

REIMAGINE
EUROPA

FORUM 2022

EMOTIONS, NARRATIVES
AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPE



23-25 MAY
BRUSSELS



Re-Imagine Europa (RIE) is a nonpartisan think-tank, founded by President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing as **the first "incubator" for new political ideas**, in honour of the friendship and partnership with Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and their efforts to define a future that goes beyond personal, national or partisan interests. By aiming to develop and promote a shared vision for Europe that pragmatically responds to fears and hopes of today, we aim to give the project of 'Europa' back to its citizens and work together with multiple stakeholders, such as civil society organisations, national governments, as well as the European Institutions, to create an understanding for the need of a stronger Europe adapted to the 21st century.

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The effects of the events of the last two years will take time to be fully understood. Something that is made more complex in Europe where war has become a reality again. With the European elections on the horizon, it is ever more important to understand how this has impacted the lives and minds of people. In a time of increasing uncertainty, Europe needs to show citizens that it is part of the solution.

An increasingly influential stream of research demonstrates the integration of cognition and emotion in political decision-making. Political cognition is emotionally shaped. The role of narratives in shaping people's minds has become an important area of research and debate, in particular in recent years when entire societies have made choices that seem "rationally" counterintuitive.

As debates around vaccines, war, inequality and climate change become increasingly emotional, policy-makers and scientists alike have had to accept that in the battle for hearts and minds of human beings, narratives will consistently outperform data in their ability to influence human thinking and motivate human action.

With a polarised society and highly-charged emotional debates on the table ahead of the upcoming European elections, it is ever more important to look at what can we learn from recent

research in psychology, neuroscience, economics, sociology and behavioural science about how minds work and are shaped.

We are convening our closest partners and advisors in Brussels from the **23rd to the 25th of May, 2022** to explore these themes and build new solutions that will help develop the programme of Re-Imagine Europa for the coming years. Discussions will be guided by the insights of *Professor Antonio Damasio*, the world-renowned neuroscientist whose contributions have helped us unravel the mysteries of the brain and emotions, and *Professor Manuel Castells*, leading scholar on globalization, network society, and internet studies.

WE WILL BE LOOKING AT THESE ISSUES FROM OUR THEMATIC AREAS:

RIE DEMOCRACY

Democracy in a Digital Society

RIE ECONOMY

An Ideal Fiscal System for the 21st Century

RIE PLANET

Sustainable Food Systems and Innovation. Narratives, Climate and the Future



MANUEL CASTELLS

“Democracy lives in
the minds of people”

PROGRAMME



MONDAY 23RD OF MAY

- 17:00 - 19:00 ● **WORKSHOP ON FUTURE NARRATIVES**
RIE PLANET - Sustainable Food Systems and Innovation
Pillows Grand Boutique Hotel Reylof
Hoogstraat 36, 9000 Gent, Belgium

With the Ukrainian conflict putting further stress on the European agriculture sector already threatened by the consequences of climate change, RIE Task Force on Sustainable Agriculture and Innovation is organizing a meeting to discuss how changing priorities will affect narratives around sustainable food systems and innovation.

- 19:30-22:00 ● **Dinner**
Restaurant 'DeRave'
Schepenhuisstraat 2, 9000 Gent, Belgium

TUESDAY 24TH OF MAY

- 10:00-12:30 ● **ANNUAL MEETING OF RIE ADVISORY BOARD**
*Hotel NH Collection Grand Sablon
Rue Bodenbroek 2, 1000 Brussels, Belgium*
- 12:30 - 14:30 ● **PREPARING FOR THE 2024 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS**
*RIE Advisory Board Working lunch
Hotel NH Collection Grand Sablon
Rue Bodenbroek 2, 1000 Brussels, Belgium*
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- 17:30 ● **Registration and welcome**
*Palais d'Egmont – Entrance 8bis
Place du Petit Sablon 8, 1000 Brussels, Belgium*
- 18:00 ● **KEYNOTE LECTURE**
*"Social Events: A Neurobiological Perspective"
Professor Antonio Damasio*



**PROFESSOR
ANTONIO DAMASIO**

Antonio Damasio is an internationally recognized leader in neuroscience. His research has helped to elucidate the neural basis for feelings and emotions and has shown that affect plays a central role in social cognition and decision-making. His work has also had a major influence on current understanding of the neural systems, which underlie memory, language and consciousness. Damasio directs the USC Brain and Creativity Institute.

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GALA 2022

18:30 ● **Reception**

*Palais d'Egmont – Entrance 8bis
Place du Petit Sablon 8, 1000 Brussels*

19:20 ● **WELCOME ADDRESS**

Mr Étienne Davignon

19:30 ● **EMOTIONS, REALITY AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPE**

*Professor Manuel Castells
Ms Erika Widegren*

20:00 ● **Gala dinner**

Seated dinner. Taking inspiration from the insights from Damasio and Castells, guests will be asked to contribute to the thinking of Re-Imagine Europa divided into different thematic tables focussing on the areas of work of Re-Imagine Europa

21:30 ● **CLOSING ADDRESS**

Ms Maria João Rodrigues

22:00 ● **Building solutions together**

Coffee and Dessert

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



**MR ÉTIENNE
DAVIGNON**

Étienne Davignon, Minister of State, is a Belgian diplomat, businessman, and former vice-president of the European Commission where he was active in the restructuring of European industry, promoting new research on cooperative ventures in Information Technology and Telecommunication and negotiated key agreements with the US, Japan and China. In 1985, he joined Société Générale de Belgique, Belgium's leading holding company, and became Chairman in 1989 and Vice-Chairman in 2001. From 2003 – 2010, he served as Vice-Chairman of Suez-Tractebel. He was Chairman of Bilderberg from 1998-2011. Today, he is Chairman of Genfina, SN Airholding, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Fondation P.-H. Spaak and ICHEC and Vice-Chairman of CMB. In addition, he is Chairman of CSR Europe and President of Friends of Europe.



**PROFESSOR
MANUEL
CASTELLS**

Manuel Castells is a leading scholar on globalization, network society, and internet studies. Manuel Castells is Professor at the Open University of Catalonia, University Professor and Wallis Annenberg Chair in Communication Technology and Society at the University of Southern California, and Emeritus Professor at the University of California-Berkeley.

He has authored 35 books on the sociology of the Internet, political economy, urban sociology, regional development and social movements, many of them translated into several languages. He is Fellow of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy, and a Fellow of the Spanish Royal Academy of Economics. He was a founding Board member of the European Research Council and of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology.

Manuel Castells has received the Erasmus Medal of Science from the Academia Europaea, the Holberg Memorial Prize from the Norwegian Parliament, and the Balzan Prize. In 2020 he was appointed Minister of Universities of the Spanish Government



**MS ERIKA
WIDEGREN**

Erika Widegren is Chief Executive and co-founder of Re-Imagine Europa (RIE). She has been working in the field of connecting science, society and policy for nearly two decades. Until September 2016, she was Chairman of the Advisory Board of REsearch. From 2010 to 2015 she was the Executive Director of Atomium – European Institute for Science, Media and Democracy working on issues like Science in Society, Responsible Research and Innovation, Digital Science, Evidence-based Policy Making and Citizen Engagement. She is a frequent speaker and moderator at European conferences.



**MARIA JOÃO
RODRIGES**

Maria João Rodrigues, former Portuguese Minister of Employment in Portugal of PM Antonio Guterres, is a European politician with a large track in different European institutions: EU Presidencies, Council, European Council, European Commission and, more recently, European Parliament where she was Vice-President of S&D Group, the second most important EP Group, in charge of the general coordination and interface with the other EU institutions.

She played a relevant role in several important European initiatives as: the Lisbon Treaty, the Lisbon and the Europe 2020 strategy (the EU's agenda for growth and jobs), the Eurozone reform, the interface with EU strategic partners, the roadmap for EU's future and, more recently, the European Pillar of Social Rights. She is now involved in developing the plans to respond to the COVID crisis.

She is currently the President of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), a European political foundation located in Brussels, financed by the EU budget to support EU policy-making and debate, with UN observer status and counting with a network of partners across Europe and the world.

In academic terms, she was professor of European economic policies in the European Studies Institute – Université Libre de Bruxelles and in the Lisbon University Institute. She was also the chair of the European Commission Advisory Board for socio-economic sciences. She is author of more than one hundred publications.

WEDNESDAY 25TH OF MAY

09:30 - 12:30 ● **MEDIA, MINDS AND MISINFORMATION WORKSHOP ON NOVEL SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN INFORMATION AND MEDIA ECOSYSTEM**

RIE DEMOCRACY – Democracy in a Digital Society
Hotel NH Collection Grand Sablon
Rue Bodenbroek 2, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

The shift to digital technologies has transformed the media ecosystem dramatically. The disintermediation that dismantled the old power structure in information turned into novel intermediation, much more concentrated in a few large platforms. This has drastically changed the way people receive and share information about local and global events. The propagation of misinformation and disinformation regarding the war in Ukraine and many other subjects; the use of incitement to hatred as a political weapon in certain heated electoral campaigns; the possibility that new dependencies on the use of certain means of communication are spreading, with consequent depressions and adolescent ills; these are just some of the many discussions about the sustainability of the media ecosystem. Europe urgently needs a new vision to innovate its media landscape to take full advantage of the extraordinary opportunities offered by the digital network and limit the risks of its development in an anti-democratic

RIE is organizing this high-level roundtable during its annual Forum to discuss systemic solutions to improve and strengthen the European information ecosystem.

12:30-14:30 ● **Lunch**

Restaurant 'Lola'
Place du Grand Sablon 33, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

RIE PARTNERS

STRATEGIC PARTNERS



KNOWLEDGE PARTNERS



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Building solutions together