

# European Union 2.0.

## Bringing the EU up to date

This article explains why updating the EU is better than revolutionizing it by rebooting it. It discusses how to overcome Eurosclerosis 2.0. The EU needs neither revolutionary innovations nor counter-revolutionary turns, but an incremental and innovative further development. In short: the wheel doesn't need to be reinvented.

The EU multi-level system must be preserved in its complexity and further developed through constant incremental improvements (kaizen) as well as through innovations. Furthermore, complementarity between market and state is important; without it, neither technological innovation nor security and prosperity are possible. Above all, the EU must become a digital knowledge society, which is why I advocate an update of the EU.

Several generations worked hard for more than 50 years until the EU reached its political and economic prime. But for the past two decades, a generation that has been spoiled by prosperity has been driving the EU into the ground. I have described the current problems of the EU here:

*Eurosclerosis 2.0: Creating ruins in peacetime? Bigoted hurrah Europeans and hurrah nationalists are driving the EU into the ground:* [lauer.biz/eurosclerosis.pdf](https://lauer.biz/eurosclerosis.pdf).

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## Publications:

[Methodology and political science: the discipline needs three fundamentally different methodological traditions](#). In: Springer Nature Social Science. 1, 43 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-020-00034-0>.

“Methodenstreit” and Political Science: Methodological Science War at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century between the scientific Establishment and phronetic Perestroikans. Heidelberg: heiBOOKS, 2017

The monograph is currently only available in German, exceptions:  
Abstract, introduction and charts are in English:  
Webversion: [lauer.biz/methodenstreit/index-en.htm](https://lauer.biz/methodenstreit/index-en.htm).

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## **Overcoming Eurosclerosis 2.0 and state failure**

The first Eurosclerosis (1966-1985) was successfully overcome, which is encouraging but is no guarantee that the second will also be. A “remake” or “reboot” of the EU that would strengthen the EU and weaken the nation states, as populist hurrah Europeans desire, would undoubtedly be an own goal. Just as bad would be if the nation state were strengthened at the expense of the EU, as the hurrah nationalists demand.

European integration promises to realize unity and diversity at the same time. This can only succeed if two basic problems are adequately solved: the distribution of tasks between the market and the state, and between the EU level and the nation states. First, the revolutionary vocabulary should be shelved and replaced by an incremental and innovative approach. Only then can the polarization decrease. A different motto is necessary for the optimal further development of political systems in the EU. But first and foremost, polarization must end.

### **Polarization of the discourse: moralization of politics, politicization of science**

As a rule, those who make apodictic judgments try to legitimize them through the authority of science and morality: politicization of science and moralization of politics is the result. The idea that one can determine “the truth” or “the good” beyond doubt is a pre-modern chimera. However, we are not quite ready to give up the dream of determining truth and rightness beyond doubt. Thus Jürgen Habermas presented a pragmatic model of political consultation, according to which all dilemmas of legitimacy can be overcome. If all those involved, citizens, scientists as well as politicians, are of good will and proceed rationally, then a decision can be reached at the end of the day that meets the demands of science and morality as well as democratic procedures. Therefore, decisions legitimized in this way can and must be accepted by all (see my article in The European: [Relationship between politics and science](#)).



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This briefly summarizes the philosophical principles of Critical Theory that form the basis of the 1968 revolutionaries. They always believe that they are in possession of the truth, know the morally right thing to do, and could win a consensus of the reasonable in a democratic, free discourse, i.e. convince the others of the correctness of their opinions. The fundamental limits of reason, which have already been noted many times in antiquity, by Kant and especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, are simply ignored by them.

In his groundbreaking work, Thomas Samuel Kuhn showed that it is not only rational reasons, but also political, psychological and sociological ones, that influence the adoption of new theories. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in particular, he analyzed the development of physics, more precisely the (Copernican) Revolution from the Ptolemaic to the Copernican worldview. He used a new terminology (paradigm, incommensurability, (Copernican) revolution, normal science) to describe and explain this revolution. For decades, these terms have shaped not only the scientific debates in all subjects, but also the public discussion, albeit unfortunately in a very undifferentiated manner. Thus the term “paradigm” today is used in a very inflationary manner, with very different meanings and often misleadingly. This is not least due to the vagueness of the term, which Kuhn openly admits: “Part of its success, I have to say to myself with regret, stems from the fact that almost anyone can read out anything they want. Nothing about the book is more responsible for this excessive malleability than the introduction of the term ‘paradigm’.” Margaret Mastermann, a student of Wittgenstein, has identified at least 22 different meanings of this expression in Kuhn’s book.

The abuse of Kuhn’s concepts is very widespread; Kuhn’s book is likely to be one of the most cited and least read books. The most infantile meaning of all, that the old is bad and must be replaced by the new, has established itself very strongly and is used to support even the most insipid demand for renewal, reset, etc. Thus, in all areas, a campaign of the supposedly “new” against the “old” is being waged in place of objective, careful development: ethos beats reflection. Both revolutionaries and



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counter-revolutionaries like to use Kuhn's vocabulary. They are like Manichaeic religious warriors who can precisely distinguish between light and darkness, good and evil: *tertium non datur*. This effectively prevents a discourse between those who think differently from the outset, since those who think differently are only presented as uneducated, morally neglected cardboard pseudo-comrades: Carl Schmitt's friend-foe scheme, perfectly illustrated. The common ground of Left and Right Hegelians becomes visible.

The common basis of revolutionary left-wing populists (hurrah Europeans) and counter-revolutionary right-wing populists (hurrah nationalists) is thus revealed: both are Hegelians, left-wing or right-wing Hegelians; both have a pure ethos and a direct line to the world spirit. The result is arrogance and hubris. According to Karl Popper, Hegel, along with Marx and Plato, is an enemy of the open society.

This way of thinking favors a *political and utopian romanticism*. The Hegelians really believe that political structures that have grown over decades and centuries can simply be replaced with new structures that have been designed on the drawing board. And should the political structures end in a collapse, then the fault lies not with these new structures, but with the people. Therefore, a new, noble or socialist person must be created, also designed on the drawing board.

In addition, there is an *infantile messianism* that does not tolerate any shades of grey or nuance and, from the Hegelians point of view, necessarily requires the friend-foe scheme: one is either for peace or for war, for world salvation or for world doom. The result is an authoritarian (hurrah nationalists) or totalitarian (hurrah Europeans) attitude that prevents rational debate from the outset. Hurrah Europeans and Hurrah nationalists are Manichaeic religious warriors and postmodern Jacobins with whom a civilized dialogue and a democratic search for consensus is hardly possible.

Kuhn's terminology is misused both by revolutionaries, who always want to abolish the old and replace it with a new, future utopia, and by counter-revolutionaries, who want a political turn to restore a past paradise. Therefore, both left-wing and right-wing



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populists, through the moralization of politics and the politicization of science, create a polarization of public discourse, about which they then weep crocodile tears.

The ideological-political differences between left and right Hegelians have already been discussed in the field of European politics: some are hurrah Europeans, the others hurrah nationalists.

## **Ending polarization: democratic and rational discourse on an equal footing**

Overcoming Eurosclerosis 2.0 requires, first, overcoming the polarization of political discourse, i.e., one should not spout European rhetoric and pay lip service to liberalism while following egoistic policies and authoritarian habits. The Manichaeian revolutionary habitus outlined above stands in fundamental contrast to the Socratic habitus developed in Western philosophy and science, in which doubt and not certainty is central.

“What you have inherited from your fathers, acquire it in order to possess it” (Goethe in Faust). Neither revolutionaries nor counterrevolutionaries have adequately addressed the EU. An infantile view of the EU prevails on both sides.

In the current polarizing political debate, the EU can only lose. Both hurrah Europeans and hurrah nationalists represent political visions of the future that are significantly worse than the EU’s current constitution. Instead of further developing and adapting the existing complex distribution of competences to the new conditions through both steady incremental improvements (kaizen) and innovations, infantile innovations, either revolutionary or counter-revolutionary, are being pursued, thus further reinforcing Eurosclerosis 2.0.

The politicization of science leads to a monocausal and reductionist approach. Such a view is inadequate because the reality is much more complex. Different effects can have a common cause (equifinality) and, conversely, a cause in combination with other conditions can produce different effects (multicollinearity, see my article in Springer



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Nature Social Science [Methodology and political science](#)). Furthermore, what applies to every drug also applies to political regulations. There is not only one desired effect, but several other side effects.

The moralization of politics leads to the situation where all scientists who accept causalities other than those identified by the governments are defamed. Both the politicization of science and the moralization of politics, taken together, only lead to ruin and must be ended. Common sense should come to the fore again. Hegel, Marx, Frankfurt School, French Deconstructivism and Structuralism should be put aside. Aristotle, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, Max Weber and Karl Popper provide the better political and philosophical foundations.

The destructive confrontation between hurrah Europeans and hurrah nationalists must be brought to an end as soon as possible. An open and transparent confrontation of different interests is necessary. Above all, bigoted behavior must be overcome.

### **Future motto of the EU: unity and diversity (*unitas et diversitas*)**

In the creation of a European federal state after the Second World War, the USA in particular was taken as a model, whose motto is “out of many, one” (*e pluribus unum*). Although the French rejected a European federal state in 1954, the preamble to the European treaties has been striving for an “ever closer union of the peoples of Europe” since 1957. In 2000, a new motto for Europe was chosen: “United in diversity” (*in varietate concordia*). This found its way into the preamble of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (TCE 2004), which has not yet entered into force due to lack of ratification. The motto does not bring a new accent, but holds on to the goal of a future federal state comparable to the USA.

Why should this goal be abandoned? Why rather further develop the current *sui generis* association of states (*Staatvenverbund*)? The 20<sup>th</sup> century, the century of extremes, offers two important lessons that should definitely be taken into account in the further development of the EU.



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The fascist experience shows that nation states can (not must, see the counter-example of EFTA!) degenerate into nationalism, with brutal consequences (Holocaust, war). This suggests that some form of supranational integration (EU level) and global cooperation that neutralize the dangers of nationalism and meet the needs of a complex world are necessary.

Socialist experience teaches that supranational integration with massive centralization and a planned economy, as in the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia, does not do justice to the complexity of modern society and eventually collapses. Therefore, criticism of an exaggerated claim to control by the European institutions is more than justified, especially with regard to the EU Commission, but also to the European Court of Justice (ECJ), both of which interpret all norms in favor of the European level when in doubt. Furthermore, caution is required when some want to enforce utopias with all their might.

The first, nationalist, lesson is invoked *ad nauseam* on a daily basis; the second, centralist-statist, lesson is successfully suppressed. The hurrah Europeans need to understand that the nation state will remain the most important level of political control for a long time to come. The stigmatization of people who emphasize the importance of the national and regional levels and point out the collateral damage of globalization is not only morally reprehensible, but also counterproductive.

Nationalists must recognize that without supranational integration at the European level and global supranational cooperation, the complexity of the modern world cannot be adequately managed. No European state can stand alone on an equal footing with China and the United States in a globalized world.

Therefore, my proposal for the motto of the EU is: *unity and diversity (unitas et diversitas)*. A complementarity between European unity and nation state diversity, and between market, state and civil society, is best suited to guarantee prosperity for all in the EU, as well as to building the EU as an international player that can compete with the USA and China.



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## **Further development of the existing multi-level system: complementarity between the European and national levels**

Despite its many shortcomings, the EU has the most complex and efficient supranational political system anywhere. This *sui generis Staatenverbund* (association of states) can only falter if hurrah Europeans or hurrah nationalists prevail. The main challenge is to develop this complex system adequately.

Eurosclerosis 2.0 can be overcome if the legal competencies, monetary resources and political responsibilities can be optimally distributed in the EU multi-level system. The four existing decision-making levels (municipal, regional, national and European) would also have to be constantly developed. It is necessary both to strengthen the performance of all levels and to shift competencies in all directions, not only toward the EU headquarters. Both shifts to the EU level and shifts back to the national level are necessary.

The political systems, both at the EU level and at the national level, are much more advanced. As shown above, there is an interlocking between the European and the national level, which has led to an increase in performance on both levels and enormously expanded the performance possibilities of each.

The most important and efficient collective and social security systems are at the national level. If one is interested in good social policy, one cannot play off the different levels against each other. Poverty, like many other problems, can only be effectively remedied if appropriate strategies and instruments are developed at all levels, local, regional, national and European, but above all if existing systems are further developed. This also includes further developing established systems at the national level. The nation state is still the most powerful political level. The national level, which guarantees diversity in the EU, must be preserved. European unity serves to preserve and further develop national diversity.

The major problems can only be overcome if several strategies and instruments are available at the European, national, regional and municipal level to tackle a problem.



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There is no “one” solution, no single road that leads to Rome. What is important is coordination, so that these complementary, supplementary solutions do not hinder each other. For this to happen, all the mentioned levels must have their autonomy. Hierarchisation is counterproductive.

## **Pluralism required: complementarity between market and state**

Which competencies should the market and the state possess? Of the five ideal-typical strategies that I listed in the article about Eurosclerosis 2.0 ([lauer.biz/eurosclerosis.pdf](http://lauer.biz/eurosclerosis.pdf)), the state of nature and communism can be disregarded because they each represent one extreme (market or state) and thus leave the many possibilities of the other strategy unused. The same is true of neoliberalism and neostatism, each of which also favors only one strategy – the former the market, the latter the state.

“Many roads lead to Rome” is a strategy that is very appropriately attributed to common sense. A pluralism of market, state and civil society strategies, as well as a variety of individual instruments for solving existential problems, offer the best guarantee that solutions will be adequate, sustainable and resilient. Complementarity between market, state and civil society is as important as complementarity between different levels of government.

## **Complementarity as a structural principle of the EU**

The EU multi-level system must be maintained in its complexity and further developed through constant incremental improvements (kaizen) as well as through innovations. The distribution of competencies, resources and responsibilities between the European and national levels and between the market and the state, as discussed above, is crucial in this context. For the two approaches mentioned above to succeed, complementarity should be introduced as a further structural principle of the EU. Complementarity is called for between the various political levels as well as between the market, the state and civil society. Complementarity would enable a further



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increase in the complexity of the political system, in which performance can be enhanced at both the European and national levels.

The greatest danger in complex systems is that responsibilities become blurred, i.e., in the worst case, there is organized irresponsibility: everyone is responsible for the successes, no one is responsible for the failures. The advantage of democratic systems is that there is more frequent turnover of politicians and senior officials. In short: complex systems can promote the formation of shunting yards and lead to organized irresponsibility. Therefore, not only is the allocation of legal competencies, monetary resources and political responsibilities important, but it is also necessary that these correspond or are brought into harmony with one another.

## **Restoring international competitiveness**

Eurosclerosis 2.0 can be overcome if international competitiveness is restored. When tackling problems, one should always work with a pluralistic approach, i.e. both statist and market-based strategies should be applied to each problem. Monocultures are not just harmful in agriculture; they can lead entire states to ruin if, for example, only state solutions are relied on, as exemplified by the collapse of state socialism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

International competitiveness can only be restored if a similarly complex approach to the implementation of the single market is followed. However, the EU would also have to act as a provider of services as quickly as possible and build a high-performance 5G network virtually at every corner within the EU and EFTA. Furthermore, all levels of government, from the municipal to the European, would have to promote digitization and, as consumers of private services, enable comprehensive digitization of all government services. In short, one has to make up for the state investments that have been neglected over the last two decades. The state is needed not only as a *regulator*, but above all as a *provider* and *customer* of public services. As a regulator, the EU is finally on the right track.



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It is still necessary to carry out a second educational offensive following the education offensive of the 1960s and 1970s. The first was simply about mass: everyone should be able to benefit from education, not just the better-off. This still needs to be expanded. The new offensive should focus on targeted support from kindergarten to master craftsman diploma or doctorate. But this should not be at the expense of quality. The strongest competitors from East Asia show that both, mass and quality are feasible.

## **The EU is at least as dependent on the UK and EFTA as the other way around**

The British made a significant contribution to overcoming the first Eurosclerosis, contrary to what many say. Without the UK and the other EFTA states, overcoming Eurosclerosis 2.0 will hardly be feasible either. The UK is vital for any serious internal and external security policy at the European level; but they are also important for developing the knowledge society. The only European universities that sit at the top of global rankings are not in the EU but in Great Britain and Switzerland.

If the EU wants to establish itself as an independent actor alongside the USA, China, Japan and Russia, this will require more than the internal development described above. It will also necessitate the inclusion of all EFTA states and Great Britain. At present, the EU treats Britain and Switzerland worse than its own provinces. They have to accept the entirety of EU law, the *acquis communautaire*, without objection, although they are not involved in its development. This will have to change if we are to overcome Eurosclerosis 2.0.



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The development of Eurosclerosis 2.0 is presented in another article:

*Eurosclerosis 2.0: Ruins in peacetime? Bigoted Hooray Europeans and Hooray Nationalists are driving the EU to the wall:* [lauer.biz/eurosclerosis.pdf](http://lauer.biz/eurosclerosis.pdf).

The EU is the most complex and efficient supranational association of states in the world. Revolutionary hurrah Europeans and counter-revolutionary hurrah nationalists have brought about Eurosclerosis 2.0 through bigoted and selfish actions. They are about to drive the EU completely into the ground with infantile plans for the future. Nationalists act and talk like Donald Trump, while hurrah Europeans talk like Mother Theresa but act like Trump.



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