

## One goal – two ways: Testing the feasibility of Macron and Juncker’s EU visions

No. 51 October 2017

By Robert Stüwe and Thomas Panayotopoulos

After years of crisis mode, the EU’s economy has slowly begun to pick up<sup>1</sup>. Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and French President Emmanuel Macron are trying to make use of this new sense of momentum, presenting their visions on how the European Union should look in the future. Their common goal – expressed within a two week period in Juncker’s State of the Union speech and in Macron’s “Initiative for Europe”-address – is to kick start and to navigate a public debate on the direction as well as the policy substance of integration. This coordinated approach to put forward opinions on the future of the EU displays both presidents’ sense of leadership to accomplish their own goals which point in a similar direction. But whose vision for Europe is more feasible?

Their key shared objective is to deepen integration and to identify unity-building policy projects. This is best visible by the proposals set forth by both presidents with regard to defence, security and migration policies. A key idea is to mandate the European Public Prosecutor, established by 20 member states in a Council agreement in June 2016, with prosecuting cross-border terrorist crimes. Furthermore, Macron’s and Juncker’s proposals converge on the European Defence Union, specifically involving the already established European Defence Fund and the swift implementation of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). This enabled certain EU countries to strengthen their cooperation in military matters in line with Articles 42 VI, 46 and Protocol 10 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU).<sup>2</sup> Also regarding migration, both presidents voiced the need for reforming the current Dublin system by

2018, reinforcing the EU’s external borders and opening legal ways for skilled migrants to enter the EU. Affirming his support for Juncker’s proposed European Asylum Office (Migration Package June 2016),<sup>3</sup> Macron committed himself to harmonizing asylum procedures throughout the EU. Outside the EU, tackling the sources of migration, especially in Africa was placed front and centre in the two addresses.

Despite these similarities there is a crucial difference in the method of implementation: As opposed to Macron, Juncker intends to achieve all of his policy goals within the current EU treaty framework. Indeed, Macron elaborated on creating a common European defence force, underpinned by a common defence budget. This however would go against the current treaty provisions. Article 41 II TEU prohibits for “expenditure arising from operations having military or defence implications”<sup>4</sup> to be allocated to the Union budget. The necessity of overhauling the Lisbon treaty in order to implement Macron’s vision also applies to the proposal to “gradually establish a European border police force that ensures rigorous management of borders”<sup>5</sup>. If equipped with European staff, the creation of a European border police would require the modification of the Articles 77(1) c) and 77(2) (d) TFEU and / or Article 78 TFEU, which places border control in the hands of the member states.<sup>6</sup>

Beyond treaty reform, the French president’s proposals place a strong emphasis on new institutional build-up. Two examples are instructive: First, Macron considers the creation of a European Intelligence Academy to be necessary to forge closer ties between national intelligence services, in order

to fight against terrorist groups.<sup>7</sup> Thereby Macron disregards existing tools for combatting terrorism in the form of Europol's Counter-Terrorism Centre whose competences - as proposed by Juncker - could be expanded to the intelligence sector. Second, Macron put forward the establishment of a new "agency on breakthrough innovation" for funding new fields of research. Here Macron once more fails to take account of existing structures such as the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT) established in 2008. This type of institution-building, which increases unnecessary overlap as well as fragmentation, is often used by member states to avoid the direct expansion of Commission competences.<sup>8</sup> It would therefore not be surprising if the French proposals were tabled to increase the national control on key common European institutions.

Irrespective of what vision the EU will pursue on its way to a possible renewal, both Juncker's and Macron's proposals will face obstacles.

The divide between Central Eastern Europe and the Western part of the continent is often seen as one of the major hurdles for reform. This is particularly true in the context of the polemic discussion surrounding the compulsory refugee relocation quota within the EU.<sup>9</sup> However recent evidence from network analysis suggests that this rift is only a misleading impression entertained by media discourse. Apart from a few notable exceptions in policy fields such as asylum and climate change, central eastern states do not regularly cluster together in a staunch voting bloc in the Council of Ministers.<sup>10</sup> This shows that the necessity for the EU "to breathe with both lungs"<sup>11</sup> - as mentioned by Juncker - has already grown into the daily institutional practice.

More importantly, the results of the German election and the four-party-coalition which will probably be formed might be the real obstacle to this new momentum for EU reform. Germany as the most powerful actor and biggest net donor to the Union might be limited due to internal coalition politics. Macron's and Juncker's notion that common borders require common protection might be difficult to implement given the opposition of the Green Party to Frontex's extended mandate.<sup>12</sup> This assessment also holds true for the presidents' proposal for the Euro to become the currency of all

EU members, as the German Liberal Democrats (FDP) are proponents of creating the possibility for states to exit the Eurozone without exiting the EU.<sup>13</sup> The next German government will not only be exposed to centrifugal forces but will also face the pressure of the right-wing populist AfD's presence in the Bundestag - a reality which can increasingly be observed in other national legislatures and the European Parliament. This trend has already complicated the work of government leaders at EU summits when faced with critical junctures. The debate on refugee relocation serves as a prime example.

Nevertheless, a window of opportunity for the EU is now opening. The current favourable economic trend combined with the political void left by the relative absence of the United States and the UK, represents a unique chance for the EU to establish itself as a power of stability in the world. Taking this context into account, what path for the EU do these proposals suggest? While Juncker's approach equals repairing the sails of the European vessel, Macron wants to rebuild the ship. The Commission President's plans do not imply treaty changes but rather the strict implementation of his work programme and can therefore be realised within his term. Macron's proposals, on the other hand, would go beyond the treaty provisions without using the existing scope to its fullest. Proceeding in such a way would produce tiring and long-lasting negotiations, missing the momentum which is presenting a chance to reboot.

However, Macron's commitment gives the much needed impetus to Juncker's aims. In the view of the French president, more common EU capabilities would not weaken the member states but instead europeanise the term of sovereignty. Consequently, he has declared the EU's future a principal topic of his time in office. In his own way, Macron attempts to trigger an atmosphere of enthusiasm within the European Union. It is for Juncker now to spread this dynamic for the sake of the European project.

**Thomas Panayotopoulos and Robert Stüwe** are ZEI Research Fellows and ZEI Alumni "Class of 2014", coordinating the ZEI Governance and Regulation in the EU: The Future of Europe project.

*References:*

1. Rankin, Jennifer (2017) The eurozone strikes back – why Europe is booming again, in: *The Guardian*, 16th of September 2017, retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/sep/16/the-eurozone-strikes-back-why-europe-is-booming-again> (last accessed: 6th of October 2017).
2. The European Council in June 2017 has agreed on the need to launch an inclusive and ambitious Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), see European Council Conclusions on Security and Defence, 22th June 2017, retrieved from <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/06/22-euco-security-defence/> (last accessed: 5th of October 2017).
3. See ZEI Monitor on Migration, retrieved from [https://www.zei.uni-bonn.de/research/governance-and-regulation/migration?set\\_language=en](https://www.zei.uni-bonn.de/research/governance-and-regulation/migration?set_language=en) (last accessed: 5th of October 2017).
4. Article 41(2) TEU.
5. Emmanuel Macron (2017) Official synthesis of the speech “Initiative for Europe A sovereign, united, democratic Europe”, retrieved from <http://www.elysee.fr/assets/Initiative-for-Europe-a-sovereign-united-democratic-Europe-Emmanuel-Macron.pdf>, p. 1 (last accessed: 5th of October 2017).
6. See European Political Strategy Centre (2017) Two Visions, One Direction. Plan for the Future of Europe, p.6, retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/epsc/sites/epsc/files/epsc\\_-\\_two\\_visions\\_one\\_direction\\_-\\_plans\\_for\\_the\\_future\\_of\\_europe.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/epsc/sites/epsc/files/epsc_-_two_visions_one_direction_-_plans_for_the_future_of_europe.pdf) (last accessed: 5th of October 2017).
7. Emmanuel Macron (2017) Official synthesis of the speech “Initiative for Europe A sovereign, united, democratic Europe”, p.1, retrieved from <http://www.elysee.fr/assets/Initiative-for-Europe-a-sovereign-united-democratic-Europe-Emmanuel-Macron.pdf>, p. 1 (last accessed: 5th of October 2017).
8. Piquet, Agathe (2017) Supranational activism and intergovernmental dynamics: the European Police Office as a supranationalist opportunist?, in: *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, Vol. 13, Iss. 2, p. 1185-1207, 1189.
9. Robinson, Duncan / Spiegel, Peter (2015) EU ministers force through refugee quota plan, in: *Financial Times*, 23rd of September 2015, retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/76c2dd9e-6111-11e5-9846-de406ccb37f2?mhq5j=e7> (last accessed: 13th of October 2017).
10. see Toshkov, Dimiter (2017) The impact of the Eastern enlargement on the decision-making capacity of the European Union, *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 24, Iss. 2, p. 177-196, 178f.
11. Juncker, Jean-Claude (2017) State of the Union Address 2017, European Commission – Speech, retrieved from [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_SPEECH-17-3165\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-17-3165_en.htm) (last accessed: 6th of October 2017).
12. See Europagruppe Grüne (2016) Frontex wird zur Abschottungsagentur, press release, 6th of July 2016, retrieved from <http://www.gruene-europa.de/frontex-wird-zur-abschottungsagentur-15806.html> (last accessed: 6th of October 2017).
13. See Freie Demokraten (2017) Weg für den Grexit frei machen, press release, 16th of February 2017, retrieved from [https://www.fdp.de/euro-stabilisierung\\_weg-fuer-den-grexit-frei-machen](https://www.fdp.de/euro-stabilisierung_weg-fuer-den-grexit-frei-machen) (last accessed: 6th of October 2017).

ZEI Insights are part of the Research Project - Governance and Regulation in the EU: [The Future of Europe](#)

ZEI Insights provide commentary and critical analysis on governance and regulation issues related to the future of the European Union. Authors are responsible for their own views.