

# 2021 ESPAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

## DAY ONE

Thursday, 18 November 2021

### BUILDING EU RESILIENCE AND AUTONOMY IN A FAST CHANGING WORLD

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#### **Resilience in practice: what does this mean for an open Europe?**

*Introduction and moderation*

**Pascale Ehrenfreund**, Research Professor of Space Policy and International Affairs,  
George Washington University

*Keynote address*

**Christa Schweng**, President of the European Economic and Social Committee

*Panel discussion*

**Kirsten Dunlop**, CEO Climate-KIC (a Knowledge and Innovation Community)

**Hans van der Loo**, Chair, Institute for Integrated Economic Research Advisory Board

**Stephan Lewandowsky**, Chair, Cognitive Psychology, School of Psychological  
Science, University of Bristol

**Harald U. Sverdrup**, Professor of System Dynamics, Game Development and  
Interactive Simulations, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences

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#### **Summary of the session**

Speakers in this session discussed the following topics: the lessons to draw from the Covid-19 pandemic; the necessary adaptations to address climate change and outcomes of the recent COP26 agreement in this sense ; the energy transition ; the stretch to democracy from misinformation and social media ; the resilience of jobs and international trade ; the involvement of civil society and all stakeholders in foresight activities.

The Covid-19 pandemic has put under the spotlight a number of challenges that the European Union is facing when addressing resilience. Ensuring the resilience and

recovery of the European Union from the pandemic entails systemic thinking and systemic change. The path towards the recovery and resilience also lays on civil society action and involvement of stakeholders in present and future decision-making.

The pandemic has highlighted the need to grasp the difference between capacity and redundancy, in particular with regards to climate change and energy supply management.

Addressing climate change requires necessary adaptations to restore the natural environment, and to regenerate the way of thinking about the relationship people have with resources. It will require a greater focus on design for adaptation and the EU will have to think in anticipatory terms and convince international partners.

As regards energy supply, the EU has been relying on energy surplus, currently on solar stocks. It has been moving to a thicker quality of energy in the sense of higher density. The next step should be to lower quality in the calorific point of view. Current solutions to energy management focus mainly on the supply side, but the demand side should be addressed as well (e.g. ecosystem services and ecobased solutions).

Risks to democratic principles have deepened during the crisis, which have highlighted the need to tackle the entire online information architecture. Misinformation and infodemic have accompanied the pandemic, in a way similar to the organised denial of the evidence and scientific findings of climate change. However, behaviour breaking down and democracy might not be able to respond fast enough to address systemic change. It is thus necessary to restore space to the democratic discourse to help manage democratic challenges. One solution is the use of human cognition to increase attention. Another solution is to reinforce smart regulation, auditing of social media algorithms, and changing these into favouring information that is more likely to be conducive to democratic discourses.

Regarding the labour market, the pandemic has shown the need for coordinated short and medium-term action to safeguard employment, and to ensure a sustainable relaunch of economic activities and competitiveness. Skills mismatches remain a big challenge. In order to meet the current skills needed on the labour market, it is time to modernize education and integrate foresight skills in curricula. Moreover, harnessing innovation, creativity and skills are necessary to create the mind-set for the social and economic transformations.

In order to address these many challenges, it is necessary to create links and to proceed with an overall analysis of the whole system, which is sometimes lacking in policy-making. Interactions between different realms (social processes, economic processes, energy systems and physical systems) should be studied in order to understand how each of them causes effects to the whole system.