



THE 28 PEOPLE FROM 28 COUNTRIES  
WHO ARE SHAPING, SHAKING AND STIRRING EUROPE

# Years in Brussels

1965 - 2015

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## POLITICO 28

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AN INTRODUCTION

You have in your hands a new publication. POLITICO 28 will be an annual affair — our version of the “chapeau” or “hats-off” magazine in which we acknowledge women and men of consequence, those who caught our attention this year and bear watching closely into the next.

In the United States, we put together an annual POLITICO 50, recognizing 50 ideas and the people behind them that are changing American politics. Here we’ve gone for a more local number: 28.

On a continent so large and varied, it takes a bit of chutzpah to distinguish — much less put an order to — a small set of people who are stirring and shaping European public life. And to draw them not only from among practitioners of the political craft but from the worlds of business, media, arts and beyond.

We started off by asking: Who are the most eye-catching people in each of the 28 states of the European Union, from Austria to the United Kingdom? Our aim — our conceit, if you like — was to identify persons who don’t command attention merely by virtue of the office they hold. So there’s no Angela Merkel for Germany, for example, and no Alexis Tsipras for Greece.

Senior editors solicited nominations widely and winnowed them down this autumn. The result comprises people who aren’t in obviously powerful positions or those with overwhelming popular appeal, but who are, nonetheless, on the cusp of power, where the greatest influence is so often exerted. Those on our list all have the ability to shape their sphere of impact, whether it be a country, a transnational activity, a legal system, a referendum, a religion, a crisis or even the very notion of European identity.



That last idea would explain, in part, why we have chosen Viktor Orbán from Hungary, and why we placed him as the person most worth watching in the months ahead. Though he comes from a relatively small state, the prime minister of Hungary has emerged in the migration crisis to challenge the Europe of open borders and its notions of representative democracy — in effect, the post-Cold War political order on the Continent — in ways that some find brave and others malign. The November 13 terrorist atrocities in Paris are sure to swing more people into line behind him, as European politics pulls in a rightward direction and attitudes harden toward migrants who want to come in and the “outsiders” who are already here.

In a haunting essay at the opening of this

magazine, Tim Parks, who wrote the 1998 novel “Europa,” dwells on the possibilities of just such a European unraveling, brought on by different expectations of the EU, clashing political cultures and an unrelenting avalanche of crises.

On this list, Orbán is joined by Denmark’s Margrethe Vestager, who is rewriting the rules of global business from her post as the EU’s competition commissioner. Britain’s Nicola Sturgeon and Spain’s Albert Rivera are both, in their own ways, reshaping their nations: One is fighting to leave hers, the other to keep his intact. And there are 24 others.

Ranking 28 European high-fliers is devilishly complicated. How to evaluate a Croatian entrepreneur alongside a Maltese humanitarian, an Italian constitutional lawyer alongside a Belgian musician, an Irish gay-rights activist alongside a Polish bishop? Our rankings are bound to please and displease readers in equal measure, but our aim has been to spark discussion and debate.

In confining ourselves to a selection of 28, we have had to exclude others; people of equally vigorous effect, beguiling people who make a difference.

We think you’ll find, in looking at POLITICO 28, that we’ve covered deserving candidates, and have also ventured, where necessary, into more contentious territory.

The beauty of the exercise is that it will never get easier. We anticipate a struggle next year — over names and placements — that matches the excitement and fierceness of this year’s selection.

— MATTHEW KAMINSKI  
AND TUNKU VARADARAJAN

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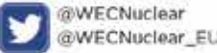
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# NOT EUROPA



**THE EUROPEAN UNION.  
HARDLY UNITED.  
EUROPEAN BY DEFAULT.**

**BY TIM PARKS  
ILLUSTRATION BY WAYNE BREZINKA**

**SO WHAT HOPE IS  
THERE FOR ITS FUTURE?**



N

**NOTHING STAYS STILL. LIFE IS CHANGE. ADAPT OR DIE IS AN imperative we all sooner or later have to deal with. And any adaptation puts identity under pressure. Forced to change, an individual might fall apart figuratively, a group literally. For a group to stay together through change, there has to be a powerful common identity.**

#### THE LARGEST GROUP MOST PEOPLE

can think of themselves as belonging to is the nation-state. Here, even in the midst of great diversity, a certain level of common interest and identity is given: the land we share, the laws that govern our lives, the police and armed forces that protect us, our history, our culture. When circumstances change drastically for the nation-state — a famine, a belligerent neighbor, a loss of empire, the discovery of huge natural resources — there is often an intensification of identity, albeit in a process of change.

Unless of course the state was largely an invented entity with no strong internal ties. Then change can bring break-up and a return to older, stronger identities. As it did in Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia. As it threatens to do in Great Britain or Spain.

What about international organizations? The USSR collapsed under the pressure of economic change and a loss of ideological purpose. It had been imposed from Moscow. The Warsaw Pact went with it. Since then NATO has looked like a military alliance dangerously in need of a cause. Everything knocks on. Even victory can be traumatic. Only organizations with a clear and necessary role in world affairs — the United Nations, the World Bank — seem guaranteed a long life, however badly they perform. Even if they were to fold, they would, arguably, soon reappear in some new manifestation. They oil the wheels of world governance. Somebody has to.



#### WHAT ABOUT THE EUROPEAN UNION?

Is it or is it not the most unwieldy, cumbersome, ill-defined and confused organization in the world? A monster so torn with internal contradiction it seems impossible it can survive; at the same time such a huge and determining presence in the lives of 500 million people that its demise would be dense with consequence for centuries. And likely bloody.

How was this improbable hybrid born? Neither state nor federation, yet sucking sovereignty from all its members, it defies definition. Those of us who live in it are utterly bemused; all we can say with certainty is that it is not a union in any meaningful sense of that word, and that it is European only in the sense that its 28 members are European, but not because it is coextensive with Europe, let

alone congruent with any myth of what Europe might mean or have meant. If the designation “Europa” conjures up antique intimations of beauty, purpose and cultural strength, then it has nothing to do with the European Union.

In the past, new sovereign entities have formed in response to the threat that gives them identity. Such, arguably, was the basis of Protestant Great Britain as it fought Catholic France and Europe time and again through the 17th and 18th centuries. Empires can form on the back of idealism, greed, missionary enthusiasms, ethnic confidence and technological advantage. Such was the colonial period; rapacious national groups that believed absolutely in their right to grab a slice of history. However despicable, they had energy and purpose. People knew what they were up to.

The European Union also formed in

response to a threat. But the enemy was within and the disaster had already happened. France and Germany must never again go to war. Dangerous instincts must be quelled forever. The European Coal and Steel Community, the Common Market, the European Community, were all formed to curb internal competition and internecine enmity, in an atmosphere of collective self-castigation. It was understandable. Millions had died. Rather than looking to seize “a place in the sun,” the organizations’ members were turned inward in anxious remorse; rather than seeking a commanding role on history’s stage, they sought to put an end to history. Europe would be sufficient to itself. Large enough to trade within itself, to feed itself; so extensive as to be beyond plausible military threat from without. So judicious and benign as never to become a threat itself. There



**FRANCE AND GERMANY  
BECAME THE BEST OF FRIENDS.  
NOT A SABER HAS RATTLED  
FOR 50 YEARS.**

would be no more war.

Amid the penitential determination to be good, the one crude positive energy was economic gain. We would have free trade within and fierce protectionism without. Greed is a quality you can rely on. Europe would be righteous, peaceful, and above all wealthy. Other European nations were invited to come inside the trade barriers and join the party, but to do so they had to lower their proud flags, fold away their bright military uniforms, put aside the delirium of national destiny that inflicted so much damage in the past. To join the EU was not a gain in identity, but a loss, a regrettable necessity, in order to seem virtuous, in order to join the cartel.

This is grossly simplified. Each nation had its history, for each nation the flag-lowering meant something different. The Italians,

whose constitution seems designed to prevent them ever agreeing on anything, signed up to the euro with a huge sigh of relief; hopefully they would never again have to decide monetary policy for themselves. How badly that fantasy has backfired. Poland and the Eastern nations were running for shelter from Russia, looking to grow rich fast, but had no serious intention of surrendering their newfound sovereignty. Hence the recent victory of the Euroskeptics in Poland.

But at first it did work wonderfully. France and Germany became the best of friends. Not a saber has rattled for 50 years. It’s true we all stood by while the Slavs slaughtered each other in their thousands, but we European Union members didn’t do anything wrong. We are good folks. We just find it difficult when anyone interrupts our moneymaking. We find it hard

to assume responsibility. Meantime citizens can move freely around the EU. Nineteen states use the same currency. These are huge achievements. We hold them dear.

Yet no collective identity has grown out of this. Not a shred. In this respect the Union has failed utterly. I know of no one for whom the idea of going to war for Europe, dying for Europe, would not be a joke. A caprice, a fantasy. There is no respect for the European Parliament, no affection for Brussels or Strasbourg. And the dream of a single European state, or even a European federation, has faded. The long economic crisis of recent years has exposed the radical differences between the member economies and raised huge questions about the euro. Rather than present itself as a source of wealth or an ideological inspiration, the Union is now a tiresome, sometimes tyrannical accountant telling us what we can and cannot spend, what taxes we must pay, how low our pensions must be. And a German accountant at that.

Because suddenly it’s clear to everyone that the one true center of power in the EU is Berlin. The old farce of collective decision-making is over. It took too long. Everything was compromise and fudge. When decisions have to be made fast, Germany makes them. Germany calls the shots. Yet no one is remotely interested in German culture. Huge numbers of novels and films are brought in from the U.S., the Anglophone world, but not from Germany. We are falling under Germany’s sway, without the slightest interest in how Germany lives, what Germany thinks. Better Game of Thrones, better the latest Hollywood blockbusters. We know more about the American primaries than the German elections, or indeed the European parliamentary elections which we ourselves vote in. We are more likely to look at the New York Times than the Frankfurter Allgemeine.

Ideologically, globalization has swept away the illusion of European identity. From the coast of Puglia, Italians can see Albania on the horizon, but it is far more likely they will travel to New York than Tirana. With Germany and France at the core of the Union, nevertheless the lingua franca is English, the language of the country most skeptical about its EU membership. So the vast majority of European schoolchildren (more than 95 percent) acquire a second language that draws them toward a culture hostile to the European ideal. Or at least indifferent. How can a European identity flourish in these circumstances? Meantime France, which must have hoped its once-global language would prevail in the Union, languishes under a kind of enchantment, apparently unable to acknowledge how profoundly the world has changed.

In response to war and unemployment, people move. Europe is overwhelmed with migrants who almost all want to go to Berlin or





London, and to a lesser degree Paris. They are a source of deep division. And European citizens themselves are heading in droves to Berlin and London. The free movement of citizens means the strengthening of the strong, the attraction of young, able-bodied, well-educated citizens to the dynamic centers of power. Spanish and Italian graduates are packing their bags as I write. On the streets of the British and German capitals the thrill of new energy, new blood, cultural vitality, is tangible, electric. Milan, for all its expo, is tired and tame in comparison. Rome is chaotic, overwhelmed with corruption scandals.

Elsewhere, the desired stability has become stagnation. Instead of putting an end to history we are in thrall to it. Surrendering economic sovereignty to Brussels, the weaker countries reveled in their newfound irresponsibility, then woke up to creeping poverty and a terrible loss of control over their lives. The whole eurozone paid the price of German obsession with monetary severity, waiting ruinous years to join the U.S. and Britain in the quantitative easing that has finally kick-started a weak recovery. But the damage has been done. From being a prosperous bandwagon you might want to fall in with, Europe has become a strait-jacket.

**ABOVE ALL WE DISCOVER THAT THE** nation-state is in rude health. With all their internal problems, the British, French, Germans, Spanish, Italians, Greeks, Belgians,

Dutch, Poles, Romanians, and so on enjoy strong feelings of collective identity. The deep dye of nationality has not washed out in the melting pot. Quite the contrary. In the constant battle to push the Union this way and that, countries have become more aware of their differences and special interests. This is particularly true when it comes to foreign policy. Pacifist by inspiration, the EU is unable even to threaten its enemies with a response. It appoints “foreign ministers” who are comically lightweight. There is not even a pretense of seriousness. Deprived of hegemony in the Union, France discovers its old identity when it acts unilaterally outside of it. Britain never planned to do anything else. Economically in the driving seat, Germany still finds any warlike posturing unthinkable. Confusion. Perhaps the situation was fine while Russia was licking its post-USSR wounds. With Putin rampant it looks like folly.

Where to then? Dismantling the whole is unthinkable. Going on as we are likewise. None of the present European leaders would dream up the EU if it wasn't there — that mood is gone, and to date none of them has told us what they want to do to bring it into line with a world that is utterly changed and moving very fast. What is the purpose of a European Parliament when we vote for it according to national party lines and are absolutely oblivious as to what it might or might not do once our vote is cast? Is it just a fig leaf for democratic process, while one nation makes the decisions for all? Is the EU in fact a

German empire by default? Certainly it has begun to feel like that where I live in Italy, and no doubt even more so in Greece.

But what about Britain? It wants renegotiation, and will hold a referendum. The British attitude to Europe from start to finish has been opportunistic and pragmatic, never idealistic. Uninvited, they joined (after two applications were rejected) because it made sense commercially. They didn't join the euro because it did not make sense. They resent every cession of sovereignty that isn't strictly necessary for making money, and many that are necessary. Just trying to imagine the details of these renegotiations brings on a headache. Thinking of how the process might fit in with the needs of different leaders of different political credos to get themselves reelected in different countries at different times is stupefying. All the same, renegotiation does offer a chance for a few leaders of common sense and good will finally to get to grips with what the EU is for and what sort of positive collective identity it expresses, if any. If that doesn't happen, which seems by far the more likely scenario, then we will be looking at the beginning of the end.

*Tim Parks is the author of many novels, including “Europa” (Arcade Publishing, 1998), translations, and works of nonfiction. His latest book is “Where I’m Reading From, The Changing World of Books” (New York Review of Books, 2015). He is also a professor of literature at IULM University.*



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# 1

HUNGARY

## VIKTOR ORBÁN

THE CONSERVATIVE SUBVERSIVE

*The small-town rebel helped bring down the Wall. Now he builds them.*

Viktor Orbán is impossible to ignore, no easy feat for a leader of a Mitteleuropean state of 10 million souls with scarcely any natural resources. Love him or hate him – and most people do one or the other – you have to pay heed to him. Indifference is not an option.

More than at any time in his winding career, Orbán shapes as much as fits the European zeitgeist. Migration is but one example. His decision to build razor-wire fencing and put water cannons at the ready on his borders – all the while needling Europe's chattering classes with undisguised glee – shifted the debate from how to accommodate the flow of refugees to how to stop it.

"Moral imperialism" was what Orbán called Germany's unilateral opening of its borders in September, an unsentimental push to get the rest of Europe to follow. He stirred and tapped into a brewing backlash across the Continent. The Hungarian put the EU's wise and mighty on the spot: As hard as it was for them to admit, and as much as his rhetoric made them blanch, he was the one who respected the law of the Union by not waving migrants across his territory, as Italy, Greece and France had done for

**IF YOU WEREN'T HUNGARIAN ...**  
*It's impossible not to be Hungarian.*

**WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE FILM?**  
*"Once Upon a Time in the West." Westerns aren't complicated.*

**HOW DO YOU RELAX?**  
*Read books. And football. And I like to drive – not for the speed but I like not to be followed by bodyguards.*

**WHAT'S ON YOUR NIGHT TABLE?**  
*The Bible. "You Tomorrow" by Ian Pearson. A crazy book, a futuristic description of how we will live in 30 years. The world is going ahead so quickly.*

**HISTORICAL FIGURES YOU MOST ADMIRE?**  
*Ronald Reagan. And Helmut Kohl. German reunification is the precondition of Hungarian freedom.*

months. "To defend borders is a national responsibility," he told a conference in June. "As a state, you have to protect your own borders. I don't believe in a European solution." European leaders once sought to ostracize him. He is now the talisman of Europe's mainstream right.

The Orbán brand of politics is a new norm in Europe. You pick up Orbán-esque notes from France's National Front on the far-ish right, Spain's Podemos on the left, Poland's new conservative leaders, Italy's Socialist Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, the Tories in Britain – even Donald Trump in America.

Orbán was a pioneer on this ground. His modus operandi is an uncompromising defense of national sovereignty and a transparent distrust of Europe's ruling establishments. He echoes the resentments of what were once called the working and peasant classes, embittered by economic stagnation and resentful of a distant and incestuous political class. He is an economic populist who carves out a strong role for the state, and also a social conservative. He invokes "Christian values," and makes clear his contempt for the "corruption, sex and violence" of



Western societies. His contempt is for “liberal elites,” the media and greedy bankers. “In most European countries – I could honestly say 90 percent of European countries – there is a gap between the opinion of the people and the policy pursued by the elite,” he told Hungarian diplomats recently.

Orbánism resembles the other -isms taking root on Europe’s edges – in Russia (Putinism) and Turkey (Erdoğanism). His variety is, to be sure, diluted: not bluntly authoritarian, broadly in line with EU norms. Still, his government has kneecapped NGOs, independent media and the judiciary in ways that Putin and Erdoğan would admire. Like them, his confrontational style with his opponents, domestic and foreign, has strengthened his popular position at home. Orbán says his people prefer his stability and strong leadership to liberalism, the effete alternative that since the collapse of the Berlin Wall has morphed, as he puts it in an interview with POLITICO at his office in Budapest in late November, into a tyranny of “political correctness” and “mainstream politics.”

Without apology and with great fanfare, Orbán personifies the rise of illiberal politics in Europe. “Liberal democracy can’t remain globally competitive,” he said in a 2014 speech to a group of ethnic Hungarians in Romania. “The most popular topic in thinking today is trying to understand how systems that are not Western, not liberal, not liberal democracies and perhaps not even democracies can nevertheless make their nations successful.” His examples are Singapore, Russia, Turkey, India (strangely) and China. “We have to abandon liberal methods and principles of organizing a society, as well as the liberal way to look at the world,” he said. His own state, a member of the EU and NATO, “will undertake the odium of expressing that in character it is not of liberal nature.”

#### HOW DOES ONE MAKE SENSE OF THIS MAN?

Seen over the course of his protean public life, Orbán defies categorization – except as a talented and successful politician. He has won three national elections and kept a firm grip on his party since 1989.

In that iconic year for Europe, Orbán the

public man was born. At 24, he was the charismatic and fiery co-founder of a youth movement called the Federation of Young Democrats, or Fidesz. He wore jeans, longish hair and frequent stubble. His party didn’t allow anyone over 35 years of age to join. Its posters featured the image of two passionate kisses: Honecker and Brezhnev, the geriatric Communists, set against a young couple smooching, under the banner, “Make your choice.”

His international debut was a passionate speech at the reburial of Imre Nagy, the Hungarian leader during the 1956 revolution who was executed and buried in an unmarked grave by the Soviets.

“The communists took away our future,” he declared that day in June 1989. At the time, he was an unabashedly pro-Western democrat and free marketeer who, for most of the 1990s, was a leader of the Liberal International group of “progressive” parties.

Orbán played a prominent supporting role in killing communism in Europe. Its collapse prompted Francis Fukuyama’s fateful speculation on history’s end and the triumph of liberal democracy. One of history’s many jokes is that Orbán then thwarted Fukuyama’s wager. To his legion of critics he’s now the polar opposite of his younger self, metamorphosing from liberal to illiberal – but one with a sense

of humor. Orbán laughed this summer when Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission, greeted him at a summit with, “Hello, dictator!” Orbán says, with a smile, that his nickname for the Luxembourgish pol is “the Grand Duke.” (He fought against Juncker’s election last year.)

To some people who know him well, the transformation from the ‘89 Orbán to the Orbán of today wasn’t so much Damascene as pragmatic. In the early days, Fidesz appealed to progressive urban youth and the intelligentsia. It was a crowded space, dominated by another party called the Alliance of Free Democrats. Fidesz did well in the first free elections, then lost badly in

1994. Orbán got the message. He took the party sharply right, and from the cities into the conservative provinces.

The shift wasn’t wholly unnatural for Orbán. He was born and raised in Székesfehérvár, a provincial town southwest of the capital. “I’m a village boy,” he says. His father was a disciplinarian prone to violence. He came from what he called an “uncultured” background and in his teens he was active in the Communist Young Pioneers. “I always had a bit of a schizophrenic tendency,” Orbán told an interviewer in 1989. “I was able to see myself totally from the outside. And I was always quite merciless, and I still am, with myself.”

Reflecting on his political evolution since his days as a student “freedom fighter,” he jokes, “I am 25 years older. Now I have five kids. It would be irresponsible not to have changed my mind and behavior.” His serious point is that “the meaning of liberalism has changed,” in Hungary and globally, turned “sclerotic” and intolerant of anyone “who does not belong to the mainstream.” In other words, him. “Mainstream sometimes is dangerous,” he says in his crisp English.

With his remade party, Orbán won the premiership in 1998, becoming the youngest Hungarian prime minister in the 20th century. He was back in the wilderness for eight years at the start of the next century. The Socialists ran the economy into the ground, while also giving “liberal” a rotten name in Hungary. Orbán roared back in 2010, this time with his pitch even more stridently attuned to Hungarians furious with the Budapest elite for the economic collapse.

In the wake of the global financial crisis, bankers threatened his notions of civilization; now Muslims do. He says those who come now as well as the generations who preceded them in recent decades endanger Europe’s Christian identity and – here he draws a direct, to him “obvious,” link between their presence and last month’s terrorist attacks in Paris – its security. Certainly that’s not a liberal mainstream view in Europe, but it is a spreading one.

There remains a pragmatism to Orbán’s furies. Whenever the EU pushes back hard on his provocations – on his musings about imposing the death penalty, say, or tightening control of the media – he tends to give in. Once a critic of most things Russian, Orbán embraces Putin and seeks to secure Russian energy supplies for Hungary, even as he signs off on EU sanctions against Moscow. Many Hungarians say, in hushed tones, that Orbán is better than the alternative: Jobbik, the openly anti-Semitic far-right party that has a fifth of the vote. One imagines that Brussels agrees.

At another historic moment in Europe, Orbán prods politics in an unsentimental direction. It may be more opportunistic than principled. Yet for now, the Orbán way is eye-catching, effective ... and contagious.

#### THE MEN OF -ISMS

*Vladimir Putin and Viktor Orbán arrive for a news conference in Budapest in February.*







2

DENMARK

# MARGRETHE VESTAGER

THE ADAMANT COMPETITOR

**M**argrethe Vestager, Europe's breezy competition commissioner from Denmark, faces a showdown next year with a daunting array of corporate poobahs.

Eric Schmidt, the chief executive of Google, Li Ka-shing, the founder of Hong Kong's giant conglomerate CK Hutchison, or Alexey Miller, chairman of Gazprom and friend of Russian President Vladimir Putin, will all have roles in the Vestager drama in the coming year. But this is still her show.

She wields powers of which her fellow commissioners can only dream: While they deal in strategy papers and draft directives, Vestager, 47, could change the future of the Internet or spark geopolitical unrest on Europe's eastern flank.

She is leading her trust-busters into domains execs never expected. Witness recent decisions clawing back tax breaks dished out by weak European governments to U.S. corporate titans.

Already, she enjoys unparalleled fame. The world's media has been enraptured by the contradictions of this folksy liberal mother of three: irreverent but steely, laid back yet calculating. She has a maternal side, for sure. There she was in August,

**YOUR ADVERTISING SLOGAN FOR EUROPE**  
*It is all about people.*

**WHICH HISTORICAL FIGURE DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?**  
*Historical or not: I admire Madeleine Albright in general and especially for the role and responsibility she took during the Balkan war.*

**IF YOU WEREN'T FROM DENMARK, WHAT OTHER NATIONALITY WOULD YOU WANT TO BE?**  
*I normally say that I am Danish in my heart and international in my mind. To me it is more a question of where you feel at home rather than the color of your passport.*

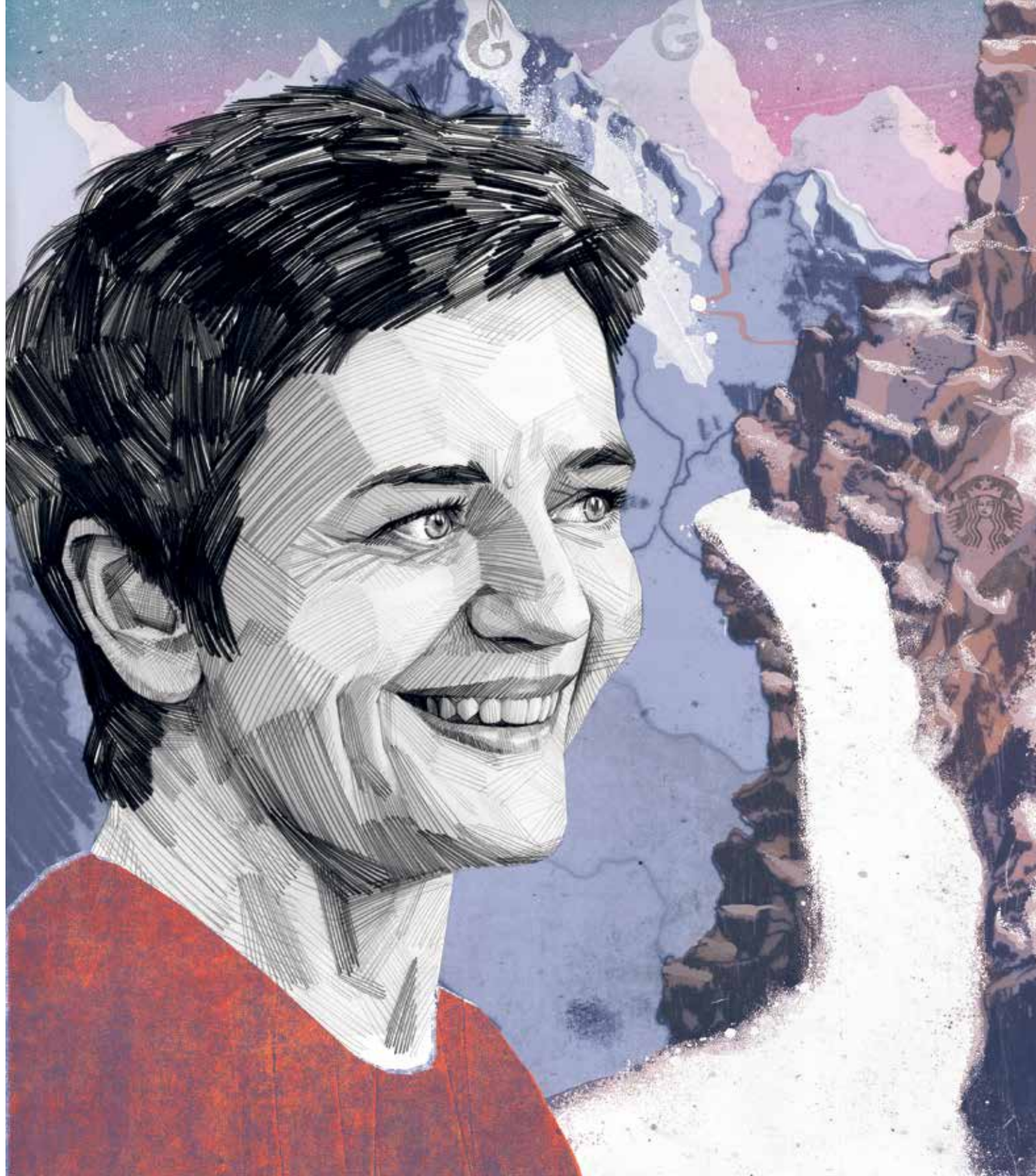
dispensing cooking tips to readers of *The New York Times*, and in October confirming to France's *Les Echos* that she knits during meetings (knitted elephants are her forté).

Impending decisions against Google and Gazprom, Amazon and Qualcomm, not to mention others involving Europe's powerful telecoms sector, will place severe strain on Vestager and her self-image as an impartial technocrat. Grumblings that she is overreaching and anti-American risk becoming a roar, one that will confront and test her.

Vestager exploded onto the international stage in April when she brought back-to-back antitrust charges against Google. If that elicited rage and bewilderment from parts of the U.S. business community – and President Obama's assertion that it played to the “commercial interests” of European companies – her decision to fly to the U.S. to defend the probe won her grudging admiration. It was signature Vestager: tough, direct and frank.

The week after she red-carded Google, she charged Russian gas giant Gazprom with breaching EU competition law. That drew anger from Moscow, yet observers





praised how she diffused accusations of anti-Americanism or Russophobia by announcing the decisions in quick succession.

PR aside, the thrust of the two probes is deadly serious. One seeks to limit Google's expansion. The other seeks to curb Russia's use of its gas monopoly to bully and cajole European governments it does not like. The endgame in both cases is expected next year.

**WHAT IS ON YOUR NIGHT TABLE?**  
*I normally have more than one book on my night table. These days I am reading "Stoner" by John Williams and "Luftspejling 38," or "Hägring 38," by Kjell Westö.*

Unlike many of her colleagues, Vestager has star power. That much was evident when she sailed through her confirmation before members of the European Parliament. Despite her chomping chocolates during the hearing and cracking the odd corny joke, MEPs handed her Europe's most powerful "oversight" job with barely an objection. Any wavering doubts were overcome when she revealed she was once an intern at the European Parliament.

The pro-Europhilia that seduced MEPs sets her apart in Danish politics. Vestager comes from the Radikale Venstre party. That literally translates as the Radical Left party, though its nicknames – The Radicool, or the Caffè Latte Party – do it more justice. It is a European liberal party that is pro-market and progressive on social issues, swimming against the current in a country that is among Europe's most hardline on migration, Islam and Europe.

Her great-great-grandfather helped found the party, and Vestager first ran for Parliament at 20. Just 10 years later, she took on her first ministerial role.

Vestager revived Radikale Venstre as the party of the urban elite. She cycled to work and brought up three young girls, all the while pursuing a glittering political career. She was an early joiner of Twitter, revealing humor and a taste for low-brow, everyday pleasures.

Yet the unpretentious image masks a politician who is admired and feared in Denmark for her ruthlessness, which was on display when she led her party into Denmark's coalition government in 2001: Despite hers being the smallest party, Vestager got the economy and interior ministries, not to mention the role

of deputy prime minister. That journey served as an inspiration for the creators of *Borgen*, a series about the bitter betrayals of Danish politics that became an international hit. (Vestager told the American TV host Charlie Rose she cannot be sure she is the inspiration, but would be flattered if it were true.)

Home-spun yes, Machiavellian maybe, but not populist. During that stint in office Vestager forced through reforms described by some as "tough" and "cruel." Her party took a pummeling in the subsequent elections, but its leader had already jumped to Brussels for a five-year stint in the Commission. Just enough time for her tough reforms to bear fruit and for all the pain to be forgotten, observe those close to her.

The ride to 2019 promises to be bumpy. Escalating cases against Google and Gazprom are one thing, but closing them is another altogether. Hit Google hard and she will be pursued remorselessly by the U.S. lobby; let it off the hook and the company's rivals in Europe and critics in national ministries will trash her. Similarly with Gazprom. The gas giant is the subject of popular hate in much of Central and Eastern Europe, but her probe is viewed as a provocation in Moscow and uneasily in certain national capitals. The

list goes on, from blocking mergers in Europe's desperate telecoms sector to pursuing charges against powerful pay-TV providers and Hollywood. The ride will place severe strain on the sparky, off-beat persona of 2015.

"The nationality of companies plays no part in our decision-making," Vestager told an audience in New York in October, repeating comments she has made virtually nonstop since taking office.

American companies dominate many markets while European companies do not. A major challenge for her will be to manage the EU's relationship with the U.S. To that end, she may decide to go soft on some cases, say observers – if her colleagues in the Commission do not force her to back down first.

That would be damaging for a commissioner who has insisted repeatedly that antitrust enforcement is free of political considerations. The daughter of two Lutheran pastors, Vestager has struck a principled note in public, emphasizing the need for due process. Although she rarely mentions her predecessor, for good or for bad, her message is clear: no more of the backroom compromises for which Joaquín Almunia was known. The coming year will put that to the test.



Photograph by Linda Henriksen for the European Pressphoto Agency



# the POLITICO interview

MARGRETHE VESTAGER

## DO YOU SEE YOURSELF MORE AS A JUDGE, A PROSECUTOR OR A POLITICIAN?

I see myself as a politician in the broader sense of the word, because I see the work we do here as putting real day-to-day value into the values and founding principles of our treaty. We work for the people, and I see the work we do as defending very basic principles of our treaty.

## YOU WANT TO REGULATE INTERNET PLATFORMS. ARE YOU OPENING PANDORA'S BOX?

First of all, I am still in learning mode when it comes to platforms, because I have difficulties in finding the common denominator of different services, which share the word platform but except for that work very differently with different parts of the economy, with different structures, with different business models.

## YOU SAID COMPETITION LAW GOES BACK TO ADAM AND EVE: FEAR, GREED AND THE MOST BASIC IMPULSES.

But that is my impression about human beings. Since neither CEOs, nor engineers nor anyone else working in a company are any different from the rest of us, well probably they react as the rest of us. Sometimes of course you need to dig through layers and layers of law and lawyers and their reasoning, but what I have found in my experience is that basically it boils down to very human feelings and aspirations and ways of thinking.

## WHAT ARE NEXT YEAR'S BIG TARGETS?

One thing is for sure and that is we will continue, both when it comes to the bigger cases, the spectacular ones of Google and Gazprom, but also continue when it comes to taxation. We have 300 different tax rulings on our table that we are analyzing. We still have a couple of pending investigations. At the same time, of course, we will pay attention to things that may not seem as spectacular but may have also direct influence on European citizens and European consumers. Because basically, and I think about this almost every day, the reason why we are useful is that we enable European citizens to have a fair chance of living their life in full. By showing that there is such a thing as fairness and equal treatment, and if you have a good idea then you should have access to the market as well. It shouldn't be closed by the big [companies], the established ones or the ones with deep pockets.



## SO YOU WANT TO PROTECT GOOGLE'S COMPETITORS?

No, never. We would do wrong if we thought about protecting other companies. Basically, what it trickles down to is to protect competition for the benefits of citizens. Because an open market with a level playing field gives every company the opportunity to offer its products at affordable prices, quality and innovation.

## HOW WILL YOUR CASES BREAK OPEN AND FOSTER INNOVATION?

It is important the future is open to innovation. I think it is quite obvious that in a European way of thinking it is a good thing that you can grow. It is not a bad thing, and we should congratulate businesses that grow. But I also think the congratulations should stop if we think a position is being misused.

## CAN COMPETITION ENFORCERS RESHAPE THE ONLINE MARKETS?

Yes. I am trying to keep in mind that, even though I have been given a hammer, not everything is a nail. There are a lot of limitations to competition law: There are issues where you would want to regulate. You saw the regulation on [credit card] fees, where we could only get so far by enforcing competition law. If you look at the tax cases, you see the same relationship.

*“I am trying to keep in mind that, even though I have been given a hammer, not everything is a nail.”*

## WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST SHOCK OF GOING FROM A MINISTER IN DENMARK TO COMPETITION COMMISSIONER?

I still put in as many hours, but it is very different. Here I have the privilege of going into cases: Some would say I know too many details, some might say I know too few, but [it allows me to] spend more time to have a much deeper understanding. Being minister of economics and the interior and leader of my party I had responsibility all over the board, whether kindergarten or financial regulation or environmental affairs.

## HOW MANY HOURS A DAY DO YOU WORK?

I never found it motivating to count because then you would like to work less. One of the things that I saw as a child was that my parents never counted their working hours because they did not keep working hours. [As Lutheran pastors] they did not have office hours, the door was always open.

## WHAT WAS THEIR LIFESTYLE LIKE?

It was very flexible during the week when there were still some days to go before the Sunday sermon to do some things that some people might consider completely private, as tending their garden or whatever. So they didn't consider a work-life balance, they just integrated the two.

Of course I don't have the privilege of living where I work, which was their privilege in the vicarage. So of course I spend a lot of hours here, from very early morning to the early afternoon, and then I have a lot of reading to do back home. But still trying to make things come together because if you don't have a life, how can you be responsible for part of the framework of other peoples' lives?

## YOU HAVE A LIFE — YOU WATCH AND RE-WATCH JAMES BOND FILMS, YOU JOG, YOU ARE A BIG ART FAN. DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE GALLERY?

No, because you find the most surprising things in the most surprising places. I very much enjoyed the exhibition that they have at [Brussels'] Bozar “2050”: It is an amazing thing. It is quite rare that an exposition is curated with a political mindset. [I find it interesting to read] Jacques Attali and his five ways of the future, and then find pieces of art that would illustrate it, or comment on it, or allow you to understand his art from a completely different dimension.

THE COMMISSION SAYS EVERY YEAR THAT EUROPE TAXES PEOPLE TOO MUCH. THEN IN OCTOBER YOU HIT FIAT AND STARBUCKS FOR MILLIONS IN BACK TAXES FOR TAX BREAKS THEY GOT FROM INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES. AND YOU'RE ALSO LOOKING AT DEALS THAT COMPANIES SUCH AS APPLE AND AMAZON HAVE GOTTEN. IN EFFECT AREN'T YOU PUSHING TAXES UP AND MAKING EUROPE LESS COMPETITIVE?

This will not reduce tax competition by the front door. What we are dealing with is what goes on via the back door. And if member states take this on board, then maybe you don't have to invent new taxes, or raise taxes.

This is not a question of higher or lower taxes: It is a question of every company contributing, not only those thousands and thousands of businesses who do contribute today and have to sit and suspect their competitors have had an advantage.

## TAX RULINGS, ANTITRUST PROBES, THE SAFE HARBOR RULING. IS EUROPE MORE OF A REGULATOR THAN INNOVATOR?

No. Europe, with all its troubles and all the crises, is a wonderful place to do business. There are more than 500 million potential customers. It is safe and well-regulated. In most countries you will find you can work with authorities directly. It is not corrupt. You can do it for absolutely right reasons and good reasons. If your suggestion was [true], you wouldn't see innovation, new technology, new business models, new ways of working together emerging on the Continent.

## YOU DO?

Yes, of course. In a number of member states you have lots and lots of startups. One of the reasons why we are working on the capital markets union is to make sure those startups have access to capital for them to grow. You have young people with lots of ideas of how to make their mark on earth. I think we way too easily paint a very grim picture.

I don't think you should take the grim picture away because obviously it is there. [But] you should also focus on the fact we have very strong institutions. Since the Lisbon Treaty we have a very strong European Parliament. We have the Commission, we have the Council, we have our Court.

Taking just one of them, the Commission is willing to make priorities and not to try to do everything. Among those priorities is to implement legislation instead of trying to think of doing something new. Which, I think, is very good news for anyone who felt that for years there has been an avalanche or slow tsunami of rules and directives and circulaires and whatever on their desk.



# NICOLA STURGEON

THE CONSUMMATE SEPARATIST

Scottish National Party leader Nicola Sturgeon lists *Borgen* as her favorite TV show. The Danish serial features a smart, personable female politician who defies the odds to lead a small, independent northern state. In real life, the slight-framed first minister of Scotland's devolved Parliament hopes to follow in the fictional Birgitte Nyborg's footsteps – once she has persuaded her compatriots to leave the United Kingdom.

Scottish independence seemed like a distant dream when Sturgeon joined the SNP as a teenager in 1986. Back then, the Nationalists were a fringe concern in Scottish politics; now the party holds all but three of Scotland's 59 seats in Westminster. It is on course to win a second majority, and a third consecutive term, in the Scottish Parliament next May.

Despite a 10-point defeat in last year's referendum, independence has become the dividing line of Scottish politics – much to the advantage of the Nationalists. SNP membership has swelled from around 25,000 on referendum day in September 2014 to over 110,000.

The Scottish Nationalists' surge owes a lot – but not everything – to Sturgeon's own

## THE STURGEON TIMELINE

*At 20... she was a law student at Glasgow University.*

*At 30... she was shadow minister for children and education in the Scottish Parliament.*

*At 40... she was deputy leader of the Scottish National Party and minister for health.*

*At 45... she is the leader of the SNP, Scotland's first minister and dubbed "most dangerous woman in Britain" by the Daily Mail.*

personal appeal. Raised in public housing in industrial Ayrshire, on the outskirts of Glasgow, voters see the onetime solicitor as authentic and down-to-earth – unlike the Oxbridge elites that dominate London politics.

That carefully managed public persona, however, belies a woman obsessed with politics and independence. Although Labour was the traditional party of working-class Scotland, Sturgeon joined the SNP at 16 "because it was obvious to me then – as it still is today – that you cannot guarantee social justice unless you are in control of the delivery."

It was another mold-breaking female politician that inspired the youthful Sturgeon to join the Scottish Nationalists: Margaret Thatcher. The Conservative prime minister was a figure of hate in industrial Scotland. For Sturgeon, only independence could save Scotland from Thatcherism.

At 29, she was elected to the Holyrood Parliament in Edinburgh, where she won plaudits as the SNP's spokesperson on justice, and later on education and health. In 2004, aged 34, she was elected as deputy leader on a joint ticket with the

pugnacious Alex Salmond. The pair would transform the shape of Scottish politics.

In 2007, with Salmond at the helm and Sturgeon by his side, the SNP won its highest-ever share of the vote in devolved elections and enough seats to form a government for the first time. In 2011, the party went one better, scoring an unexpected landslide that gave the Nationalists both full control of the Scottish Parliament and the long-cherished dream of a referendum on independence.

Sturgeon enjoyed a successful referendum – indeed, many now wonder if the result would have been different if she, and not the more combative Salmond, had led the party during the campaign.

Having succeeded Salmond unopposed in the wake of the referendum defeat, Sturgeon has pushed the SNP leftward. In May's British general election, the Nationalists backed a 50 percent top tax rate, a mansion tax, an increase in the minimum wage and a levy on bankers' bonuses. Calls for corporate tax cuts – much vaunted by Salmond – have been quietly dropped.

The challenge for Sturgeon is to manage demands from the grassroots for a second referendum. The SNP has long adopted a "gradualist" strategy for independence, slowly building electoral support while increasing the powers available to the devolved Parliament in Edinburgh.

Sturgeon is unlikely to risk another referendum until she is certain of victory.

She has said that only a "material change" in Scotland's constitutional position could trigger another vote – such as the U.K. voting to leave the European Union and Scots choosing to stay in. Briefings to journalists at the SNP conference in Aberdeen in October suggest the nationalists intend to wait until polls put support for independence at 60 percent for a year before risking another vote.

With a Conservative government in London with minimal support north of the border and a Labour opposition struggling to define itself under new leader Jeremy Corbyn, Sturgeon seems confident that her *Borgen* moment will arrive some day. Until it does, the question of independence will continue to dominate Scottish politics and keep her in the spotlight.







**ACHTUNG,  
BREXIT.**



***The Germans  
may not be  
exactly happy  
to see Britain  
leave the EU,  
if it comes  
to that.***

***But neither  
do they seem  
willing  
to concede  
much to  
make it stay.***

BY KONSTANTIN RICHTER





## WHEN JOHN MAJOR, THE FORMER BRITISH PRIME MINISTER BEST

remembered for being unmemorable, came to Berlin in late 2014, he had a banner headline for the Germans. Or so he thought. The threat of Brexit — a British exit from the European Union — was real, he said, and the Germans had better take heed. Major’s warning, delivered with some pomp at the HQ of a big conservative think tank, fell on deaf ears. The German media didn’t so much as mention it.

### PERHAPS MAJOR’S TIMING WAS AWRY.

The British probably won’t hold their referendum on continued EU membership before 2017. There will be many more opinion polls before then, and many more brawls, with pros and cons hurled about ad nauseam. David Cameron’s Tory government will push for concessions from the EU and hope to convince voters to stick with a “new, improved” Brussels. EU leaders are wary of coming across as susceptible to British blackmail. And right now at least, in the midst of a major refugee crisis and heated debate over terrorism and border security, it all still seems pretty far off.

Let’s not forget, though, that we’re not talking about a small Mediterranean country with some of the world’s finest olive oil and staggering debt levels. This is Great Britain, the EU’s second-largest economy and third-most populous nation. In its four decades of EU membership, the country has been a consistent net contributor, paying far more into EU coffers than it has got out. Its military and intelligence services are still world-class, befitting a (former) global superpower. And on many economic issues, the Germans are closer to British market liberals than to French state interventionists.

So it would make sense, surely, for the Germans to be agitated about the loss of a fellow contributor and potential ally in their efforts to reform the EU. Why, then, don’t they seem all that worried? Do the Germans not care about Britain?

### GERMANY IS SUFFUSED WITH A

“terrifically pro-British sentiment” — that’s what Neil MacGregor, the director of the British Museum poised to take over at Berlin’s Humboldt Forum, said. And he’s right. We like Britain. But our views of Britain are muddled and not all that well-informed. Old stereotypes — bowler hats, afternoon tea and eccentric sense of humor— mix with glimpses of a contemporary society that strikes us as more ruthlessly capitalist than our own. Between the Britain of Margaret Thatcher and the Britain of Monty Python, most Germans would probably go for Monty Python. We even like the “Fawlty Towers” sketch about the hotel owner who tells employees not to mention the war in the presence of his German guests.

That the Brits do, inevitably, mention the war when they meet Germans is OK with us. We know what we’ve done and we’re grateful for the British support that helped us rebuild



Germany into a thriving democracy after the war. It’s because of that history that we’re still keen to know what the British think of us. A new translation of “Instructions to British servicemen in Germany, 1944,” published by the Foreign Office in London during World War II, made the German bestseller lists last year. And when the Queen visited this summer that mattered too. We presented her with a gift, a painting of a blue horse. She didn’t like it. Joachim Gauck, the German president, looked terribly apologetic — even mortified. Our mistake, he seemed to want to say. We know that horses aren’t actually blue. Sorry about that.

So, yes, we care about Britain. But when it comes to European matters, German patience has run a little thin. In or out? The British people will soon vote on a question that isn’t exactly new. The U.K.’s relationship with the EU has been rocky from the very beginning. When the European Economic Community was founded in the 1950s, the Brits didn’t want to join. Then, in the 1960s, they launched EFTA, a free-trade association outside the EEC. Even after they finally joined in the 1970s, they negotiated for all kinds of opt-out clauses and special exemptions, resisting an “ever closer” political union. Most significantly, they chose to keep the pound instead of adopting the euro. This is particularly painful to many Germans, who wish in their hearts that Germany had kept the deusechemark instead of playing “Mutti” (Mummy, in the Queen’s English or Merkel, in the German political lexicon) to the euro family. Psychologists might have a field day studying

this currency-envy. They have the pound and their opt-outs, and still they want more?

**IT NEEDN’T HAVE COME TO THIS.** The British could have been more involved in Europe. It was Winston Churchill himself who, in 1946, called for the formation of a United States of Europe. But in that very same speech, he also clarified that the union would be based on a relationship between Germany and France, and that Britain would only act as a “friend and sponsor.”

Churchill’s reluctance to place the U.K. at the heart of Europe shaped British attitudes for decades to come. Having won the war, Britain deemed its economy strong enough to hold out on its own. Trade relations with the Commonwealth and its far-flung colonies seemed more promising than teaming up with Continental Europe. And the Brits already harbored the same fears of a supranational authority that fuel Euroskepticism today. Instead of helping to build institutions more to their liking, they watched from the sidelines as Brussels rose.

When the U.K. finally entered the EU in 1973, it was too late to Anglicize the place. The set-up was purely Franco-German by then, and, truth be told, more Franco than German. Up until today, the political culture of Brussels — all those strange DGs staffed with hundreds of anonymous career bureaucrats — is as alien to most Germans as it is to the Brits. Even Frankfurt’s European Central Bank doesn’t feel very Germanic these days, run as



it is by an Italian on a bond-buying spree.

No wonder, then, that British and German attitudes to the EU aren’t that far apart. An increasing number of Germans would prefer to see key political issues — like labor laws or regional aid — handled by national institutions rather than by Brussels. And conservative Germans in particular would prefer to rein in EU spending and limit the eurozone to a few North European economies. But unlike the British with their Brexit, the Germans wouldn’t even flirt with the idea of a German exit.

Europe is a key component of Germany’s post-war identity. More than 50 years after the end of World War II, we still want to be cozily embedded in a union that is bigger than us. We wouldn’t like to be out there on our own.

### THE TERM “SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP”

usually refers to the transatlantic bond between Great Britain and the U.S. But if you take “special” to mean “peculiar” rather than “privileged,” the Germans and the Brits have a special relationship, too, and it dates back to the Angles and Saxons who invaded Britain after the fall of the Roman Empire. Germans and Brits do like each other, a German saying goes, but never at the same time.

After World War II, the Brits watched with envy as the German economy soared and their own industry lagged behind, crippled by labor conflicts and chronic underinvestment. For a while, during the 1970s, the British Labour government tried to emulate the German business model and aimed for consensual labor

relations. But the cursed British unions were having none of it. Asked to compromise, they simply went on strike.

Britain took a sharp turn when Thatcher took over as prime minister. She pulverized the unions, deregulated financial markets and privatized state institutions. And, my word, she didn’t trust the Germans. When Chancellor Helmut Kohl invited her to his native Rhineland-Palatinate, he famously treated her to a meal of stuffed pig’s stomach, or Saumagen. Thatcher hated the Saumagen, and that was fine with most Germans — they don’t like Saumagen either. What they did mind, though, was her successful lobbying for a British rebate on EU payments. “What we are asking is for a very large amount of our own money back,” Thatcher had said. The British thought it was only right. The Germans, who had paid their EU bills without ever complaining publicly, thought it was selfish and cheap.

Then came the ’90s, Tony Blair and Blur — a breath of British fresh air. Blair’s Third Way, a compromise between free markets and social justice, even inspired Gerhard Schröder’s Social Democrats. Then Blair decided to go to war in Iraq. And he failed to rein in London’s avaricious City, choosing instead to cultivate close ties to bankers and business leaders. When the financial crisis hit in 2008, the Germans decidedly cooled on Cool Britannia.

Interestingly, it’s now the Brits who have taken a liking to the Germans. In the latest twist in this bittersweet love story, 100,000 Britons

made the trip to Germany for the 2006 World Cup. The sun shone for four happy weeks. Many British tourists have returned for subsequent trips. And there’s renewed British interest in all things German, ranging from the Bundesliga (where the ticket prices are far cheaper than back in the Premier League) to the particularities of Rhine capitalism (which helped the German manufacturing industry weather the crisis) to contemporary German artists like Anselm Kiefer, Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter (all of whom were honored with exhibitions in London last year). Cool Germania.

**MUCH THOUGHT HAS BEEN GIVEN TO** the question of what Brexit would mean for the U.K. But what about Germany? Some British Euroskeptics, ever wary of German power, have suggested that the Krauts would rejoice in total EU domination. But that’s unlikely. Germany doesn’t want to dominate. When U.S., French and British armies go to war somewhere, the Germans prefer to sit back and provide moral support and first-aid kits. And with Britain missing in Europe, they might feel even more isolated than before. The cultural rift between Northern and Southern Europe has widened as a result of the euro crisis, and a British departure certainly wouldn’t help in that respect. You can bet it would reduce the EU’s clout on the world stage too, and that’s not in Germany’s interest either. Put simply, we don’t want to be left alone with the PIGS.

On the other hand, the economic impact might not be as catastrophic as doomsayers suggest. What are the Brits going to do, after all? Join NAFTA? Rev the Commonwealth back up? London’s mayor Boris Johnson suggested an economic alliance with Switzerland, to be called Britzerland. Or perhaps they’ll try Great Borway, a union with Norway. More likely though, the Brits will decide against severing economic ties. If the Eurocrats let them, they’ll replace the current set-up with comprehensive bilateral treaties along Swiss lines, and that shouldn’t hurt Europe all that much.

So, yes, a majority of Germans would like the U.K. to remain a member. But in the end, the German commitment to Europe is greater than to a nation of islanders who’ve been indecisive and standoffish from the beginning. We want them to make up their minds, once and for all. And we don’t want the EU to make significant concessions to keep them on board. In or out? The French foreign minister Laurent Fabius has said that there cannot be a Europe “à la carte” and that the British efforts to overhaul relations with the EU was like joining a soccer club and then deciding abruptly “that we’re now going to play rugby.” The Germans — who prefer soccer to rugby — are with the French on this one. When you warn the Krauts of Brexit, you won’t hear them say, “Please don’t go.” Our response is: “Dear Brits, we want you to stay. But go if you must.”

*Konstantin Richter, a German novelist and journalist, is a contributing writer at POLITICO. He is the author of “Bettermann” and “Kafka was Young and He Needed the Money.”*

### LEADERS UNITED IN THE GARDEN

*David Cameron and Angela Merkel stroll through the garden at Cameron’s country residence in October.*



# REFUGEES WELCOME FOUNDERS

THE FOLKS WITH A HEART

One of the great rifts in Europe in 2015 is between those who want to swing doors open to thousands of migrants and those who don't. In Germany this clash – over politics, values, economics, the country's very identity – links this unlikely foursome.

Horst Seehofer, the conservative politician who runs the southern region of Bavaria, and the three young founders of the "Refugees Welcome" grassroots movement have virtually nothing in common aside from their central place in this debate, leading the charge of the righteousness brigades from starkly opposed sides.

An enduring image from the early autumn was the scene of thousands of Germans cheering the thousands of migrants who arrived at train stations. "The September Fairytale," people called it.

Little else better epitomizes this new caricature-shattering Germany than "Refugees Welcome," an online platform created in November 2014 that pairs Germans who have an empty room with refugees looking for a place to stay. This civic start-up raised awareness and in its own way shaped the public mood of openness.

JONAS  
KAKOSCHKE  
OF REFUGEES  
WELCOME

**WHAT IS ON  
YOUR NIGHT  
TABLE?**

*If you sleep on a mattress on the floor, there is no need for a night table. But next to my bed are some books laying on the floor.*

**YOUR  
ADVERTISING  
SLOGAN FOR  
EUROPE**

*Humanity should have no borders!*

**IF YOU WEREN'T  
FROM GERMANY,  
WHAT OTHER  
NATIONALITY  
WOULD YOU  
WANT TO BE?**

*I don't believe in nations, it's a concept that's outdated.*

**WHAT THREE  
THINGS DO YOU  
TAKE WITH YOU  
EVERYWHERE  
YOU GO?**

*Smartphone, tobacco, keys.*

# AND HORST SEEHOFER

THE BAVARIAN SCOLD

The founders – Mareike Geiling, 28, Jonas Kakoschke, 32, and Golde Ebding, 26 – gave their new website a professional look, to appeal to Germans of all political stripes. In the first year, some 200 refugees in Germany (and almost as many in Austria) found accommodation through them. Sometime, they're surprised to see what kinds of Germans lend a hand. "In some cases, you really wouldn't have thought so, based on the stereotype you have," Kakoschke said.



HORST  
SEEHOFER

**QUOTE/  
UNQUOTE**

*"We are not the social security office for the Balkans – I'd like to underline that statement."*

*"To simply say that in our time, 3,000 kilometers of border can't be protected anymore, means the state is surrendering to reality."*

*"Without limiting immigration, we as a state community in Germany and Europe will fail spectacularly."*

At first, "Refugees Welcome" relied on word of mouth, but the media helped create buzz, at one point branding it as the "AirBnB for refugees." The team wasn't too happy about that; their project isn't about making money, they say.

Though opinion polls continue to show strong German support for a broadly welcoming approach favored by Chancellor Angela Merkel, in contrast to many other EU countries, the "Fairytale," at least politically, was brief. And the force behind the greater realism on migration – or cynical sourness, depending on the point of view – was an old school Bavarian pol whose glory days, it was thought, were behind him.



As waves of migrants came from the south, over the Austrian border and onto his terrain, Seehofer stood athwart that frontier and yelled – stop! He gave voice to a more lukewarm mood that the chancellor was forced to adopt by year's end, if not to the degree that the Bavarian politician wanted.

Guarded in private but borderline bombastic on the stage, Seehofer cast himself as Germany's last man of reason, the voice of the "man on the street,"

warning that mass immigration will undermine the German way of life if it isn't handled "in an orderly way." Infuriating his conservative governing partners in Berlin, Seehofer invited one of the chancellor's foremost critics in Europe, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, to Bavaria, cashing immediate political dividends at home and gaining him attention across the Continent.

The migration crisis is an unexpected opportunity for Seehofer, who holds

every top job in Bavaria and almost certainly has no future at the national level. All of his conservative proposals in recent years were squashed, including a car toll for foreigners on Germany's autobahns or traditional child care subsidy models.

Who's winning this debate, Refugees Welcome or Seehofer? That's grist for another lively argument that will carry on into 2016.





# STROMAE

THE (VERY) INTERNATIONAL POP STAR

Belgians have good reasons to love Paul Van Haver. On top of the understandable “local boy makes good” pride, there is the way the Brussels-based pop star – better known as Stromae – personifies Belgium’s weird social and cultural mix: He offers something for everyone in a famously fractious country. He’s a French-speaker with a Flemish last name and half-Rwandan ethnic heritage. His music combines the latest electronic dance grooves with old-school, sad-song “chanson,” and addresses political and social issues with humor. His non-threatening, nerdy persona still seems cool and cutting-edge. Imagine Tintin throwing down rhymes while doing a Michael Jackson moonwalk, and you get an idea of Stromae’s appeal.

Now the rest of the world is taking notice. Stromae has won over music fans across the rest of Europe and even in the U.S., where his videos need subtitles and where, it’s safe to assume, few people are familiar with the French street slang that gave him his stage name (reversing the syllables of “Maestro”).

In the last two years Stromae has sold more than 2 million copies of his album “*Racine Carrée*” (“Square Root”), topping the charts in France and Belgium, and

## QUOTE/ UNQUOTE

*“It’s never me talking in my songs, it’s a character, even if there’s some personal stuff involved. I need that detachment.”*

*“I don’t make music for intellectuals or clubs. I make the music I want and the groove’s very important to me. Also, I don’t think English sounds better than French.”*

*“Formidable, formidable. Tu étais formidable, j’étais fort minable.” (“Wonderful, wonderful. You were wonderful, I was so pathetic.”)*

breaking into the American top 20 without even one song in English. He capped off a 2015 tour by headlining New York’s Madison Square Garden.

Van Haver, 30, was born in Brussels to a Belgian mother and a Rwandan father, who died during the 1994 genocide in the African country. His songs take on serious issues – including, in the superb “Papaoutai,” growing up without a father – but never at the expense of a clever hook or a thumping beat. Even a seemingly throwaway tune like “Moules Frites” delivers a sobering message about sexual promiscuity and AIDS underneath a witty (and quintessentially Belgian) veneer.

Stromae is often held up alongside Jacques Brel, another wiry Belgian baritone who became a national hero and found worldwide fame. Though he has called that comparison “intellectually lazy,” there is no denying that his emotional songwriting and everyman charm recall Brel at his best.

At a time when Belgium is in the headlines as a haven for terrorists, Stromae offers hope as a goodwill ambassador for the country’s peculiar brand of multiculturalism.





# ISABELLE FALQUE- PIERROTIN

THE DATA WATCHDOG



Within the course of a few months in 2015, Isabelle Falque-Pierrotin warned the French government against its new snooping law, stared down Google and issued ultimatums to U.S. and European governments. The head of France's Commission Nationale de l'Informatique et des Libertés (CNIL), the country's surveillance watchdog, has been at the forefront of the drive to find a better definition of citizens' rights in the digital age. Falque-Pierrotin is also the chair of the "Article 29 Data Protection Working Party," the independent advisory body set up under the European Commission's auspices to protect the personal data of individuals. As such, she has been instrumental in helping the EU find common ground on matters pitting individual rights against corporate or government encroachments. Now her role as France's keeper of civil liberties is likely to increase as the government seeks new powers to fight the terrorist threat in the wake of the November 13 attacks.

When the European Court of Justice struck down the so-called "safe harbor" data-transfer agreement between the U.S. and Europe in early October, Falque-Pierrotin hailed the ruling as "excellent news."

#### WHAT IS ON YOUR NIGHT TABLE?

*William Boyd's "Sweet Caress," a book by French anthropologist Yves Coppens, and "A Bad Character," by an Indian writer named Deepti Kapoor.*

#### YOUR ADVERTISING SLOGAN FOR EUROPE

*Yes, we can!*

#### WHICH HISTORICAL FIGURE DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?

*Nelson Mandela.*

#### WHAT THREE THINGS DO YOU TAKE WITH YOU EVERYWHERE YOU GO?

*A book, my smartphone, chocolate.*

"The court basically asked U.S. authorities to extend EU citizens the same rights they have at home," she explains. Days after the court's decision, she issued an ultimatum to both Washington and Brussels: Strike a new deal within three months, or sanctions would have to be levied on companies still working under the old data-transfer regime.

"We had to give some time for actors to comply with the ruling, but make sure it was not excessively long," she says. Falque-Pierrotin showed the same no-nonsense determination when, as head of the CNIL, she ruled that Google should apply the "right to be forgotten" EU ruling to all its global domains – and not just the European ones, as the company asserted.

A graduate of France's top business school, HEC, who then went on to the government-elite training factory École Nationale d'Administration, Falque-Pierrotin, 55, started her career at France's apex administrative court, where she specialized in online networks legislation in the mid-1990s. She was appointed to the CNIL as vice-chair in 2009 before moving on to the top job two years later, and was elected chairwoman of the Article 29 body in February 2014.

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POLITICO



# ALBERT RIVERA

THE BREATH OF FRESH AIR



On the left and the right, Europe is now a place of insurrection. Syriza here, Podemos there, Jobbik, UKIP, National Front. Even Corbyn's Labour. Rancorous new forces are laying siege to politics-as-usual, as the Old Continent battles with economic crisis, migrant flows, and a widespread disenchantment with established parties, progressive or conservative.

In all of this meltdown, one party stands out, representing an Insurrection of the Center – an oxymoron, all things considered. Spain's Ciudadanos – Citizens – is selling itself as the embodiment of measured, centrist rationality. The party's first campaign poster, in 2006, featured a photo of its leader, Albert Rivera, in the nude – privates shielded from a nation's gaze by his cupped hands.

Rivera, in that poster, had the chiseled physique of a champion swimmer – which he was as a teenager – and the confidence of a man who believes public attention is his to demand. He was also a national-level debater at university, and if his performances on the campaign trail and on television panels are any indication, the gift of the gab hasn't deserted him. It is no wonder that the

## QUOTE/ UNQUOTE

*"We defend cultural diversity and bilingualism. That's the richness of Spain. But it's one thing to be diverse and something else to be broken apart."*

*"We want to modernize Spain, but we don't question the general rules of the game, the constitution, the Spanish welfare state, the euro and our link to Europe."*

*"I'll fight for a Catalonia in which you can feel you're Spanish without someone calling you a fascist."*

*In Paris, "they killed dozens of European compatriots, but they didn't kill our open society."*

leaders of Spain's two main political parties – the conservative PP and the Socialists – avoid him in one-on-one debate.

Rivera is a Catalan, but a Catalan adamantly Spanish and anti-separatist. In the regional elections in Catalonia earlier this year, his party finished second in vote-share, behind a conglomerate of nationalist parties driving for independence. Buoyed by the results, Rivera has made a major push into national politics: With Spanish general elections set for December 20, he is spoken of as a possible "kingmaker." Polls show that Ciudadanos is the country's third-most-popular party, overtaking Podemos, the insurrectionary upstart that remains the darling of the uncompromising and youthful left. Unlike Podemos, Rivera wants reform, not revolution.

Rivera isn't likely to enter into a coalition with either the PP or the Socialists after the elections. Ciudadanos, in its public pronouncements, is proud of its unsullied political record, as well as of its à la carte ideology. Given its rejection of Catalan separatism and its embrace of the free market, it is sometimes – too

glibly – regarded as a party of the right. Its social policies, however, have much more in common with the center-left's. People close to Pedro Sanchez, the Socialist leader, say that he and Rivera get along, and that the two can work together. On the other hand, Rivera and Mariano Rajoy, prime minister and leader of the PP, have poor political chemistry. This has led analysts to speculate that if the PP needs Rivera's support to stay in power after December 20, Rajoy would have to step down.

Rivera and his party also count on the counsel of two very good economists: Luis Garicano of the London School of Economics (and the University of Chicago), as well as Toni Roldan, an LSE and Columbia alum who co-authored a book with Garicano – "Recuperar el futuro" – that offers a dozen solutions to end Spain's stagnation.

What stands in Rivera's way? The lack of a cosmopolitan liberal tradition in Spain, where voters define themselves as either Socialist (or even further left), or conservative. That, and his youth and inexperience. He is 35, untested outside Catalonia and, some say – though perhaps only in jest – much too good looking.



Multiple-exposure photograph by Alberto Estevez for the European Pressphoto Agency





# 8

LATVIA

## VALDIS DOMBROVSKIS

THE TREATY-MEISTER



As national governments across Europe fight to protect sovereignty and project control as a tide of populism rises across the Continent, Valdis Dombrovskis is swimming against the tide.

He doesn't do grandstanding, nor the forehead kisses and playful slaps of his boss at the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker. If Mario Cuomo campaigned in poetry and governed in prose, Dombrovskis campaigns in powerpoint and governs in numbers.

After implementing Europe's most severe austerity as prime minister of Latvia (no referendums, one small bailout, 24 percent unemployment), Dombrovskis increased his party's number of seats in the following election. When economics Nobel laureate Paul Krugman called Latvia the "new Argentina" in 2008, Dombrovskis kept quiet and ploughed on, securing eurozone membership for his country.

Yet he also quickly offered his resignation in 2013 after a shopping center collapsed, killing 54, raising questions about whether state building inspections should have been protected from the budget cuts.

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### WHICH HISTORICAL FIGURE DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?

*Naming one would be an injustice to others. I draw inspiration from many outstanding men and women who, by means of their ideas and the course of their actions, pushed society toward progress... or simply made the world a better place.*

He later told MEPs that there was "no question that the crisis has created deep social problems." In each case, though, the short-term pain was put aside so Dombrovskis could focus on his mantras of the "overall picture" and "stability," which have also become the guiding forces behind his Commission role of saving the eurozone from itself.

Dombrovskis, currently the European Commissioner for the Euro and Social Dialogue, presents modestly and talks the talk of non-legislative workarounds and "sharing best practice" to make the EU's monitoring of national budgets work better. He writes report cards on leaders that can't control their national budgets; he's preparing treaty changes to finish the EU's half-built economic governance, and won't listen to excuses from the backsliding Greek government.

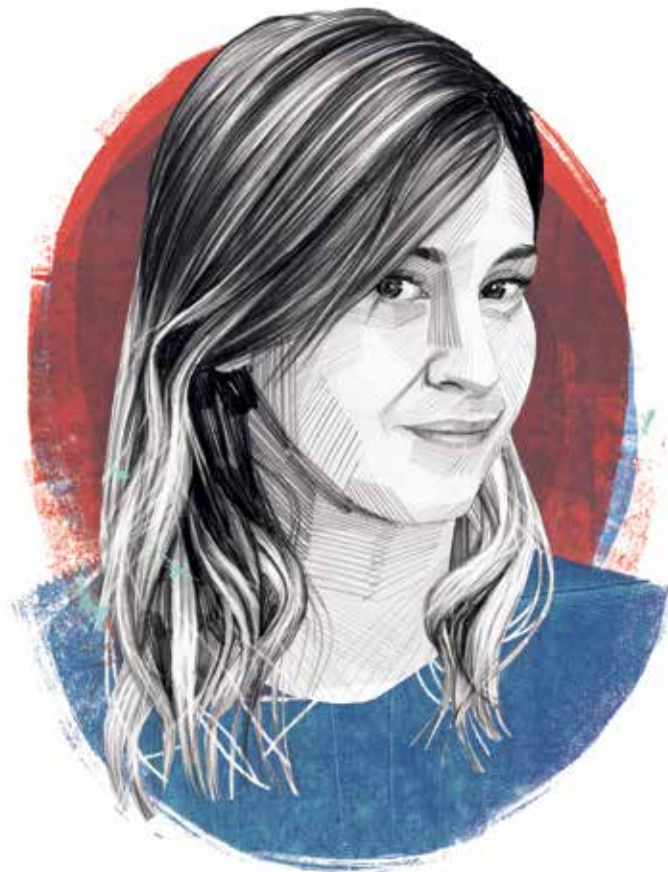
But there's a bigger picture in mind.

Dombrovskis is also the man Brussels insiders bet will step into the hot seat should any political or personal tragedy befall Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker or Council President Donald Tusk (whom he nearly beat for the job in 2014).



# MARIA ELENA BOSCHI

THE CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMER



Maria Elena Boschi drew much media coverage back in 2014 when Matteo Renzi appointed her, at age 33, minister for constitutional reforms. That was a crucial post for an Italian prime minister who had put political reform at the center of his government's action. Nearly two years later, with the passing of the institutional reform in 2015 that will reduce the power of the senate, Boschi has shown that youth is not incompatible with political success.

The reform is even named after her. The "Boschi bill" puts an end to a system where the two houses of Parliament had equal powers, which meant lengthy procedures and, often, legislative paralysis. From now on, Italy's governments will no longer depend for their survival on a vote of confidence from the Senate, which will only number 100 senators, down from the current 325.

When the bill was finally approved in October, Renzi wrote on Facebook that Italy had "written another piece of its future."

The change will have to be approved by a popular referendum in 2016, but there's little chance it will be rejected. Coupled with an electoral reform already passed

## QUOTE/ UNQUOTE

*"I'm not Wonder Woman."*

*"Once I used to spend until five in the morning clubbing, while now it happens to me only at the Senate."*

*"If it is true that new is not necessarily a synonym of quality, the opposite is also true — not always people with more experience are the most able."*

*"If we will not change Italy, I will go back [to work] as a lawyer."*

*"I prefer to be judged upon my reform rather than my form."*

*"Communists do not exist anymore!"*

ensuring that the winning party will be able to count on a clear parliamentary majority, it should give Italian democracy more stability.

That would be no small feat for a country that has had 63 governments in 70 years.

Like many of Renzi's acolytes, Boschi, a lawyer born in Tuscany, had to overcome many obstacles in her first parliamentary test. The far-right Northern League, for example, used an algorithm to submit no fewer than 80 million amendments to the Senate reform bill.

The reform minister will now embark on a European roadshow to present her reforms to Italy's partners. A regular talk-show guest, she has avoided political gaffes and has even taken the liberty of differing from her mentor. For example, on civic rights — she is in favor of gay marriage, whereas he is more ambiguous. No wonder some already see her bound for even higher positions.

"She could even, one day, be the next prime minister," says David Allegranti, Renzi's biographer.

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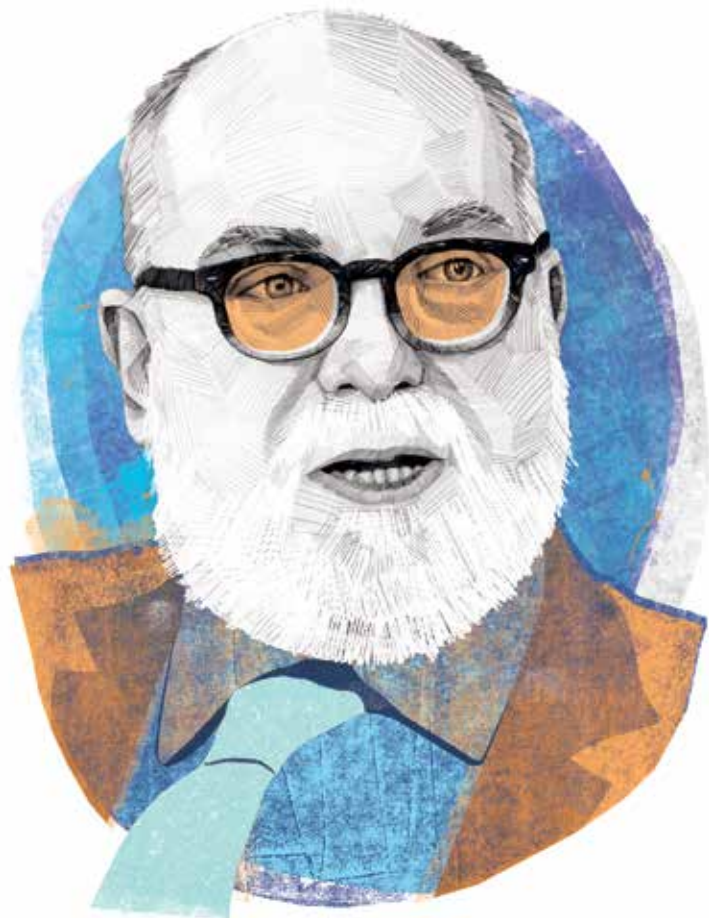
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# THOMAS WIESER

THE MAN WHO MIGHT SAVE THE EURO



When Thomas Wieser, the European Council's behind-the-scenes economic ringleader, was preparing to attend the University of Colorado-Boulder in his 20s, the Austrian had a panic attack. Terrified his classmates would know more than he did about mathematic economics – his subject of study – he got to campus weeks before classes started and raced through the course materials in the library.

Now at the helm of the technical group in charge of bailouts for Europe's troubled economies, the same sense of vigilance serves Wieser well. He helped steer the eurozone through its scariest season to date, as Greece dangled on the edge of an exit from the euro. Wieser drafted Greece's third bailout package of up to €86 billion this summer. His task in the coming year is to make sure Greece implements the deal as promised.

Wieser, who is 61, holds two of Europe's top economics jobs. He leads the European Council's Economic and Finance Committee, a position held earlier by the Continent's most powerful banker, ECB President Mario Draghi, in 2000-2001. This committee prepares meetings of the EU finance ministers. Wieser also runs the Euro Working Group,

## YOUR ADVERTISING SLOGAN FOR EUROPE

*Not perfect, but the best.*

## IF YOU WEREN'T FROM AUSTRIA, WHAT OTHER NATIONALITY WOULD YOU WANT TO BE?

*I have never thought about this, I guess because nationality is quite an artificial labeling device. It does not help defining an individual, does it? If exiled, I would chose New Zealand.*

## WHAT IS ON YOUR NIGHT TABLE?

*Water Music by T.C Boyle; two books by John Kay, who is one of the most original economists; iPhone; a defunct alarm clock of Danish design.*

a laboratory for bailouts that brings together top finance officials to hash out technical details ahead of meetings of the eurozone finance ministers in the Eurogroup.

Wieser isn't just the emergency fireman. He helped design the eurozone's banking union and was behind financial structures improvised to save the eurozone: the European Financial Stability Facility, a rescue fund, and the European Stability Mechanism, the eurozone's permanent financial backstop. Its lending capacity maxes out at €500 billion, more than one-quarter of which is currently lent to Spain, Cyprus and Greece.

Born in Maryland to an Austrian biologist and a British physiologist, Wieser's tastes are trans-Atlantic: He likes Bruce Springsteen and Baroque composers. When his family returned to Austria when he was a young boy, his classmates ridiculed him for the traditional yellow raincoat his mom had bought for him on Cape Cod. Around Brussels, he has shed the raincoat and cuts an elegantly jolly figure, in smartly-tailored Austrian suits and a well-kept white beard. Yet as in his American youth, he's braced for the next EU storm.

# MATS PERSSON

THE ALPHA THINK-TANKER



At first glance, it might seem bizarre that David Cameron would pluck a silent Swedish giant from a Euroskeptic think-tank to help avert a vote for Brexit in a U.K. referendum.

Mats Persson, the former director of Open Europe, was brought into the inner circle of Downing Street in May to find workable policy reforms that would make the EU attractive to Britain without alienating Brussels.

Towering over his English boss, the 6'7" (two meters flat, across the Channel) Viking redhead is a former basketball player from Bankeryd, a Swedish town of 8,000 that's a world away from the fevered British "In/Out" debate. Persson has been a regular at the plenaries in Strasbourg since negotiations stepped up in September and has been Cameron's stand-in for explaining British reform to MEPs.

The cerebral Persson is credited with transforming Open Europe from an anti-euro shop into a respected think-tank on trade, justice and home affairs. After graduating from the London School of Economics in 2007, he joined Open Europe as a researcher and worked his

## QUOTE/ UNQUOTE

*"Without the U.K., the EU will, on aggregate, be far more hostile to free trade, and Germany will have lost its key political counterweight to the southern protectionist bloc."*

*"We need a whole new generation of politicians, committed to acting in the public interest and pushing for a much better deal for taxpayers at all levels of government – especially EU level."*

*"As the Swedish euro vote shows – warts and all, the public can opt for perfectly rational and responsible outcomes that would not occur if politicians were left to their own devices."*

way up, diversifying the all-British staff, opening offices in Brussels and Germany and completely rebranding the think-tank.

Persson shocked many colleagues when he joined No. 10.

Others say they saw the move coming when he pushed out a paper in May called "Evaluating 30 potential proposals for EU renegotiation." It focused on benefits reform, and was referenced by Cameron in a speech. He was hired shortly thereafter.

Before he took the job, Persson warned on the Open Europe forum that the British shouldn't rush an EU referendum if they want to make real reforms at the EU level. He suggested waiting until 2017. Since joining Downing Street, the Swede has had a more "technical" profile.

The stakes are clearly high for Persson, whose guarded nature creates the impression that he's a bit of an outsider in the PM's office. "He's been very careful and collective," says a source in the Pro-EU campaign. Which is as it should be, one would assume: Persson's star is hitched to Cameron's – and to success in the referendum.



# PANTI BLISS

a.k.a. Rory O'Neill

THE DRAG-QUEEN ACTIVIST



Modern Ireland found the antidote to its socially conservative, Catholic image in gender-bending gay rights activist Rory O'Neill. O'Neill left his sleepy rural hometown for art school in Dublin, before moving to London for its superior gay scene, and, finally, to Tokyo. There, he began performing as Panty Bliss, his drag alter-ego, and toured with '80s pop sensation Cyndi Lauper. He returned to Ireland in '95, and for two decades performed in relative obscurity. In May, he became the figurehead of Ireland's successful gay marriage referendum.

It happened almost by accident. In 2014, O'Neill kicked up a storm on a late-night talk show on RTÉ, Ireland's public broadcaster, when he described two prominent Catholic columnists and the Iona Institute, a Catholic think-tank, as "really horrible and mean about gays." RTÉ was forced to issue a public apology and pay out a total of €85,000 to the six who threatened legal action.

The debacle – dubbed "Pantigate" – catapulted homophobia to the top of the national agenda, pitting Ireland's old guard against its social progressives. Within a week of the payout, Bliss, resplendent in a purple dress and blonde

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*Peace, prosperity, and equality through togetherness.*

## WHICH HISTORICAL FIGURE DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?

*Alan Turing.*

## WHAT THREE THINGS DO YOU TAKE WITH YOU EVERYWHERE YOU GO?

*I take my phone ... my HIV medication, and ... I would like to say my dog but I can't always take her everywhere because of EU regulations.*

wig, made a 10-minute speech about the affair that went viral online.

The outspoken queen captured the public imagination in a country that didn't decriminalize gay sex until 1993. O'Neill was surprised himself. He charts it up to the fact that drag queens, often considered "fun" and almost "cartoonish" in popular culture, are divorced from the messy moral questions that plague other public figures, and can be more relatable. Ahead of the referendum, Bliss took to the campaign trail to appeal to younger people, with whom he is most popular, and to rally doubters in support of the cause. The campaign won.

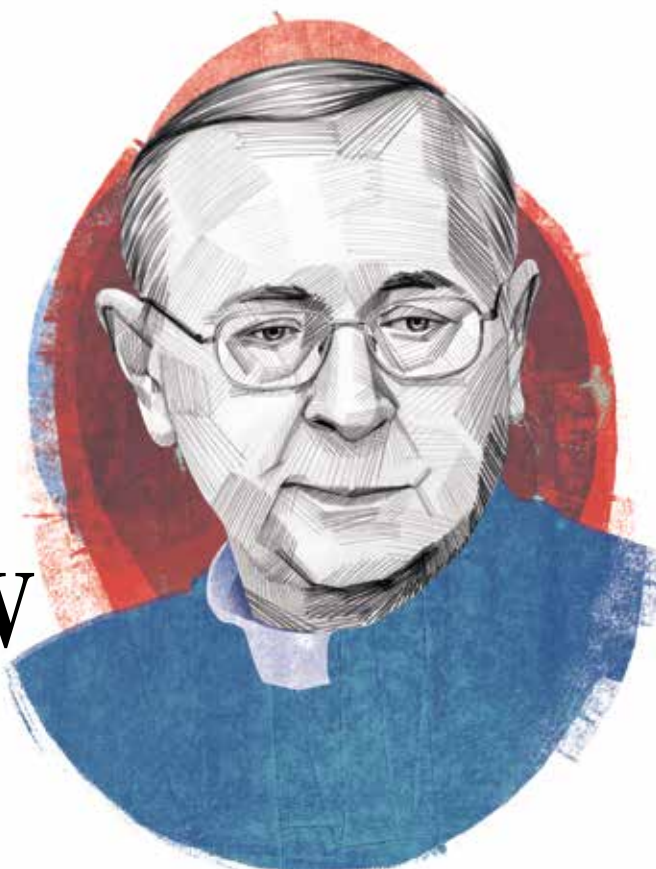
Ireland's lightning shift away from Catholic orthodoxy resonated beyond its borders, offering hope that gay rights can flourish even in unlikely places. O'Neill plays down his own role and credits the country's activists, the power of the internet and Irish kindness for the referendum result. Next up: fighting for LGBT rights outside Ireland. "We have achieved an incredible amount in a very short amount of time, and I think how we did that is instructive for other minority groups," he says. Is Putin ready for a Russian drag queen extraordinaire?





# STANISŁAW GADECKI

THE MORAL CRUSADER



Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki will make the Roman Catholic Church's voice resound across Poland at a time of major political change in the overwhelmingly Catholic nation.

His views are also echoing beyond his homeland. The 66-year-old Gądecki has become one of the most vocal opponents of doctrinal liberalization pushed by Pope Francis, leading the resistance to soften Church teaching on divorce and acceptance of homosexuality.

That's the same tough line the head of the Polish bishops conference is pushing in Poland.

The archbishop may well argue that he wants to keep the Church – the most powerful institution in Poland – out of daily politics. But his influence was one of the reasons the Civic Platform lost May's presidential elections and October's parliamentary vote, as opponents seized on the party's perceived leftward drift on social issues.

It has been replaced by the Law and Justice party, which is better disposed toward the Church's ideas.

## QUOTE/ UNQUOTE

*"In the question of 'in vitro' procedures, there are not just two sides to the discussion, that it opponents and proponents... The third side is unborn children. It is they who, immediately after conception, have their right to development, birth and a dignified life taken away."*

*On "gender": "Communism wanted to divide by class... and now this is happening in another much more subtle way, through the teaching of gender, by questioning the rightness of the existence of marriage and the family."*

For months, Gądecki led the attack against Poland ratifying the Council of Europe's convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, arguing that it undercut the Church's teaching on sexuality by mentioning "socially constructed roles" for men and women. He hasn't pulled his punches, comparing "gender" ideology to an evil "worse than communism."

The archbishop then blasted a new law financing in vitro fertilization. "The episcopate is completely against the law on treating infertility," he said in a letter, which went on to warn that enacting such a reform could lead to "expulsion from the community of the Church."

Gądecki has opposed any compromise on approving civil unions for Polish gays. Same-sex marriage is out of the question in Poland, where an adamant constitution defines marriage as being between a man and a woman.

"[The archbishop] opposes any liberalization of Church doctrine," says Marcin Przeciszewski, editor in chief of Poland's Catholic News Agency, an operation once overseen by Gądecki



himself. "The Church was very opposed to this cultural revolution" coming to Poland from Western Europe.

He's also battling a cultural revolution in the broader Church. During a recent Synod on the family, Gądecki strongly opposed liberal German bishops who wanted to allow divorced and remarried Catholics to take communion.

The Church "cannot bend to human will, but only to the will of Christ," Gądecki said in one of several uncompromising interviews making him one of the most visible churchmen fighting the Franciscan moderation.

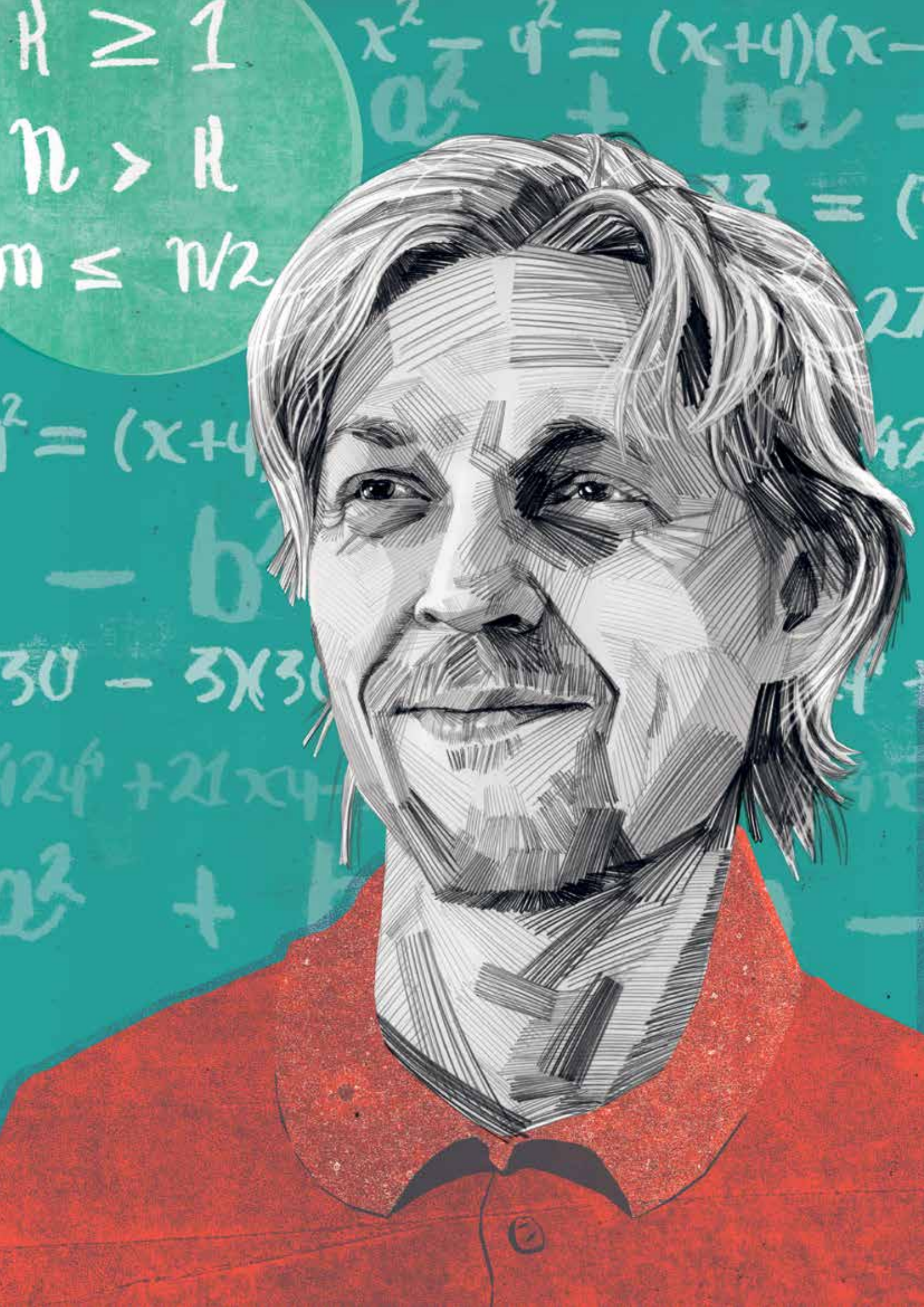
That heavyweight, hardline role, both inside and outside Poland, is something of a break from the recent past for the Polish Church. John Paul II, born Karol Wojtyła, was so dominant in his home church that local hierarchs were eclipsed by him.

John Paul died a decade ago. Today, Gądecki seems to have the intellectual heft to make the Polish Church a political player again. His linguistic abilities are impressive – he speaks English, German, Italian and Russian, as well as ancient Greek, Latin and Hebrew – and he has studied in Rome and Jerusalem.

At a time when Poland's politics are being reshaped by a triumphant Law and Justice party, Gądecki is likely to be a significant presence. "Certainly the Church will be listened to by the new government and the new president," said Przeciszewski.

They will, in all likelihood, be doing a lot of listening: The archbishop is just one year into the first of two possible five-year terms as the country's most important cleric. Think of this as Poland's Decade of Gądecki.





## KAREL JANEČEK

THE CRUSADING DEMOCRAT

Karel Janeček used his mathematical skills to build a lucrative financial-derivatives business, and now he's using that same knack for numbers to rethink how democracy functions.

He doesn't have any government job and he's not a professional politician, but his quest for a cleaner and more understandable voting system has struck a chord in one of the EU's most corrupt countries.

The Czech Republic lags most of the rest of Central Europe in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. The country's politics have been frequently roiled by fraud scandals. It's led to the formation of new political parties that attempt to break the old system, such as TOP09, which was founded in 2009, and the ANO movement founded by billionaire (and current finance minister) Andrej Babiš in 2011.

The perception remains that something is deeply wrong with Czech politics. The political system has been "completely taken over by real bastards," Janeček said earlier this year.

He calls his scheme Democracy 2.1. The

**YOUR ADVERTISING SLOGAN FOR EUROPE**  
*Freedom, justice, respect, rationality, empathy.*

**WHICH HISTORICAL FIGURE DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?**  
*Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk.*

**WHAT THREE THINGS DO YOU TAKE WITH YOU EVERYWHERE YOU GO?**  
*My mobile, ID and a photo of my beloved wife.*

idea is to replace one-person, one-vote systems with elections where voters have more than one vote, and in some cases negative anti-votes. The formulas set the numerical balance between positive votes and negative ones, with each voter casting multiple votes on a single ballot and the sum of pluses and minuses determining the outcome. "Multiple votes allow voters to say an entire sentence, not just a single name," Janeček said.

As with most other EU countries, the Czech Republic uses a form of proportional representation. Voters can express preferences for individual candidates on the list of the party they vote for. But who makes it into parliament still depends on intra-party backroom deals.

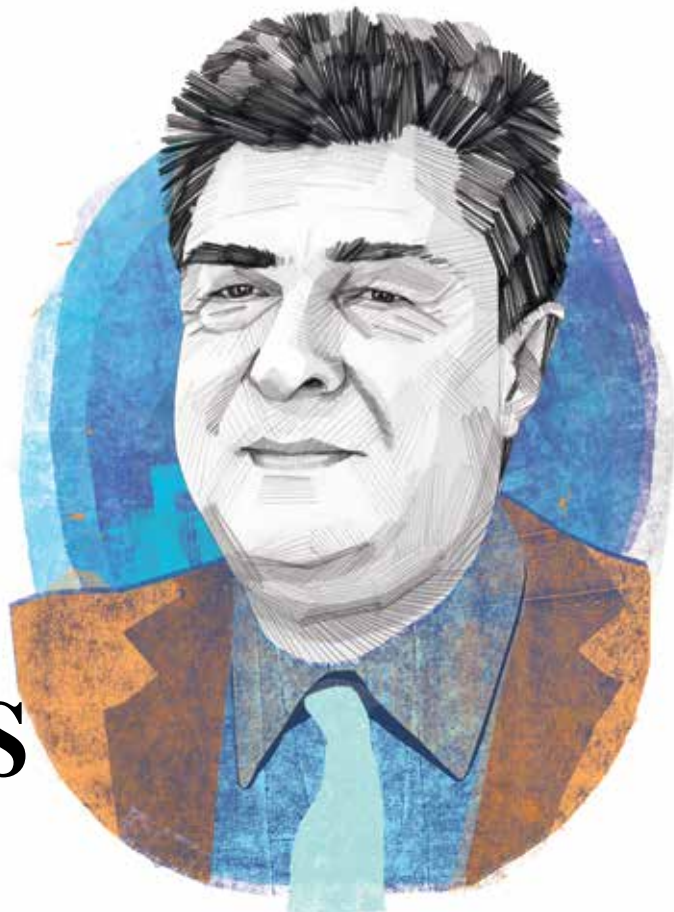
So far the idea hasn't gained much traction with national politicians in Prague, but it has been taken up by dozens of Czech towns which now use multiple voting schemes to set budgetary priorities.

Unlike Babiš, Janeček isn't running for office himself. The goal is to stay in the background and make the system work better.



# ALEXIS PAPAHELAS

THE HONEST GREEK



Alexis Papahelas spared no one from a share of the blame for the midsummer Grexit melee: the ill-prepared prime minister “Comandante Alexis [Tsipras],” the rigid and uncompromising creditors, and the nation itself – for sleepwalking “to the brink of the abyss.”

Papahelas, executive editor at Greece’s venerable daily broadsheet Kathimerini and a well-known face on television news shows, prides himself on a healthy dose of skepticism, even if it means making enemies. “The job of the journalist is to go against the current,” he said once. “I don’t write or make programs to be liked. I like to speak my mind, even if it goes against the current.”

Kathimerini, published by members of a prominent shipping family who also own Greece’s Skai broadcasting group, is broadly conservative and critics from both left and right say it represents the business interests of the establishment. At the height of this year’s bailout drama, the newspaper was above all a pro-European voice, appealing to reason in turbulent times.

“We only have a few days left to ensure the country’s European prospects will not

## YOUR ADVERTISING SLOGAN FOR EUROPE

*The power of tolerance, compromise, culture and balanced growth.*

## WHICH HISTORICAL FIGURE DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?

Winston Churchill.

## WHAT THREE THINGS DO YOU TAKE WITH YOU EVERYWHERE YOU GO?

*The little “inspiration notebook” my wife gave me, my phone (I’m afraid I’m addicted to it) and my reading glasses (can’t read without them...).*

be endangered,” Papahelas wrote with urgency in a June 28 column, a day after Tsipras stunned creditors and political opponents by calling a referendum on whether to accept the terms of a third multi-billion euro rescue package.

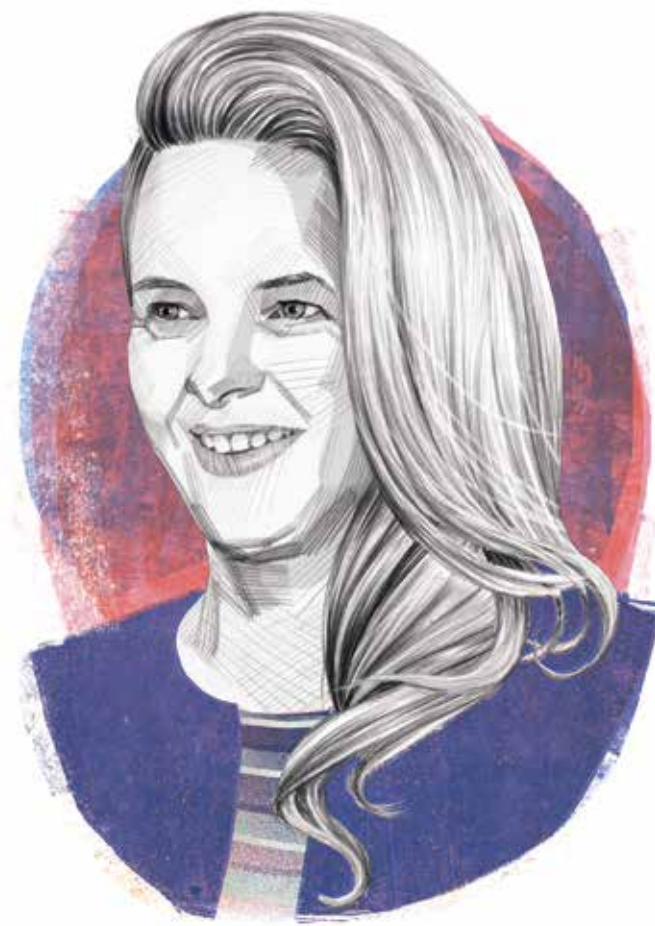
His frequent editorials resonate with urban middle-class Greeks who feel they are part of the EU and were horrified at the prospect of leaving it. Papahelas often invokes the late conservative statesman Konstantinos Karamanlis, who talked about “Greece’s European destiny” and worked doggedly for the country to join the European Economic Community, which it finally did in 1981.

Papahelas’s Europeanism, coupled with a ready recognition of his country’s flawed and corrupt political system, strike a sympathetic chord outside Greece too, and Kathimerini has gained international esteem under his stewardship.

Papahelas was invited two years ago to the secretive annual Bilderberg conference of global political and business leaders, and Kathimerini is a favorite interview stop for foreign dignitaries visiting Athens.

# PRINCESS MABEL

THE ROYAL WITH A CAUSE



At 25, she lobbied Margaret Thatcher and Valéry Giscard d’Estaing for peace in the Balkans; she is co-founder and chair of the European Council on Foreign Relations, as well as advising numerous human rights groups; and the organization she began and chairs, Girls Not Brides, can claim partial credit for the U.N. setting the aim of ending child marriage by 2030.

In her native Netherlands, however, Princess Mabel became the center of attention when rumors – which she robustly denied – of an earlier relationship with a slain drug dealer meant Prince Friso van Oranje-Nassau had to renounce his right to the throne when the pair married in 2003. She kept the honorary title of ‘Princess’ after Prince Friso, the father of her two children, died in 2013 following a skiing accident.

Mabel, 47, says the theme of her work is amplifying worthy issues that are forgotten or ignored. An internship at the U.N. in 1993 prompted her to start the European Action Council for Peace in the Balkans, but Mabel says ending child marriage, which affects 15 million girls each year, requires a different approach.

Girls Not Brides, a partnership of more

## QUOTE/ UNQUOTE

*“Nowadays, in conflict situations, it is more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier.”*

*“We’re not going to end child marriage overnight. Commitments must be matched by long-term policies & funding.”*

than 500 civil society organizations, is working to end the centuries-old practice, which is exacerbated by poverty and the need for dowry payments, but also by the misconception that marriage protects girls from sexual violence.

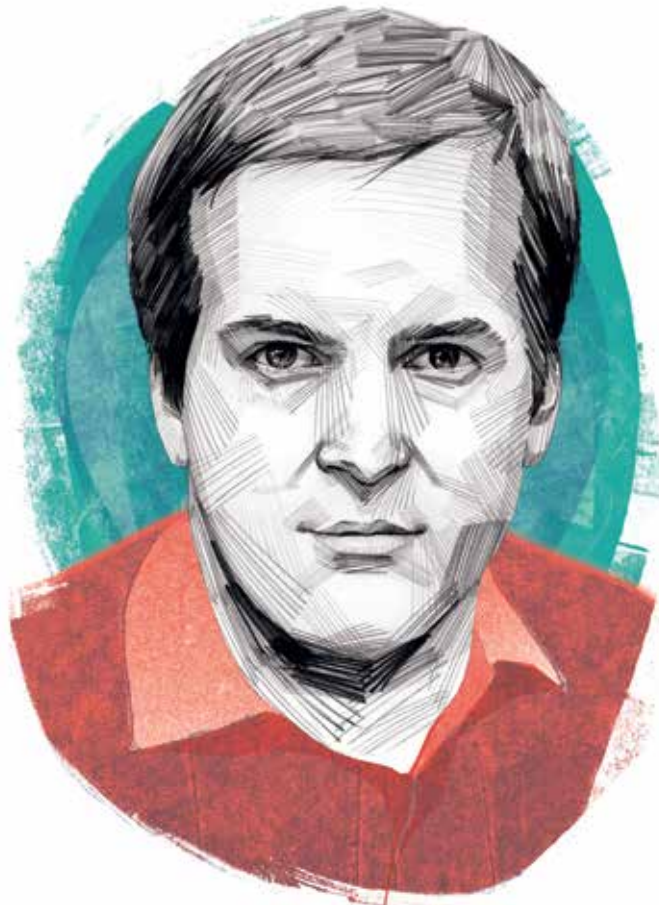
In Senegal this year, Mabel watched Girls Not Brides members spark conversations about how girls’ earning power decreases the earlier they are married due to a lack of schooling. “The men in the village realized that this practice was not only harmful to the girls but it was actually harmful to the whole community.”

By including the target to end child marriage in the Sustainable Development Goals, agreed this September, she says the U.N. has changed the terms of the debate. “Child marriage is no longer a taboo subject. Therefore we can start talking with governments about what policies they will develop, how much money will mobilize ... Now the real work starts, now we need to get it implemented.”



# TAAVET HINRIKUS

THE UNICORN MAN



Back to the 1991 future. Newly independent Estonia, with a population of just over 1.3 million, has a GDP of a few thousand euros per person. Fewer than half its households are connected to a telephone line.

Today the country is Europe's startup haven. Estonians brought the world Skype, the most popular Internet-based communications company, and TransferWise, a currency exchange platform so popular it could be valued at \$1 billion – a so-called “unicorn” in the making.

Taavet Hinrikus, Skype's first ever employee and the co-founder of TransferWise, is the common denominator. He is also one of the richest Estonians. Hinrikus credits his country – which he calls “startup nation” – for his entrepreneurial spirit. If you need something in Estonia, you go out and build it, he says.

“I experienced this when I started working for Skype, when it was still just an idea on the back of a napkin,” Hinrikus tells POLITICO. “We set out to build a global telco and I quickly learned that it's possible to build a revolution with good

## YOUR ADVERTISING SLOGAN FOR EUROPE

*Let's make the world better.*

## WHICH HISTORICAL FIGURE DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?

*Edmund Hillary or Buzz Aldrin.*

## IF YOU WEREN'T ESTONIAN, WHAT OTHER NATIONALITY WOULD YOU WANT TO BE?

*I'd only be Estonian.*

tech skills and a clear mission.”

Hinrikus launched TransferWise in 2011, with his friend and countryman Kristo Käärmann. Their success depended on disrupting one of the world's most lucrative and insular businesses: banking.

The idea for the company came to Hinrikus when he relocated to London for work. “I was based in London but was paid in euros. Kristo worked in London but paid an Estonian mortgage in euros,” he says. We figured out a fair way to exchange money between ourselves, using the mid-market rate.”

This year marked a turning point for TransferWise. In November, it opened its first U.S. office in Tampa, Florida, with about 50 staff, and with ambitious growth plans in place, the company now has its sights on world domination.

TransferWise's list of backers looks like a who's-who of some of the world's richest investors – among others, venture capitalist firm Andreessen Horowitz, Sir Richard Branson, French media tycoon Xavier Niel, and PayPal co-founders Peter Thiel and Max Levchin.

# HARRIS GEORGIADES

THE RESPONSIBLE STEWARD



Cypriots can generally be relied upon to give their Greek kin the benefit of the doubt. But as Greece teetered on the brink of “Grexit” during the summer, Cyprus's mild-mannered finance minister, Harris Georgiades, must have feared he was backing the wrong horse.

Georgiades, 43, who has helped make his island nation a star pupil in Europe's bailout class, had little support from fellow finance ministers when he urged them to extend emergency aid to Greece and ease its debt burden.

A self-confessed “believer in the free market” who has doggedly implemented the stringent demands of creditors, Georgiades's solidarity with Athens can hardly have been born of conviction. He had earlier questioned the negotiating tactics of Yanis Varoufakis, his maverick Greek counterpart, drawing the ire of the opposition.

Bonds of kinship aside, self-interest may also have played a role in Georgiades' support for Greece. As Cyprus prepares to exit its €10 billion rescue program, the last thing he wanted was a meltdown on the mainland scuttling his efforts to turn a final page on the financial crisis.

## QUOTE/ UNQUOTE

*“I believe in rationality, making non-dogmatic decisions far from prejudice and obsession. And I insist that in the end, decisions have to be made. Procrastination is a characteristic that has had a significant cost.”*

*“When I don't have a dinner engagement at the ministry, I go to bed very early, at 10 p.m. at the latest. But every day, even at the weekend, I wake up at five in the morning or earlier. I write, think and read in peace... At the moment of course, I'd like to have more time with my daughter.”*

An incipient economic recovery has taken root under the disciplined stewardship of Georgiades, who close associates have credited with a steady hand and a readiness to “meet or even beat” the demands of Cyprus' creditors.

Georgiades, who hails from the center-right Democratic Rally party and used to run a family-owned hotel business, has proven tougher than some might have expected given his relative inexperience when he was appointed in April 2013. In his favor, expectations were low: The hated bailout – which imposed losses on savers – had already been agreed to and none of his three predecessors lasted more than 11 months in the job.

It has been a painful path back to fiscal health, however, and Georgiades has faced criticism for heavy-handedness. High rates of unemployment and non-performing loans suggest Cyprus is not out of the woods yet. But its biggest sacrifices may be in the past. In April, capital controls were lifted. In October, the country made its first long-term debt sale since the bailout and the economy has started to grow. Next year should be its last under the watchful eye of the Troika.



# TOMAS VALASEK

THE DEFENSE STRATEGIST



Tomas Valasek arrived at NATO headquarters, that graying Cold War warhorse, in time for a new Cold War with Russia. "Overnight the issues I had worked on started to loom large, and what were once second-order priorities became the dominant issues," says Slovakia's ambassador to the military alliance in Brussels.

The Russian annexation of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula, the first forced land grab on the Continent since World War II, followed by its invasion (albeit undeclared) of the country's east has ended Europe's 25-year respite from major power tensions. Vladimir Putin's challenge to the post-'89 order, continuing this past year with aggressive military posturing across Europe and into the Middle East, is shaking the cobwebs off NATO – and bringing a doer-thinker like Valasek into the center of the debate over security in Europe.

Fit and intense, Valasek, 43, came over into diplomacy and policymaking relatively late in his career, after a long life as a self-admitted "defense wonk." Born in the Soviet satellite of Czechoslovakia, he went West to study (and pursue another passion, cycling) and landed

## WHICH HISTORICAL FIGURE DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?

*FDR. Because he was the person who, more than anyone else, proved that international relations were not doomed to be a struggle between big nations and everyone else. Building an international system accommodating big and small nations is an amazing achievement. We are not by nature peace-loving. That we have managed to build something that defies that ... amazes me and has to be cherished.*

## WHAT THREE THINGS DO YOU TAKE WITH YOU EVERYWHERE YOU GO?

*iPad, noise-cancelling headphones and a book – usually on history, geography or defense.*

at the influential London-based Centre for European Reform. Three years ago, he moved to Bratislava to run another think tank and put on a popular regional security forum, bringing top political names to the Slovak capital. Then he jumped to a top defense ministry job and soon after, in the spring of 2013, to Brussels.

As a wonk and now a diplomat who worries about Russia, his focus these days is to promote defense cooperation between wary neighbors, trying to herd NATO's eastern members together to strengthen their deterrence and deal with a deepening migration crisis as a group.

"Governments once treated [the need for strong defense] as discretionary," the hyperenergetic Valasek says in nearly accentless English. "Now all of a sudden we are looking at challenges to the very borders of our countries, and it's not discretionary anymore. It's self-defense."

Referring to NATO today, "The right words to describe the mood are 'quiet determination.' The Alliance only works because we take an interest in each other's worries – it's not an à la carte Alliance."





# OZAN YANAR

THE YOUNG TURK



Finland finds itself at an ideological crossroads. April's election produced a right-of-center government in coalition with a Euroskeptical junior partner. Anti-immigrant rhetoric has increased – although not quite to the levels seen elsewhere in Europe – and Ozan Yanar has been visibly promoting multiculturalism and tolerance.

The 28-year-old Yanar, born in Turkey, moved to Finland at 14. Today, he's a freshman MP, elected for Helsinki on the Green Party list, one of two new immigrant MPs. While politicians born in Sweden or Estonia have been elected to the Finnish Parliament before, none were so obviously "foreign" as the newly elected duo from Turkey and Afghanistan.

Involved in politics at Helsinki University, Yanar beat the odds of the Finnish electoral system in his first attempt. Aspiring MPs in the capital must usually endure several fruitless local, national or European campaign cycles before their name recognition raises them high enough on a party list to land a seat in Parliament.

"I'd say 95 percent of the responses are very positive, a lot of people stopping

**YOUR ADVERTISING SLOGAN FOR EUROPE**  
*Not perfect, but a work in progress.*

**WHICH HISTORICAL FIGURE DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?**  
*Martin Luther King.*

**IF YOU WEREN'T FROM FINLAND, WHAT OTHER NATIONALITY WOULD YOU BE?**  
*Italian. They have pretty good football teams, very nice food and a Mediterranean mentality that I love. And they surely have also lots of things in politics to fix.*

me on the streets. People who'd like to have an international, open and forward-looking Finland have been incredibly supportive," Yanar says.

But there's a certain swath of Finland that's not fond of Yanar, perhaps because he accused a populist politician of being "cut from the same cloth" as Islamists during a parliamentary debate on marriage equality. "The negative responses have been 'go back to your country' kind of messages. Sometimes my mailbox is full of these," laments Yanar.

"Finns with migrant backgrounds have been living in this country for a very long time," says Yanar. "You can see them everywhere in Finnish society these days. This is why I find it really odd when the rhetoric of immigration is 'we' and 'them.'"

# LAURA CODRUȚA KÖVESI

THE DIRT-BUSTER



The first woman to be Romania's prosecutor general, Laura Codruța Kövesi, was only 33 when appointed in 2006. Seven years later, she marked another milestone when she was named the head of the Romanian Anticorruption Directorate (DNA), an institution created to fight high-level corruption in the years when Romania was preparing to join the EU. Ever since, she has presided over corruption cases of leading Romanian politicians from all parties: former minister Elena Udrea; Bucharest mayor Sorin Opreșcu; former president Traian Băsescu's brother, who was arrested when Băsescu was still in office; and, at the time of indictment in September, then-prime minister Victor Ponta.

Romanians have long suspected their politicians were corrupt, but her investigations showed the stunning extent of it. In the first nine months of 2015, Kövesi's DNA indicted 14 former or current legislators; four ministers; Ponta, who resigned in November; and 10 city mayors.

The daughter of a prosecutor, Kövesi went to law school in the early 1990s, the first years of newly democratic Romania. She started work in a highly

**YOUR ADVERTISING SLOGAN FOR EUROPE**  
*More education, less corruption.*

**WHICH HISTORICAL FIGURE DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?**  
*No one in particular. I admire people who managed to do something in life, who are serious, responsible and professional.*

**WHAT THREE THINGS DO YOU TAKE WITH YOU EVERYWHERE YOU GO?**  
*A book, sports equipment and a phone.*

male environment, when "the system encouraged gender discrimination" in job assignments, she tells POLITICO. Things have changed since then; discrimination disappeared from the judicial system, and job assignments and promotions are now based on other criteria, she says.

Today, many regular citizens look at Kövesi with the hope that Romania's politics and society can be cleansed of the deep corruption that has bedeviled the country since the fall of communism.

Kövesi has her critics: Some claim that she is playing political games. Her response is that the DNA goes after all officials suspected of corruption. "Over the past few years politicians from all parties were investigated, independently of their parties being in power or in opposition." Ninety percent of those indicted end up being convicted, which, she says, shows that the evidence is solid and the judicial procedure is respected.

"For the fight against corruption to succeed, our will, determination and skill are not sufficient," Kövesi declares. "It's vital that prosecutors' independence and the institutional stability of DNA remain unaltered."



# IVO BOSCAROL

THE ENGINEER

Energy-efficient transport? Tesla and Silicon Valley come to mind first – not planes, and almost certainly not Slovenia.

Yet a couple of Slovenian dreamers are making low-carbon flight take off in a way that highlights this continent's love of most things green and, perhaps the bigger surprise, sometimes muffled entrepreneurial vim.

Ivo Boscarol, founder of aircraft manufacturer Pipistrel, produces ultra-light and electric planes. His old friend, photographer and extreme pilot Matevž Lenarčič, was the first in 2004 to fly solo around the world in an ultra-light aircraft – proving that low-carbon flight has a viable future.

In one of his missions Lenarčič used a Pipistrel aircraft to fly over the North Pole on a climate research mission. Why does he do it? Lenarčič doesn't give much away. But he believes in Pipistrel's ethos: Air travel has to be sustainable to have a future. "The secret of economic flights in aviation is design: low drag, a lot of lift and a very fuel-efficient engine. Pipistrel has all of this," he says. Boscarol describes his friend as an environment-conscious adventurer with unassailable personal

IVO BOSCAROL

**YOUR ADVERTISING SLOGAN FOR EUROPE**

*The rigidity of Europe is the biggest advantage of our competitors.*

**WHICH HISTORICAL FIGURE DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?**

*Nikola Tesla [the Serbian American engineer.]*

**WHAT THREE THINGS DO YOU TAKE WITH YOU EVERYWHERE YOU GO?**

*Any device to be connected to the Internet. Cash. I don't like to work too much with plastic money. I don't know...*

# AND MATEVŽ LENARČIČ

THE EXPLORER

ethics. The pair is planning future projects. Their sense of adventure may turn out to be the catalyst low-carbon flight needs.

It's been a long time coming. Boscoral spent his late twenties quietly tinkering with aircraft design in his workshop in Ajdovščina, a small Slovenian town near the Italian border. He trained as an economist in former Yugoslavia and started with a printing business. When he decided to buy a hang glider – flight always fascinated him – he found that it wasn't built according to his "very high standards." He modified and sold a new model to his friends. His ultra-light aircraft business grew from there.

Pipistrel became the first privately owned aviation business in the Balkans and, in 2007, the first in the world to bring a fully electric twin-seater aircraft onto the market. Equipped with a solar-powered trailer to allow the plane to recharge in storage, it was able to fly at 220 kilometers per hour for 600 kilometers, in silence. The Taurus G2 won the NASA Green Flight Challenge in 2011 and \$1.3 million in prize money. "It's a completely independent system with no impact on the environment," says Boscarol.



Large competitors like Airbus have only developed prototype electric planes.

For all Boscarol's achievements – Pipistrel was named most innovative company in the European Union in 2010 – he eludes the spotlight. "I can say that I have the best team in the world," he says. Boscarol's employees often leave work at 3.30 p.m. so they can spend time with their families. He could easily relocate his growing business to the States and likely reap the profit, but he says he doesn't

MATEVŽ LENARČIČ

SO...

*These kind of stupid questions I never answer.*

agree with American business values, which he believes disrespect workers and the environment. And in any case, business is doing fine. Pipistrel won a contract to supply the Indian Airforce with 194 planes in October.



# ANTANAS GUOGA

THE POKER POLITICIAN



Antanas "Tony" Guoga never meant to be an MEP. In 1984, as an 11-year-old refugee from Soviet Lithuania, he packed his Rubik's Cube (he was reigning national champion) and headed to Melbourne, Australia. By the turn of the century he'd become a freewheeling globetrotter known as "Tony G," the Aussie bad boy of international poker.

Guoga was a cable TV star, a multi-millionaire, and on the way to building his own online gambling empire TonyBet. (His four-star Tony Resort and marriage to model Aistė Šlapokaitė would come later). But in re-laying roots in his native Lithuania, Guoga saw a political system sadly lacking business nous. Struggling with a 20 percent drop in GDP in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, Lithuania's population was draining away, led by a political class that hadn't escaped its Soviet past. Guoga saw complacency where others saw Lithuania gaining from EU subsidies and market access. Guoga used his wealth to launch himself as a competent populist, intent on telling Lithuanians and officials in Brussels all the things others couldn't afford to tell them.

To get there he drove 42,000 kilometers (Lithuania has only 13,000 kilometers

**YOUR ADVERTISING SLOGAN FOR EUROPE**  
*Don't talk — just do it!*

**WHICH HISTORICAL FIGURE DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?**  
*Confucius.*

**WOULD YOU TAKE A REFUGEE INTO YOUR OWN HOME?**  
*I already have said for the national (Lithuanian) media at the beginning of the discussions regarding the quotas — if my country cannot take 200 refugees I will take them into my resort.*

of paved roads) and recruited 2,000 volunteers. Since winning election to the European Parliament in 2014, he still gives his MEP salary to charity.

His unsexy mission is structural economic reform. "One percent growth is not OK, the country will be deleted. Lithuania made cuts but didn't make the reforms Estonia did. We need to restart the computer on a fresh operating platform. If we want to catch up to Germany it means we have to be better than Germany."

Tony Guoga is already a hero to many Lithuanians, but in 2015 he took that status cross-border. He gave voice to the frustration of fed-up Balts, and eastern Europeans across the board, in a rap song that slammed Greeks for wanting subsidies and loans from much poorer EU states.

Politics is just a new game of poker, he says. "I know how much money to put into something, how to model possible outcomes of events, manage risk. Poker is about understanding what hand others have and what people are thinking about you," and taking responsibility.

"In bureaucracy there is no responsibility."



# MATE RIMAC

THE INNOVATOR



It's hard enough disrupting the car industry with an electric-powered vehicle when you're Elon Musk, a Silicon Valley billionaire with vast resources, powerful connections and the pick of the world's brainiest designers and scientists. But to do it from Croatia, a small European country of limited industrial pedigree?

Local engineers scoffed at Mate Rimac when the 27-year-old inventor announced he was going to commercially produce an electric supercar. They thought he was crazy. Now they're lining up to collaborate.

Rimac's audacious aim of changing the perception of electric cars by manufacturing a high-end vehicle that can outperform the super-fast, petrol-guzzling supercars of Bugatti, McLaren and Lamborghini has captivated the motoring world. And it's been a shot in the arm for Croatia's startup scene.

Rimac's unlikely journey to becoming Europe's Musk started when he began racing cars in high school. After the engine on his 1984 BMW 3 series blew up, Rimac decided to convert it to electrical power. Several years, numerous refinements and a handful of speed

## YOUR ADVERTISING SLOGAN FOR EUROPE

*Europe — perfection on every level.*

## WHICH HISTORICAL FIGURE DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?

*Nikola Tesla.*

## IF YOU WEREN'T FROM CROATIA, WHAT OTHER NATIONALITY WOULD YOU WANT TO BE?

*Besides being a Croatian, I consider myself a world citizen. I am looking forward to a unified world where nationalities are a thing of the past.*

records later, he decided to go into business and produce a new vehicle from scratch. The Concept One was introduced at the Frankfurt Motor Show in 2011, where it caused a stir among journalists and car aficionados.

The next several years were hard work. After securing investment from wealthy backers in South America and China last year, in an initial funding round that valued Rimac Automobili at €70 million, they're producing eight cars a year. The supercars aren't for the mass market, with a price tag of about €900,000. The company is now moving into a new phase of expansion, with plans for models that will be produced in slightly bigger volumes. A new carbon-fiber electric-powered bicycle, which has a top speed of 80km/h, is likely to have broader appeal.

Rimac has turned down several opportunities to move the business to a bigger country. He now employs about 120 people at his base on the outskirts of Zagreb, where they design and build virtually all the vehicle components from scratch. Ivo Spigel, founder of Zip, Croatia's first start-up accelerator, says the company has inspired other domestic entrepreneurs and engineers.

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# EVA PAUNOVA

THE RISING STAR



Seven years after the economic crisis walloped Europe, youth unemployment still hovers at around 23 percent in the eurozone, with record numbers in Greece and Spain. European leaders have made pledges for employment-promotion programs, and members of the European Commission have fought to ensure that young people in the EU aren't left without a job or inactive for longer than four months.

But there are few young people in the European institutions who are as committed to improving the plight of young Europeans as Eva Paunova. At 28, she is the youngest member of the European People's Party, the largest group in the European Parliament, and she is considered one of its rising stars.

As a member of the powerful internal and consumer affairs committee of the Parliament, Paunova, a native of Bulgaria, is pushing Europe to be more supportive of startups and mentorships and to create an environment where young people can start businesses, particularly in the digital world. "I managed to establish myself as the person to go to on digital issues," Paunova says.

## YOUR ADVERTISING SLOGAN FOR EUROPE

*United. Strong. Diverse. Connected. Evolving.*

## WHAT THREE THINGS DO YOU TAKE WITH YOU EVERYWHERE YOU GO?

*I make sure I never leave my positive thoughts and attitude behind; in my line of work having an open disposition and the ability to be clear and concise are paramount.*

*When travelling around Bulgaria, I always bring my team's favorite gadget, "Biskvitkata" or the "Biscuit" – a pocket-sized but surprisingly powerful Wi-Fi hotspot device that works even in the most remote areas we go to. Also fruit and nuts, as I often forget to eat during the day.*

Though she has not written parliamentary reports of her own, Paunova has delivered 46 speeches in the plenary on a wide range of subjects from the promotion of young entrepreneurship through education and training to the current negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, known as TTIP.

In her home country, she has helped set up education programs such as "Education Bulgaria 2030," which tries to connect young Bulgarians with employers.

"I come from a country that has said a lot but done very little," Paunova says. "I'm someone who puts her heart in everything she does."

Many in Parliament praise Paunova for her refreshing style, low profile and visibility on social media. But she's not seen as favoring style over substance: She's already co-managed her party's relations with the EPP group and served as policy adviser to an MEP.

"She is not just a pretty face," said a Parliament official. "In the Parliament, she is like a fish in the water."

# KATRINE CAMILLERI

THE HUMANITARIAN



It took a shocking image of a dead child on a Turkish beach to hammer home the full extent of the migration crisis facing Europe.

Katrine Camilleri could have warned EU leaders of the potential seriousness of the situation at any point over the past two decades. Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service in Malta, Camilleri is a long-time advocate of creating safe routes of passage for those fleeing war zones and hardship, and seeking a better life in Europe. In 2015 she gained a reputation outside Malta for her tough talking yet compassionate stance. At a summit in Valletta in November, Camilleri was one of the most sought-after voices on the migration debate.

Boats full of migrants ending up in tiny Malta after running into trouble crossing the Mediterranean were a regular – at times daily – occurrence for years. The situation is changing – the number arriving by boat has dropped, the number arriving by plane has increased – but Camilleri and her team remain at the forefront of the struggle, offering legal advice and pastoral care, and making sure refugees have access to health care. She is also a prominent voice in warning

## QUOTE/ UNQUOTE

*"Men, women and children have been dying on Europe's doorstep, and drowning in our seas for years."*

*"We are living at the edge of a region that is in complete turmoil. It is inevitable that people in that region will flee for their lives. We would do the same."*

*"Protection is about more than being safe. People want to become part of a community."*

*"We are not saying that border controls and security are not important, but people are by far more important."*

the government in Malta, and authorities further afield, of their responsibilities. This has often come at a cost. In 2006, her car and home were damaged in arson attacks. The perpetrators were never caught.

Although the migrant crisis has shifted center-stage in Europe, Camilleri says Europe is doing nowhere near enough to help the vast number of refugees fleeing conflict in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Malta's near neighbor Libya.

"We must take refugees' needs into account," she says, adding that "protection is about more than being safe: People eventually want to be part of a community." Supporting transit countries, as the EU is trying to do, is all well and good, but "no one wants to be housed in a camp forever."

The human rights lawyer was awarded the Roland Berger Human Dignity Award in April 2015 and is a former winner of the U.N.'s Nansen Refugee Award. She says closing borders, as Hungary and others in central Europe have done, won't stop people coming to Europe. It merely increases the risks they face. "Refugees aren't coming because it's easy. If it's not one route, it's another."



# CATARINA MARTINS

THE FACE OF THE LEFT



In a Europe embroiled in political upheaval, Portugal looked like a haven of two-party business as usual ... until Catarina Martins came along. The 42-year-old actress with a penchant for jeans and red blouses has shaken up a Lisbon political scene dominated by men in suits. She led her radical Left Bloc party to third place in the elections in October with a record number of lawmakers.

The only female leading a major party, Martins took Portugal's far-left to the brink of sharing power for the first time since the mid-'70s when a revolution ended four decades of rightist dictatorship. "They are mostly men with the same background and same way of thinking," she says of Portugal's political class. "Politicians need to speak about things that people understand, in a language they understand."

While leading negotiations with Portugal's center-left Socialists and old-school communists to form an anti-austerity government, the Left Bloc had to back away from some of its more radical demands, like withdrawing from NATO or abandoning commitments to eurozone budget rules. Still, Martins' success sent shivers through Europe's establishment.

**YOUR ADVERTISING SLOGAN FOR EUROPE**  
*We invented the welfare state. We have to reinvent it.*

**WHICH HISTORICAL FIGURE DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?**  
*Amílcar Cabral, the guerrilla leader who led the struggle against Portuguese colonial rule in Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau in 1960s and 1970s — and was assassinated in 1973.*

**WHAT THREE THINGS DO YOU TAKE WITH YOU EVERYWHERE YOU GO?**  
*A book, sneakers and a rucksack.*

Founded in 1999, the Left Bloc predates the better-known Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain; but the Portuguese leftists were sidelined by splits and personality clashes.

Martins took over as party spokeswoman — they don't like the word "leader" — in 2012. Her politics has combined straight-talking to woo centrist voters, and hard-edged rhetoric to rally activists. "I was always political, even if I've little experience in party politics or public office," Martins told foreign correspondents in Lisbon recently.

She runs the Left Bloc with a supporting cast of young women that includes star parliamentary performer Mariana Mortágua, 29, and Marisa Matias, 39, the Bloc's candidate in January's presidential elections.

"I've always fought for greater visibility for women in public affairs, because I think it's the only way to get equality," Martins says. "I discovered that women are really affected by the fact that a woman was leading the campaign. That created a closeness that enabled us to discuss certain themes, to put more things onto the political agenda."

# LIZ WENGER

THE INTEGRATION CHAMPION



Imagine a country where almost half the residents are foreigners, laws are debated in one language and published in another, and where this year the prime minister became the first EU leader to have a same-sex marriage. That's the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg — the EU's richest and second-smallest state, with 550,000 people in an area just three times bigger than New York City.

The Duchy offered to take in about 700 refugees under the EU relocation schemes, making it one of the bloc's most generous hosts on a per-capita basis. But what language will the new arrivals learn?

There are three official languages: Luxembourgish is spoken among locals, while all legal texts are in French and many media are in German. Luxembourgers switch seamlessly for "frontaliers," who work in the Duchy but live in France, Germany or Belgium.

"It's not that we're more talented than other people, it's a necessity," says Liz Wenger, the 31-year-old author of the first English-speakers' guide to learning Luxembourgish, published this year.

"You cannot go and buy a pair of shoes

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**WHICH HISTORICAL FIGURE DO YOU MOST ADMIRE?**  
*Edmond de la Fontaine — or "Dicks" as we call him — is the national poet of Luxembourg and wrote the first play in the Luxembourgish language, performed around the middle of the 19th century. Luxembourgish was still considered a dialect referred to as "Lëtzebuergesch" [Luxembourgish-German] and wasn't a written language at all, especially not in public texts. Dicks' work really did a lot for the creation of the Luxembourgish national identity.*

without speaking French ... At six we start German in school."

Wenger married a Canadian and now lives in Toronto with her four-year-old son. She uses Skype to teach Luxembourgish to students all over the world, including a Pole who has no intention of visiting Luxembourg, but learns for aesthetic pleasure alone.

Wenger sees herself in a long line of people who've kept the language — which she likens to a "cute," less guttural version of Dutch — from being subsumed by its more popular rivals.

She is lobbying the government to support initiatives like hers to teach refugees Luxembourgish via English, a language she says many of them already speak.

"It's not just about making friends, it's also about really participating in the local cultural life, which takes place mostly in Luxembourgish, especially in the villages," Wenger says. "In my village there are lots of fairs, people make apple juice right there in the square next to the town hall."

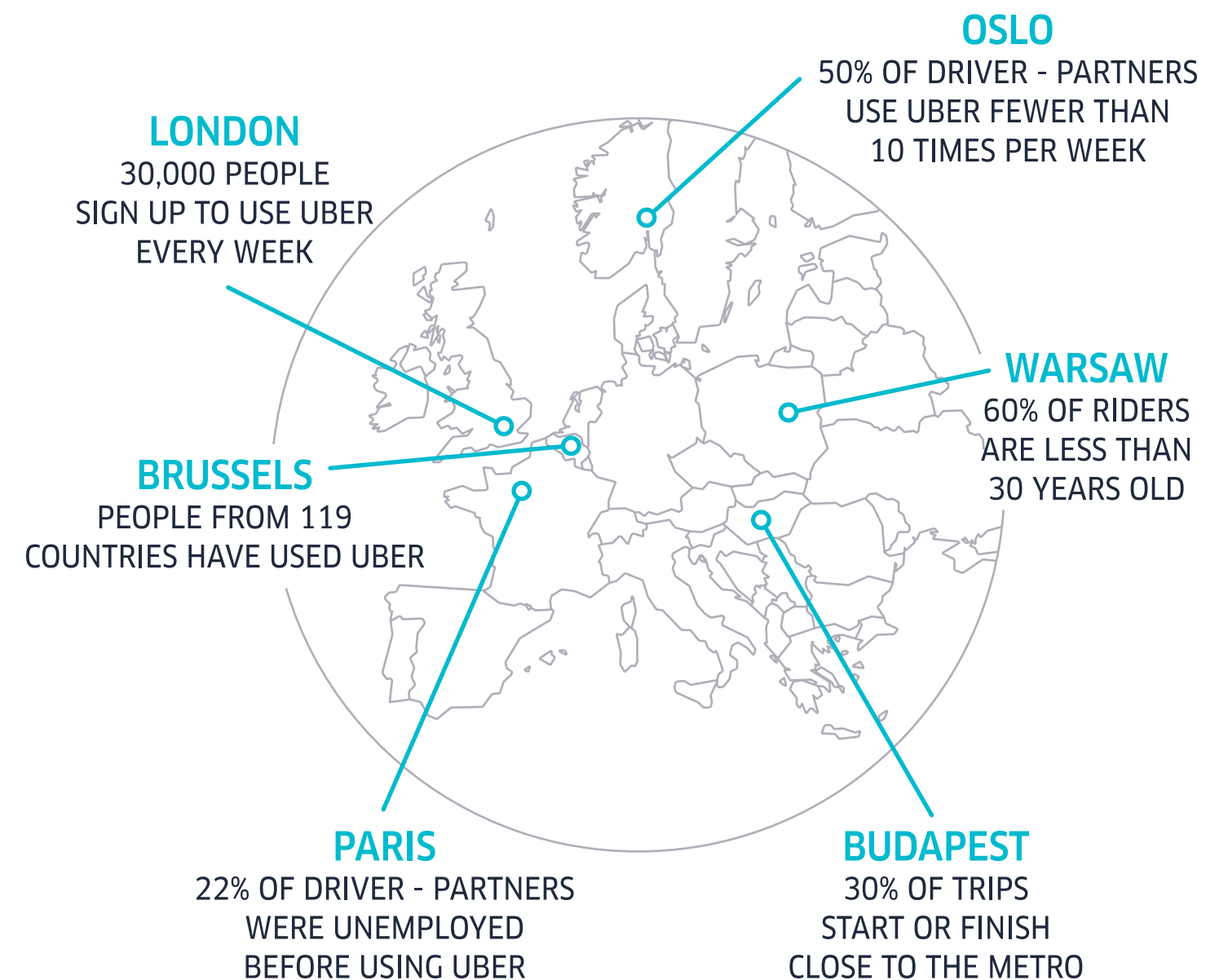




The Eiffel Tower is clad here in the colors of France. In the hours and days after Islamist terrorists slaughtered people in Paris, landmarks the world over turned red, white and blue in a show of solidarity with the French that was as spontaneous as it was contagious. The Empire State Building; Sydney Opera House; Christ the Redeemer in Rio; the Burj-al-Khalifa in Dubai — the world's tallest building; the London Eye; the Chhatrapati Shivaji Rail Terminus in Mumbai; the Brandenburg Gate; the Town Hall in Grand Place, Brussels — all paid tribute to France in a global display of shared pain and humanity.

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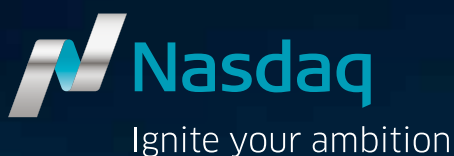
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