How, and to what extent, the European Union (EU) needs to be reformed is a topic that has increasingly come onto the agenda of the EU polity. EPRS has produced a number of publications that tackle the issue of possible future reforms or try to foresee the future challenges that the EU will face.

Cross-cutting publications

**Unlocking the potential of the EU Treaties** - An article-by-article analysis of the scope for action

*Study by Étienne Bassot et al., May 2020*

This study explores possibilities for broadening the scope of EU action in order to respond to repeated calls from EU citizens. With a view to reappraising the legal framework of the EU, it aims to identify those legal bases in the Treaties that remain either under-used (in terms of the purposes they could be used to achieve) or completely unused. It analyses possible ways of delivering on EU policies, including in the development of common rules, providing enhanced executive capacity, better implementation of existing measures, targeted financing and increased efficiency.

**A European Green Deal**

**EU agricultural policy and climate change**

*Briefing by James McEldowney, May 2020*

In December 2019, the European Parliament declared a climate and environmental emergency in Europe and across the globe – a recognition of the challenges that the EU faces in this area. The agricultural sector is not only affected by climate change but also contributes significantly to it, according to some assessments. Evidence from a range of reports points to the impacts that climate change will have on yields, length of growing season, water availability, biodiversity, and habitats.

**Impact of the coronavirus crisis on climate action and the European Green Deal**

*Briefing by Gregor Erbach, April 2020*

The Covid-19 crisis has led to an economic downturn. Stimulus programmes are considered necessary to re-launch the economy. While some governments consider that ambitious programmes like the European Green Deal will hinder economic recovery, the European Commission and others maintain that the European Green Deal is the growth strategy that can help Europe’s economic recovery while at the same time addressing the global climate emergency.

**Impact of coronavirus on energy markets**

*‘At a glance’ note by Alex Wilson, April 2020*

The coronavirus pandemic has had a strong impact on global energy markets, contributing to a collapse in the oil price as well as lower prices for other fossil fuels. In the short term, coronavirus will negatively affect new energy investments in all sectors, including renewables needed for the clean energy transition. The longer term impact is more uncertain and very much hinges on the nature and speed of the economic recovery, as well as the differing responses of global policy-makers to this challenge.
Energy supply and security
Briefing by Alex Wilson, July 2019
EU legislation on security of supply focuses on natural gas and electricity markets, with the aim of improving energy efficiency, and promoting renewable energy sources. The EU will retain a key role in monitoring security of supply throughout the energy transition. However, the EU would need to use a special legislative procedure if it were to intervene directly in determining the energy supply of its Member States. This procedure requires decision-making by unanimity in Council and only a consultative role for the Parliament.

An economy that works for people
Demography on the European agenda: Strategies for tackling demographic decline
Briefing by Vasileios Margaras, May 2020
The EU faces a number of demographic challenges such as ageing, a declining birth rate and depopulation in some of its regions. The EU represents an ever-shrinking proportion of the world population, at just 6.9 % today (down from 13.5 % in 1960), and is projected to fall further to just 4.1 % by the end of this century. This is explained by the low fertility rates as the numbers of children being born has fallen from an EU-28 average of around 2.5 children per woman in 1960, to a little under 1.6 today. This is far below the 2.1 births per woman considered necessary to maintain a stable population in the long term.

Social governance in the European Union: Managing complex systems
In-depth analysis by Nora Milotay, May 2020
While economic governance has a regulated, ‘hard’ framework, there is no such framework for social governance in the EU. Social governance functions mainly within the ‘soft’, unregulated realms but is also marked by some ‘hard’ governance mechanisms. This publication presents an overview of existing EU social governance mechanisms and tools, including the current state of play, the debates that surround them and possible avenues for their further development.

Joint debt instruments A recurrent proposal to strengthen economic and monetary union
Briefing by Angelos Delivorias and Carla Stamegna, April 2020
The idea of issuing joint debt instruments, in particular among euro-area countries, has long been linked in various ways to the Union’s financial integration process. In the context of the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, joint debt instruments have once more come to the fore as a potential medium-term solution to help Member States rebuild their economies following the crisis.

Demographic outlook for the European Union 2020
Study by Monika Kiss et al., March 2020
This paper highlights and explains major demographic trends as they affect the European Union. With the world population rising substantially, the EU represents a shrinking proportion of the global population. The EU population is also ageing dramatically, as life expectancy increases and fertility rates fall. This has serious implications across a range of areas including the economy, healthcare and pensions. The ‘in-focus’ section of this year’s edition examines food and nutrition-related demographic challenges.

Economic and Budgetary Outlook for the European Union 2020
Study by Alessandro D’Alfonso, Angelos Delivorias, Magdalena Sapata and Carla Stamegna, January 2020
This study summarises the main economic indicators in the EU and euro area and their two-year trends. It explains the annual EU budget, provides an overview of its headings for 2020, and sets out the wider budgetary framework – the multiannual financial framework (MFF) – and its possible evolution in the new decade. A special ‘economic focus’ puts the spotlight on the international role of the euro, and on various recent EU-level initiatives in this field.
EU industrial policy at the crossroads: Current state of affairs, challenges and way forward

In-depth analysis by Marcin Szczepański and Ioannis Zachariadis, December 2019

This paper seeks to serve as a key resource for policy-makers who need to understand the complex issues connected with the new industrial policy emerging in the EU. It provides an overview of the current state of affairs and of the key challenges facing the EU, followed by an analysis of the debate surrounding the main policy options.

A Europe fit for the digital age

EPRS Ideas Paper: Digital sovereignty for Europe
Briefing by Tambiama Madiega, July 2020

There is growing concern that citizens, businesses and Member States are gradually losing control over their data, over their capacity for innovation, and over their ability to shape and enforce legislation in the digital environment. This briefing explains the context of the emerging quest for 'digital sovereignty', which the coronavirus pandemic now seems to have accelerated, and provides an overview of the measures currently being discussed and/or proposed to enhance European autonomy in the digital field. This would require the EU to update and adapt a number of legal, regulatory and financial instruments, and to promote European values and principles more actively.

The rise of e-commerce and the cashless society

Briefing by Mar Negreiro, March 2020

In the EU, a large majority of internet users shop online. Clothes, sports goods, travel and online content such as games, videos and music are among the most popular items. This trend is also driven by the increase in cashless payments, which have become very popular in some countries. However, e-commerce and the cashless society are facing a host of challenges related to cybercrime, fraud, privacy, the digital divide and pollution, among others.

Digital taxation: State of play and way forward

Briefing by Marcin Szczepański, March 2020

The digitalisation of the economy and society poses new tax policy challenges. One of the main questions is how to correctly capture value and tax businesses characterised by a reliance on intangible assets, no or insignificant physical presence in the tax jurisdictions where commercial activities are carried out, and a considerable user role in value creation. Current tax rules are struggling to cope with these new economic models.

Is data the new oil? Competition issues in the digital economy

Briefing by Marcin Szczepański, January 2020

One of the fundamental questions facing modern economic policy is whether and how to regulate the digital economy. The two main lines of debate are taxation and competition. Taxation has gathered international attention with some pioneer tax efforts by individual countries, the 2018 EU tax proposals, and the OECD efforts to work out a global solution. Competition is hotly debated, and points of view across the world vary. The European Union has taken multiple initiatives to unlock data markets through modern, user-centred laws such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the regulation on the reuse of public sector information.

Protecting our European way of life

Education in isolation in the pandemic, following the path of Isaac Newton

Briefing by Denise Chircop, June 2020

While schools have remained closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, students' education cannot be suspended indefinitely without severe consequences. Alternative methods, mostly dependent on digital technology, have been adopted very rapidly. Organisations such as Unesco have been quick to monitor the situation, and the EU too has followed developments in the Member States through its agencies and networks. Video-conferences of education ministers have been pivotal for them to discuss issues and learn from each other's best practices. What has started as an emergency has become an eye-opener, as existing educational gaps have become more visible.
Migration and border management: Heading 4 of the 2021-2027 MFF
Briefing by Alessandro D’Alfonso, January 2020
The Treaty of Lisbon makes explicit reference to pooling financial resources to support common policies on asylum, immigration and external borders, but relevant resources initially planned in the EU budget proved insufficient in the context of the 2015-2016 refugee crisis. The Commission proposal for the post-2020 long-term budget seeks to enhance financial allocations for migration and border management, improve synergies with other EU funding instruments and increase capacity to react to evolving needs.

A stronger Europe in the world

Foreign policy consequences of coronavirus
Plenary ‘At a glance’ note by Elena Lazarou, June 2020.
The Covid-19 crisis has had economic, social, political and geopolitical consequences that will inevitably affect key aspects of EU foreign policy. These include relations with major powers, as well as several aspects of humanitarian aid, development and peacekeeping, and the fight against disinformation and cyber-attacks. It has also accentuated the debate about the future of multilateralism, a primary concern of EU foreign policy. Parliament heard a statement on the issue from the High Representative during the June plenary session.

Towards a new EU strategy with Africa: A renewed focus on outreach
Briefing by Eric Pichon, June 2020
Following its geopolitical work programme, in March 2020, the European Commission proposed to build a new and comprehensive partnership with Africa. Although the proposal mainly builds on existing frameworks, its high profile and clear commitment to the African Union (AU) make it an important milestone in a partnership effort initiated several years ago. In order to preserve its own economic and security interests in the face of increased geopolitical competition, the EU intends to continue to be an important player on the African continent.

The role of armed forces in the fight against coronavirus
Briefing by Tania Latici, April 2020
Whether distributing food, building hospitals or shelters, EU armed forces were mobilised early in the coronavirus crisis. Discouraging economic projections indicate that the impact of the pandemic will not spare the defence sector or weaken geopolitical tensions. As militaries have shown their value in unconventional crisis management, there is an impetus to deliver on the EU’s defence ambitions.

A new approach to EU enlargement
Briefing by Branislav Stanicek, March 2020
The Thessaloniki Summit (2003) opened the door to a European future for the Western Balkans. The 2018 Enlargement Strategy as well as the 2020 new Methodology gave positive impetus to the enlargement policy, offering the six countries of the region a ‘credible strategy’ through enhanced EU engagement and indicating 2025 as a possible accession date. The new approach improves tools to push reforms forward, notably in the areas of the rule of law and the economy. It makes the accession negotiations more credible, more predictable, more dynamic and guided by a stronger political steer.

Peace and Security in 2019: Overview of EU action and outlook for the future
Study by Elena Lazarou et al., May 2019
The study looks at the concept of peace and the changing nature of the geopolitical environment. It then focuses on the centrality of the promotion of peace and security in the EU’s external action and proceeds to an analysis of the practical pursuit of these principles in the main areas of EU policy: development, democracy support, and security and defence and disinformation.
A new push for European democracy

The practice of democracy. A selection of civic engagement initiatives
Study by Gianluca Sgueo, June 2020
This study describes current challenges to democratic principles and infrastructure across the world, by exploring a wide selection of participatory initiatives run by local, national and supranational administrations. In doing so, the study identifies three trends that are driving innovation in democratic participation, as well as the key risks that threaten the success of participatory initiatives. Focus is put on the EU, and current attempts to foster inclusiveness in decision-making.

Protecting the EU budget against generalised rule of law deficiencies
The briefing describes the on-going legislative procedure concerning the proposal for a regulation introducing a rule of law conditionality for EU funding as part of the 2021-2027 MFF. The regulation would help to protect European values, especially the rule of law, from further deterioration in certain Member States by introducing a negative conditionality, allowing to withhold funding from Member States found culpable of undermining the rule of law. At the same time, EU citizens as end-beneficiaries of the funds would remain protected.

The rights of LGBTI people in the European Union
Briefing by Rosamund Shreeves, May 2020
The prohibition of discrimination and the protection of human rights are important elements of the EU legal order. Nevertheless, discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people persists throughout the EU and takes various forms, including verbal abuse and physical violence. Combating discrimination has become part of EU internal and external policies, and is the subject of numerous resolutions of the European Parliament. However, action in this area remains problematic when it touches on issues pertaining to areas traditionally the preserve of Member States, such as marital status and family law.

The Beijing Platform for Action – 25 year review and future priorities
Briefing by Rosamund Shreeves, February 2020
The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is considered the most comprehensive global policy framework for the rights of women. Its concrete measures and measurable outcomes across a range of issues affecting women and girls are regularly monitored and give an indication of progress towards gender equality, both globally and in the EU.

Institutional matters
Parliament’s right of legislative initiative
Briefing by Silvia Kotanidis, February 2020
The European Commission has a near monopoly on legislative initiative in the EU, with special initiative rights for other institutions applying only in certain specific cases. However, the European Parliament and the Council may invite the Commission to submit legislative proposals. In July 2019, and in her Political Guidelines, the then candidate for President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, pledged to strengthen the partnership with the Parliament, inter alia, by responding with a proposal for a legislative act whenever Parliament, acting by a majority of its members, adopts a resolution requesting that the Commission submit legislative proposals.
European Union electoral law
Briefing by Silvia Kotanidis, October 2019
Several reforms of the EU electoral system have been attempted over the years, but not all have resulted in legislation. The introduction of a transnational constituency in particular is a perennially controversial issue. Some consider it a step towards the genuine ‘Europeanisation’ of elections, others believe that it could increase the distance between the public and elected representatives.

In-depth analysis by Silvia Kotanidis and Ralf Drachenberg, May 2019
This paper concludes a series of four briefings on the Future of Europe debates that explained the views of the different Heads of State or Government who spoke in European Parliament plenary sessions from January 2018 until April 2019. The first part of the paper describes the overall points of convergence and divergence among the speakers, trends in the topics tackled, and proposals advanced. In the second part, the paper offers excerpts from some of the most significant statements by the speakers, as well as a more detailed analysis of their various positions on selected key policy areas.

Forthcoming publications

| Covid-19: The need for a gendered response, Briefing by Rosamund Shreeves, July 2020 |
| Next Generation EU, Briefing by Alessandro D’Alfonso, July 2020 |
| Disruptive technologies, In-depth analysis by Philip Boucher et al., summer 2020 |
| Mapping threats to peace and democracy worldwide: Introduction to the Normandy Index 2020, In-depth analysis by Elena Lazarou et al., July 2020 |
| EPRS Ideas paper: European interests and values – Unleashing the European Dream? Protecting, promoting and projecting Europe’s interests and values for the global good, Briefing by Naja Bentzen, summer 2020 |
| Slowbalisation 2007-2020: Myth or Reality?, In-depth analysis by Jana Titievskaia et al., summer 2020 |
| EPRS Ideas Paper: International trade, Briefing, by Jana Titievskaia, summer 2020 |
| Europeanisation of European elections, Briefing by Maria Diaz Crego and Silvia Kotanidis, September 2020 |
| EU mechanisms to monitor and enforce EU common values within Member States, Study by Maria Diaz Crego, Wouter van Ballegooij and Rafał Mańko, autumn 2020 |
How, and to what extent, the European Union (EU) needs to be reformed is a topic that has increasingly come onto the agenda of the EU polity. The following selection of external publications aim to tackle the issue of possible future reforms or try to foresee the future challenges that the EU will face.

**Global Foresight perspectives on Europe**

**How the EU could pioneer a new economic model for the post-Covid-19 world**

*Article in The New Statesman, by John Milbank and Adrian Pabst, co-authors of The Politics of Virtue: Post-Liberalism and the Human Future, 7 June 2020*

Europe can and should offer an economic model of its own in the face of both liberal globalisation and national populism.

**Rethinking EU Crisis Management – From Battlegroups to a European Legion?**

*Research paper, by Niklas Novaky, from Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, June 2020*

This paper discusses the proposal of Radoslaw Sikorski, MEP to create a European Legion. This would be a new kind of EU military unit, made up of volunteers rather than national contingents contributed by the Member States.

**Strategic sovereignty: How Europe can regain the capacity to act**

*Study by the European Council of Foreign Relations, 25 June 2019*

A detailed analysis of some of the different dimensions of the challenge to Europe's strategic sovereignty, in three main baskets: economics and finance; security and defence; and politics and diplomacy. As a bonus, here is a sobering US assessment of Germany's position, from a study by the Atlantic Council: 'Ultimately, Berlin is trying to have it both ways. German officials make the case for transatlantic links and better relations with Washington, without seriously addressing the fact that a number of their policy choices are undercutting transatlantic solidarity. Germany demands to go its own way on energy policy, defense spending, and relations with China, without the audacity, vision, or resources that France invests in its conception of strategic autonomy. As a result, Germany finds itself in the unenviable spot of depending on the United States for its defense, Russia for a mounting share of its natural-gas imports, and China for a growing share of its industrial exports. That triad will prove increasingly unstable for Berlin in the coming years, regardless of whether or not President Trump spends another four years in the White House.'

**The Folly of Decoupling From China: It Isn’t Just Perilous – It’s Impossible**

*Article in Foreign Affairs, by Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman, 3 June 2020*

'China's economy is not a discrete organism that can easily be separated from the global economy but rather a Siamese twin, connected by nervous tissue, common organs, and a shared circulatory system.'

**The Real Lessons of the 75th Anniversary of World War II**

*In The National Interest, the view from Russia, by the President himself.*

None other than Vladimir Putin sets Russian policy in the context of the Second World War. He insists that the legacy of World War II is being forgotten. 'Today, European politicians, and Polish leaders in particular, wish to sweep the
Munich Betrayal under the carpet. The Munich Betrayal showed to the Soviet Union that the Western countries would deal with security issues without taking its interests into account.

**What Think Tanks are Thinking**

*Recent papers from major EU think-tanks on the debate over the future of Europe.*

**The Conference on the Future of Europe: A new model to reform the EU?**
Federico Fabbrini, Professor of EU Law at Dublin City University, Founding Director of the Brexit Institute

**Schuman at seventy**
Andrew Duff, European Policy Centre, June 2020

**The future of Europe: Views from the capitals**
Trans European Policy Studies Association, June 2020

**Preparing for the Conference on the Future of Europe: The ‘known knowns’ of citizens’ participation**
European Policy Centre, June 2020

**Conference on the Future of Europe: Five reasons for moderate pessimism**
Friends of Europe, March 2020

**Représentation et participation: Réinventer la démocratie européenne**
Institut Jacques Delors, March 2020

**Europe’s next stage: Report from Ideas Lab CEPS conference**
CEPS, March 2020

**Other articles from the EP Library**

**La Conférence sur l’avenir de l’Europe**
Jean-François Drevet; Futuribles; 2020/2 (N° 435) ; pp. 105-113

**Possible Avenues for Further Political Integration in Europe**: A Political Compact for a more democratic and effective Union?, May 2020
This study, commissioned by the European Parliament’s Policy Department for Citizens’ Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the AFCO Committee, analyses possible avenues for further political integration in the EU after Brexit. The study maps the multiple crises that the EU has weathered in the past decade and explains how these crises, including the recent Covid-19 pandemic, reveal several substantive and institutional weaknesses in the current EU system of governance.
The future of differentiated integration: A ‘soft-core’, multi-clustered Europe of overlapping policy communities

Vivien A. Schmidt; Comparative European Politics; 2019; Vol. 17(2); pp. 294-315
This article discusses the future of Europe as one of differentiated integration. It argues that this future takes the form of member-states’ overlapping participation in the EU’s many policy communities, making for a soft-core Europe, as an alternative option to the hard-core around the Eurozone. The article contends that this multi-clustered Europe is the only feasible future, given the challenges facing the EU from its many crises, its problems of governance, and the difficulties of decision-making against a background of increasing politicization.

The re-making of Europe: The long view

Graham Room; Journal of European Social Policy; 2020-02; Vol. 30(1); pp. 108-120
This article starts with three commonplace judgements on the European Union – its success in healing the wounds of war, its failure to win democratic engagement and its vulnerability now to the seeds of disintegration. Setting these against the background of the High Middle Ages, and the original making of Europe, the article argues that each of these judgements is overly simplistic and for reasons that are closely interconnected. They are, moreover, the ‘high politics’ of European integration, expressing the concerns of political elites. Against these, the article proposes a rather different agenda, in relation to the following: social and economic justice; the turmoil, dislocation and hurt that European integration produces; the critical questioning of political elites; and the creative diversity of the Union. These are the ‘hot politics’ that matter to ordinary citizens.

Debating Europe’s future

Desmond Dinan; Irish Political Studies; 2019-10-02; Vol. 34(4); pp. 490-506
The European Union – including its precursors, the European Communities – has had many ups and downs since the beginning of institutionalized integration, in the 1950s. Yet the state of the EU today seems exceptionally grave. Debates about the future of European integration are as old as the EU itself. They are particularly prevalent at times of perceived crisis. The current debate takes place at a time of undoubted crisis, even polycrisis. This article discusses the course and contours of the current debate, by looking, first, at the global context in which the debate is taking place; second, at the EU context; and, third, at the contributions to, and overall significance of, the debate so far.

Future Scenarios of the European Union

Brigid Laffan; Oxford Research Encyclopedias – Politics; September 2019
Debate on the future of the European Union (EU) never abates because the Union is a polity characterized by considerable change in its internal and external environment. Scenarios are an important tool in mapping possible futures for the Union as they bring underlying trends into focus. Four scenarios on the future of the EU are presented: disintegration, piecemeal adjustment, functional federalism, and a United States of Europe.

Differentiated Integration and Disintegration in the EU after Brexit: Risks versus Opportunities

Benjamin Leruth, Stefan Gänzle, Jarle Trondal; JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies; 2019-11; Vol. 57 (6); pp. 1383-1394
Differentiation is becoming an increasingly salient feature of European integration. The multifaceted European crisis and the subsequent Brexit vote (paving the way for a ground-breaking case of differentiated disintegration) have led scholars and practitioners to think about the consequences of differentiated integration. This article draws on five empirical models of differentiation experienced by countries both inside and outside the EU: the European economic area model, the Danish model of (quasi-)permanent differentiation, the Swedish model of de facto differentiation, the instrumental model and the Brexit process of differentiation.
Enhancing Europe’s Global Power: A Scenario Exercise with Eight Proposals
Christoph M. Abels, Helmut K. Anheier, Iain Begg and Kevin Featherstone; Global Policy; 2020; Vol. 11(1); pp.128-142
In the present context of intensifying competition between the major trading economies and potentially game-changing technological developments, the European Union is generally seen as the weaker party. Lacking the ‘hard power’ derived from military capabilities, it has laid claim to a ‘soft power’ of normative influence externally, yet even that is only partially utilised. Nor has Europe been able to exercise the power to coerce – ‘sharp power’ – commensurate with its economic weight as a trading bloc equivalent in size and reach to the US or China, its most prominent global competitors. How can Europe strengthen its position, and in what fields? Through a scenario exercise, we develop eight policy proposals aimed at countering Europe’s vulnerabilities and enabling it to assert its sharp and soft power more effectively.

Vision oder Utopie? Junge Ideen für die Zukunft Europas
Friederike Augustin, Jana Schubert; integration; 2019; Vol. 42(2); pp. 149-157
Although most of the first-time voters and young citizens of the European Union (EU) share a positive attitude towards the EU, less than 30 percent cast their votes in the European elections of 2014. Against this backdrop, this year’s European election campaigns particularly focused on young people aged 15 to 24. In that sense, the youth participation project #EngagEU aimed at motivating young people to vote in the European elections 2019 and at empowering them to formulate concrete political demands. Summarised in the manifesto “Young Ideas for the Future of Europe”, their ideas were presented to the public as well as to Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier on 30 April 2019 at the #1stYoung Citizens’ Convention organised by the Institut für Europäische Politik and discussed with young candidates for the European elections.

Towards a New EU: Why Populism Can Save the European Union
Alessandro Giuseppe Drago; Review of European and Russian Affairs; 2018; Vol. 12(1); pp. 1-16.
Europe has seen an alarming increase of populist parties throughout the last two decades. The European debt crisis has only added to their strength and support, and Eurosceptic attitudes have only increased, as exemplified by the recent Brexit vote. However, this exploratory paper will argue that the crisis to which populism has given rise allows the EU to critically reflect on itself and fix many of the fatal flaws that the increase in populist support has pointed out. It will be argued that the EU needs to create a strong civic society to help mend its democratic deficit. Finally, it will be argued that by incorporating particular elements of populist thought and critique (i.e., democratization and fairer economic policies), that is, implanting an “alter-europeanization,” that the ugly side of populism (its xenophobia and racism) will begin to lose support within European countries.

Alternative governance models: ‘Hard core’ in a differentiated Europe
Sergio Fabbrini; Comparative European Politics; 2019-04; Vol. 17(2); pp. 278-293
The discussion on the future of Europe has been mainly focused on policy regimes and not (also) on governance models for managing them. An economistic bias has largely affected the proposals on the future of Europe advanced by EU and national leaders. The article brings the governance question back to the debate. Using a deductive approach, it identifies four governance models, and their connected policy implications, epitomizing different interpretations of the EU and its future. Two models are derived from the interpretation of the EU as regional organization and the other two from the interpretation of the EU as a federation in the making. Through the four governance models, the article aims to structure the discussion on the future organization of Europe on more solid, logically and empirically, bases.