

European Angst

A conference on populism, extremism and euroscepticism in contemporary European societies

6-7 December, 2016

BOZAR, Centre for Fine Arts

Brussels

Populism, extremism and euroscepticism are haunting Europe, creating a tense atmosphere in which fear, hate, anger and anxiety generate a climate of European Angst. The current rise of radical parties such as AFD in Germany, UKIP in Great Britain and FN in France indicates a drastic change in European societies and politics - and the more momentum these populist parties and movements gain, the more clueless the established political, cultural and legislative institutions seem to be. A recent expression of this phenomenon is the surprising outcome of the referendum in Great Britain in which a majority, incited by populist leaders, voted to leave the European Union without necessarily grasping the consequences of this act. Another expression is the prevalence of hate speech and violent acts threatening migrants and refugees, a phenomenon one can perceive in France as well as in Hungary, in Germany as well as in Great Britain. In Eastern European societies, a reluctant attitude towards liberal values and towards modern, open societies is gaining ground. Hungarian leader Victor Orbán for instance has more than once stated his wish for “an illiberal new state based on national foundations”.

Why is this happening now? And how are we dealing with it? The conference *European Angst* will shed light on these questions in a unique way. It will leave the comfort zone of liberal consensus by inviting controversial thinkers, thus creating a space for passionate debate, for reflection and in-depth analysis. Among the participants are the writers and philosophers Slavoj Žižek, Didier Eribon and Nobel Prize winner Herta Müller, as well as 40 students selected in an open call. Representing tomorrow's decision makers, the students will play an active role in the conference, and they will draft a manifesto on Europe's future to be handed over to EU officials.

DAY 1 | Tuesday, 6 December 2016 | BOZAR

15:30 - 16:30 Registration and security check

16:30 - 18:00 **Welcome address & speeches**

- Paul Dujardin, Director, Bozar
 - Conference moderator: Sascha Lehnartz, journalist, head of foreign desk at *Die Welt/ Die Welt am Sonntag*, Germany
 - Opening speech: Klaus-Dieter Lehmann, President, Goethe-Institut, Germany
 - Keynote speech: Herta Müller, Nobel Prize winner in Literature (*Attemschaudel*), Germany
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18:00 - 19:30 1st Conversation

How did it come upon us? An analysis of extremism's reasons and manifestations.

- Didier Eribon sociologist, philosopher and author (*Retours à Reims*, 2009), France
 - Vladimíra Dvořáková, political scientist, Czech Republic
 - Shermin Langhoff, artistic director of Berlin's Maxim Gorki Theater, Germany
 - Moderator: Béatrice Delvaux, journalist, commentator in chief at *Le soir*, Belgium
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19:30 - 21:00 Drinks

DAY 2 | Wednesday, 7 December 2016 | BOZAR

08:30 - 09:00 Registration

09:00 - 09:10 **Welcome words**

- Johannes Ebert, Secretary General, Goethe-Institut
 - Michael Metz Mørch, President of EUNIC Global
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09:10 - 09:20 Sascha Lehnartz introducing the programme and the speakers of the day

09:20 - 10:50 2nd Conversation

Scapegoating: Why racism could gain so much ground and how it feels to be a migrant in contemporary Europe.

- Paul Scheffer, author and sociologist (*Immigrant Nations*), The Netherlands
 - Rabih Mroué (tbc)
 - Firas Alshater (tbc)
 - Moderator: Isolde Charim, journalist and writer (*Lebensmodell Diaspora: Über moderne Nomaden*), Austria
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10:50 - 11:15 Coffee break

11:15 - 12:45 3rd Conversation

Words, words, words. How conspiracy theories, polarised talk show rhetorics and social media activities distort our perception of reality - and how reputable media could react.

- Sonia Seymour Mikich, journalist, editor-in-chief, *WDR TV*, Germany
 - Lukasz Warzecha, journalist and author (*Miedzy Berlinem a Pekinem*), Poland
 - Moderator: Beppe Severgnini, journalist and author (*La Bella Figura: A Field Guide to the Italian Mind*), Italy
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12:45 - 14:00 Walking lunch

14:00 - 15:30

4th Conversation

Facing the challenge: an approach towards productive methods and narratives to face extremism and the disintegration of Europe.

- Slavoj Žižek, , philosopher and cultural critic (*Trouble in Paradise: From the End of History to the End of Capitalism*), Slovenia
- Elif Shafak writer and columnist (*The Bastard of Istanbul*), Turkey/ Great Britain
- Moderator: Martin Ehl , journalist and author (*The Third Decade: On life, politics and people between Brussels and Gazprom*), Czech Republic

15:30 - 16:00

Coffee break

16:00 - 17:30

Conference summary by Sascha Lehnartz
Presentation of the manifesto
Q&A with Jo Leinen, Member of the European Parliament and President of the European Movement International

Thank you word – Susanne Höhn, Director, Goethe-Institut Brussels
