

## 2-Mar-17 World View — European leaders debate how the European Union can survive after Brexit

### Description

- [\*] European leaders debate how the European Union can survive after Brexit
- [\*] European nations split on the future of Europe

## European leaders debate how the European Union can survive after Brexit



*Italian politician Gianni Pittella calls the European Commission's white paper a 'clear political mistake' (Getty)*

A variety of crises seem to get worse as time goes on is causing anxieties about the future of the European Union and the euro currency. The crises include the refugee crisis, financial crises in Greece and Italy, and increasing euroscepticism in many countries, following the Brexit referendum that called for Britain to leave the European Union.

Recognition of these crises comes at a significant time. On March 25, 27 EU countries (Britain, the 28th, is not invited) will be meeting in Rome to discuss the future of Europe on the 60th anniversary of the 1957 Treaty of Rome that contained the core principles that led to the creation of the European Union.

When the Treaty of Rome was signed, Europe had been devastated by two world wars, and everybody was fearful that there could be another world war at any time. Finally, it was agreed by the war survivors that Europe had to form a union like the United States to prevent another war. That was the motivation behind the 1957 Treaty of Rome.

Today, many in Europe's older generations fear that Europe is headed for new war like WW I and WW II, while younger generations, who have lived in peace their whole lives, think that anyone who worries about war must be an alarmist.

European Commission president Jean-Claude Jüncker on Wednesday published a “White Paper On The Future Of Europe,” which describes the problems facing Europe and suggests five different paths. Jüncker summarizes the problems as follows:

[Begin quote]“Europe’s challenges show no sign of abating. Our economy is recovering from the global financial crisis but this is still not felt evenly enough. Parts of our neighborhood are destabilized, resulting in the largest refugee crisis since the Second World War. Terrorist attacks have struck at the heart of our cities. New global powers are emerging as old ones face new realities. And last year, one of our Member States voted to leave the Union.”[End quote]

Jüncker’s approach is to present alternatives for the future of Europe:

- [\*] **Carrying On.** No new treaty.
- [\*] **Nothing but the Single Market.** Loosen Brussels’ control, give up citizens’ rights, and just have a commercial trading agreement.
- [\*] **Those Who Want More Do More.** Also called a “multi-speed” Europe, this is Jüncker’s favored option. A small group of nations would proceed on a path toward greater integration, and other nations could join when they wish.
- [\*] **Doing Less More Efficiently.** More than the “single market,” but less Brussels control than today, implement policies only when everyone agrees that they add real value.
- [\*] **Doing Much More Together.** This would be the full integration of all 27 member states into a unified EU, but would require significant treaty changes.

The white paper will be discussed at the Rome meeting on March 25, and the European Commission will published a series of discussion papers throughout the year. [European Commission – The Future of Europe](#) and [RTE \(Ireland\)](#) and [Bloomberg](#)

## European nations split on the future of Europe

Many member nations are disenchanted with the EU, and it’s feared that if one more nation follows Britain out of the EU, then others may follow rapidly.

- [\*] **France:** The thought that far-right National Front Party leader Marine Le Pen could win the upcoming election would have been considered impossible a year ago, but the nationalist populism displayed by the successful Brexit referendum and the victory of Donald Trump in America have shown that a Le Pen victory is a real popularity, and Le Pen favors the “Frexit” option of having France leave the European Union.
- [\*] **Poland:** Poland is thought to be eurosceptic, but a poll says that 84.5% would vote to stay if there was a referendum.
- [\*] **The Netherlands:** The Dutch are approximately evenly split on the “Nexit” option of leaving the EU.
- [\*] **Austria:** The rise of right-wing Freedom Party of Austria has made the “Auxit” option appear to be a possibility.
- [\*] **Denmark:** Denmark voted against the Maastricht treaty in 1992, but was later drawn into the EU. However, Denmark voted to stay out of the euro currency.
- [\*] **Hungary:** Hungary’s anti-immigrant prime minister Viktor Orbán has been a fierce opponent of

plans to resettle refugees to EU nations according to a quota system.

- **[\*] Czech Republic:** The Czech people have been called the most eurosceptic people in Europe. Polls indicate that 57% consider EU membership to be a risk to their country.

The foreign ministers of France and Germany supported Jüncker's white paper options, and particularly supported the "multi-speed Europe" option, described in the white paper as follows:

[Begin quote]"In a scenario where the EU27 proceeds as today but where certain Member States want to do more in common, one or several "coalitions of the willing" emerge to work together in specific policy areas. These may cover policies such as defense, internal security, taxation or social matters.

As a result, new groups of Member States agree on specific legal and budgetary arrangements to deepen their cooperation in chosen domains. As was done for the Schengen area or the euro, this can build on the shared EU27 framework and requires a clarification of rights and responsibilities. The status of other Member States is preserved, and they retain the possibility to join those doing more over time."

[End quote]

However, politicians in other countries disagreed. Far-right Dutch politician Vicky Maeijer reacted harshly to the white paper:

[Begin quote]"The EU is collapsing and support for the project is crumbling. It seems we're trying to keep the Brussels dream alive but it's really more of the same – more, more, more European Union. What world do they come from? You're playing with the lives of millions of citizens who you do not represent.

The Dutch, I think, are going to have their feeling confirmed that they must get away from this suffocating Europe and get freedom and democracy back."

[End quote]

Gianni Pittella, an Italian politician who leads the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, said that the white paper was a "clear political mistake": "We would consider it a clear political mistake to simply present five options concerning the EU's future without pointing out a clear political preference. [The future of Europe can't be sacrificed for] short sightedness or fear of the next national elections."

But Spanish politician Esteban González Pons said that the EU must be preserved:

[Begin quote]"It is time to defend Europe because it is the best vaccine against nationalists and populists. ...

Nobody should forget that the Union is already our present, and now we have to decide which way we want to go in the future in order to deal with common challenges such as globalization, the generational gap, terrorism, climate change, the migration and refugee crisis, and the rise of nationalism and populism."

[End quote]

[Daily Express \(London\)](#) and [Politico](#) and [Xinhua](#)

**KEYS:** Generational Dynamics, European Union, Greece, Treaty of Rome, European Commission, Jean-Claude Jüncker, Brexit, France, Marine Le Pen, National Front Party, Hungary, Viktor Orbán, Netherlands, Vicky Maeijer, Italy, Gianni Pittella, Spain, Esteban González Pons