

# Berlin Conference 2023

## Resilient Futures: Building a Sustainable Europe

8/9 November 2023

### Report and Conclusion

The Berlin Conference 2023 has come to an end - with great success and numerous results. It began internally with an exciting discussion between Svetlana Tsickanouvskaya and Armin Laschet. **The first conference day** opened with welcoming speeches from Michael Roth, Georg Pfeifer, Nele Hertling and Markus Dröge. This was followed by a panel discussion on sustainability and innovation organised by the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation. Finally, in the form of a pitch presentation, the workshops' speakers presented their topics for the second day of the conference and Wolf Plesmann summarised the evening.

**The second day** was characterised by exciting working groups on our three thematic pillars: Democracy and its communities, Sustainability as a holistic model, and Arts and culture as a vision. Finally, the results and demands were presented to all 200 participants in the European House, and further summarised into a final outcomes list presented to the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, later that evening.

**What made this conference so successful** was the joint collaboration between Stiftung Zukunft Berlin, A Soul for Europe and We are Europe with many partners, the close cooperation with youth groups and initiatives, including Green Youth, the alumni network of young Charlemagne Prize winners, YATA, Junior Ambassadors of the OFAJ, Service Civique Européen, the European Festival Association and the European Festival Academy. More details on the individual programme items can be found on the following pages.

**139** different organizations, initiatives and political representations working on Europe were present.

The proportion of **young people** (under 30 years of age) was **35.3%**.

Over the two days of the conference, we welcomed a total of **391 guests**.

Participants came from **32 different countries**.

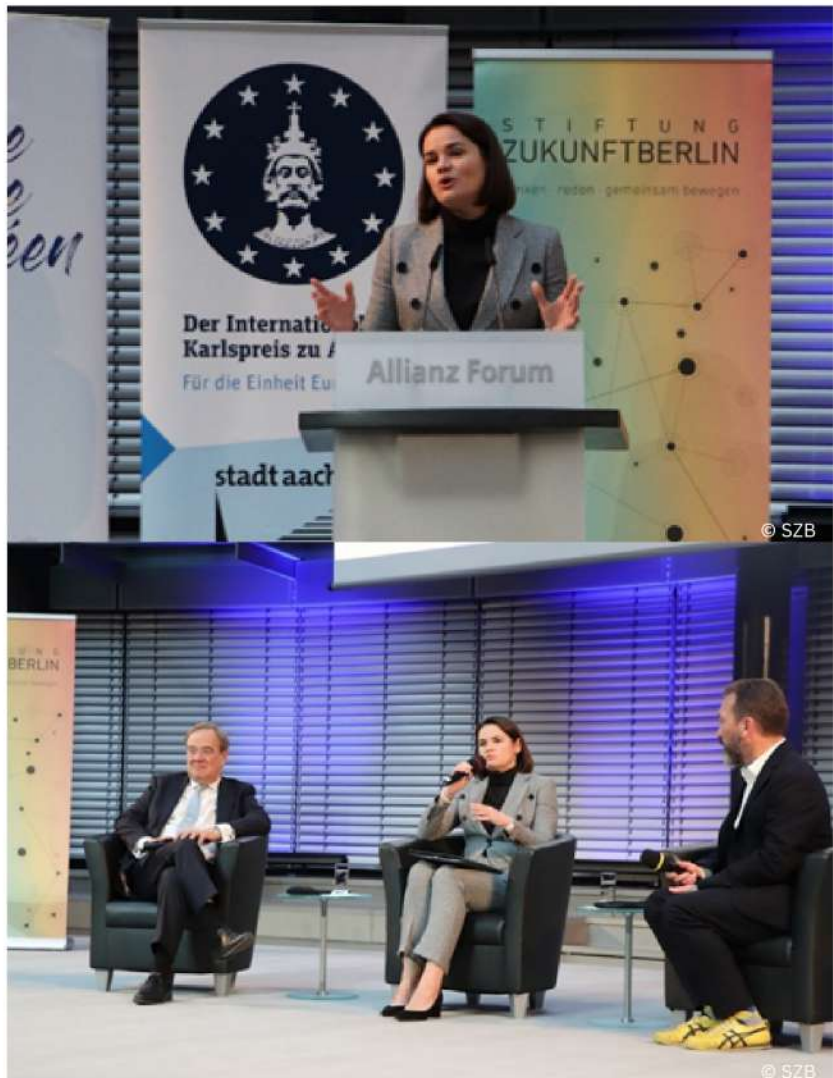
# Day 1

## Keynote and conversation

**“Every morning, every moment to think about those who have sacrificed their lives, their freedom to give you opportunity to fight for your country.”** - Svetlana Tsikhanouskaya (Belarusian Opposition leader and 2022 Charlemagne Prize Winner)

Belarusian Opposition leader and 2022 Charlemagne Prize Winner Svetlana Tsickanouvskaya delivered a keynote on her motivation and the fight for democratic values, highlighting how these cannot be taken for granted. She then participated in an exchange with Armin Laschet (Member of the German Parliament) moderated by Christophe Knoch (member of the Board of Stiftung Zukunft Berlin).

**“We do everything we can to support Belarus to come to the European Family.”** - Armin Laschet (Member of the German Parliament)



## Words of Welcome

**“If we want to build a diverse and colorful society we need young people.”** - Michael Roth (member of the German Parliament)

**“These are not just elections to the European Parliament, the European institutions are being reconstituted, there is a lot at stake. Justice Commissioner Věra Jourová has said that the candidate in this election, in this European election, is Europe”** - Georg Pfeifer (Head of the liaison office European Parliament in Germany)





**“It is more important than ever to activate and motivate people to take responsibility for Europe and your country!”** - Nele Hertling (Founder and speaker of the strategy group of A Soul for Europe)

**“We live in a time characterised by tensions, conflicts, violence, terror and new wars, a time in which anti-Semitism is flaring up again in a disturbing way, human rights are being violated but also fundamentally questioned, identities are not seen as complementary diversity but are used as means of fighting against each other. The way in which we work together in turbulent times at this conference - appreciating, listening, arguing objectively - this way of being together will not only let us talk about Europe, but let us experience Europe.”** - Markus Dröge (Spokesperson of the Board, Stiftung Zukunft Berlin)



**“The Berlin conference has introduced new approaches to address the significant challenges confronting Europe. I am pleased that representatives from civil society across Europe gathered here in Berlin, a city reunited. We gained valuable insights into Berlin's role and objectives within Europe”** - Wolf Plesmann (Head of Federal and European Affairs and Media Policy, Senate Chancellery)

## **How can innovation lead to more sustainability?**

That was the question of the panel discussion organised by the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation and moderated by Jan Cernicky (KAS). The guests were Julia Köhn (entrepreneur), Bernd Weber (EPICO Climate Innovation) and Christopher Sieler (Syngenta).



Three perspectives shed light on how to think more sustainably about challenges, particularly in agriculture and energy. How can we make our soil nutrient rich and long-lasting? How can we create an agriculture that takes global supply into account? What are the sustainable resources and innovations from which we can obtain our energy?

# Pitch presentations



## Democracy and its communities

**“In our time a nation state develops more and more into a multicultural state and the cities are the space to develop and to rethink Europe.” - Eric Corijn**



**“AI will make our lives significantly different from today. Nothing will change our lives and the ones of young people and their experience more than AI.” - Haris Pašović**



## Sustainability as a holistic model

**“We live in an economy that is based on and is addicted to growth. The point is, we are consumers in this and no longer citizens. We need to get clean. We have to go to rehab.” - Marieke van Doornick**



**“This is not a fight for any unreasonable utopia. This is not a fight for some unclear, corporate sustainability. This is a fight for life. And you are all needed in this.” - Dominika Lasota**



## Arts and culture as a vision

**“It is very important to understand that culture and art are not a proposal from the middle class for the middle class. They are a proposal from and for society as a whole.” - Bartosz Szydłowski**



**“Embracing Europe as an aural reality – With art and culture as realities, not only as visions. Shaping Europe every moment we hear a world in a grain of sand, every moment we hear a heaven in a wild flower.” - Jelle Dierickx**

# Day 2



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**On day 2**, the participants worked in six working groups led by the speakers who had presented their topics in the pitch presentations the day before. There was a strong impulse where everyone came together with their different backgrounds, participated and exchanged solutions on specific topics. The aim of the six working groups was to develop two demands each for the political level. This resulted in a paper of demands, which was **presented to Roberta Metsola** on the evening of 9 November 2023. This is precisely the approach of Stiftung Zukunft Berlin, to prepare issues in a bottom-up, decision-relevant manner and to present them directly to the political leaders.

## Words of Welcome

Michelle Schmitz (Head of Representative Office Berlin Allianz) and Markus Dröge (Spokesperson of the Board, Stiftung Zukunft Berlin) stated that **"civil society must be inspired to strengthen civic participation in Europe"**.



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## Democracy and its communities



### Outputs Workshop 1: “Urbanity and culture. A city is not a country.” by Eric Corijn

**A city is not a country.** The reason for this statement is the fact that a growing number of Europeans live in urban environments and the urban system is becoming more complex than the national one. EU institutions and structures need to reflect this increasing urbanisation of the European population, hence the need for a legal structure for associations at European level. It should also be possible **for all residents within the EU to have the right to vote at local level**, regardless of their EU or non-EU nationality. Finally, **access to the existing cultural funding system for small initiatives** must be extended. Furthermore, **the possibility of a European citizens' service** should be created at local level in all EU member states.



### Outputs Workshop 2: “AI and the Future of Europe” by Haris Pašović

A need for **economic stimulation** in the field of AI has been identified. This should include creation of a coalition, joint ventures of companies from big to small ones, and the support by EU programmes. Furthermore, it is important to **create a European programme on AI education and arts**. This should include education of the general public in the arts, to learn critical thinking. In the end, there is also the lack of a **European narrative and ethical framework of AI**, which should act like a safeguard against the misuse of AI-generated content, and should answer the questions ‘which kind of AI is wanted?’ and ‘where is the red line?’.



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## Sustainability as a holistic model

### Outputs Workshop 3: “Doughnut Rehab: How can we overcome our addiction to economic growth and learn to meet the needs of all people within the means of our planet?” by Marieke van Doorninck

A thousand “doughnuts” should flourish by making it much easier for local economies to prosper. **We should encourage local economies to thrive** by making it easier for companies to adopt a new and broader ownership model, which can be done by taking away the monopoly position of multinational corporations. One example to achieve this would be to implement a more sustainable procurement system within the European Union itself. There needs to be a **new way found to measure** progress, meaning promoting quality over quantity, and replacing the GDP with a broader wellbeing index.

### Outputs Workshop 4: “How can we win a just, green future & beat the far-right at the same time? A story of hope from Poland.” by Dominika Lasota

**There is a need to create an affordable and environmentally-friendly means of transport.** This should be done by strengthening the mandate of the European Railway Agency into an EU public railway company. In addition, the EU should levy taxes on airline tickets, and fuel and decentralise public transport to connect urban and rural areas. It is also important that the **EU supports civil society organisations in Europe through bottom-up approaches** by ensuring that underrepresented groups are included in decision-making. Furthermore, trust in social movements needs to be strengthened through capacity building and mobility funds.



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## Arts & Culture as a vision

### Outputs Workshop 5: “Art as a vehicle of hope” by Bartosz Szydłowski

**The key words are trust and decentralisation.** There is a need for trust in the unpredictable element and the impact of culture. The "irrational moment" must be taken seriously, as well as art as a means for change. It is important to have trust in the process, and to create own spaces and practices in order to promote the self-confidence of the individual. Measurement should be done by promoting qualitative approaches and long-term impact. **Micromanagement of projects needs to be stopped; instead local NGOs, initiatives, individuals and communities need to be empowered.** It is important to offer long-term support to ensure sustainability. Non-formal spaces for art and culture must be provided, together with the implementation of cross-sectoral approaches, and the enabling of unexpected and experimental places.



### Outputs Workshop 6: “To hear the world in a grain of sand. Embracing Europe as an aural reality” by Jelle Dierickx

**Actively listening to Europe's diversity:** this emphasises the importance of listening to different communities (age, culture, race, religion, economic background, gender, rural/urban, education, skills). Space should be made for best practices (listening to what is already happening and what solutions are already being offered). **Ultimately, it is important to see art and culture as a reality and not just a vision.** Listening to the quiet voices of the periphery and beyond: This means listening to understand and not just to react - and then, to take action on the basis of understanding.



# Plenary Session at European House



The results of the six thematic groups were presented in a plenary session in the European House. These results were discussed with all conference participants. From this, a joint statement was drawn up and later presented to the President of the European Parliament.

## From the Bottom to the top - presentation of the results

This paper was presented by Stephanie Bonnici (Member of the Strategy Group A Soul for Europe) and Markus Dröge (Spokesperson of the Board of Stiftung Zukunft Berlin) to Roberta Metsola just before her State of Europe speech at the Allianz Forum. In her speech, EU Parliament President Metsola appealed to all Europeans to strengthen the European Union with their wealth of ideas and to counter the narratives of extremists and populists, because the EU is no longer a matter of fact.



# A special thanks goes to...

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