



## EDITORIAL

# Back to the drawing board? Rethinking the European integration process

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In 2004 the EU witnessed a momentous occasion at Áras an Uachtaráin, the Irish presidential palace. There it celebrated its most extensive enlargement as 10 new members joined the Union. This included my home country, Slovakia, of which I was then the prime minister. At this same time the Union was discussing further political integration, an aspiration symbolised by the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. The EU was then a Common European House. In confirmation of its optimism, the integration process would be extended several years later to include still more countries.

Fast forwarding to approximately a decade later, we find that the Common European House looks like a different place. It is confronted with not only external challenges but also deep division among its members. As opposed to Dublin in 2004, the integration process now requires rethinking and a new vision for cooperation among its members.

This issue of the *European View* examines in depth the ways in which the EU member states can work together on some of the sensitive challenges the Common European House faces today: cooperation on defence and foreign policy, migration, eurozone

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reform and internal cohesion. The central question this issue explores is how the EU can reform itself in key strategic areas with a view to the future of the integration process. This question is in line with the soul-searching that the European Commission launched with its *White Paper on the Future of Europe*. The topics this issue covers range from EU foreign policy and external action to security and defence, migration, eurozone reform, internal cohesion and political participation in the age of technology. Submissions go beyond the technicalities of policymaking and provide important political input as to how today's and tomorrow's challenges can be met. They provide informative material on how to shape our Common European House.

As mentioned by Wolfgang Schüssel in his contribution, we must retain our sense of identity and preserve our European values, which bind us together, in the process of rearticulating our common European narrative. The integration process should avoid excessive centralisation as this fuels popular resentment and may lead to a reversal of the progress the Union has made since its inception 60 years ago in Rome. Instead, the different responsibilities on the national and the supranational levels should be clarified based on the principle of subsidiarity. On this basis the recent developments towards increased cooperation in security and defence are welcome, and I look forward to further progress in this area.

It is natural to compare the blue sky over Áras an Uachtaráin in 2004 to the cloudy skies that currently hang over the EU. It is precisely at this time that we need both a sectoral and an overarching vision of how to settle our internal divisions so that we can overcome the challenges which history has placed before us. It is with this in mind that I invite you to engage with this issue's contributions.

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