

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

*Aspen Initiative  
for Europe*



## OVERVIEW 2016-2017



November 2016





## 2016-2017 Overview

“We have to rethink the way the European Union works. We know what our **principles**, our **interests** and our **priorities** are. This is no time for uncertainty: our Union needs a Strategy. We need a **shared vision**, and **common action**.”

**Federica Mogherini**, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy; Vice-President of the European Commission

*EU Global Strategy, June 2016*

### Foreword

***Europe, in the post-Brexit scenario, is going through an existential crisis. For the first time since the Rome Treaties, a gradual disintegration of the EU is possible. The increase of euro-skepticism and the rise of illiberal and populist forces in different European countries put the European project at risk. A disunited Europe would make the West much weaker: avoiding this scenario is a common interest – for Europe and the US.***

The seven Aspen Institutes in the Old Continent have joined forces to help relaunch Europe and rejuvenate the Transatlantic relationship.

The two sides of the Atlantic share most fundamental values, many political institutions and economic standards, and a host of XXI century

challenges and problems that have emerged in our societies. We can still shape the future by translating diversity into creativity – just as the West’s history (for all its twists and turns) teaches. There is no simple recipe to rebuild trust in the ability of Europe and the wider West to address the legitimate concerns of our citizens, but there are key priorities.

The European Community was set up in the last century with a strong security rationale: to prevent wars from recurring in Europe. But after the project of a fully-fledged “European Defense Community” fell through in 1954 it went on to become a chiefly economic entity. The idea of “functionalists” such as Jean Monnet was that

political union would be achieved through economic integration. The truth, however, is that the incomplete Economic and Monetary Union does not work well and political union has never gotten off the ground. Meanwhile, the security tasks that any citizen expects the state (or federal/confederal union) to perform were put on the back burner, suffering from insufficient funding and limited coordination. Thus, many Europeans have come to perceive the EU as a bad deal. The sentiment of losing control and identity is deepened by the impact of globalization.

For too long we did not listen and pay attention to the concerns and needs of our citizens.

The result is that in most European countries we are seeing an increase in the weight carried by parties which we generically brand “populist” (on both the left and right of the political spectrum). In the post-Brexit climate, this is the recipe for a step by step implosion of the EU by national means, i.e. through the defeat of pro-European forces in some of the member states.

In turn, the implosion of the EU would deal a tough blow to the international liberal order that has primarily been based since 1945 on cooperation among Western democracies. Today – with the rise of powers such as China, the resurgence of Russia and neo-authoritarian rule in Turkey – cooperation among like-minded, liberal-democratic countries is no longer sufficient on its own, but it is more necessary than ever. The EU’s collapse would gravely damage our ties with the United States, leaving Europe overexposed to the forces of instability and illiberal democracies and encouraging US retrenchment.

To counter this worst case scenario, three decisive steps should be taken.

First, it is crucial to adopt economic policies that foster growth and offer more concerted action to create jobs, with a combination of national efforts and EU-level measures.

Second, just as important and urgent, we need to redefine the security rationale underpinning the EU. Security must no longer be interpreted as the prevention of a conflict between the larger states on the continent – in that crucial respect Europe has done a good job. Rather, we need to interpret

security as protection for ordinary people from today’s risks, as well as managing the continent’s eastern and southern fronts. We must create a strong new link between what we might term “democratic security” (accountable, responsive institutions), security from transnational risks and threats (rapid and often preventive responses to crime, terrorism, hybrid warfare), and international security (the pursuit of the EU’s broad interests regionally and globally). Common defense in a more traditional sense is clearly a key ingredient of this mix, and one that needs to be pursued consistently with the commitments made in the context of NATO (to nurture the Euro-Atlantic community of values in changing circumstances).

Third, we must manage the huge migration phenomenon that will confront us for decades to come, both with foreign policy action in the Mediterranean and in Africa and, on the internal front, with asylum policies and integration. Both these spheres external and internal security – are also going to carry equal importance in the struggle against Islamist terrorism, as rightly indicated in the “global strategy” presented by Federica Mogherini last June, the very day after the Brexit referendum. The combination of centrifugal forces (which certainly are not confined to the UK) and a growing awareness of the need for joint action characterize the EU today.

In this context, true to our values of an inclusive, multi-partisan approach and aware of the EU’s current fractured economic and social geography, the Aspen Institute has decided to establish an Aspen Initiative for Europe, pooling the efforts of its seven institutes in Europe, all with national roots but each independent of their respective government.

Rescuing the European Union is a precondition to tackling the challenge shared by Europe and the US – defending the international liberal order from the numerous threats that it faces today and, at the same time, improving it.

by **Marta Dassù, Mircea Geoana, Rüdiger Lentz**

## 1. Overall mission and goals

“A disunited Europe would make the West much weaker: avoiding this scenario is a common interest – for Europe and the US.”

The Aspen European Institutes are focused on the development of leadership networks and informed dialogue about the values and principles of democracy, the rule of law, and a wide array of economic, financial, social, and political topics.

The central mission of the **Aspen Initiative for Europe (AlfE)** is to pool the national resources and strengths of each individual Aspen Institute in Europe around common values and shared ideas about the future of the European Union.

The underlying assumption is that saving Europe is an essential precondition to preserving and renewing the transatlantic relationship.

**AlfE** also aims to gather “emerging leaders” in various fields that are urgent and policy-relevant. A new generation of leaders may be more willing to engage with relatively new challenges in creative ways, while remaining true to the original Aspen values of liberal democracy and open dialogue.

### ⇒ Goals

- ✓ Encourage **close cooperation and joint projects** among the 7 European partners in the Aspen family on the basis of the following criteria: synergy; areas of specialization and comparative advantage; consensus building when possible but also respect for diversity.
- ✓ Contribute to ongoing debates on the **future of Europe** (the EU as well as the wider European space in various configurations).
- ✓ Contribute to the emergence of a **new generation of Europeans** sharing a commitment to a better functioning EU and to a peaceful wider European space where the principles of liberal democracy and open dialogue can flourish.
- ✓ Contribute to the follow ups of the 2016 **European Global Strategy**.
- ✓ Create a **European counterpart to the Stevens Initiative**, a multilateral public-private partnership designed to increase people-to-people exchanges among youth in Europe and the Middle East and North Africa.

## 2. AIfE Structure

Adopting a pragmatic approach, the **Aspen Initiative for Europe** starts from what the Aspen partners are already doing, to “Europeanize” some of their programs and pool resources to tackle the most pressing common issues of the day. Each partner is encouraged to propose one event per year that might become part of the Initiative, with some financial support from the Coordination mechanism.

The **AIfE** consists of four lines of action, each characterized by specific goals and an operational strategy:



### **AESG » Aspen European Strategy Group**

The **AESG** is a nonpartisan forum for discussion made up of representatives from each of the Aspen European Institutes plus external experts, opinion leaders and policy-makers. The Aspen European Strategy Group will organize at least one major yearly meeting in a European capital. It will deal with strategic issues for Europe's cohesion and the future of the transatlantic relationship. Background papers, reports and short articles for wider circulation will be produced. A central feature of the AESG is to build consensus around practical policy options (see annex “B”). The AESG aims to become the natural counterpart to the original Aspen Strategy Group in the US, exchanging ideas and sharing experiences.

### **NE » National events**

Conferences, seminars and public events organized in the context of the **AIfE Pillars** by individual Aspen Institutes in Europe, open to the entire Aspen family and in the spirit of a more cohesive Europe. A central feature of the National events is to create direct links between each Institute and the entire family.

### **WE » Woman and Global governance**

Activities focused on the gender dimension in international relations and in global challenges. The issue has important implications in foreign policy, particularly from a Euro-Mediterranean perspective, given how it conditions any possibility of integration for immigrant communities in Europe.

The main goal is to give women the tools needed for them to reach their full economic potential, inspiring men and women to promote change in this direction and to facilitate networking, learning, and the sharing of experiences, to inspire a new generation that is more aware of its rights and responsibilities. The membership of the **WE international board** is open to the participation of selected **AIfE** members (see annex “C”).

### **YEL » Young European Leaders**

Meetings on a wide range of issues devoted specifically to emerging leaders (below 35 years of age) in various sectors. The basic assumption will be that younger generations are more likely to have “multiple identities” as individuals view themselves simultaneously as Europeans and citizens of member states. By discussing common values and challenges and opportunities, our selected Young European leaders can contribute to a fruitful conversation on what it means to be a European today. A central feature of the Young European Leaders activities is to tackle the generational challenge, offering new generations a platform to become protagonists of a new Europe.

## **3. Thematic areas**

The **AIfE** line of action will unfold through three main thematic areas, the **AIfE Pillars**: individual activities may tackle one or more thematic Pillar.



### ⇒ **MIGRATION & IDENTITY » Migration, identity and integration**

The European refugee and migration crisis, in parallel with a worsening of the humanitarian and socioeconomic conditions in several countries that have been hit by conflicts or that have declined even further economically (Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, a few countries in the Sahel and others), may not be unique in terms of size and intensity of the migration flows globally, but it is unique for Europe.

We are dealing with several interconnected issues, traditionally belonging to distinct policy areas (which poses an additional challenge for governments and even experts precisely because we need comprehensive approaches):

- » Border management (common rules for asylum/refugees and “economic migrants”, “hotspots” for processing requests, border guards and security issues, etc....);
- » Relations with key neighbors;



- » Domestic concerns (costs of assistance and processing, “welfare shopping”, labor markets, crime, terrorism);
- » Longer-term integration processes, challenges of multicultural societies, role of religion;
- » Link to ongoing debates on conflict resolution and development aid as a global issue.

## ⇒ **SECURITY & DEFENSE** » European security and defense: the internal-external link

Europe needs a new concept of security, addressing more directly the daily concerns of its citizens and factoring in the changing nature of the risks and threats within the EU borders and beyond them. A key requirement is to devise security policies that better link internal and external tools – from police and intelligence in counterterrorism to cybersecurity instruments and the whole spectrum of military force.

It is essential that European resources be spent more effectively, through pooling and economies of scale, but it is also necessary for policy-makers to make the case for increased investments in defense – also in light of the commitments made in the NATO context by most European governments. The European “Global Strategy” presented in June 2016 provides a useful framework for forward thinking in this complex policy area.

The Brexit process is providing an additional impetus to a rethinking of common priorities and necessary capabilities in the field of foreign, security and defense policies.

## ⇒ **JOBS & INNOVATION** » Technologies and job creation to shape positive change

The economic crisis has affected European countries, sectors and socioeconomic groups in different ways, but a widespread concern is certainly the high level of unemployment and the slow pace of job creation across the continent. There has been a sharp rise in social discontent, a climate of recriminations and divisions, and ultimately political instability – which in turn pushes governments themselves to pursue short-term policy goals at the national level to the detriment of longer-term and cooperative efforts. In the meantime, welfare systems are becoming unsustainable. What is needed is a vision of the future that pursues growth (especially in the sectors with a multiplier potential) and addresses rising inequalities.

Against this background, the future of Transatlantic trade is a major concern, even more so in light of the hurdles along the road of TTIP negotiations.

A specific type of inequality is that between genders: progress in surmounting these obstacles has been slow and is limited to a few regions across the world. The unequal distribution of unpaid care and household work between women and men and between families and the society is an important determinant of gender inequalities at work.

Technological change is a major economic force that can be harnessed to pursue valuable social goals and serve as a growth multiplier. This requires policy choices (including public investments and regulatory frameworks) designed to exploit the technological potential and to channel change in positive directions for the entire population. A case in point is the emergence of “smart cities” and “smart grids”, which holds great promise for a better quality of life across Europe. An underlying goal for European businesses is to improve their performance in key innovative sectors, raising their profile in cutting edge technologies and new market niches.



## 4. Activities – Accomplishments and Future Plans

### ⇒ Activities 2015 » Launching Phase



AESG » Aspen European Strategy Group

#### » International Seminar – Brussels, November/December 2015

The International Seminar “**Energy Security as a Priority for Europe’s Foreign Policy**” was held in Brussels on November 30 and December 1, 2015. It was organized in cooperation with **EUISS** (European Union Institute for Security Studies) and **CEPS** (Centre for European Policy Studies) with the support of **EEAS** (European External Action Service) and with a contribution by **Eni**.

As the first operational stage of the **Aspen Initiative for Europe**, this AESG seminar was focused on three components of energy policy: the regional external dimension and the imperative of diversification; the internal and trans-border dimension and the efforts to avoid fragmentation and increase coordination; the global dimension and the strategies to include energy in trade negotiations and climate change in wider partnerships.

The Aspen event was opened by **High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy and Commission Vice President, Federica Mogherini**, who highlighted the need to review, update and improve the European foreign and neighborhood policies through a strategic rethinking process. The new EU strategic approach has to be global both in scope and in geographical terms, and has to promote EU interests while taking into account its fundamental values.

### ⇒ Activities 2016 » Inception phase

In the course of 2016, four events have been scheduled in the three thematic areas:



AESG » Aspen European Strategy Group

#### » International meeting - Berlin, April 2016

**Aspen Institute Germany**, in cooperation with **AlfE**, organized the first 2016 preparatory meeting of the Aspen European Strategy Group. The central topic was the vast array of domestic and external security threats – the worst since the end of the Cold War – which is severely challenging the foundation of European integration and the entire European project. Nationalist-leaning governments are challenging European unity; rightwing populist movements are on the rise in various member countries; Brexit, and the possibility that Greece might leave the EU in the near future are very worrisome scenarios. The migrant flow is undermining the Schengen Agreement and testing European solidarity to its limits. In its response to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, the EU was remarkably successful when all 28 member states agreed to sanctions, but it remains to be seen whether cohesion can become the norm rather than the exception.



#### NE » National events

##### » **AlfE Meeting and Bucharest Forum – Bucharest, October 2016**

**Aspen Institute Romania** organized an **AlfE** meeting in **Bucharest** on October 5, 2016. The Bucharest meeting offered the chance to shape a joint contribution to European strategic options in particular when it comes to a shared perspective in critical societal areas. These include immigration, identity, borders and a shared sense of Europe's future setup. The discussion tackled controversial concepts such as nationalism, populism and economic sovereignty, the search for a new and sustainable economic model, Europe's specific contribution to the Western liberal order, and the risk of a deep divide between the Western and the Eastern parts of the continent.



#### WE » Woman and Global Governance

##### » **International Conference – Rome, October 2016**

The first international meeting of the WE leg was held in Rome on October 21, 2016, also in cooperation with the **Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation** and **OECD**. The agenda centered on promoting gender balance in public life and economic strategies.



#### AESG » Aspen European Strategy Group

##### » **International meeting - Rome, December 2016**

The **AESG** full meeting, entitled “**In search of security for European citizens: the rationale for a redesigned EU**”, is being organized by **Aspen Institute Italia**, in cooperation with **AlfE**. .

The main topics are the search for an economic way forward for Europe's recovery, policy measures in the fields of internal security and external defense, and options for a more effective strategy on migration and refugees, including a renewed Mediterranean policy. The common thread connecting these policy areas is the need for a new concept of “citizens' security”.

## ⇒ Activities 2017 » Consolidation phase

As of today, the **2017 AlfE calendar** includes five planned meetings to be held in Washington DC, Prague, Paris, Rome and Spoleto. These activities will match thematic areas and **AlfE** pillars:



AESG

### ASPEN EUROPEAN STRATEGY GROUP

#### » International meeting - Washington, DC, May 2017

A joint Aspen European Institutes mission to Washington for a wide-ranging conversation on the priorities of the next US administration and Europe's perspectives and contribution to shared objectives.

#### » International meeting - Prague, Fall 2017

Led by Aspen Institute Prague, with a special focus on the goal of rebuilding trust in Western democracies.



NE

### NATIONAL EVENTS

#### » International conference – Paris, October 2017

Led by Aspen Institute France.



WE

### WOMAN AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

#### » International Conference – Rome, April 2017

This conference, organized by the WE leg of AlfE, is intended as a contribution to the G7 agenda on gender issues.



YEL

### YOUNG EUROPEAN LEADERS

#### » The Aspen Initiative for Europe Seminar– Spoleto, September 2017

The inaugural event of the YEL series will be led jointly by Aspen Institute España and Aspen Institute Italia. The discussion will deal with common European values for younger generations.

**Activities on other topics may be organized by individual Aspen Institutes in Europe**, open to the entire Aspen family and in the AlfE spirit.

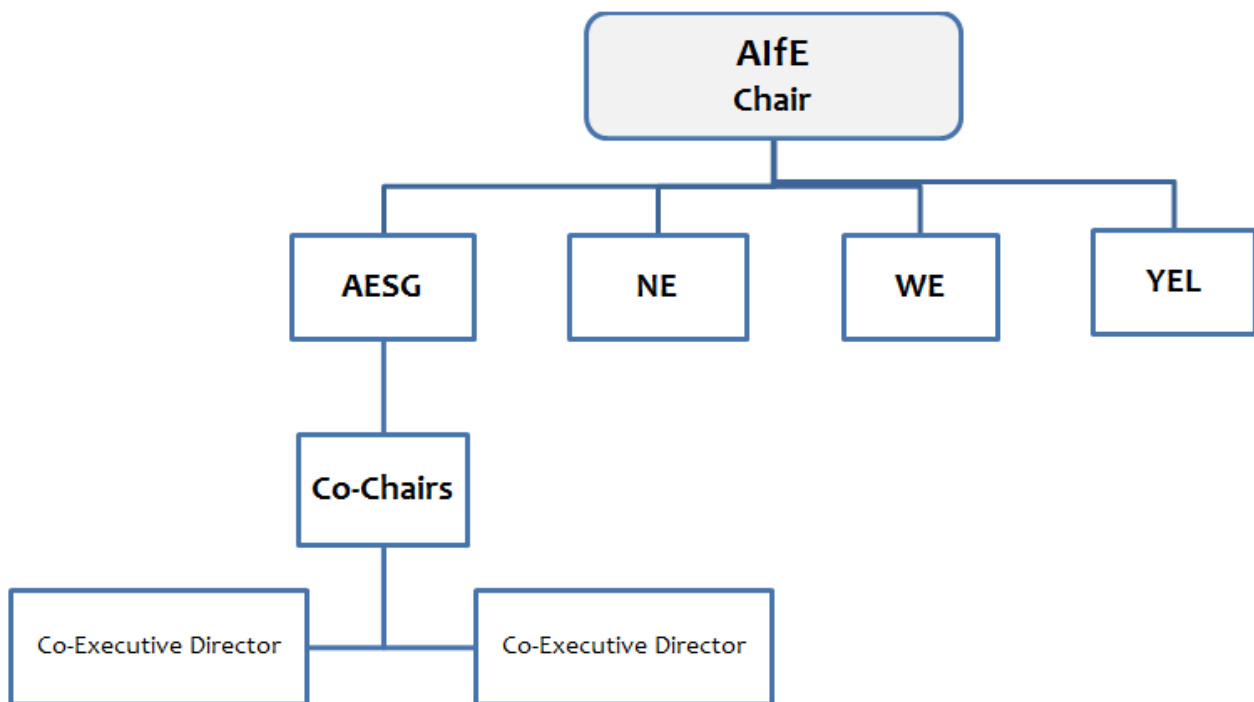
## 5. Organizational Structure

Marta Dassù chairs the overall Initiative, as agreed with the other Partners, ensuring the coherence of each topic and organizational step. The **AlfE** coordination staff is based at Aspen Italia headquarters in Rome.

Mircea Dan Geoana and Rüdiger Lentz serve as **Co-Chairmen** of the AESG for the 2016-2017 period. Rotational criteria will be applied.

Roberto Menotti and Andrei Tarnea serve as AESG **Co-Executive Directors**.

Each Institute is represented by its Chair/President or Secretary General/Director and may indicate an operational contact person.



## 6. Stakeholders

During the first two-year period there were several collaborations and synergies with public and private organizations, institutions and associations including the **EEAS** (European External Action Service); **OECD** (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development); **EUISS** (European Union Institute for Security Studies); **CEPS** (Centre for European Policy Studies) and **Lotto Stiftung** Berlin.

The Initiative will continue to engage the institutional and business community, also through the contribution of top political and business leaders to be actively involved in upcoming events and projects.

## 7. Financial model

**Leonard Lauder** generously provided funds to launch and sustain the first phases of the Initiative - 2016-2018. The seed fund – allotted to each event separately – covers part of the costs of planned activities.

The seven Institutes are committed to actively seeking additional funding, from a variety of sources, in order to make the Initiative sustainable over the longer term.

To this end, we call on the international business community to team up with **AIfE** and support our efforts, by contributing financially and by sharing ideas and a wealth of experience.

## 8. Branding and Public relations

The **media campaign's goal** will be to strengthen and disseminate the Aspen brand across Europe on the basis of the mission and the agreed program.

In the inception phase we have developed a **common logo** and channels for regular exchange of information among the partners, with a view to set up a dedicated website by January 2017 to make the joint activities more visible and recognizable.

Steps of the communications plan:

- ✓ Identify the key audience and build up a key message;
- ✓ Establish a common website for all the **AlfE** to advertise events across the Aspen partners;
- ✓ Contact media representatives from newspapers, magazines and international broadcasters;
- ✓ Develop materials (press kits, press releases, op-ed articles, byline articles).

## 9. Conclusion

In the first year of activities, we have laid the foundations for a European Aspen network designed to exchange critical information, share intellectual resources and fully exploit the potential of the seven European Institutes.

In 2017 and beyond, all participants are committed to improving the existing model, particularly with respect to:

- » raising the **public profile** of **AlfE** in the media and among the expert community;
- » having a **tangible impact** on intra-European and Transatlantic policy discussions;
- » engaging the **new European generation** of potential leaders;
- » transforming early successful steps into the ability to raise **additional funding**.



# The Aspen Institutes in Europe



**Aspen Institute  
Germany**

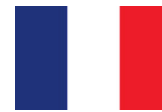


**1974**

**Berlin**

[www.aspeninstitute.de](http://www.aspeninstitute.de)

**1983**



**Institut Aspen  
France**

**Paris**

[www.aspenfrance.org](http://www.aspenfrance.org)

**Aspen Institute  
Italia**



**1984**

**Rome, Milan and Venice**

[www.aspeninstitute.it](http://www.aspeninstitute.it)

**2006**



**Aspen Institut  
Romania**

**Bucharest**

[www.aspeninstitute.ro](http://www.aspeninstitute.ro)

**Aspen Institute  
España**



**2010**

**Madrid**

[www.aspeninstitute.es](http://www.aspeninstitute.es)

**2012**



**Aspen Institute  
Prague**

**Prague**

[www.aspeninstitute.cz](http://www.aspeninstitute.cz)

**Aspen Institute  
Kyiv**



**2015**

**Kyiv**

[www.aspeninstitute.kiev.ua](http://www.aspeninstitute.kiev.ua)



## Contacts

### **Aspen Initiative for Europe**

#### **Coordination Staff**

Aspen Institute Italia Headquarters

Piazza Navona, 114

00186 Rome

**Novella Cavallari**, Assistant to the Chair

ph. 039 06 45 46 891; [novella.cavallari@aspeninstitute.it](mailto:novella.cavallari@aspeninstitute.it)

**Paola Fienga**, Head of Communications

ph. 039 06 45 46 891; [paola.fienga@aspeninstitute.it](mailto:paola.fienga@aspeninstitute.it)