Rethinking Europe’s East-West Divide

2024 marks numerous important anniversaries: 75 years since the establishment of the Council of Europe and NATO, the 35th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, 25 years since the launch of the Stabilisation and Association Process for the Western Balkans and the 20th anniversary of the EU’s ‘Big Bang’ enlargement. Celebrating the historic enlargement, then President of the European Commission Romano Prodi remarked that ‘the divisions of the Cold War are gone’ and *Le Monde* declared ‘Europe – a new continent’.

Two decades later, not only are Central and Eastern European countries repeatedly defined by their communist legacy rather than their integration into the EU and NATO, but the study of Europe remains largely construed by an East-West divide. The continuous application of outdated concepts and ways of thinking about Eastern and Western Europe not only reproduces lazy stereotypes but also undermines our understanding of the continent. How we study Europe has important implications for what we know and what we teach. More importantly, research has real-world impact as it shapes policy debates and influences the next generation of scholars and policymakers.

We set up this research network with the aim of challenging outdated ways of studying Europe, dismantling disciplinary siloes and starting new conversations about knowledge creation.

- We are keen to encourage the advancement of a new research agenda which sheds light on European interconnectedness with a focus on structural dependencies and diffusion processes. This approach has a strong analytical potential to contest the ‘othering’ of Eastern Europe, which is often portrayed as inferior, illiberal and populist.

- We are particularly interested in exploring the impact of the EU on democracy, civil society and public participation in Europe; enlargement and the future of European integration, EU technocratic governance, the transformation of party systems and national parliaments, populism, industrial policy and growth models, migration, labour markets and the welfare state, and digital policy-making.

- We aim to promote novel research and existing studies that critically engage with Europe’s East-West divide(s).

- We are committed to creating a common space for dialogue and networking.

- We are determined to build an inclusive interdisciplinary community. One of the key goals of the network is to give space and voice to early career researchers from across Europe by supporting them to attend conferences, develop their research, and build collaborations.

- We intend to build bridges between the academic community and policy experts and practitioners with the aim to facilitate knowledge exchange and contribute to the policy debates on EU enlargement and the future of European integration.

We have started small, but we aim high and we would like to see this network as a collaborative space for people whose research and expertise will make a difference to how we study, teach and understand Europe.

If you would like to join us:
You can follow us @EastWestDivide on X (twitter) and sign up for our mailing list. To become a member of the network and/or share ideas, email us at rethinkeastwestdivide@gmail.com.

**Events**

**Next events:**

We have organised panels at the at International Conference of Europeanists (CES), 3-5 July 2024 in Lyon and we are convening ‘Rethinking Europe’s East-West Divide’ at UACES conference in Trento.

**Past events:**

Network Launch Conference: Rethinking Europe’s East-West Divide at St Antony’s College

If you could not join us, you can watch the recordings from the conference:

- Introduction & Network launch
- Panel 5: Panel 5: Risks to Representative Democracy in the European Union
- Panel 6: Rethinking Europe’s East-West Divide - 20 Years since the Big Bang Enlargement
- Panel 7: Rethinking Europe’s East-West Divide and European Integration in a New Geopolitical Era