



Europe's External Action and the Dual Challenges
of Limited Statehood and Contested Orders

D7.14 Public Event in Washington D.C. (virtual)

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EU-LISTCO's public event entitled *Improving Governance After the Pandemic: The Role of the Transatlantic Relationship* took place on Wednesday, November 18 from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. This virtual panel discussion was hosted by the Carnegie Europe Foundation (hereinafter referred to as Carnegie).

The goal of this event was to engage stakeholders from the United States in discussion of some of the research findings of the EU-LISTCO project. The debate focused on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on governance structures in the EU's Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods. It highlighted how sources of societal resilience, such as social trust, legitimacy of governance actors, and institutional design of governance arrangements, were lacking in many cases. Given the vulnerability of these neighbourhood countries, special attention was paid to the potential renewal of a transatlantic relationship in the light of the incoming Biden administration. By livestreaming the event on YouTube, it was possible to engage a wide public audience and keep a record available online.

Panellists debated the prevalence of flawed or weak governance in Europe's Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods, sharing a similar assessment on the situation in the United States and the EU. Essentially, they raised important questions about the loss of public trust in or social acceptance of governance structures worldwide as a result of the planning and implementation of harsh (or negligent) policies to contain the pandemic. As the provision of public goods and services in an effective and flexible way by governance structures is one of the key sources of societal resilience, the pandemic majorly highlighted where it was lacking.

Against this background, the panel agreed that European and U.S. leaders should pay greater attention to issues of transparency and accountability—not only when taking executive decisions that affect the majority of the population, as was the case with the pandemic response, but also when providing assistance abroad and tackling foreign policy challenges.

The event also successfully served as a platform to promote and raise awareness of the EU-LISTCO project amongst key audiences in European capitals, across Europe's neighbourhoods, and the United States. The panellists took the opportunity to integrate (or challenge) EU-LISTCO research findings into their discussion points.



This report summarises the major discussions, findings, and insights generated at the public virtual event.

2. TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The event *Improving Governance After the Pandemic: The Role of the Transatlantic Relationship* was hosted online as a public virtual panel discussion. The session was livestreamed on [YouTube](#) on Wednesday, November 18, 2020 from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. CET.

Judy Dempsey, senior fellow at the Carnegie Europe Foundation and editor-in-chief of Carnegie's *Strategic Europe* blog, moderated the panel of experts. The participating panellists were: **Cornelius Adebahr**, fellow at the Carnegie Europe Foundation in Brussels; **Rachel Kleinfeld**, senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, D.C.; and **Agnieszka Legucka**, senior research fellow at the Polish Institute of International Affairs in Warsaw.

In order to promote the event in Brussels, European capitals and especially with an audience in the United States, Carnegie created dedicated events webpages on the [EU-LISTCO website](#) and the [Carnegie website](#). Invitation mailings targeting about 10,000 recipients from Europe and the United States were sent out. The event was actively tweeted about both from EU-LISTCO's official account and from Carnegie's. EU-LISTCO members were encouraged to share the event within their networks.

The virtual panel was streamed on the Carnegie Europe YouTube channel and proved to be most popular in Belgium, Germany, and the United States. It was live streamed by 46 unique viewers, while gaining more than 2,100 impressions and 200 total views at time of writing (November 24, 2020).

3. DISCUSSION

The virtual public event panel kicked-off with opening remarks by Judy Dempsey, who presented the EU-LISTCO project and welcomed the panellists based in the United States (Kleinfeld), Germany (Adebahr), and Poland (Legucka). By being able to exploit the panellists' diverse vantage points, the first part of the event provided a comprehensive overview of the governance



struggles brought on by the coronavirus pandemic in the wider Middle East, Europe's Eastern neighbourhood, and the United States.

The case of Iran was considered. The country was hard hit by the pandemic. It has also been increasingly involved in areas of limited statehood and contested orders just across its borders – in Iraq, Syria, and most recently in Southern Caucasus. One panellist noted that the EU's engagement with Teheran should be closely coordinated with the new U.S. administration and should not be limited to the nuclear file, but also include issues of governance and societal resilience such as questioning Iran's role in neighbouring areas of limited statehood.

Shifting the discussion to the situation in Europe's East, the importance of public trust for effective governance was highlighted. The example of Belarus was made: there, the erosion of public trust, the complete breakdown of the social contract, and the persistent violence by the security forces has only encouraged the protest that started last August to continue to demand real change.

With the coronavirus straining governance structures across the EU's Eastern neighbourhood, it was agreed that democracy promotion and the strengthening of state institutions' ability to provide public services should be on top of the EU agenda for the region. Similarly to the approach to Iran, the EU should closely coordinate with Washington on these matters. It was agreed this will not be easy. Washington's withdrawal from the nuclear accord, negotiated by the United States and the EU, might be reversed by the Biden administration. But it will take time. It is uncertain what the outgoing U.S. administration is planning in the meantime.

Picking up on the issue of legitimacy, the discussion then moved towards the United States. Before the November 3 election, the country was already experiencing a record low for trust in governance structures at the federal and state level. The contestation of the results of the election and the difficult transition ahead will only worsen the situation, forcing the next Democratic administration to prioritise domestic issues next to the top items on the foreign policy agenda (relaunching the Transatlantic relationship and countering China). Consequently, the EU will have to establish its own strategy towards China and its near-abroad, the latter of which could be helped by a strong focus by the United States on anti-corruption in relation with democracy promotion.

The panellists reflected on the challenges to democratic governance currently at play on both sides of the Atlantic. It was highlighted that in many countries the fight against the pandemic has



been led by the executive branch, often side-lining parliaments and limiting the opportunity for civic participation, which challenges core democratic principles. It was stressed that there is a strong nexus between healthy democratic governance at the internal level and the possibility of effectively projecting democratic values externally.

At the internal level, the panellists took stock of the long-term implications of the coronavirus pandemic on democratic governance. Governments proved themselves unable to tackle this global threat with an inclusive approach. The pandemic showed the faults of our current relationship with the environment; the inefficiency of existing crisis-management structures; and the inability of most politicians to communicate in a clear and honest way with their populations. Uncertainty, fear, and distrust are weakening our society, which is now more polarised than ever. Increasing inequalities and extreme polarisation threaten democracy and the social contract itself.

All panellists identified the “local level” as a crucial area to build up resilience from, leveraging civil society responses and civic participation. If finding a “centre ground” is the only way to escape polarisation, this can be achieved by engaging citizens directly. Citizen councils in Ireland, France, and Germany were mentioned as examples of effective advisory bodies proposing governments measures and recommendations on a vast array of topics.

Towards the end of the discussion, one audience member asked how the EU and the United States could cooperate to improve implementation of anti-corruption reforms in Ukraine. It was clear: Brussels and Washington must work together on this and should openly discuss the potential challenges facing reform implementation. One panellist noted the importance of the EU and the United States aligning their policies in this area and potentially linking reform implementation to disbursement of aid or further funds.

It was suggested that the EU should put aside double standards and tackle corruption and kleptocratic networks effectively both within the Union and in the neighbourhood but also with the United States. This would be an opportunity for democracy to emerge strengthened in the post-pandemic era.



Overall, the discussion made clear that during the time of EU-LISTCO, governments around the world faced a formidable challenge through the pandemic. While it exposed a lack of legitimacy or flexible institutional design in many cases, it also now poses an opportunity for the EU to




strengthen these sources of resilience internally as well as externally. By doing so going forward, the EU could help to avoid governance arrangements from breaking down and violence from breaking out inside of its borders and abroad.


4. FOLLOW-UP




Before, during, and after the event, members of the EU-LISTCO consortium made sure that the virtual event reached a wide audience of international policymakers. Information on the public event was shared and publicised to the public through multiple channels before and after the event. As the event was held virtually and on-the-record, a copy of it was retained on Carnegie's YouTube channel, available to the public. The programme and a link to the copy were also kept on the EU-LISTCO and Carnegie Europe event webpages where it remains available for the public.


 **EU-LISTCO project** @eulistco · Nov 18 ⋮
LIVE TODAY | Will the EU and the U.S. be able to strengthen state institutions in Europe's neighbourhood?
What about their own democratic shortcomings?
Watch the discussion with C. Adebahr, @RachelKleinfeld, @ALegucka & @Judy_Dempsey
 youtu.be/BsMg8fOTsC0






Improving Governance After the Pandemic: The Role of the Transatlantic Relationship
NOVEMBER 18 | 4:00–5:00 p.m. CET | VIRTUAL EVENT

1 4 2 

 **EU-LISTCO project** @eulistco · Nov 18 ⋮
 | Can transatlantic cooperation tackle flawed governance practices in the EU neighbourhoods?
Join a virtual debate with C. Adebahr, @RachelKleinfeld, @ALegucka and @Judy_Dempsey
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The coronavirus pandemic has exposed flawed governance practices across the world. This is true fo...
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Twitter posts by @eulistco in the lead up to the event, November 18.



Agnieszka Legucka
@ALegucka

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Interesting? Join our discussion 📌

 **EU-LISTCO project** @eulistco · Nov 16
📌 | Can transatlantic cooperation tackle flawed governance practices in the EU neighbourhoods?
C. Adebahr, @RachelKleinfeld, @ALegucka and @Judy_Dempsey will discuss.
For more information and to watch live click here 📌
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**Improving Governance After the Pandem
The Role of the Transatlantic Relationshi**

NOVEMBER 18 | 4:00–5:00 p.m. CET | VIRTUAL EVENT

Twitter post by @eulistco, retweeted by consortium member Agnieszka Legucka, November 16, 2020.

Improving Governance After the Pandemic: The Role of the Transatlantic Relationship

Wednesday, 18 November 2020
16:00 – 17:00



WATCH ON YOUTUBE

The coronavirus pandemic has exposed flawed governance practices across the world. This is true for countries with high corruption and weak or no democratic structures as well as for consolidated democracies on both sides of the Atlantic, where governments have been criticised for lacking transparency and accountability.

To build more inclusive governance at home and abroad, the EU and the United States must cooperate strategically to strengthen state institutions in Europe's neighbourhood, while addressing their own democratic shortcomings.

Join **Cornelius Adebahr**, **Rachel Kleinfeld**, and **Agnieszka Legucka** for a discussion about the prospects of renewed transatlantic cooperation after the 2020 U.S. presidential election. **Judy Dempsey** will moderate.

To submit a question for the event, please use the YouTube chat, email malte.peters@ceip.org, or tweet at us [@ceip_eu](https://twitter.com/ceip_eu).

Panelists

- **Cornelius Adebahr** is a fellow at the Carnegie Europe Foundation in Brussels
- **Rachel Kleinfeld** is a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, D.C.
- **Agnieszka Legucka** is a senior research fellow at the Polish Institute of International Affairs in Warsaw

Moderated by

- **Judy Dempsey** is a senior fellow at the Carnegie Europe Foundation in Brussels and the editor in chief of *Strategic Europe*.

For more information please email Mr. Malte Peters

Screenshot of the event page on eu-listco.net, includes photo and event description above, an embedded version of the video interview, an embedded recording of the public event and descriptions of both separate sessions below.