wanted to have a majority in the parliament by having 50 percent of the seats, it only needed 43 percent of the votes.¹⁰¹ Gerrymandering practices in the EU threaten democracy, as they are unrepresentative of the government that the voters truly want.

Case Study: Vote Buying in Bulgaria

Even in cases where election results were legitimate, the process of how those votes were cast was called into question. In certain member states, vote buying is a huge issue. For instance, Bulgaria faced large-scale vote buying in the 2024 national election. Before Bulgarians even went to the polls, the Bulgarian Interior Ministry, tasked with maintaining law and order in the country, stated that it had received over 400 accounts of vote-buying.¹⁰² The problem became a major crisis with oligarchs and elites such as Bulgaria's oligarch Delyan Peevski and his party, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS). In the 2024 election, it came fourth with 280,000 votes, or 11 percent of the ballot.¹⁰³ Strikingly, the party won in districts with very strange voting patterns, such as high differences in voter turnout compared to other districts.¹⁰⁴ One survey conducted by Gallup International found that 62 percent of Bulgarians did not believe that the election was fair and fair, and 10 percent admitted that their ballot could be influenced by cash or other incentives.¹⁰⁵

Civil Society Actors

Civil society actors are organizations or individuals who operate independently of the government; they often advocate for change and keep people in power in check.¹⁰⁶ When faced with the erosion of democracy, civil society

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Seb Starcevic and Antoaneta Roussi, "Vote-buying allegations rock Bulgaria as protests escalate," Politico, October 31, 2024, <https://www.politico.eu/article/vote-buying-allegation-election-bulgaria-protest/>.

¹⁰³ Todorov, "News Calls Grow."

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Margarita Assenova, "Bulgaria Continues to Experience Chronic Political Disarray," Eurasia Daily Monitor 21, no. 153 (2024), <https://jamestown.org/program/bulgaria-continues-to-experience-chronic-political-disarray/>.

¹⁰⁶ "Civil society," Migration Research Hub, Accessed June 29, 2025,

actors play a crucial role in maintaining the Rule of Law, acting as watchdogs that keep the government in check.¹⁰⁷ It is for this reason that the protection of these actors is critical.

Case Study: NGOs in Slovenia

One example of civil society actors is NGOs that protect democratic values. These NGOs often identify and take action upon the breach of these values. In 2021, Slovenia faced breaches of the Rule of Law and democracy. In response, people gathered to protest through a peaceful assembly. However, the government completely banned rallies, resulting in 40 percent of the protestors facing legal proceedings.¹⁰⁸ The Legal Network for the Protection of Democracy (PMVD), a Slovenian NGO, stood up for the rights of the people and challenged the legality of the government's ban on protests by bringing the issue to the judiciary. Soon, the constitutional court recognized the right to gather to be a human right.¹⁰⁹ While this serves as a good example of the effectiveness of NGOs, it was also reliant on the independence of the judiciary. This is not a privilege that all NGOs or protestors have, as it depends on the state of their judicial system.

Case Study: Whistleblower Protection in Luxembourg

Whistleblowers are another type of civil society actor crucial to holding the government accountable. Whistleblowers are individuals who report corrupt practices in organizations like the government, thus maintaining the Rule of Law. One instance of this occurred during an event known as “LuxLeaks,” an investigation into tax evasion practiced by corporate giants and enabled by the government of Luxembourg.¹¹⁰ This was exposed by tax auditor Raphaël Halet, who leaked 28,000 documents containing plans to allow large corporations like Apple and Pepsi to pay very low tax rates.¹¹¹ In cases like these, governments have a vested interest in silencing these whistleblowers. When the protection of these crucial civil society actors is threatened through corrupt government policies, defamation lawsuits, imprisonment, assassinations, or other means, the EU needs to take steps to safeguard their interests.

Case Study: Protests in Spain

In 2011, Spanish people protested against the government in a movement known as the Indignados movement because of its unsatisfactory handling of the 2008 financial crisis.¹¹² The movement protested against corruption in the government and economic woes that the people faced, such as inequality and unemployment.¹¹³ In response to protestors, police and law enforcement handled the situation poorly, beating and pepper-spraying protestors,

<https://migrationresearch.com/taxonomies/topics-migration-governance-governance-actors-civil-society>.

¹⁰⁷ “Watchdog,” Harvard Law School, Accessed June 29, 2025,

<https://hls.harvard.edu/bernard-koteen-office-of-public-interest-advising/about-opia/what-is-public-interest-law/public-interest-work-types/watchdog/>.

¹⁰⁸ “Janša’s government continues its attack on media freedom; spreads misinformation about CSOs,” Civicus Monitor, May 13, 2021,

<https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/jansas-government-continues-its-attack-media-freedom-spreads-misinformation-about-csos/>.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ “Major UK companies cut secret tax deals in Luxembourg,” BBC News, May 11, 2012,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-17993945>.

¹¹¹ “Whistleblower Who Exposed PwC Tax Evasion Schemes Vindicate,” CorpWatch, January 5, 2024, <https://www.corpwatch.org/article/whistleblower-who-exposed-pwc-tax-evasion-schemes-vindicated>.

¹¹² Peter Matjašič, “Spanish gag law: The original sin and ongoing penance,” Al Jazeera, March 1, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/3/1/spanish-gag-law-the-original-sin-and-ongoing-penance>.

¹¹³ Ibid.

as well as shooting rubber bullets. In 2015, the government took a major step in curbing protests in response to the Indignados movement by adopting the Citizen Security Law, better known as the gag law.¹¹⁴ The gag law significantly limited protesting rights in Spain; there were hefty fines that could be imposed for holding unauthorized protests, up to EUR 30,000.¹¹⁵ Authorized protests became part of a very complicated bureaucratic process, with it becoming very difficult to obtain permission to protest.¹¹⁶ The law also gave police and law enforcement excessive power, such as the “ability to fine anyone who refuses to disperse meetings and protests in public places.”¹¹⁷

The gag law is only one instance of EU member states curbing the right to protest. It is an issue that occurs even in other Western European states—France has implemented similar provisions in its 2021 Global Security Law.¹¹⁸ The issue with curbing the right to protest is that it infringes on the fundamental freedoms of EU citizens. While governments may call it a step towards keeping peace, restricting protests is also a method of silencing dissidents, therefore preventing proper checks on the Rule of Law. In the case of Spain and other EU countries, delegates should consider working towards improving the right to protest as a way to criticize the government.

Case Study: Press Freedom in Greece

Press freedom is critical for a democracy to thrive; when the press and media are threatened by governmental actors, it undermines the Rule of Law. There are three reasons why the press is so crucial. First, the free press exposes the truth. Oftentimes, some situations or events are difficult for the average citizen to understand without detailed informative media. Free press, specifically journalists, research and investigate these issues to give citizens the full picture and the truth of what happens around the world.¹¹⁹ Second, the free press maintains the Rule of Law. Similar to the aforementioned civil society actors, press freedom plays the crucial role of holding governments accountable; by exposing what the government does, the press prevents arbitrary use of power.¹²⁰ Third, press freedom plays a crucial role in elections; it helps citizens understand why a certain party or government might be good or bad, and allows citizens to make informed decisions when voting.¹²¹

An example of the suppression of press freedom is Greece. Since the New Democracy party took control of Greece in 2019, the freedom of the press has significantly worsened. Journalists have experienced harassment, intimidation, surveillance, and lawsuits by the government that undermine their freedoms.¹²² One example of this was the murder of Giorgos Karaivaz, a veteran journalist, in 2021. Greece’s criminal court found that his murder was due to his journalism; although the specific motive for his murder is unknown, he was a key witness to an investigation into connections between corruption circles and the police.¹²³ He was also the founder of a

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Alissa Greenberg, “Spain’s New Security Law Meets Fierce Criticism From Rights Groups,” Time, July 2, 2015, <https://time.com/3944245/spain-security-law-ley-mordaza-dictatorship-censorship-gag/>.

¹¹⁸

¹¹⁹ “Why Is Freedom Of The Press Important in a Democracy?” Human Rights Careers, Accessed August 1, 2025, <https://www.humanrightscareers.com/issues/why-is-freedom-of-the-press-important-in-a-democracy/>.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² “Greece,” Reporters Without Borders, Accessed August 1, 2025, <https://rsf.org/en/country/greece>.

¹²³ Eleni Stamatoukou, “Greek Court Rules Crime Reporter Was Murdered for His Journalism,” Balkan Insight, December 19, 2024, <https://balkaninsight.com/2024/12/19/greek-court-rules-crime-reporter-was-murdered-for-his-journalism/>.

website that highlighted issues with law enforcement.¹²⁴ Additionally, in 2021, the National Intelligence Service was found to have been phone-tapping several important figures, including journalist Thanasis Koukakis. Greece's government has slowly eroded press freedom by attacking many journalists and reducing media independence. Greece serves as one of many instances of EU governments turning towards illegitimate methods of suppressing dissidence.¹²⁵

Rise of the Far-Right

The “far-right” refers to politics that generally favour extreme right-wing policies. In the context of the EU, far-right parties and groups support anti-immigration policies and national sovereignty. The driving force of far-right groups in the EU is the idea of extreme nationalism. Nationalism is a sense of unification between a group of people that share a common culture, history, and ethnicity. This leads to resentment of immigrants and a belief that the EU hinders national progress because of other countries. Far-right ideologies are a massive threat to the EU because the bloc was fundamentally formed on liberal values.¹²⁶ Recently, the EU has seen a rise in far-right ideologies in member states. Although most threats to democracy have occurred in Eastern Europe, where many states lack strong foundational democratic institutions, the rise of the far-right is taking place in both Eastern and Western Europe.¹²⁷

Case Study: Far-Right Political Parties in France and Germany

In 2024, one major development was the rise of far-right politics in the French government. In France, the far-right party National Rally (RN) was extremely successful in the 2024 French legislative election. This massive triumph is largely due to the rebranding of the party to make it seem less extreme, even though it is still widely regarded as far-right politically.¹²⁸ The sole reason that the party did not win the election in the end was because the other parties formed a “Republican front” to stop the RN.¹²⁹ Additionally, we have seen far-right ideologies appear in Germany recently as well; the Alternative for Germany (AfD) is a far-right populist party that has gained significant influence. From the 2021 parliamentary elections to the elections held in 2025, the AfD managed to double its vote percentage from 10.3 percent to 20.8 percent, becoming the country's second most influential party.¹³⁰ Although there has been some backlash against far-right political ideologies, like the German government debating a possible ban on the AfD for being “extremist,”¹³¹ the rising popularity of these groups communicates the growing far-right sentiment in the EU as a whole.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ “From Bad to Worse | The Deterioration of Media Freedom in Greece,” Human Rights Watch, May 8, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2025/05/08/bad-worse/deterioration-media-freedom-greece>.

¹²⁶ Maxime Lefebvre, “The European Union and the war in Ukraine: liberal power and its limits,” The Robert Schuman Foundation, January 8, 2023, <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/0651-the-european-union-and-the-war-in-ukraine-liberal-power-and-its-limits>.

¹²⁷ “Why Europe's Far Right Is Rising,” Journal of Democracy, Accessed June 29, 2025, <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/news-and-updates/why-europes-far-right-is-rising/>.

¹²⁸ “The National Rally's Electoral Success,” American University, September 19, 2024, <https://www.american.edu/sis/centers/transatlantic-policy/articles/20240919-the-national-rallies-electoral-success.cfm>.

¹²⁹ John Leicester, “How French voters formed a ‘Republican front’ to block the far-right's path to victory,” PBS News, July 8, 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/how-french-voters-formed-a-republican-front-to-block-the-far-rights-path-to-victory>.

¹³⁰ Elsa Conesa, “German elections: Far-right AfD party achieves historic result,” Le Monde, June 30, 2025, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2025/02/24/german-elections-far-right-afd-party-achieves-historic-result_6738495_4.html.

¹³¹ Jeremias Lin, “Germany labels AfD party as ‘extremist’, opening door to ban,” Euractiv, May 2, 2025, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/germany-labels-far-right-afd-party-as-extremist-group/>.

Rising far-right sentiment can be traced back to two main causes: immigration and the economy. Immigration has led to xenophobia and nativism in many European countries due to the recent influx of migrants. Specifically, the “whiteness” of EU politics, lack of engagement from the younger generation, and lack of support for the EU have led to xenophobia and nativism.¹³² Particularly, many Europeans are xenophobic against Muslims, although other coloured groups are also excluded.¹³³ Far-right ideas of anti-immigration, like the AfD’s plan to deport asylum seekers, have become popular amongst voters.¹³⁴ Additionally, economic distress has improved the far-right’s standing. Specifically, following the 2007-2008 financial crisis, the EU has suffered economically. European countries lacked strong public services and infrastructure, demonstrating how the EU economic system was weak.¹³⁵ Far-right promises such as economic sovereignty and the protection of jobs have attracted many voters.¹³⁶

Far-right extremism inherently undermines democracy because it reduces trust in government institutions. Far-right movements often attack the judicial system and the electoral process, instigating less government legitimacy and thereby reducing democratic values.¹³⁷ For example, in 2025, after RN leader Marine Le Pen was barred from standing on election for five years, her party condemned the action, calling it “the tyranny of judges” and saying that “French democracy had been executed.”¹³⁸ This was a clear attempt at undermining the legitimacy of the government and the French judicial system. Furthermore, far-right ideologies can lead to disregard for human rights. When taken to extremes, far-right movements can suspend the freedom of expression, the right to a fair trial, and the right to association, undermining the democratic process.¹³⁹

Possible Solutions and Controversies

Punishment for Erosion of Democracy

The EU has already punished certain states for eroding democracy, including various aforementioned measures to withhold funding, including the Rule of Law Conditionality Regulation, the RRF, and the CPR.¹⁴⁰ Although these programs have resulted in total suspensions of more than EUR 1 billion, their effectiveness is disputed because the corrupt practices have continued.¹⁴¹ Delegates may want to consider harsher measures in terms of the restriction of EU funds to increase the effectiveness of this solution. However, it is also important to consider

¹³² Jon Henley, “EU moving towards more xenophobic view of ‘Europeanness,’ report warns,” The Guardian, September 25, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/sep/25/eu-moving-towards-more-xenophobic-view-of-europeanness-report-warns>.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Alexander Smith, “A surging far right cements its place in Europe,” NBC News, October 13, 2024, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/surging-far-right-europe-austria-anti-immigration-rcna173398>.

¹³⁶ Kristian K Wiulsrød, “The Economic Crisis and the Rise of Far-Right Parties in Europe,” Norwegian University of Science and Technology, May 2022, <https://ntnuopen.ntnu.no/ntnu-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2999895/no.ntnu%3Ainspera%3A110337431%3A49521199.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

¹³⁷ Seyidov, Samad, “The challenge of far-right ideology to democracy and human rights in Europe,” Council of Europe, September 20, 2023, <https://rm.coe.int/the-challenge-of-far-right-ideology-to-democracy-and-human-rights-in-e/1680ac86d0>.

¹³⁸ Leila Abbou, “Marine Le Pen goes on the offensive after 5-year ban,” Financial Times, April 2, 2025, <https://www.ft.com/content/c5a78939-5ac4-4278-835f-b7d6fe9a5977/>.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Csaky, “Freezing EU funds.”

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

whether or not increasing financial punishment will lead to more defiance by member states. For instance, Hungary is still worsening in terms of its democratic practices, despite harsh financial punishments imposed upon it.¹⁴² Delegates may want to try to prevent this by offering Hungary significant help with reforming its government or compromising with them.

Although financial punishment has been the main mode of enforcement of democracy, there are other types of punishment for democratic backsliding as well, specifically, Article 7 of the TEU. If properly implemented, Article 7 could result in sanctions beyond financial incentives, such as the suspension of voting rights, suspension of EU programs, and more.¹⁴³ Article 7 has been triggered twice: once against Poland in 2017, and once against Hungary in 2018.¹⁴⁴ The issue is that the actual implementation of direct action based on Article 7 requires the unanimous approval of EU member states. Since Poland and Hungary have vowed to prevent that from happening to each other, there is a political deadlock.¹⁴⁵ Although this means that Hungary and Poland are essentially safe from these sanctions, delegates may want to consider using Article 7 more against other countries where it may prove to be more effective; however, other states may use the same loophole as Hungary and Poland. Additionally, delegates could attempt to create a new method of legal punishment or sanctions against states, separate from Article 7, that does not require unanimous approval to implement, to bypass this loophole.

Currently, the main form of enforcement and punishment for democratic erosion is financial. This is because other punishments have limited effectiveness due to Hungary and Poland's deadlock, as well as other loopholes in the TEU. If delegates wish to use more consequential punishments, such as expulsion from the EU, reform should be made to the TEU.

Protecting Civil Society

The protection of civil society is crucial, as it allows different individuals and organizations that are not a part of the EU to bolster democracy as well. Regarding the protection of whistleblowers, the EU has already passed Directive 2019/1937, which should have given whistleblowers significant protection.¹⁴⁶ The issue is that many member states, particularly those known to be corrupt, have delayed the implementation of these actions.¹⁴⁷

With that being said, delegates will want to consider how they can facilitate the rapid development of these protections. For instance, the aforementioned withdrawal of funding may be a solution. Additionally, if other countries are unwilling to cooperate and create whistleblowing protection, the EU could step in; the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) is an established organization that provides whistleblowers with an anonymous line of communication.¹⁴⁸ Strengthening supranational channels or making these channels well-known may give whistleblowers more incentive to help. The issue with this is that it supersedes the national authority of countries. Specifically, many countries in the EU that value national sovereignty would see this as an overstep of the EU's power because it undermines the authority of the government. In the case where whistleblowers are threatened, funding whistleblower defence infrastructure, such as NGOs that can protect them and advocate for stronger

¹⁴² Csaky, "Freezing EU funds."

¹⁴³ "Timeline - Article 7: the story."

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Marcin Godowski, "Poland says it will block any EU sanctions against Hungary," Reuters, September 14, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/poland-says-it-will-block-any-eu-sanctions-against-hungary-idUSKCN1LT0NC/>.

¹⁴⁶ Terracol and Nowers, "EU countries continue."

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ "Report fraud," OLAF, Accessed June 29, 2025, https://anti-fraud.ec.europa.eu/olaf-and-you/report-fraud_en.

protection laws, may work as well.¹⁴⁹ However, whether or not this would be a misplacement of funds is called into question.

Maintaining the Independence of the Judiciary

Given the increasing use of the judiciary to legitimize corruption, the EU needs to innovate solutions.¹⁵⁰ First, the EU may consider creating standards for the appointment of judges. Delegates may want to consider creating EU-wide standards that the entire bloc uses, or have different countries create set standards that are transparent to the public. Whether or not this solution would be binding is up to the discretion of the delegates; however, they should keep in mind that creating binding standards will significantly undermine the sovereignty of independent states and will grant the EU more control over the governments of member states. Furthermore, the EU could support the use of civil society to address judicial independence. This includes forming and encouraging the formation of independent bodies that can monitor the independence of the judiciary. Delegates could create bodies that would be specific to a singular country, but would also want to consider creating judicial bodies that monitor the EU justice system as a whole. These regulatory bodies would likely want to investigate the qualifications of appointed judges, as well as their political alignment; for instance, if 90 percent of judges align with a particular political party, it would draw suspicion. However, there are drawbacks to this idea. For one, the bloc will run into the issue of enforcement again; it would be very difficult to enforce the suggestions made by a regulatory body because they would not be able to force the government to change things. Furthermore, the EU would have to ensure that these regulatory bodies themselves are free from political influence. The EU may want to oversee who joins these bodies to prevent biased oversight.

Preserving Fair Elections

The preservation of fair elections is crucial to ensure that no singular political force or party can unjustly stay in power. Given blatant issues in elections, such as Hungary's gerrymandering and Bulgaria's voting buying, even when these parties win elections, it is illegitimate.¹⁵¹ Regarding the issue of gerrymandering, the EU should address this by creating a more balanced approach to forming electoral boundaries. Rather than giving a small group full power to manipulate boundaries, delegates should consider creating collaborative efforts with the EU to establish boundaries, establishing national committees that are filled with multiple parties to increase diversity within the decision-making process of boundaries, or other methods to increase the number of opinions in terms of electoral boundary creation. An alternative but more complicated approach to address gerrymandering would be to reform the electoral process altogether. Many Western European countries avoid gerrymandering because of the proportional representation (PR) system.¹⁵² Rather than drawing boundaries where citizens vote—which invites gerrymandering—PR allocates seats in parliament to each party based on how many votes that party received. If countries in the EU changed to PR, it would circumvent the issue entirely.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ "How Non-Governmental Organizations Can Help Whistleblowers Around the World," NWC, Accessed June 29, 2025, <https://www.whistleblowers.org/how-non-governmental-organizations-can-help-whistleblowers-around-the-world/>.

¹⁵⁰ Alexandra Brzozowski, "Human rights body slams Poland for lack of judicial independence," Euractiv, June 28, 2019, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/human-rights-body-slams-poland-for-lack-of-judicial-independence>.

¹⁵¹ Kim Lane Scheppele, "How Viktor Orbán Wins," *Journal of Democracy*, 33 (2022): 45-61, <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/how-viktor-orban-wins/>.

¹⁵² Josep M. Colomer, "Western Europe: General Overview," *The Handbook of Electoral System Choice*, no. 9 (2004): 179-208, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9780230522749_9.

¹⁵³ Douglas J. Amy, "PR Library: How Proportional Representation Would Finally Solve Our Redistricting and Gerrymandering Problems," *Fair Vote*, Accessed August 1, 2025, <https://fairvote.org/archives/how-proportional-representation-would-finally-solve-our-redistricting-and-gerrymandering-problems/>.

When it comes to vote buying, increasing investigation and prosecution should be the EU's main course of action.¹⁵⁴ The lack of enforcement for vote buying enables it, because there are few repercussions for people responsible for it. With this being said, governments of member states should investigate cases of vote-buying in much more depth to determine whether or not it is occurring.¹⁵⁵ Delegates should also consider creating more platforms or channels where citizens can report cases of vote-buying to gauge how impactful the issue is. In terms of determining cases of vote-buying, civil society plays an important role, so delegates may want to refer to that section to improve their response to this issue.

Although these solutions could improve the situation, there are a few complications. First, the government that is in power may be the one using or facilitating vote-buying. If this is the case, delegates may wish to intervene as a bloc to prevent this form of blatant corruption; this might look like creating a channel to convey cases of vote-buying directly to the EU. However, this would undermine the national sovereignty of countries. Furthermore, vote-buying often occurs because countries lack the funds needed to enforce laws. In this case, delegates may want to find alternative sources of funding for enforcement against vote-buying.

Bloc Positions

This section entails the positions that different member states of the EU want to maintain when it comes to the erosion of democratic values. The blocs here were created based on their level of support for democracy in the EU and how willing states have been to reform their systems. Although this can give delegates a broad sense of what they will want to support, the bloc positions are a generalization. Therefore, further research is encouraged to find out what specific actions and policies each country is likely to support.

Pro-Democracy Advocates

Pro-democracy states are largely countries that have well-established institutions, have spearheaded democratic efforts in Europe as a whole, and that strongly support the implementation of policies that will reduce democratic erosion; a lot of these countries are Western European, but there are others as well. This bloc includes Germany, France, Belgium, Spain, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and more. These states will likely strongly support measures to enforce the Rule of Law and democracy, such as more aggressive usage of the withholding of EU funds to democratically weak states. For instance, many of these countries advocated for the Rule of Law Conditionality Mechanism.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, they support the protection of independent organizations and civil society actors, who can help hold governments accountable. In general, these countries will look towards the punishment of countries that do not abide by the democratic principles that are fundamental to the EU. For example, these countries have often supported the use of financial punishment and withholding of funds against democratically eroding states.

¹⁵⁴ Erisa Kryeziu, "OSCE/ODIHR report: "Any form of pressure to reveal how people voted must be prevented," Citizens, July 27, 2021, <https://citizens.al/en/2021/07/27/raporti-i-osbe-odih-r-cdo-forme-presioni-per-te-zbuluar-si-votuan-njerezit-duhet-te-parandalohet/>.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ "Budget conditionality: Council presidency and Parliament's negotiators reach provisional agreement," Council of the EU, May 11, 2020, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/11/05/budget-conditionality-council-presidency-and-parliament-s-negotiators-reach-provisional-agreement/pdf>.

Illiberal Democratic States

An illiberal democratic state is a country that emulates the political environment in Hungary; the term “illiberal democracy” has largely grown in popularity thanks to Viktor Orbán.¹⁵⁷ These states include Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, and Croatia. In many illiberal democratic states, there have been cases of eroding democracy, which can be seen through the prominent examples given in previous sections. These states are often characterized by actions such as decreasing judicial independence,¹⁵⁸ stronger government control over media, lack of integrity in elections, and, generally speaking, corruption in the government.¹⁵⁹

As such, the position that they hold in terms of improving democracy is quite complicated. These states will want to support some democratic reforms, but not to a huge degree. One likely approach to this topic would be citing national sovereignty as a major concern; in the status quo, the ability of the EU to intervene in national issues has already been challenged and criticized, and delegates part of this bloc may want to continue that trend. Although these states are still inherently democratic, they will advocate for minimal democratic amelioration, or even none at all. Delegates may support minor democratic reforms in a variety of aspects, like gerrymandering or protecting whistleblowers. The best-case scenario for these delegates would be a continuation of current trends; although there have been some financial punishments for democratic erosion, these countries do the bare minimum to access funds. Delegates under this position must remember to give solutions to the issue, yet they also must represent their governments accordingly. In most circumstances, this will mean advocating for some reform that could improve the country’s image, but not supporting major reforms.

Moderate States

Moderate states are countries that still support democracy; however, there are two types of complications. Some states have more relaxed policies compared to the pro-democracy advocates in general, while other states’ policies will depend on the government’s makeup. These states include Ireland, Portugal, Austria, Greece, Malta, Cyprus, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, and more.

First, consistently moderate states are states that support democracy like the pro-democracy advocates, but are not as harsh on democratically eroding states. These states include Ireland, Portugal, Cyprus, Malta, and others. Although they do support democratic values, they play a more neutral style, and are less likely to heavily punish states. With that being said, however, these states are more likely to support strong democratic reforms compared to the illiberal democracies.

Second, ideologically shifting states are states whose values depend on the government in power, particularly regarding the shift to right-wing ideologies. The rise of the far-right has occurred in many different states, which certainly overlaps with other blocs. This includes: Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, and many more. Delegates are encouraged to do further research to determine their position depending on the influential parties in the government. In general, however, these countries will take one of two actions. First, countries like Germany that do not have a far-right group in power will heavily condemn

¹⁵⁷ “What is going on in Illiberal democracy Hungary?” Amnesty International, May 31, 2018, <https://www.amnesty.nl/actueel/what-is-going-on-in-illiberal-democracy-hungary>.

¹⁵⁸ “Poland reforms are part.”

¹⁵⁹ “Corruption Perceptions.”

the far-right;¹⁶⁰ they will likely take steps to reduce the presence of far-right ideas in the EU to circumvent issues that could affect democracy. Second, countries that do have a far-right group in power, like Hungary, would avoid combatting the presence of the far-right; additionally, they would likely challenge the notion that far-right sentiments harm the EU, citing concerns regarding the voice of the people in democracy.

Discussion Questions

1. Are financial punishments for corruption and Rule of Law violations enough incentive for change? If so, why have major reforms not occurred?
2. To what extent do supranational organizations like the EU have the right to intervene in issues such as democracy? How can the EU justify this intervention?
3. How can the EU address issues with the TEU, such as the necessity for unanimity in certain votes?
4. Are far-right ideologies inherently undemocratic, or is the suppression of such sentiments undemocratic?
5. How can the EU take countermeasures to prevent the possibility of eroding democracy before it occurs?
6. Should the EU prioritize the rise of the far-right when immediate and more urgent threats to democracy are present as well?
7. How could regional collaboration through sharing methods against corrupt practices be used effectively?
8. How can the EU ensure that oversight mechanisms that hold member states accountable are not biased?

Additional Resources

Explanation of all the EU institutions:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RkwIlr912A>

Overview of erosion of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe:

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26323302?seq=1>

More information on the “illiberal democracy” in Hungary:

<https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/illiberal-democracy-hungary-social-background-and-practical-steps-building-illiberal>

Why democracy is so important to the EU:

<https://valuesatvet.si/files/2025/06/Democracy-in-the-European-Union.pdf>

Analysis on whether or not the freezing of funds is effective:

<https://www.cer.eu/insights/freezing-eu-funds-effective-tool-enforce-rule-law>

¹⁶⁰ Carlo Angerer, “German chancellor condemns first state election success for far-right party since WWII,” NBC News, September 2, 2024, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/germany-far-right-afd-world-war-ii-state-elections-thuringia-saxony-rcna169199>.

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Reducing Economic Dependence

Overview

The EU's economic overdependence on foreign actors has long exposed member states to exploitation, underdevelopment, and instability.¹⁶¹ As partners like the United States and Russia become increasingly unreliable, the EU must look towards improving its self-reliance to reduce these risks and regain control of its economy.

There are two main types of economic dependence: energy and technology, both of which became major issues by the end of the Second World War. As the EU sought to industrialize its economy, it relied on energy from Arab countries;¹⁶² this later evolved into dependence on Russian energy.¹⁶³ Similarly, the EU has grown increasingly technologically dependent on other nations in crucial emerging fields, including military systems, semiconductors, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity. The U.S., and more recently, China, have pulled ahead in terms of technological capabilities and production, leaving the EU behind.¹⁶⁴ Concerningly, American companies control 70 percent of the European Cloud Market, compared to regional firms' 15 percent.¹⁶⁵

Many countries continue to source the majority of their energy from foreign nations; even when countries have turned towards domestic energy sources, they remain divided on which types of energy to use.¹⁶⁶ Technologically, the EU has fallen short of its goals, especially in the semiconductor industry, which is crucial for electronics, vehicles, and many other technologies.¹⁶⁷ Although the EU has resolved to make progress in these areas, significant change still needs to happen.

Delegates must work together to improve economic independence; the committee must establish a long-term plan for the EU's economy moving forward. Though difficult, polarizing issues such as foreign economic influence, the ability to defend the EU independently, and the usage of nuclear energy must be examined.

¹⁶¹ Britannica Editors, "foreign dependency," Encyclopedia Britannica, August 8, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/foreign-dependency>.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Torbjörn Becker and Anders Åslund, "*The Borders of the European Union in a Conflictual World*," ed. Antonina Bakardjieva Engelbrekt (Springer Nature Link, 2024), 147–175, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54200-8_7.

¹⁶⁴ Pieter Haeck, "A new tech race is on. Can Europe learn from the ones it lost?" Politico, July 2, 2025, <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-china-us-artificial-intelligence-ai-governments/>.

¹⁶⁵ Nicole Kobie, "US companies dominate the European cloud market – regional players are left fighting for scraps," ITPro, July 29, 2025, <https://www.itpro.com/cloud/cloud-computing/us-companies-dominate-the-european-cloud-market-regional-players-are-left-fighting-for-scraps>.

¹⁶⁶ Juliette Portala, "New leadership in Germany may tip the balance in Europe's debate on nuclear power," Science Business, April 10, 2025, <https://sciencebusiness.net/news/green-technology/new-leadership-germany-may-tip-balance-europes-debate-nuclear-power>.

¹⁶⁷ Pieter Haeck, Giovanna Coi, "Europe has risky reliance on China for low-tech chips, auditors warn," Politico, April 28, 2025, <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-reliance-china-low-tech-microchips-manufacturing-european-court-of-auditors/>.

Timeline

May 8, 1945 — Germany unconditionally surrenders to the Allied Forces.¹⁶⁸ While this marks the end of the Second World War in the European theatre, countries are left devastated with war-torn economies.¹⁶⁹

April 3, 1948 — U.S. President Harry Truman signs the Economic Cooperation Act of 1948, establishing the European Recovery Program, also known as the Marshall Plan.¹⁷⁰ This plan aims to provide economic relief to 16 Western European countries following World War II. European countries increase trade relations with the U.S. and rely on the U.S.' aid and technology to rebuild.¹⁷¹

April 4, 1949 — 11 EU nations and the U.S. sign the North Atlantic Treaty, forming NATO.¹⁷² It serves as a military alliance between them; however, it also creates significant reliance on American protection and military equipment.¹⁷³

October 20, 1973 — The Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) imposes an embargo on countries that openly support Israel militarily.¹⁷⁴ Although this embargo does not affect all EU members, it exposes a deep, bloc-wide dependence on Arab and foreign energy.

April 3, 1978 — The European Economic Community (predecessor of the EU) and China sign their first trade agreement, formalizing political and economic relations.¹⁷⁵ Trade relations with China only deepen from this point.

1984 — Construction on the Urengoy–Pomary–Uzhhorod (Brotherhood) pipeline, designed to connect Russia and Western European markets, is complete. European countries embrace Russian gas as a cheap source of fuel.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁸ “What You Need To Know About VE Day,” Imperial War Museums, Accessed July 16, 2025, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-you-need-to-know-about-ve-day>.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ “Marshall Plan, 1948,” Office of the Historian, Accessed July 16, 2025, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/marshall-plan>.

¹⁷¹ “The Marshall Plan: Design, Accomplishments, and Significance,” EveryCRSReport, January 18, 2018, <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R45079.html>.

¹⁷² “NATO member countries,” NATO, Last updated March 11, 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52044.htm.

¹⁷³ Laura Kayali, “US dominates European weapons purchases: report,” Politico, March 10, 2025, <https://www.politico.eu/article/us-dominates-european-weapons-purchases-report/>.

¹⁷⁴ “Oil Embargo, 1973–1974,” Office of the Historian, Accessed July 16, 2025, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/oil-embargo>.

¹⁷⁵ “EU-China relations in challenging times,” Think Tank – European Parliament, October 14, 2021, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2021\)698751](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2021)698751).

¹⁷⁶ Donald Kursch, “Soviet Gas Pricing and Export Strategy,” Central Intelligence Agency, August 27, 1984, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T00287R001400830001-7.pdf>.

2008 — The U.S. housing market and stock market crash.¹⁷⁷ Despite this being an issue external to the EU, the bloc is deeply affected economically and suffers a recession.¹⁷⁸

2009 — Greece admits to being in extreme debt and is unable to refinance its debt unilaterally.¹⁷⁹ Greece is forced to rely on the financing of core EU countries like Germany,¹⁸⁰ demonstrating economic dependence within the bloc itself.

2020 — COVID-19 spreads across the globe, becoming a pandemic. The EU's dependence on foreign nations is exposed when world trade is shut down.¹⁸¹ This results in the worst recession in EU history, with countries in the eurozone's GDP shrinking by 6.8 percent in.¹⁸²

May 18, 2022 — The EU launches the REPowerEU Plan to reduce dependence on energy imports from Russia.¹⁸³ This is in response to the escalating tensions due to Russia's actions in Ukraine and the threat that energy dependence poses to Europe. As of May 2025, Russian gas imports make up 19 percent of total gas imports, down from 45 percent in 2022.¹⁸⁴

April 2, 2025 — President of the United States Donald Trump announces a 20 percent blanket tariff on EU goods in tandem with a plethora of other tariffs.¹⁸⁵ These tariffs, along with the retaliatory tariffs imposed by the EU, severely harm member nations' economies.

Historical Analysis

European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan)

The Second World War ravaged Europe's land, population, and economy. Due to the scale of destruction, most countries were severely hindered from rebuilding. Though industrial capital and factories remained intact in many regions,¹⁸⁶ much of the infrastructure used for transportation, including bridges and railways, was entirely

¹⁷⁷ John Weinberg, "The Great Recession and Its Aftermath," Federal Reserve History, November 22, 2013,

<https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/great-recession-and-its-aftermath>.

¹⁷⁸ Marcin Szczepanski, "A decade on from the crisis – Main responses and remaining challenges," European Parliament, October 2019, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/642253/EPRS_BRI%282019%29642253_EN.pdf.

¹⁷⁹ "Greece's Debt Crisis," Council on Foreign Relations, Accessed July 16, 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/greeces-debt-crisis-timeline>.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ "EU trade in goods strongly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020," Eurostat, March 25, 2021,

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20210325-1>.

¹⁸² "Euro economy shrank at end of 2020 under pandemic's weight," CityNews Everywhere, February 2, 2021,

<https://ottawa.citynews.ca/2021/02/02/euro-economy-shrank-at-end-of-2020-under-pandemics-weight/>.

¹⁸³ "Roadmap to fully end EU dependency on Russian energy," European Commission, May 6, 2025, https://commission.europa.eu/news-and-media/news/roadmap-fully-end-eu-dependency-russian-energy-2025-05-06_en.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ "Trump's reciprocal tariffs: How much will each country be hit?" Al Jazeera, April 3, 2025,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/4/3/trumps-reciprocal-tariffs-how-much-will-each-country-be-hit>.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

demolished.¹⁸⁷ Additionally, structural barriers, including a severe lack of food and financial instability, delayed economic recovery.¹⁸⁸

To improve the economic situation of Europe, the U.S. spent approximately USD 13 billion from 1948 to 1952 towards rebuilding economies and modernizing production capacity.¹⁸⁹ Beyond aid distribution, the plan also focused on reducing trade barriers for Western European countries and fostering collaboration between European countries.¹⁹⁰ The benefits of the Marshall Plan cannot be understated: industrial production increased to 35 percent above pre-war levels in 13 years.¹⁹¹ The program guaranteed countries' financial stability, creating strong currencies and controlling inflation.¹⁹² It also unified the Western European countries by significantly reducing trade between them.¹⁹³

However, the Marshall Plan is regarded as the first step towards European economic overdependence. While Europe received billions of dollars worth of aid, much of their rebuilding efforts were spent on U.S. technology and markets, thus establishing the U.S. as a crucial component of the European economy.¹⁹⁴ Duty-free trade with Europe allowed the U.S. to dominate the market early.¹⁹⁵

Energy Dependence

Europe's focus on fossil fuels for energy has led to the overexploitation of existing resource reserves.¹⁹⁶ Relying solely on domestic energy was infeasible for most countries, as their resources were often insufficient, or the cost of extraction was not cost-effective.¹⁹⁷ In the second half of the 20th century, one actor played a huge role in Europe's energy market: Russia. Specifically, the Urengoy–Pomary–Uzhhorod pipeline was built in 1984, greatly expanding the existing volume of Russian gas imports.¹⁹⁸ This occurred despite U.S. interference, the goal of which was to oppose improved relations between Western Europe and the USSR. Gradually, the Russian share of the energy market in Europe increased over time.¹⁹⁹ While many European states immediately warmed up to Russian energy, other states in Europe, such as Sweden, raised security concerns.²⁰⁰

¹⁸⁷ Tamás Vonyó, "Recovery and reconstruction: Europe after WWII," Centre for Economic Policy Research – VoxEU, November 21, 2019,

<https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/recovery-and-reconstruction-europe-after-wwii>.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ "The Marshall Plan: Design, Accomplishments, and Significance."

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ilya Zarrouk, "Looking Back At 75 Years Of The Marshall Plan," The Defence Horizon Journal, July 17, 2023, <https://tdhj.org/blog/post/marshall-plan-75-years/>.

¹⁹⁴ "Marshall Plan 1947-2017," U.S. Embassy And Consulate General In The Netherlands, Accessed July 16, 2025, <https://nl.usembassy.gov/marshall-plan-1947-2017/>.

¹⁹⁵ "Political analyst: Marshall Plan made Europe dependent on U.S. economy," Belarusian Telegraph Agency, April 19, 2025, <https://eng.belta.by/society/view/political-analyst-marshall-plan-made-europe-dependent-on-us-economy-167253-2025/>.

¹⁹⁶ Julian Wettengel, "Germany, EU remain heavily dependent on imported fossil fuels," Clean Energy Wire – Journalism for the energy transition, April 3, 2025, <https://www.cleanenergywire.org/factsheets/germanys-dependence-imported-fossil-fuels>.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ K Swart, "Trends in the energy market after World War II (WW II)," *Journal of Power Sources* 37, no. 1-2, (1992): 3-12, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/037877539280059K>.

¹⁹⁹ Becker, "The EU's Dependence."

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

Another significant energy supplier in European history was the Middle East. Before the Second World War, the Middle East struggled to access its oil reserves despite the discovery of them in 1908.²⁰¹ Global oil demand was lacking, and Middle Eastern countries did not possess the infrastructure to export it. This changed following the war; global demand for oil skyrocketed as countries attempted to rebuild their economies.²⁰² This culminated in increased European dependence on Middle Eastern countries, mostly on Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait.²⁰³

Energy dependence poses a major threat, as a lack of energy has historically left Europe vulnerable to shocks in supply. For instance, in 1973, OPEC stopped oil shipments to certain European countries that supported Israel in the Yom-Kippur War. OPEC countries intentionally hiked prices by 70 percent,²⁰⁴ resulting in a disruption of the global energy supply. Europe had been heavily dependent on Arabian oil; in some countries, 75 percent of crude oil imports were from Arab nations.²⁰⁵ Regardless of whether or not a country was embargoed, it suffered, as global crude oil prices quadrupled.²⁰⁶ More recently, in both 2006 and 2009, Russia halted gas transit that passed through Ukraine to supply the rest of Europe. Countries that put their full faith in Russian energy reliability saw their energy security falter, and the energy supply of Europe as a whole suffered.²⁰⁷

Past UN/International Involvement

The Third Energy Package

In response to the halting of Russian energy imports in 2006 and 2009, the Third Energy Package was adopted in 2009.²⁰⁸ This legislation improved competition in the energy market and further ensured energy security. For example, one result of the package was that gas producers would no longer be able to own gas pipelines.²⁰⁹ Gazprom, the nationalized Russian gas company that owned many pipelines, was able to fully shut down gas importation.²¹⁰ By forcing Gazprom and other producers to sell their ownership of pipelines, Russian influence over the energy market was reduced. While significant, the package still left a major regulatory gap; the EU was not safe from crises similar to the ones in 2006 and 2009. This act prevented Gazprom or other producers from owning pipelines, but they could still completely halt the flow of energy into the EU due to their complete control over the production.

²⁰¹ "Oil development in the Middle East," Institution of Civil Engineers, Accessed July 16, 2025, <https://www.ice.org.uk/what-is-civil-engineering/infrastructure-projects/oil-development-in-the-middle-east>.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ "Oil Embargo."

²⁰⁵ "Navigating the Oil Crises: Driving Restrictions and Economic Downturns," Ifo Institut, Accessed July 16, 2025, <https://celebrate.ifo.de/en/node/43>.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Becker, "The EU's Dependence."

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

The European Green Deal (EGD)

In 2019, the EU formalized the European Green Deal, the purpose of which was to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 percent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.²¹¹ Notably, the deal demonstrated the EU's commitment to shifting towards renewable energy,²¹² and independence from Russian energy markets is explicitly stated as a goal.²¹³ To achieve this independence, the deal aims for 42.5 percent of energy consumption to come from renewable sources by 2030.²¹⁴ In recent years, measures have been taken to spur this change, such as reducing regulatory red tape and improving the efficiency of permit grants for renewable energy projects.²¹⁵ Overall, this improves energy independence insofar as an increase in renewable energy reduces the dependence on other sources of energy, such as foreign gas.

The REPowerEU Plan

In May 2022, the REPowerEU Plan was implemented in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February of the same year. While ideas of energy dependence and green energy were not new, the invasion reinforced them and pushed the EU towards a faster transition.²¹⁶ This plan has significantly sped up the European Green Deal's commitment to renewable energy in pursuit of independence from Russian energy. A European Commission report from June of this year claims that the world has produced more than double the amount of solar energy since 2019.²¹⁷ The EU aims to fully remove Russian gas, oil, and coal imports by the end of 2027.²¹⁸

A discussion regarding nuclear energy in both the EGD and the REPowerEU Plan is necessary. The bloc currently remains divided on whether or not it is a viable and safe alternative to other energy sources. Both plans fail to truly address this issue, as certain countries remain adamant on non-nuclear energy sources.²¹⁹

The European Chips Act

To address the EU's decaying power in the technology market, the European Chips Act was adopted in 2023. The European Commission notes that chips, particularly semiconductor chips, play an important role in the production of electronics, vehicles, and artificial intelligence.²²⁰ To improve technological leadership, the EU planned to mobilize EUR 43 billion of public and private investments, committing to implementing measures designed to prevent future supply chain disruptions as well.²²¹ The bloc aims to dramatically increase their share of the global microchips market, from 10 percent in 2020 to 20 percent in 2030.²²² Unfortunately, the European

²¹¹ "How the EU is greening energy," European Council, Accessed July 16, 2025, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/how-the-eu-is-greening-energy/>.

²¹² "How the EU."

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ "REPowerEU Affordable, secure and sustainable energy for Europe," European Commission, Last updated June 17, 2025, https://commission.europa.eu/topics/energy/repowereu_en.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Jens Thurau, "German government shows cracks over nuclear energy," Deutsche Welle, June 28, 2025, <https://www.dw.com/en/german-government-shows-cracks-over-nuclear-energy/a-73067507>.

²²⁰ "European Chips Act," European Commission, Accessed July 16, 2025, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-chips-act_en.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

Court of Auditors claims that the EU is still far from the aforementioned goal of 20 percent of market control.²²³ The reason for this lag is that global demand continues to increase for more advanced microchips, while EU companies focus on less advanced ones.²²⁴ This inherent difference between the EU and foreign countries' technological capabilities must be addressed.

Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe is the EU's main body for research and innovation, created in 2021 with a budget of EUR 93.5 billion.²²⁵ This program aims to help researchers, companies, universities, and other actors participating in innovative technologies turn ideas into market innovations. Horizon Europe is the successor to Horizon 2020, a similar initiative that funded over 35,000 projects with a budget of EUR 75.6 billion.²²⁶ Although Horizon Europe will empower many European innovations, the EU may want to consider increasing its spending. After all, Horizon 2020, despite its successes, was EUR 159 billion short of funding all proposals that were considered "above the quality threshold"; consequently, 74 percent of these proposals were not supported.²²⁷ Since Horizon Europe will terminate in 2027,²²⁸ delegates are encouraged to improve upon this initiative for a future iteration.

The European Defence Fund (EDF)

The EDF is used to support research and development in defence technologies. The official goals of the fund are to promote cooperation in research, boost defence capabilities through investment, and help EU companies develop new defence technologies.²²⁹ This represents a major step towards achieving independence in military technology; rather than relying on U.S. equipment, it supports EU companies in developing their own alternatives.²³⁰ From 2021 to 2027, the Fund has a EUR 7.3 billion budget to help finance these innovative projects.²³¹ However, EUR 7.3 billion stretched over seven years is not sufficient to fully support the EU defence market, especially for countries that lack national military budgets in the first place.

²²³ Pieter, "Europe Has Risky."

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ "Horizon Europe," European Commission, Accessed July 16, 2025,

https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en.

²²⁶ Thomas Brent and Goda Naujokaitytė, "In review: The successes and shortcomings of Horizon 2020," Science Business, January 30, 2024, <https://sciencebusiness.net/news/horizon-europe/review-successes-and-shortcomings-horizon-2020>.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ "Horizon Europe."

²²⁹ "EDF | Developing tomorrow's defence capabilities," European Commission, Accessed July 16, 2025,

https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/european-defence-fund-edf-official-webpage-european-commission_en.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

Current Situation

The State of EU Energy Dependence

Throughout the continent, several major fuel pipelines connect Russia to the rest of Europe: Nord Stream, the Brotherhood System, Yamal-Europe, Blue Stream, and others.²³² Historically, the EU relied heavily on Russia through these pipelines, but major reforms in recent years have gradually shifted the EU away from Russian energy.

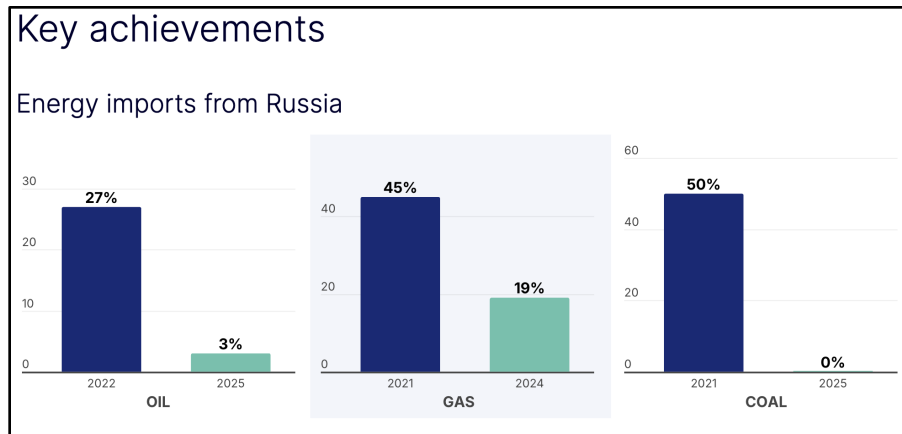


Figure 1: Different energy imports in 2021 compared to 2024/2025.²³³

Before Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, approximately 30 percent of all EU energy came from Russia.²³⁴ Figure 1 demonstrates how dependence on Russian energy has decreased dramatically over the past years as a result of policies implemented, particularly the REPowerEU Plan.²³⁵ Specifically, Russian imports of oil have decreased by 24 percent, gas by 26 percent, and coal by 50 percent.²³⁶

On January 1, 2025, Ukraine did not extend a deal that would have allowed energy to continue to flow.²³⁷ Notably, this did not mean that all Russian imports would cease, as Russia still operates pipelines such as Nord Stream; however, Ukrainian pipelines previously facilitated 49.3 percent of Russian gas.²³⁸ Despite creating significant independence from Russia, the ending of the Russia-Ukraine pipeline deal has still hurt Western Europe. EU nations currently have gas storage facilities at 73 percent capacity on average, compared to 86 percent last year, illustrating the damage this had on EU energy reserves.²³⁹ Furthermore, cold weather forced countries to use even

²³² Mohammed Hussein, "Mapping the world's oil and gas pipelines," Al Jazeera, December 16, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/16/mapping-world-oil-gas-pipelines-interactive>.

²³³ "REPowerEU Affordable."

²³⁴ Becker, "The EU's Dependence."

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ "Russian gas flow to Europe via Ukraine stopped: Who does it hurt?" Al Jazeera, January 1, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/1/russian-gas-flow-to-europe-via-ukraine-stopped-who-does-it-hurt>.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ "Russian gas flows to Europe via Ukraine drop to zero on January 1, says Kyiv," Le Monde, Accessed July 16, 2025,

more of their reserves in 2025.²⁴⁰ Countries that were heavily reliant on Russian energy, such as Austria, Slovakia, and Moldova, were hit the hardest by this cessation.²⁴¹ In particular, Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico claimed that Slovakia would have to pay EUR 177 million to receive gas from alternative routes.²⁴²

Simultaneously, there are several issues with turning to different alternatives. For instance, Germany has vehemently hindered the use of nuclear energy, citing public concern over the possibility of nuclear disasters.²⁴³

Public Dissent

Although support for the European Green Deal was initially high, many stakeholders developed conflicting interests, leading EU politicians to criticize the deal.²⁴⁴ For instance, Figure 2 illustrates the farmers’ protests that erupted in countries across Europe in response to the deal’s implementation.

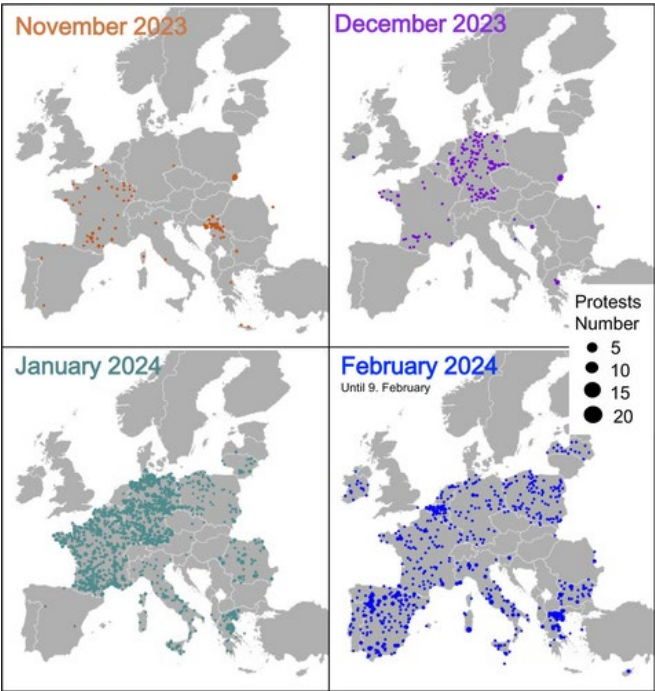


Figure 2: Dot density map indicating the presence and magnitude of farmers’ protests in 2023 and 2024.²⁴⁵

https://www.lemonde.fr/en/energies/article/2024/12/31/russian-gas-flows-to-europe-via-ukraine-drop-to-zero-on-january-1-says-kyiv_6736600_98.html.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Markham Heid, “Why ultra-green Germany turned its back on nuclear energy,” Vox, July 19, 2023, <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2023/7/19/23799448/germany-climate-change-nuclear-power-fukushima-carbon-emissions-coal-global-warming>.

²⁴⁴ Kappe, Kira, “The EU Green Deal in turbulent times: insights from the EU Green Policy Tracker from Sweden and Estonia,” SEI Discussion Brief, April 8, 2025, <https://www.sei.org/publications/eu-green-deal-turbulent-times-eu-green-policy-tracker-sweden-estonia/>.

²⁴⁵ Robert Finger, “Farmer Protests in Europe 2023–2024,” Wiley Online Library, September 30, 2024, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1746-692X.12452>.

Unlike most other protests, these protests occurred on a continental scale; farmers from across member states participated. For instance, the protests began in the first place because of environmental regulations in Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium: Germany's proposed termination of fuel subsidies and nitrogen emission reduction regulations in the latter two were what specifically catalyzed these protests.²⁴⁶ These pieces of legislation significantly hurt farmers' profits and restricted their practices; as such, some countries have begun to backpedal on environmental regulations.²⁴⁷

Technological Sovereignty

The EU has fallen behind the U.S. and China in terms of technological innovation and sovereignty. In the past decade, the U.S.-China technology arms race has escalated, resulting in increasingly rapid development.²⁴⁸ Estimates suggest that U.S. companies account for approximately 54 percent of global electronic profits; simultaneously, China has made continuously remarkable progress in its technology sector.²⁴⁹ This rivalry has spurred the growth of many emerging and disruptive technologies (EDTs), including semiconductors, 5G networks, artificial intelligence (AI), and more.²⁵⁰

Several EU governments and leaders have expressed discontent over foreign superiority; in particular, over how global leaders in technology use their control.²⁵¹ For instance, U.S. companies have been known to serve the government's interests above all. When President Donald Trump sanctioned Karim Khan, the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Microsoft followed up by disabling Khan's email address.²⁵² Relying on American companies that have an ulterior motive exposes the EU to vulnerabilities, especially in digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, and communications. Additionally, the EU's relations with China have grown in recent years, in stark contrast to the U.S.'s strategy of diversifying away. In 2023, China was the EU's largest importer, with the U.S. in second.²⁵³ Furthermore, the EU has continuously reaffirmed its close relationship with China, indicating a desire to continue the trade partnership.²⁵⁴ An overreliance on Chinese technologies may create the same weaknesses that the EU currently sees due to its reliance on American technology.

Despite a consensus that technological sovereignty is necessary, the EU continues to remain dependent. Undoubtedly, the EU has tried to take some action, such as the Digital Markets Act's attempt to promote competition. In general, however, the bloc has done little to improve technological independence.²⁵⁵ For instance,

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Aurélien Duthoit, Famke Krumbmüller, "Tech wars: US vs China rivalry for electronics out to 2035," Coface for Trade, March 13, 2025, <https://www.coface.com/news-economy-and-insights/tech-wars-us-vs-china-rivalry-for-electronics-out-to-2035>.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Suasti Daeli, "US-China technology competition: A New Cold War Threat to Global Stability," Modern Diplomacy, May 10, 2025, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2025/05/10/us-china-technology-competition-a-new-cold-war-threat-to-global-stability/>.

²⁵¹ Anthony Ha, "European leaders worry they're too reliant on US tech," TechCrunch, June 21, 2025, <https://techcrunch.com/2025/06/21/european-leaders-worry-theyre-too-reliant-on-u-s-tech/>.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ "Trade and Economic Security," European Commission, Accessed July 16, 2025, https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/china_en.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ "EU fines US companies under Digital Markets Act," Euro Topics, April 24, 2025, <https://www.eurotopics.net/en/337793/eu-fines-us-companies-under-digital-markets-act>.

in the European cloud computing market, U.S.-based companies like Amazon, Google, and Microsoft still hold 70 percent of the shares.²⁵⁶ When the EU tried to launch Gaia-X, a European alternative, in 2020, it failed,²⁵⁷ demonstrating that a preference for U.S. technological products has significantly undermined the technological autonomy of the EU.

This overdependence has serious implications for the future. Since Trump entered his second presidential term, relations have been increasingly strained between the U.S. and the EU. The continuous onslaught of increasing tariffs, coupled with contrasting policy goals, puts the relationship into question.²⁵⁸ As the U.S. continues to establish trade barriers, they are no longer a trustworthy partner for trade. Another implication of technological dependence is a lack of autonomy in EDTs and digital platforms, one aspect of which is the use of U.S.-based satellite systems.²⁵⁹ When the U.S. halted intelligence sharing with Ukraine in March 2025, American aerospace firm Maxar completely disabled Ukrainian customers' access to satellite imagery.²⁶⁰ Additionally, U.S. bias has great potential to interfere with politics in the EU.²⁶¹ One study found that during the 2025 German federal election, social media platform X, owned by Elon Musk, gave priority to posts from the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, an ideologically far-right party that Musk openly supports.²⁶² The EU's continued dependence on the U.S. for technology and digital platforms threatens the EU's autonomy and integrity.

Technological dependence on China is similarly concerning. In 2024, China accounted for EUR 17.6 billion of chip imports, more than double the value of any other importer.²⁶³ Unfortunately, the EU is far from its goals in the microchip market; recent analysis suggests that in reality, the EU is likely to only control 11.7 percent of the market in 2030.²⁶⁴ As of now, the 20 percent goal previously established by the European Chip Act seems far from attainable.

Dependence on Military Equipment

Since the post-war implementation of the Marshall Plan, Western Europe has been militarily dependent on the U.S.²⁶⁵ While this does protect Europe, it has also prompted many European nations to lessen the commitment to their own militaries.²⁶⁶

²⁵⁶ Kobie, "US companies dominate."

²⁵⁷ Francesca Musiani, "Gaia-X: the bid for a sovereign European cloud," Polytechnique insights, June 18, 2025, <https://www.polytechnique-insights.com/en/columns/digital/gaia-x-the-bid-for-a-sovereign-european-cloud/>.

²⁵⁸ Anna Cooban, James Frater, "EU warns that its trade with the US could be effectively wiped out if Trump follows through on his threat," CNN Business, July 14, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/07/14/business/europe-us-trade-tariff-wipe-out-intl>.

²⁵⁹ David Matthews, "The EU urgently needs technological autonomy from the US, MEPs say," Science Business, March 13, 2025, <https://sciencebusiness.net/news/sovereignty/eu-urgently-needs-technological-autonomy-us-meps-say>.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Pieter, "Europe Has Risky."

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Jeremy Shapiro, "Why America? The US role in European defense and the European mind," Chaire Grands Enjeux Stratégiques Contemporains, March 18, 2019, <https://chairestrategique.pantheonsorbonne.fr/themes/2019/why-america-us-role-european-defense-and-european-mind>.

²⁶⁶ Hugo Meijer, "Illusions of Autonomy: Why Europe Cannot Provide for Its Security If the United States Pulls Back," International Security 45, no. 4 (2021): 7-43, <https://direct.mit.edu/isec/article/45/4/7/100571/Illusions-of-Autonomy-Why-Europe-Cannot-Provide>.

In reality, the EU has a relatively solid domestic industry for defence equipment.²⁶⁷ However, due to the fact that many smaller companies all compete within the EU, the production cost for each is quite high, making buying from American companies cheaper.²⁶⁸ The European defence industry is also ultimately less advanced than the American one. The aforementioned sense of security that was brought by the U.S. in the past led European nations to feel little urgency for developing their own forces.²⁶⁹ Lastly, European countries have significant historical military ties with the U.S., and prefer continuing to work closely with the U.S.²⁷⁰

Recently, this form of economic overdependence has only increased, as the share of arms imports from the U.S. rose from 52 percent to 64 percent from the 2015-2019 period to the 2020-2024 period.²⁷¹ Given shifting geopolitical alliances, the legitimacy of U.S. protection is being called into question.²⁷² For instance, in 2018, the U.S. threatened to leave NATO due to many EU countries not meeting the two percent defence spending pledge.²⁷³ Should the U.S. abandon the EU militarily, the bloc would be extremely vulnerable due to the lack of a military industry.

Possible Solutions and Controversies

Clean Energy Usage

Clean energy is renewable and does not emit greenhouse gases, or only emits low amounts of greenhouse gases.²⁷⁴ Although the main attraction of clean energy infrastructure is the potential to fight climate change, another major benefit is that it reduces the need to import foreign energy, especially Russian fossil fuels.²⁷⁵ Some countries, like Hungary and Slovakia, still heavily rely on Russian energy, despite the cutoff of energy through Ukrainian pipelines.²⁷⁶ Others, even those less dependent on Russia, lack the capacity, policies, and programs to produce energy domestically.

Delegates may want to consider the implementation of nuclear energy programs in particular. However, certain states currently oppose the use of nuclear energy as an alternative, including Germany, Austria, and Denmark.²⁷⁷ Their main concern with nuclear energy is public safety, especially as public opinion towards nuclear energy tends to be negative due to historical accidents.²⁷⁸ Despite this, claims that nuclear energy has a high risk of accidents

²⁶⁷ “The economic impact.”

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Meijer, “Illusions of Autonomy.”

²⁷⁰ Jan Buchar, “The European defense industry is struggling to cope with global competitive pressure,” CZ Defence, September 19, 2024, <https://www.czdefence.com/article/european-defence-industry-fails-to-cope-with-global-competitive-pressure>.

²⁷¹ “The economic impact.”

²⁷² Giuseppe Spatafora, “The Trump card: What could US abandonment of Europe look like?” EU Institute for Security Studies, February 17, 2025, <https://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/briefs/trump-card-what-could-us-abandonment-europe-look>.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ “What is Clean Energy? How Does it Work? Why is it so Important?” The Welding Institute, Accessed September 28, 2025, <https://www.twi-global.com/technical-knowledge/faqs/clean-energy>.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ “Hungary's Orban says EU plan to ban Russian energy imports must be prevented,” Reuters, May 23, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/hungarys-orban-says-eu-plan-ban-russian-energy-imports-must-be-prevented-2025-05-23/>.

²⁷⁷ Rosie Frost, “Europe is divided on nuclear power: Which countries are for and against it?” EuroNews, April 1, 2024, <https://www.euronews.com/green/2024/04/01/europe-is-divided-on-nuclear-power-which-countries-are-for-and-against-it>.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

are usually only based on the rare cases of Chernobyl, Fukushima, and the Three Mile Island accident.²⁷⁹ As nuclear risk has declined significantly due to improvements in safety and technology, these claims have lost relevance.²⁸⁰ However, proponents of nuclear energy claim that it is quite cost-effective; once power plants are built, they can produce energy at a very low cost.²⁸¹ One possible fix to this stalemate is cross-border energy usage: states could import nuclear power into ones that do not have the capacity or public approval to produce it themselves. Through this method, countries that fear the use of nuclear energy would not be at risk of accidents. Furthermore, education campaigns could be created in school curricula or generally in the public to improve opinion on nuclear energy. The committee should look towards improving the independence of nations, possibly by utilizing actions previously taken through the EGD, such as creating clean energy sources.²⁸²

Innovation in Technology

The EU continues to fall behind the U.S. and China in technological and digital markets.²⁸³ To address this, delegates may look towards fostering competition and subsidizing innovation to improve the EU's competitiveness on the global stage as a whole. Previously, the funding of Horizon 2020 led to 276,000 peer-reviewed publications of extremely high quality, a quarter of which eventually aided in research.²⁸⁴ These papers directly created numerous breakthroughs in fields including medical sciences, quantum mechanics, and chemical engineering.²⁸⁵

However, the main issue regarding both Horizon programs was that funding was not nearly sufficient;²⁸⁶ delegates may wish to discuss increasing commitment to this program. Specifically, if delegates believe that the EU should prioritize specific industries, then a discussion on the allocation of funding into that industry specifically is highly recommended. For instance, the EU lags behind in semiconductor and satellite production, which has forced the bloc to depend on foreign actors for technological necessities.²⁸⁷ By subsidizing these industries specifically, the EU could improve self-reliance.

Another solution may be to cut red tape: to make it easier for individuals and businesses to enter the market, improving the competitiveness of the EU. Currently, many EU companies are hindered by strict regulations and tedious bureaucratic processes that prevent them from competing with foreign companies. However, delegates should do so with caution; cutting red tape will improve businesses, but at a detriment to consumers, who will be at a larger risk.

²⁷⁹ "Safety of Nuclear Power Reactors," World Nuclear Association, Updated February 11, 2025, <https://world-nuclear.org/information-library/safety-and-security/safety-of-plants/safety-of-nuclear-power-reactors>.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ "Embracing nuclear for Canada's energy future | Part two: Nuclear energy is cheap energy," Canada West Foundation, April 18, 2017, <https://cwf.ca/research/publications/embracing-nuclear-for-canadas-energy-future-part-two-nuclear-energy-is-cheap-energy/>.

²⁸² "How the EU."

²⁸³ Pieter, "Europe has risky."

²⁸⁴ Brent, "In review."

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Matthews, "The EU urgently."

Improving Military Independence

Companies in the EU's military market are fractured, increasing the cost for each company to produce equipment due to a lack of economies of scale. For instance, France's defence sector is lacklustre because it depends on some 4,000 small and mid-sized firms for equipment, despite having big contractors like Thales, Safran and Airbus.²⁸⁸

One possible solution is to increase government involvement in the market. In France, the government's response to the divided industry was to subsidize smaller companies, with a EUR 5 billion budget.²⁸⁹ By expanding these programs, governments can both guarantee that businesses will have government backing to continue to produce military equipment and ensure that businesses are encouraged to collaborate, ultimately decreasing the cost of production. However, delegates must also consider whether or not this would be a good use of government funding and resources.

Another method of government involvement would be to invest in a nationalized defence sector. This would entail creating government corporations that take over defence infrastructure production, or using existing companies to do so as well.²⁹⁰ In doing so, member states would no longer have to rely on private corporations that could potentially serve their interests over the country's interests. A government-controlled defence sector also means that the production of equipment would be cheaper, as a single government entity would be responsible for the entire process.²⁹¹ However, a nationalized defence sector could also be harmful to the industry due to a lack of competition and overuse of regulation.

Bloc Positions

The purpose of this section is to provide delegates with a generalized overview of different stances within the committee regarding this topic. Please note that the broad group your country falls under here is not verbatim what delegates should support; there are several forms of economic dependence, and most countries have varying views on each.

Countries Advocating for EU Technological and Military Autonomy

Countries that advocate for complete EU autonomy want to maintain the EU's technological and military capacity while reducing imports from the U.S. and China. This bloc includes Germany, France, Spain, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands: wealthy countries that have the economic potential to rival foreign countries.²⁹² They strongly support actions that reduce technological dependence on foreign countries, including increased funding for research and development. These states typically receive funding from the EU for their large number of researchers and high capacity for improvement, so they are more likely to push for funding in their own states than in others. Additionally, these countries support a unified EU when it comes to technology and

²⁸⁸ Leigh Thomas, Mathieu Rosemain, "France to raise 5 bln euros to boost defence sector capital," Reuters, March 20, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/france-raise-5-bln-euros-defence-sector-funding-finance-minister-says-2025-03-20/>.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Will Kenton, "Nationalization: Definition and How It Works in the Oil Industry," Investopedia, Last updated July 25, 2024, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/n/nationalization.asp>.

²⁹¹ Will Kenton, "Economies of Scale: What Are They and How Are They Used?" Investopedia, Last updated May 30, 2025, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/e/economiesofscale.asp>.

²⁹² Giorgio Leali, Barbara Moens, "Ukraine war gives Macron's drive for EU autonomy new impetus," Politico, March 9, 2022, <https://www.politico.eu/article/war-in-ukraine-versailles-france-emmanuel-macrons-strategic-autonomy/>.

the military, under their economic leadership.²⁹³ Notably, this bloc's views are true for both technological and military dependence.

Countries Cautious of Increased Technological and Military Independence

Countries within this bloc have generally weaker technological and military capacity; this is particularly true for Eastern European countries. Although they do find dependence on foreign countries unfavourable, it is seen as their best course of action for two reasons.²⁹⁴ Firstly, the threat of Russian invasion continues to linger on the Eastern front, meaning this bloc would rather continue to use reliable U.S. technology and military than risk losing the U.S. as a partner.²⁹⁵ Secondly, even if the EU is eventually able to improve its independence from foreign actors, the states that truly dictate this autonomy are wealthy and developed ones. Poorer countries would still be economically dependent, just on different countries, even ones within the bloc.²⁹⁶ As such, these countries are open to yet also wary of EU technological and military independence. They will likely continue to support reliance on the U.S. and China for technology and military needs.²⁹⁷ Countries within this bloc include Poland, Romania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Greece, Portugal, and Croatia.

Notably, a separate subgroup emerges within this bloc: the Baltic region. The Baltic region refers to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, who are still reliant on foreign military support, but have strong digital technologies.²⁹⁸ The Baltic countries support continued reliance on the U.S. for military, but are simultaneously strong advocates for technological sovereignty.²⁹⁹

Energy-Independent Countries

Countries under this bloc will support the continued build-up of clean energy sources, because they establish energy independence. They would push to sustain programs similar to the European Green Deal, which has already significantly expanded the EU's usage of clean energy.³⁰⁰ These countries will likely also advocate for nuclear energy as a viable alternative energy source, as it can be domestically sourced.³⁰¹ Countries within this bloc include France, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Notably, some overlap with other blocs as well because this topic deals with a separate subtype.

²⁹³ Nicholas Vinocur, "How Macron's EU vision stacks up to reality," Politico, September 27, 2017, <https://www.politico.eu/article/how-emmanuel-macron-france-eu-vision-speech-stacks-up-to-reality/>.

²⁹⁴ Candace Huntington, "For Central and Eastern Europe, Strategic Autonomy Isn't Particularly Strategic," CEPA, January 13, 2021, <https://cepa.org/article/for-central-and-eastern-europe-strategic-autonomy-isnt-particularly-strategic/>.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Junjie Zhao, "Eastern Europe's anxiety affects continent's 'strategic autonomy'," Global Times, Mar 25, 2025, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202503/1330844.shtml>.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Craig Turp-Balazs, "E-government: Catching up with the Baltics," Emerging Europe, December 11, 2024, <https://emerging-europe.com/best-practice/e-government-catching-up-with-the-baltics/>.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ "European Green Deal," European Council, Last reviewed February 21, 2025, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-green-deal/>.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

Countries that Resist Change in Energy Sources

The bloc that resists change in energy sources includes countries that are still dependent on Russian energy, particularly Hungary, Slovakia, and Moldova. While countries like Hungary support continued reliance on Russia, others are less happy being reliant on Russia for their energy supply. However, they are unwilling to change as their economy revolves around Russian energy, and diversifying would be extremely difficult. Therefore, while they are open to embracing clean energy, it is unlikely that they will be willing to take action unless other EU countries put in significant effort to address these issues.

Some countries within this bloc more generally oppose the use of nuclear energy. This includes Germany, Austria, Denmark, Luxembourg, and others. These countries do not support nuclear energy because of public dissent and fear of nuclear energy.³⁰² The delegates representing these countries may either support moderate action that alleviates the public dissent over nuclear energy, or continue to support their country's current policy.

Discussion Questions

1. How can the EU integrate renewable energy into its long-term plan, while appeasing groups who oppose this change, such as farmers?
2. To what extent should the EU be willing to fund every technological innovation project that meets a quality standard, and how much should they put towards them?
3. How would the U.S. and other trade partners respond to a more independent EU?
4. How will rising far-right sentiment in Europe affect certain states' perspectives on economic dependence?
5. How can the EU engage in future trade and partnerships in a way that does not make it economically dependent on foreign countries?
6. What might occur to countries that are energy-dependent on Russia or the U.S. if they decide to restrict trade?
7. If the U.S. were to stop protecting the EU, which sectors and areas would be most vulnerable?

Additional Resources

REPowerEU Plan:

https://commission.europa.eu/topics/energy/repowereu_en

Information on Technological Sovereignty:

<https://ecdpm.org/work/tech-sovereignty-and-new-eu-foreign-economic-policy>

Failures of the EU in Subsidizing Research:

<https://sciencebusiness.net/news/horizon-europe/review-successes-and-shortcomings-horizon-2020>

³⁰² Heid, "Why ultra-green Germany."

Dangers of Technological Dependence:

<https://sciencebusiness.net/news/sovereignty/eu-urgently-needs-technological-autonomy-us-meps-say>

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