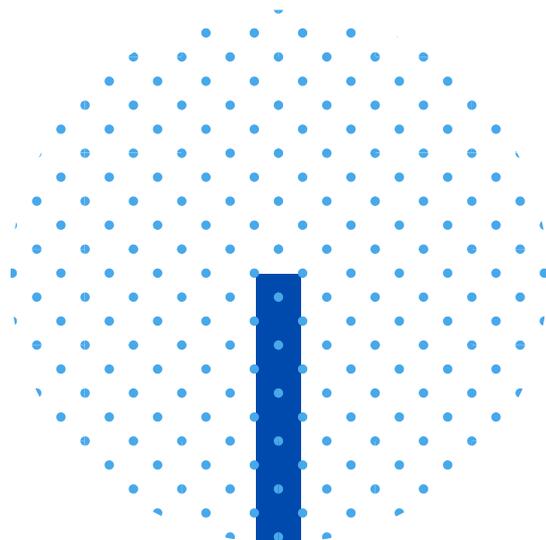


EVENT REPORT

ASPEN DIALOGUE ON RESILIENCE AND FORESIGHT
– THE WORLD AFTER THE PANDEMIC –
29 MAY 2020



Event Report: Aspen Dialogue on Resilience and Foresight – The World after the Pandemic – 29 May 2020

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About the Webinar

Organized under the aegis of the **Aspen Dialogues Series**, the **Aspen Governance and Society Program** and the **Aspen Economic and Strategy Group**, in partnership with the **Bucharest Office of the German Marshall Fund of the United States**, **Aspen Institute Germany**, and **Aspen Institute Italy**, the **webinar addressed the issues of resilience and foresight in a post – pandemic world**, in the context of the necessary global recovery after the crisis created by the Covid-19 outbreak. Now more than ever, it has become clear that the concept of resilience has evolved from a narrow understanding, to a global concern. The debates covered **strategic dimensions** related to **resilience-building in the face of global threats** such as pandemics.

The webinar also addressed **resilience in the face of fake news**, a tactic which has recently become a key pillar of a wider hybrid warfare campaign waged by state and non-state actors against institutions such as NATO, the EU, and their member states. As the intensity and potential for harm of the fake news campaign have increased since the pandemic, the webinar discussed **strategies to identify and counteract fake news**, looking at best practices and potential lessons learned.

During the webinar, **Amb. Maroš Šefčovič**, European Commission Vice-President for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight, engaged in a **discussion** with **Amb. Baiba Braže**, Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy, NATO. They approached resilience and foresight from the perspective of two of the most important multilateral organizations. The discussion was followed by a **Q&A session**, based on questions from webinar participants and moderated by **Andrew Wrobel**, Founding Partner, Strategy & Content, Emerging Europe followed.

About the Aspen Dialogues Series

Values-based leadership is now more than ever needed at a global, European, regional and national level in order to overcome the global health crisis caused by COVID-19 and mitigate the pandemic's negative economic and social effects.

In this context, **Aspen Institute Romania**, as a neutral, balanced, multi-stakeholder convener, seeks to engage its network of members, fellows and alumni and its wider community in a reflection process on the current critical topics confronting our society and on how to ensure that the post-pandemic world continues to reflect the ideals and ideas defining a good society. Under the **Aspen Dialogues** series of webinars, we invite public decision-makers, representatives of political parties, private sector stakeholders, Ambassadors of key partners of Romania and representatives of the non-governmental and academic sectors to discuss these current challenges and debate with the Aspen community on possible ways forward.

The goals of the Aspen Dialogues series are both to **foster resilience** in the face of challenges posed by the pandemic and to discuss lessons learned and possible solutions, providing concrete **policy recommendations** for recovery.

Key Take-aways, Lessons Learned and Best Practices

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested the **resilience** of our societies as never before since World War 2 and has taught countries and multilateral institutions that they must become more resistant to threats and attacks. NATO and the EU agree on the need to ensure that their member states can bounce back from such crises and emerge stronger. The resilience of societies must be constantly trained. One way of doing so is **working together** as countries, institutions and people, as public and private sector, as civilian and military personnel.

The NATO Perspective and Recent Developments

At the NATO level, the essence of resilience is enshrined in Article 3 of the Alliance's founding treaty in 1949. Resilience at NATO has since evolved from mere readiness and preparedness to fight back armed attacks. Currently, the organization is adapting to make sure its **member states and their populations are able to resist and recover from a wide range of shocks**, including hybrid threats and attacks, failure of critical infrastructure, natural disasters and health crises, including pandemics. Thus, resilience refers to society's ability to resist and recover easily and quickly from such shocks and combines both civil preparedness and military capacity to adapt and transform. Already in 2016, NATO leaders agreed at the Warsaw Summit on a set of **baseline requirements for national resilience**, helping Allies ensure preparedness in a wide range of government activities, including in the health sector. These requirements focus on assuring continuity of decision-making processes and critical government services, as well as resilient energy supplies, civil communications systems, and civil transportation systems.

On the one hand, NATO Allies proved their unity against the global challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. **Allies cooperated in providing critical supplies** to those most in need, sharing hundreds of tons of medical supplies via military flights, pooling medical expertise and spare military hospital capacity, as well as deploying thousands of military personnel against the pandemic. **NATO forces helped build civilian capabilities** against the pandemic through a synergic engagement between civilian authorities and military forces.

On the other hand, it became clear that more work needs to be done to further strengthen the resilience of our societies. NATO Allies need to **better plan for pandemics in the future**, to protect critical infrastructure and to improve business continuity planning, both in the public and private sector. Furthermore, to improve resilience, Allies need increased **situational awareness** in order to foresee future crises and, when this is impossible, they require **agility and flexibility** to prepare for the unexpected. NATO defense ministers agreed in April 2020 on a set of recommendations to strengthen Allies' resilience, focusing on **bolstering civil preparedness** based on a comprehensive lessons-learned process triggered by the crisis. As resilience is a collective effort, this implies **improving cooperation with international partners**, states and international organizations alike - mainly the EU and UN.

The EU Perspective and Recent Developments

The pandemic will undoubtedly continue to have an impact on the EU's societies, economy and citizens in the long run. It will **magnify the challenges and trends already facing us today**, both positive and negative. On the one hand, the **twin digital and green transitions are being accelerated**. Trust in public institutions is being reinvigorated, and there is a renewed sense of collective responsibility and solidarity. On the other hand, against the backdrop of rising geopolitical and trade tensions, strenuous questions pertaining to the efficiency and viability of multilateralism and relevance of international institutions, **there is a clear need to learn and integrate lessons learned from this crisis**, including by **strengthening Europe's strategic autonomy** in key areas.

To respond effectively to a changing world, the **EU is carrying out an assessment of its shortcomings**. Its scope is to transform vulnerabilities into opportunities and ensure a steady emergence from the recovery period of an ever more resilient Union. Later in 2020, the European Commission will adopt a **strategic foresight report** that will introduce a number of resilience indicators to monitor the continually evolving state of vulnerability and resilience in the EU's societies. This is because the EU's democracies, societies and economy must be properly prepared for, and able to withstand, future shocks on the same scale as the coronavirus. The concept of resilience will encompass numerous dimensions: democratic, political, economic, industrial, digital, security-related, social and individual.

The **EU's main tool to drive the economic recovery is its far-reaching EU Recovery Package**. The package, which lays out the 2021 – 2027 financial framework and introduces the Next Generation EU instrument, will bring the total EU budget to €1.85 trillion. Together with €540 billion in loans, it will bring the EU's recovery effort to a total of €2.4 trillion. The Package will help accelerate the green and digital transition and ensure greater resilience.

Resilience is becoming a strategic compass for EU policymaking, with the goal of achieving **technological sovereignty and strategic autonomy**. The crisis has further highlighted the EU's shortcomings, such as an overdependence on extended global value chains in areas such as medicines or overreliance on raw materials from Asia or Africa. Thus, there is a pressing need for the EU to build **strategic, sustainable and resilient industrial value chains in key sectors**, including critical raw materials, clean game-changing technologies (5G, AI), pharmaceuticals and medical equipment, and defense and space industry. The EU should **build a global alliance for multilateralism**, working with key partners to bring back trust between major economies and extend fair and open trade.

The Common Challenges of Disinformation and Fake News and Enhanced NATO – EU Cooperation

NATO and the EU acknowledge that **disinformation, propaganda, and fake news are challenges that put increasing pressure on the resilience of democratic systems**. This trend has increased during the pandemic, as state and non-state actors have exploited the current situation to further their own interests by trying to sow divisions and undermine liberal societies and democracies. The fight against disinformation is more important than ever as **the pandemic intensifies competition between different political models**, testing the strength of democratic systems and human rights values across the world. If left unchecked, **these trends risk undermining the foundations and legitimacy of the rules-based international order**. For example, in several instances disinformation was aimed at

eroding trust in the readiness of NATO troops in Central and Eastern Europe in the context of the pandemic. Thus, raising awareness and strengthening collective defenses against disinformation and the hostile actors behind it has become critical. In this context, **the importance of enhanced NATO – EU cooperation on countering disinformation and propaganda has been highlighted by both institutions.** The following measures aimed at countering these trends have been identified:

- The EU has set up a **Rapid Alert System** among the EU institutions and Member States in order to spot and tackle coordinated disinformation campaigns.
- The EU has worked closely with big Internet platforms to sign up to a **Code of Practice on Disinformation**, asking them, among other things, to disrupt the advertising revenues of those behind disinformation, take greater action against bots, and make political advertising more transparent.
- NATO is also **closely monitoring disinformation** and countering it with democratic values and facts. NATO continues **to work with all Allies as well as Partners** to identify, expose and counter disinformation.
- Both institutions have stressed the **need to support free independent media**, a key building block of democratic systems. Other key pillars in the fight against disinformation are **governments and international organizations**, which must call out disinformation and counter it with facts, and **citizens**, who must learn to understand hostile information and to check the information with reliable sources.
- The role of **responsibility** was also emphasized. This applies both to the personal example of decision-makers, as well as the responsibility of social media platforms, which, in deciding what information they allow to be spread, must maintain freedom of speech while fighting disinformation.
- **NATO – EU cooperation and coordination has never been closer**, especially when it comes to countering hybrid threats, disinformation and cyber-attacks. **The current crisis has further reinforced the importance of cooperation and partnership**, and the necessity to access the idle potential of synergies.
- Further cooperation is possible. **Enhanced cooperation on resilience between the EU and NATO** could result in the short-term in a standardizing of procedures and methods, in the medium-term in a joint assessment and awareness of threats and trends emerging on the event horizon, and in the long-term, it might lead to a coordinated response within the relevant frameworks.

SPEAKERS' BIOGRAPHIES

Ambassador Baiba Braže was appointed Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy in May 2020. She advises the Secretary General on public diplomacy issues and directs the Public Diplomacy Division (PDD), which plays a key role in conveying the Alliance's strategic and political messages to opinion formers and to the public in general. PDD works to raise the Alliance's profile with audiences world-wide and to build support for Alliance operations and policies.

Baiba Braže was born in Riga, Latvia. She holds two Masters degrees from the University of Latvia: one in Law (1990) and another in Communication Science (2002). Ambassador Braže served most recently as Latvia's Ambassador to the United Kingdom (August 2016-early May 2020), prior to which she was Director General Security Policy and International Organizations (June 2011-January 2016) and Director General of the Communications Directorate (February 2016-July 2016) at the Latvian Foreign Ministry in Riga.

Ambassador Braže previously served as Latvia's Ambassador to the Netherlands and Permanent Representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (July 2003-August 2008), prior to which she was Director of the Europe Department, served as Foreign Policy and National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister in Riga. She has held numerous other posts since joining the Foreign Ministry in August 1993, both at home (Legal Department, International Organizations Department) and abroad (United Nations, New York). In addition to Latvian, Ambassador Braže is fluent in English and Russian, and speaks Dutch proficiently.

Ambassador Maroš Šefčovič (born in 1966) is a Slovak career diplomat, and since 1 December 2019 Vice President of the European Commission in charge of the Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight. In this capacity, he leads the Commission's work on interinstitutional relations, better policymaking, strategic foresight and European Battery Alliance.

In 2014 he was elected as the Member of the European Parliament. From 2010 – 2019 he was Vice President of the European Commission in charge of Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration, and then in charge of the Energy Union. In 2009-2010, he was European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth. From 2004 -2009, he was the Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the European Union. As diplomat by profession he served between 1992 and 2004 in Zimbabwe and Canada and as Ambassador to Israel.

He graduated from the University of Economy in Bratislava and the Moscow State Institute for Foreign Relations. He holds a degree as Doctor of Law and a PhD of European Law from the Comenius University, Faculty of Law, Bratislava. He also studied at Stanford University, USA.

Andrew Wrobel is the Founding Partner of Emerging Europe, a London-based intelligence, news and community platform, and the leader of the Tech Emerging Europe Advocates initiative, a member of the Global Tech Advocates network. Trained as a journalist, he specialises in technology and innovation, foreign direct investment, nation branding and soft power, and cross-cultural communications. Andrew regularly interviews political and business leaders and speaks at or moderates international political, economic and technology events, where he promotes discussion about emerging Europe. He is also a juror at various international business-related competitions, a media coach, a location promotion trainer and a media commentator. He has authored and contributed to a number of international business, investment and trade-related publications focused on the region.