

## Reclaiming Europe

Europe has been constantly reimagined – yet in facing the criminal and destructive war against Ukraine and all the tragedies resulting from it, the need for a more comprehensive rethink toward a more open-minded and future-oriented cultural imaginary of Europe has become obvious. The Russian war of aggression has revealed the extent to which the existing expertise on countries so often bundled together under the misleading label “Eastern Europe” has been neglected and marginalised. Across Europe in general, but especially in Germany and its western neighbours, relevant research institutes have too often been closed and downsized.

The countries in question are not “the East”. They lie in the north, south and centre of Europe and all of them belong to the core of the European landscape. Their complex histories are full of entanglements. Yet each history has unique characteristics – resulting in a rich diversity of cultures, academic systems, politics and the perspectives of the respective inhabitants.

Ignorance resulting from a failure to listen to the Europeans living in these diverse landscapes more closely and to engage with their manifold perspectives has had dire consequences. This must not happen again.

The time for new approaches is now. Many steps have already been taken, but we must not stop at “first aid”. The goal must be closer ties across borders and a new understanding of Europe. We – presidents of Academies and Universities, office holders from other academic institutions as well as politics and actors from civil society – are resolved to further this goal.

We are convinced that academia has to play a key role in such processes. Firstly, it offers the ideal prerequisites for such a transnational agenda because of its standards of openness, curiosity, willingness to cooperate, critical questioning and motivation to perform. Secondly, scholars use their academic expertise to question traditional seemingly self-evident truths in order to gain new perspectives and insight. Such abilities are urgently needed in the current situation – and they are especially embodied by younger excellent scholars.

We therefore formulate the following theses and declare that we want to advance in their spirit:

1. It is time to reclaim Europe from chauvinist, nationalist and illiberal agendas. This means taking back the initiative and creatively promoting European unity, also beyond a political agenda of integration.
2. Reclaiming Europe requires putting the regions that have for too long been seen as its periphery back into the centre of attention, making their many voices heard.
3. Such a reclamation must be transnational in spirit: it crosses borders, languages, cultures, histories, identities, and much more. This does not imply any form of homogenisation – we can only really see our many similarities when we adequately appreciate the rich regional diversity of Europe.
4. Reclaiming Europe is a process that will last for many years to come. We must be prepared to continue with this process long after peace in Ukraine has been achieved. Our attention must not be diverted from it, even when other challenges remain or arise.
5. Academia plays a fundamental role in shaping such an agenda. Indeed, it can act as a driving force for positive change. This must be recognised throughout all societal spheres and by different actors.
6. But academia itself must also recognise its responsibility and that it can and must be such a driving force in reclaiming Europe.
7. In order to be able to fulfil this role properly, academia's many voices, but especially the most qualified ones, must be heard and listened to. They need to be given adequate platforms.
8. This is especially true for younger excellent scholars, even more so for those who work in academic systems that offer fewer opportunities for networking and international cooperation.
9. We need platforms that bring such younger scholars together so that they can develop projects and visions for the future of European academia and society more broadly.
10. We encourage others, actors from all societal sectors, to join us in advancing this agenda and in creating adequate networks for this purpose.

## First Signatories

1. Banyas, Jūras (Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, President)
2. Blumenthal, Julia von (Humboldt University Berlin, President)
3. Bourguignon, Jean-Pierre (European Research Council, Former President ; Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), Directeur de recherche émérite)
4. Eenmaa, Helen (Young Academies Science Advice Structure, President)
5. Ferens, Bohdan (Ukrainian NGO "Progresylni"/Progressive Teachers, Head)
6. Garaschuk, Olga (UKRAINET, Co-founder; German-Ukrainian Academic Society, President)
7. Günther, Oliver (University of Potsdam, President)
8. Kerski, Basil (European Solidarity Centre Gdańsk, Director)
9. Kopp, Gisela (Die Junge Akademie, Chair)
10. Markschies, Christoph (Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, President)
11. Martin, Bettina (Minister for Science, Culture, Federal and European Affairs of the State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)
12. Mishkova, Diana (Centre for Advanced Study Sofia, Director)
13. Mühle, Eduard (European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder), President)
14. Nosch, Marie-Louise (Royal Danish Academy, President)
15. Ostrowski, Jan (Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences Krakow, President)
16. Sandu-Dediu, Valentina (New Europe College Bucharest, Rector)
17. Sasse, Gwendolyn (Centre for East European and International Studies, Director)
18. Soomere, Tarmo (Estonian Academy of Sciences, President)
19. Schneider, Carsten (Minister of State for Eastern Germany)
20. Simakhova, Anastasiia (Scholar Support Office, Vice-Head)
21. Schüle, Manja (Minister for Science, Research and Culture of the State of Brandenburg)
22. Stollberg-Rilinger, Barbara (Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, Rector)
23. Vashchuk, Olesia (Young Scientists Council at the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, Head)
24. Zagorodny, Anatoly (National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, President)