

Centre for Britain and Europe Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence Launch Event – Thursday 19th November 2020

Professor Amelia Hadfield - Head of Department of Politics and Director of Centre of Britain and Europe, University of Surrey

The launch event kicked off with Centre for Britain and Europe Director, Professor Amelia Hadfield's, welcoming remarks and expression of gratitude and excitement to have been awarded the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence funding at such a key time.

A welcome video from senior staff at the University of Surrey was then showed, including remarks and comments from Professor Max Lu, President and Vice Chancellor of the University of Surrey; Professor Michael Kearney, Provost and Executive Vice-President; Patrick Degg, Vice-President (External Engagement) and Professor Graham Miller, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. The main message of this video is a strong sense of pride around the University of Surrey's commitment to its surrounding communities, and how this is enhanced by the work of the Centre for Britain and Europe, through its activities of research and engagement with local partners and stakeholders, and leading what has been described as 'a global conversation.'

The full video can be found here: <https://www.surrey.ac.uk/centre-britain-and-europe/jean-monnet-centre-excellence>

Session One : A Roundtable on the Centre's work, chaired by Dr Jamie Shea

Dr Jamie Shea – Visiting Professor in the Department of Politics - University of Surrey

Dr Shea echoed the enthusiasm that the timing for the Centre to be given this award could not be better. He went on to speak of the current state of Brexit negotiations between the UK and the EU and said that he hopes for this next phase to open up a phase of 'great reconnection', instead of disconnection. He went on to discuss the need to safeguard vital interests, for ideas in developing trade, how to approach meeting global challenges, making contributions to science and technology and connecting people at such a pivotal time.

Professor Simon Usherwood – University of Surrey

Professor Usherwood is co-theme lead for the De-Europeanisation and Re-Europeanisation strand of the Centre's work for the next three years, alongside Dr Theofanis Exadaktylos.

Professor Usherwood began by speaking of the notions of Britain AND Europe, but also Britain IN Europe, and how often there is a sense of Europe being somewhere else – an issue central to political and social debate in the current climate.



He went on to discuss the notion of Europeanisation and how it is an increasingly interesting concept to explore. He covered points such as:

- The continued entanglement of the UK within the EU at various levels, and how this is likely to persist for an indefinite length of time.
- The 'Grandfathering' of obligations into legal systems.
- How both the UK and the EU will be locked into a semi-permanent process of negotiations for many years to come.
- The fact that there is a high degree of economic interdependence for both sides, alongside the social entanglement and alignment which is likely to persist.

The future of Euroscepticism in the UK was also discussed:

- Will Brexit be the end of the Eurosceptic struggle in the UK? Or will we see a change of Eurosceptic activity to different focuses?
- What will we see in terms of issues of public policy?
- Will those with Eurosceptic attitudes take the 'long game' see this as a small blip, a swing of the pendulum perhaps?

The idea of the UK potentially being seen as an outlier in the European experience, but also as perhaps a model or template for other states, was also mentioned. The frequently asked question here is: 'is this Britain just being British?' Or will we see other European Member States follow suit?

Dr Laura Chappell – Jean Monnet Chair, University of Surrey

Dr Chappell is the current Jean Monnet Chair for the University of Surrey, and also the theme-lead of the Gender and Identity strand of the Centre's research and activities.

Dr Chappell began by outlining the gendered impacts and consequences of EU policy, in spite of the fact that the EU sees itself as a leading body and advocate for enhancing gender equality.

Dr Chappell discussed some key themes and questions of how gender is approached within the EU, including:

- The Women's Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda and the UNSCR 1325, and follow up resolutions from these.
- How is gender mainstreaming done within the EU (for example, in European Security and Defence Policy)? Are these policies actually being actioned, and how?
- Where is gender found in the European External Action Service (EEAS)? How committed is the EEAS to gender equality?
- The predominance of men being appointed to higher positions.
- The formulation of policies and their inclusion of gender.

Dr Chappell went on to talk about the interaction of gender and identity, and other themes:

- How does gender interact with other policies?
- What are the interactions between gender and Brexit? What has been the impact upon women's political engagement?



- What have we seen in terms of the gendered impacts of Covid-19?

Dr Alia Middleton, Co-Director of Centre for Britain and Europe, and Dr Roula Nezi – University of Surrey

We then heard from Dr Alia Middleton, Co-Director of the Centre for Britain and Europe, and co-theme lead for the Electoral Behaviour strand of the Centre’s activities, along with Dr Roula Nezi.

Dr Middleton began by discussing how Britain’s relationship with Europe has also had several impacts upon domestic issues in the UK, such as the recent period where we have seen additional general elections take place as a result of this changing relationship. Dr Middleton went on to say how this leads us to look at the effect this has had on electoral behaviour, and the engagement between the general population and those in power.

Dr Roula Nezi then continued the discussion around the Electoral Behaviour focus within the Centre’s activities.

Dr Nezi noted the Centre’s work around researching and attempting to understand the impact of the economy and different crises on voting behaviour. Additionally, she also outlined the focus on looking to understand the impact of new issues on voting behaviour, their importance and how they may act as to transform the current climate.

Dr Nezi also touched upon points such as:

- The effects of different parties, such as the Brexit Party, and their attempts to transform issues and bring them to the surface.
- The question of what will happen in terms of the political party landscape and voting behaviour once Brexit has moved forward?
- The importance of public health issues, and the accountability of our leaders in addressing these issues.
- The effects of the above issues on public attitudes and voting behaviour.

Dr Middleton then went on to discuss how the coronavirus pandemic has affected the framing politics, and how reactions to this and the handling of it may be reflected in future elections.

She ended by gesturing to the fact that there is a lot to be covered and researched regarding this particular strand of the Centre’s work, especially through looking at elections and the surrounding debate, and considering expert opinions and insights.

Professor Amelia Hadfield - Head of Department of Politics and Director of Centre of Britain and Europe, University of Surrey

Head of the Department of Politics at the University of Surrey, and Director of the Centre for Britain and Europe, Professor Amelia Hadfield then went on to discuss the European and British Security and Defence strand of the Centre’s activities, of which she is theme lead.



Professor Hadfield covered a range of topics about this segment of the Centre's research and activity, including:

- Cross-thematic links between this strand and other areas of the Centre's research, such as women in security, their role in crisis management, conflict resolution and peace-building, and how this ties in to the Gender and Identity strand.
- How the EU continues to define missions as the 'beating heart' of EU's foreign policy, and how perhaps this means it may be time for a 'health check as to what EU is doing in the material sense to address particular issues.
- The intersection between the EU and NATO, and how this may be complicated by what President Trump may do in the next couple of months before he leaves office.
- Additional to this, Biden's potential future input to the US-EU-NATO triangulation was also mentioned as something which must be considered.
- The current state of the EU's own defence market, which is now clearer and more focused than before, as well as its current focus on new aircraft programmes.
- The potential development of European strategic autonomy.
- The UK's contribution to defence in terms of spending and outputs; the UK is currently the largest defence spender in Europe, and the second largest in NATO. It has been questioned as to what role the UK can play in supporting the EU in its Security and Defence strategy.
- The intersection of national identity, national interests and foreign policy.
- The concept of Global Britain, which lies at the heart of pre-Brexit anxieties and post-Brexit objectives.

Paul Adamson OBE - [Encompass](#)

Mr Adamson summarised the topics touched upon, and made several key points around these, such as:

- The idea of semi-permanent negotiations, which are likely to continue indefinitely after January 2021.
- The notion that 'Brexit a process, not a final destination.'
- The role of the Centre, and other groups and the importance of their role in this conversation.
- The potential lack of clarity politicians are presenting to the public in terms of perpetuating the idea that Brexit will be a 'clean cut' and ties will be severed.
- The importance of continued engagement of the UK with the European Union.
- The rebranding and repositioning of political parties such as UKIP and the Brexit as a result of Brexit.
- The reiteration of the idea of 'Global Britain' and its roles in the G7 and COP26 – how will the UK government use this to bolster its reputation and credentials.
- The role of the outside world and broader civil society – to what extent are trade associations and civil society groups allowing European membership post-Brexit?

Roundtable: Q&A Segment



The roundtable was then followed with a brief opportunity for Q and A, which covered issues such as disentangling the different effects of Brexit, the future position of the UK and voting behaviour of Eurosceptic voters after Brexit, the rise and changing role of populism, the focus of the media once the UK has left the EU and gender issues at the civil society level.

Keynote Speaker – Katya Adler, *BBC Europe* Editor

We were delighted to be joined by *BBC Europe* Editor, Katya Adler, as our keynote speaker for our Launch event.

Ms Adler began with the statement: ‘So near and yet so far,’ with reference to the current state of Brexit negotiations. She discussed issues such as whether or not we are likely to see an agreement upon a post-Brexit trade deal, the influence of the United States – particularly in light of the recent election -, the importance of timing and the role of the media.

She covered a range of highly relevant and interesting topics which must be considered concerning both the current and future states of the relationship between the UK and the EU, falling under categories such as the current state of negotiations, geopolitical considerations and potential implications of the incoming Biden administration.

Current State of Negotiation

Here, Ms Adler outlined some of the key issues and barriers which are currently being faced in the negotiation process, and what this could mean for the future relationship, such as:

- The concept of a ‘softer’ Brexit, and what this would involve, or if this is even really a concept at all; currently, it seems to be a choice between a ‘hard’ Brexit, or no agreement at all.
- The persistence of the same main ‘sticking points’ such as fishing, the Level Playing Field (competition regulations) and the governance of a deal - if ever reached.
- The lack of certainty and trust around the other side maintaining and honouring the agreements made, in addition to the need for compromise and increased flexibility, but the uncertainty as to if this will happen in such a high stakes issue where both sides seem equally suspicious of the other.
- The importance of EU Member States and any losses some may see over others once the UK has departed.
- The UK’s attachment to the idea of post-Brexit sovereignty.
- The importance for each side to be able to walk away and claim the negotiation process and eventual agreement as a victory.
- The arguments around as to whether or not a deal is important as any deal made is likely to be risky and complex, with the addition of being increasingly difficult to implement in practice.
- The idea that if a deal is reached, that several concerns will be eased, and that extra agreements may even be facilitated on top of this, in addition to the fact that it is within the interest of both sides to reach an agreement.



- The absence of certain issues on the agenda and lack of inclusion in the current agreement, such as health coverage.

Geopolitical Considerations

Ms Adler then went on to discuss elements of a geopolitical nature which have arisen around or as a result of Brexit and its surrounding negotiations. Key topics considered include:

- The wishes and interests of other European states around the outcome of this process, and the future relationship with the UK once it has left the EU.
- The importance of, and the issues which may arise around transatlantic relations.
- The unpredictability of President Trump over the last four years, how EU leaders coped with this, and how this has altered transatlantic relations going forward.
- The changes we may see under Biden's administration, in the US' stance on Brexit and the future relationship; the questions of whether Biden will look towards Asia as Obama did, whether the Senate will remain under Republican control, and Biden's personal outlook on the situation were also mentioned.

Implications of a Biden Administration

- The expectation that Biden will be very enthusiastic toward NATO, and will take a different attitude to Trump.
- The potential attitude Biden may take as a result of his Irish roots, and how this may affect his perception of and approach toward issues affecting the peace process in Northern Ireland, the Internal Market Bill, and the Good Friday Agreement.
- The hopes from both the EU and the UK to work closely with Biden on climate change and the hopes of the US re-joining the Paris Agreement.

Ms Adler concluded with a mention of issues such as how the UK has set an example in leaving for other countries, but not necessarily a positive one, due to the social and political complications which have arisen as a result of the negotiation process. The continuation of Euroscepticism was also mentioned, in addition to what seems like a lack of appetite for a federalist Europe and the presence of nationalists within other European Member States.

Q&A Segment

There was then the opportunity for a Q and A session, where topics such as the new relationship, lack of trust between two sides, and the end goal for a future relationship were discussed. In response to these topics, issues such as business preparation, working groups involved in the negotiations and the EU's perception of the negotiations were outlined.



Session Two: 'Centre to Centre Showcase' – chaired by Dr Florence Gaub, EU Institute for Security Studies

Dr Alia Middleton - Co-Director of Centre for Britain and Europe, University of Surrey

Dr Middleton began by remarking upon the tendency to think of Jean Monnet entities as being isolated, but went on to discuss the need to understand that they in fact act as to form a global network of expertise.

Dr Uta Staiger - Director of UCL European Institute, UCL

Dr Staiger began the discussion by speaking of Jean Monnet himself and what drove the thoughts behind the programme to which he gave his name.

She pointed out specifically the importance of remembering :‘the way he conceptualised European integration as a process of becoming rather than of being,’ and as a continual process of steps and encounters which lead to even further steps and encounters.

Dr Staiger went on to discuss the importance of cooperation, not only in the sense of European integration as mentioned before, but also between the centres and parts of the Jean Monnet programme which we see today. She discussed the different ways through which centres may co-operate, and the importance of this.

Dr Staiger ended on the idea of how centres act as to embed the work of researchers ‘within a sustainable institutional basis,’ and with a final thought on the differences between, but also the importance of structural and project-based cooperation, and formal and informal cooperation. Structural, she highlighted, as cooperation which is usually longer term, with a lengthier period of cooperation involving cross-thematic, and multilateral engagement; project-based cooperation was described as being just as effective, but usually way to more stand-alone events and engagement.

Dr Chad Damro – Co-Director of Europa Institute, University of Edinburgh

Dr Damro emphasised the key concept of collaboration, and its value for scholars, educators, students and institutions. He spoke up the Erasmus+ programme, and how Jean Monnet Centres of Excellence fall under its objectives, by aiming to ‘promote excellence and research in EU studies,’ ‘promote innovation in teaching and research and also in fostering a dialogue between academics, practitioners and policy-makers.

Dr Damro went on to speak of how the Jean Monnet programme acts as to enhance the career prospects for students, and to support young researchers and academics across all stages of their careers.

A parting thought was given on collaboration and cooperation that, when first looking at collaboration, it almost seems self-evident, and that collaboration is essentially a fundamental part of the mission of academic and higher education.



Dr Mary C. Murphy – Jean Monnet Chair, University College Cork

Dr Murphy spoke of the importance of European studies – both cross and trans disciplinary – and described them as the roots and branches of what Jean Monnet envisaged, through capturing teaching, research, innovation, public engagement, media, and policy information. She went on to describe the European studies brand as a real achievement and as a helpful tool for students, in providing a pathway for those who may pursue careers in Brussels or in the policy-making arena – although the scope is unlimited.

Dr Murphy discussed European studies as being part of the greater good of informing society, and how this leads to creating graduates who are civic minded, and those who are understanding of the European Union.

Dr Murphy outlined that for centres, in terms of connecting, we perhaps need to be more creative in terms of how we organise and what we do. She highlighted the importance of human connection, and how difficult connection has been as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. She echoed Dr Staiger’s points about formal and informal events and cooperation, and how each are equally important – the informal side especially in terms of capacity for human connection.

Dr Florence Gaub – Deputy Director, EU Institute for Security Studies

Dr Gaub, as chair, ended the discussion by reiterating the role and importance of linking societies, and the capacity for cooperation and collaboration. She concluded the discussion on the note of remembering to understand the importance of the work which has been discussed, how it creates several opportunities and connections, and how its importance must not be undermined.

Session Three: Engaging with Local Stakeholders

We then moved on to discuss the Centre for Britain and Europe’s newly released report: ‘Charting Surrey’s Post-Covid Rescue, Recovery and Growth,’ which can be found here: <https://www.surrey.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-11/charting-surreys-post-covid-rescue-recovery-and-growth.pdf>

For the Executive Summary: <https://www.surrey.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-12/charting-surreys-post-covid-rescue-recovery-and-growth-executive-summary.pdf>

Michael Coughlin – Deputy Chief Executive, Surrey County Council

This session began with words from Mr Coughlin, who emphasised the importance of collaboration, and how we can find collaboration in extraordinary terms in the research itself.

He mentioned that since the coronavirus pandemic, engagement has become even more important, and that ironically, when speaking of isolation, we have as a community



had to collaborate more than ever in an effort to prevent the spread and eradicate the virus completely.

Mr Coughlin also spoke about the importance of coming together physically, and of place-based leadership. He recognised that the resources, talents, and insights provided by the Centre for Britain and Europe can bring a lot to the understanding of the economy, and ‘report a rich source of unparalleled data around Surrey’, ensuring that we have a clear, evidence-based approach going forward.

Mr Coughlin ended on the note that successful collaboration ultimately depends on individuals and the quality of organisational and personal relationships which are sustained and maintained between them.

Bob Pickles – Chair, Surrey Employment and Skills Board

Mr Pickles discussed the Surrey Employment and Skills Board, which was formed in 2013 to bring together skills and the expertise agenda in Surrey. He praised the Centre’s report on Surrey’s recovery from Covid-19, and described it as a ‘milestone,’ which covers the considerations which need to be made across Surrey in all areas, including a focus on skills and education.

He discussed the employment landscape, and how it has been/could still be affected by Covid-19 and Brexit. The key issues mentioned were:

- The importance of inclusion and ensuring everyone has access to the resources available – education, and IT infrastructure, among others. The inclusion of those in the labour market while being further away from the workspace was also mentioned as a key issue.
- The risks posed to the cohort of 16-24 year olds who are at risk of dropping out of education and facing unemployment.
- High skills – the adults losing out due to Covid-19 and its impact on the labour market.

Mr Pickles went on to speak of the importance of apprenticeships, traineeships, T-Levels and the role of higher education. He also stated the importance of work experience, and that it is vital that we see effective collaboration between those who provide qualifications and those who provide work – collaboration has to be truly embedded in the programme. He commended the report on its perspective on this, as they also emphasised its importance.

Dr Malcolm Parry OBE – Managing Director and CEO, Surrey Research Park

Dr Parry emphasised the importance of looking at the type of economy we would like to see in the future, rather than the one we have today. He highlighted the importance of the role of entrepreneurship, and how it acts as to bring economic value to science in a modern economy, through creating business and creating businesses that are destined to grow. He outlined the need to recognise how to renew that economy, and how renewal can be found in entrepreneurship.



Dr Parry went on to describe the University of Surrey as a ‘centre of knowledge.’ He also spoke of the enormous challenges Surrey will face in recovery.

Mr Pickles then asked: ‘How can we nurture entrepreneurial ambitions, to ensure they follow that route and choose to do it in Surrey?’ Dr Parry answered this by speaking of Surrey Business School and the University, and they have given the opportunity for every single undergraduate to take a module in Business education – ending on the note of creating pathways for entrepreneurship.

Closing Reflections – Professor Amelia Hadfield, University of Surrey

Professor Hadfield concluded the day’s sessions, speaking of ‘ending on a high’ and thanking everyone in attendance, and those who participated for a great day of contributions and wonderful insights around cutting edge research, the collaborative benefits of centre-centre showcasing, and working on tandem in a sustainable way.

