

An EU “fit for purpose” in the global age: defining Europe’s value in the next decade

*A high-level debate organised by
Policy Network and Friends of Europe*

**Bibliothèque Solvay, Brussels
17.00 – 19.00 November 4, 2009**

Context and objectives

The global economic crisis marks the end of an era in economic, political and ideological terms. The globalisation model that has held sway for some three decades, relying on financial markets as the spearhead of global economic integration, is in deep crisis; and so is the real economy in Europe and worldwide despite a few dispersed signs of economic recovery. But can the EU deliver in these times of crisis? And can Europeans define and collectively defend common interests and values in a multi-polar world where increasingly size matters?

Inevitably, there are policy choices at the national, regional and global levels; trade-offs that will be differently perceived through national and ideological lenses. The EU’s key challenge will be to redefine its role in providing the framework for the more effective management of close European interdependencies while exerting a stronger influence on shaping the “new global order”. In short, the challenge will be to make the EU “fit for purpose” in the coming era.

Needless to say, this is where controversy begins: what *exactly* is the EU’s “purpose” in the 21st century and what kind of *internal* reforms are required to render it “fit”? Answers vary from policy area to policy area, but at the current political juncture greater clarity about the direction of EU integration and about the EU’s aspirations seems indispensable to preparing for the challenges ahead.

Hence, are we capable of defining and implementing a new, common EU mission or does the crisis and current state of the EU rather demand a renewed focus on the preservation of the *acquis*? Is the EU still a project with political will and a distinctive *communautaire* vision with the European Commission exercising its powers as an institution that is independent of national governments, or has it turned into a process defined and constrained by domestic political realities and largely directed by inter-governmental deals made inside the Council and away from the public gaze? And what is actually desirable and achievable in an EU27?

The event will mark the launch of Policy Network's substantial 'EU fit for Purpose' report as well as three volumes containing over thirty original policy papers on the full range of EU challenges written by leading experts in the field. In addition the debate will be underpinned by a report of Friends of Europe's Trustees.

Agenda and timings

17.00 -17.15	Welcome refreshments
17.15 - 17.45	Introduction by Giles Merritt , Friends of Europe Presentation by Professor Loukas Tsoukalis
17.45 - 18.15	Keynote speech Jose Manuel Barroso , President of the European Commission
18.15 – 19.00	Panel discussion: Defining Europe's value in the next decade Discussants: Corien Wortmann-Kool , MEP for the Christian Democrats Andrew Duff , MEP for the Liberal Democrats Hannes Swoboda , MEP for the Social Democratic party
19.00	Reception