

WHAT ROLE CAN EUROPEAN UNION VALUES PLAY IN PEACEBUILDING?

Thursday 26 september, 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m., Nacre room



Mikayil Tokdemir, Mélanie Lepoutier, Éric Pestel, Céleste Rouyer and Bénédicte Feuger

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In an increasingly divided world, with conflicts occurring on several regional fronts, there is a clear need to reaffirm the values of the European Union as a bulwark guaranteeing the peace of its Member States. But what are these values? In the room, some notions dear to the participants emerged: respect, sharing, listening, freedom, charity, mutual aid, excellence, success and solidarity. ‘Values in which we can fully

MODERATION

Mikayil Tokdemir, Director of the Maison de l’Europe de l’Eure

SPEAKERS

Éric Pestel, European issues analyst, Europe Direct team expert, administrator of the Jean Monnet Association and President of the European Cultural Hub

Céleste Rouyer, Europe Mission Manager at Info Jeunes Normandie

Mélanie Lepoutier, President of the French delegation to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Departmental Councilor of Calvados

Bénédicte Feuger, Head of the EUROPE DIRECT Normandie Vire Center (CREAN)

identify with the action of the European Union’ said Bénédicte Feuger, head of the EUROPE DIRECT Normandie Vire Centre (CREAN).

But two values were not mentioned: democracy and the rule of law. ‘They are fundamental, because the European Union, which is uncompromising on these issues, is based on treaties which must be respected by the Member States. In the event of a dispute, the Court of Justice of the European Union can rule,’ she added. But other values are just as crucial, noted Céleste Rouyer, Europe project manager at Info Jeunes Normandie. These include ‘freedom of expression or the principles of equality and dignity. The European Union strives to respect these principles on the basis of fundamental rights.’ Mikayil Tokdemir, Director of the Maison de l’Europe de l’Eure, mentioned an additional value dear to the European Union: Human Rights.

But all these European values are not always visible to the public, who may feel that their voice is drowned out by the mass. However, noted Eric Pestel, analyst of European issues, expert team Europe Direct, administrator of the Jean Monnet Association and President of the European Cultural Hub, democracy and the rule of law are really the fundamental points of the creation of the European idea, born after the Second World War. Jean Monnet, a French politician and considered one of the fathers of Europe, said that 'for there to be no more war, we must ensure countries cooperate with each other', in the



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interest of equality between all countries. This is why the voice of the Member States, of Malta or Luxembourg, for example, is worth as much as Germany and France. 'This is what is very important to understand', added Éric Pestel 'because in this notion of democracy, there is also the notion of compromise. Sometimes we have the impression that because France's ideas are not 100% adopted, we are being wronged. But France expresses itself and participates both in Parliament and in the European Council or the Council of Ministers, and when everyone is not in total agreement, we must move forward. For a common general interest, common positions are needed.'



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In addition, in 1993 the European Union defined the Copenhagen crite-

ria, i.e. the set of essential conditions for its integration as a member country. Recently, Ukraine was accepted as a candidate, and must therefore commit to reforming its legal, judicial and other systems, if necessary, to meet these rule of law criteria. Otherwise, sanctions may be taken. The EU Court of Justice has already intervened to stop laws in Poland that did not respect this rule of law. 'These values are the cement of the house in which we live together, Europe. We must embody them and carry them,' said Mélanie Lepoutier, president of the French delegation to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and departmental councillor of Calvados.

Eric Pestel talked about this unique experience in the world of the Conference for the Future of Europe, which was held from 2021 to 2022, and where European citizens were called to meet via a digital platform to issue legislative proposals to be included in the European Commission's programme. 'No fewer than 700,000 people took part. Nowhere else in the world has there been a consultation like this. It is also one of the European Union's strengths that it is able to call on participatory democracy to define a set of values shared by the different peoples of Europe.'