



## Grassroots for Europe Round Table #41

### Views from Spain: democracy, the EU, and lessons for Rejoiners

Tuesday December 5th, 2023

#### Summary Report

##### Background and aims.

This session of the Grassroots for Europe Round Table continues a series that began with a discussion with Annette Dittert, station head of ARD German public broadcasting in UK, in which we seek nation-specific EU perspectives on what is happening in the UK and in the EU, and where we are heading. The aim is to improve our understanding of shared challenges and strengthen civil society dialogues in support of the process towards a UK Rejoin.

December 2023 marks the end of the [Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union](#). Pedro Sánchez's Socialist-led coalition has just been sworn in as the next Spanish Government and the far-right Vox party, having lost ground, has been kept out. However, the coalition deal was contingent on a controversial amnesty for Catalan activists involved in the 2017 independence movement. This strategy is risky, as evidenced by large-scale demonstrations across Spain. But the new Sánchez government could be a potentially sympathetic interlocutor for a Labour government in the UK.

Topics we aimed to address include:

- How is Brexit perceived, previously and (if at all) now by political and public opinion in Spain, including in terms of attitudes to a UK initiative move to rejoin the EU? We were impressed by the insightful report by Carlos Fresneda on the NRM2 march for *El Mundo*.

- Spanish perspectives on the experiences and problems facing UK nationals in Spain since Brexit, and how far progress on this depends on progress in future UK-EU relations.
- Shared issues for European states and citizens in terms of threats to democracy and the rise of the hard right.
- What parallels are there between Brexit and the dangers of autocratic regression and anti-democratic forces within member states of the EU – for example, in Spain?
- What lessons can the UK learn from Spain's experience of proportional representation?

### **Contributors.**

**Lisa Burton** is vice-chair of Bremain in Spain and a member of the European Movement's National Council.

**Carlos Fresneda** began his career as a journalist with *El País*, and has been reporting since 2011 from New York, Milan, and now London for *El Mundo*, Spain's second-largest newspaper. His article covering the second National Rejoin March was translated in *Northeast Bylines*. Carlos is also the author of several books on environmental issues.

**Rachele Arciulo**, an Italian living in Barcelona and co-president of Volt España, the Spanish branch of an EU-wide political party set up in the wake of Brexit. Experience with a European conflict resolution project in Cyprus led to involvement in European politics. She joined Volt in 2019, convinced that the only way to respond to the EU's common challenges is through rebuilding shared European values directly involving people in towns and cities and making people leaders of change. Rachele will be running in 2024 for election to the European Parliament.

**Dr. Arantza Gomez Arana**, senior lecturer in international relations at Northumbria University, has studied and taught about the European Union for over 15 years, with a focus on external relations and international security. Since 2016 her research activity and supervision has covered Brexit and the negotiation of the Withdrawal

Agreement. She is currently researching the impact of Brexit on UK-EU relations in internal and external security, including its impact on Gibraltar and Spain.

**Chair (Lisa Burton, Bremain in Spain): *Brief introductory comments.***

There are 1.3 million Britons living in the EU, with over 400,000 of us in Spain. The political upheaval caused by Brexit and the subsequent removal of our rights as EU citizens has had a profound and often devastating impact on the lives of individuals and families. Our own government stripped us of our EU citizenship, removing our rights to freedom of movement and changing our status to third-country nationals. Our democratic participation has been reduced as we cannot vote in national or EU elections. Many of us feel cast aside and deeply let down by our government. Cameron called the Brexit referendum to appease the hard-right Eurosceptics in the Conservative party and stave off Nigel Farage's party, UKIP. However, he didn't think it through very well because Brexit became a nationalistic project driven by the populist far-right. Its success emboldened nationalists and far-right populists across the globe. Now, many countries, including Spain, are battling to hold the far right at bay. At the same time, in the UK, the Conservative Party has morphed into a populist party indulging in far-right rhetoric and policy.

From 1939 to 1975, Spain was ruled by the fascist dictator General Franco, and it was not until after his death that Spain moved from a dictatorship to a democracy. In 1977, Spain had its first democratic elections in over four decades. Many thought Spain's recent history under Franco and fascism might insulate the country from the rise of the far right; however, that has not been the case.

Spain has a form of proportional representation, and from 1977 until recently, politics had been dominated by two main parties, the centre-right Partido Popular, or People's Party (PP) and the centre-left Partido Socialista Obrero Español, or Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE). However, in recent years, Spain has experienced problems forming stable governments. Regional tensions, economic challenges, and the emergence of new political parties like Ciudadanos, Podemos, and VOX are challenging the historic dominance of PP and PSOE. These shifts have brought a more diverse and fragmented political landscape and have led to the need for coalition governments and complex negotiations to govern effectively.

Regional elections in June this year saw PP and the far-right VOX party make considerable gains, taking power in several regions, sometimes in coalition. In response, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez called a snap election for July, saying. "These results suggest Spaniards should clarify which political forces they want to take the lead".

PP won the most seats in the election but could not form a coalition government. Even with VOX, they fell seven seats short. So, after months of negotiations, a Socialist-led government was sworn in last month, with Sánchez holding on to his premiership. Still, it has not come easily. In November, Sánchez completed negotiations to form a government with various parties, most controversially the Catalan nationalists, Junts and Esquerra Republicana whose support was obtained based on an amnesty for Catalan activists. This may have kept the far-right at bay for now, but it has been controversial.

We have European Parliamentary elections next year and are keen to hear what our panellists think. Is there an emerging shared sense across our civil societies that our democracy is under attack and that we must unite to defend it? Can we learn anything from the pros and cons of Spain's proportional representation system?

**Carlos Fresneda:** As a regular traveller between the UK and Spain, Carlos has a dual perspective which a solely UK point of view lacks. Not just in Spain, but all over the world, the UK's reputation has been very seriously damaged by Brexit and the ensuing political chaos. Fortunately, links between Spain and the UK remain strong at a personal and cultural level, through tourism, study, football, astronomy and numerous other areas of life. Names like Santander and Scottish Power (a subsidiary of Spanish utility firm Iberdrola) are familiar to British people.

In the months following the referendum Carlos was very tempted to move back to Spain with his family. One of his sons suffered damaging bullying at school because of his immigration status, a traumatic situation which Carlos wrote about at the time. Although tensions have eased to a degree, the sadness and frustration felt by Europeans in all communities are still very much alive. He has recently written about the devastating effects of the UK's self-inflicted exclusion from the Erasmus scheme. He cites the loss of opportunities suffered by a 19-year-old university student and

family friend with Jamaican roots who has an Italian girlfriend: a situation which will inevitably be exacerbated by this week's changes to immigration rules.

Their loss of freedom to travel, live and work in Europe is seriously distressing for young people. Polling shows that British people between the ages of 18 – 24 would like to be back in the European Union. However, the main political parties' self-imposed refusal to discuss Brexit issues means that this is no longer part of wider public debate. Having incurred the full force of the right-wing press for raising the issue of Europe several months ago, Keir Starmer is no longer willing to mention Brexit. As a European, Carlos finds this very frustrating, as Starmer was eloquently anti-Brexit at the time of the referendum.

As far as Spanish media are concerned, Brexit is now old news. It was difficult to get editors interested in covering the recent National Rejoin March until the impressive size of the demonstration made re-visiting the subject newsworthy. Carlos stressed the difficulty of keeping these issues to the fore until the leader of the Labour Party decides that Brexit is an acceptable topic again. Ironically, Farage's appearances on TV and radio have enabled Spanish journalists to remind readers that even Mr. Brexit himself admits that Brexit is not working.

In conclusion, Carlos stressed the importance of maintaining public awareness and interest if progress towards rejoining is to be made.

**Rachele Arciulo:** Rachele explained that her background as European and Italian living in Spain led her to see identity as fluid. Her fight to create a common European identity made her aware of the growth of the far right throughout Europe, including among young people. Young people are pushing back against the status quo, which oddly enough is now often represented by the Left and progressive parties. Spain, Italy, and UK (especially with Brexit), all exhibit the erosion of a common political dialogue. This demands a new kind of democracy and political participation which is not just about power, and where the voices of young people are heard. Emphasis must be on our common European values and on participating at a local level. Hence at the European elections, Volt works for a federal Europe and the values of the European Constitution. We have spoken a lot about wanting our UK family back, and about activities or projects on a European level which will involve movement between young people and might facilitate the UK's return, especially - but not only -

Erasmus. Volt wants this kind of exchange at school level, even for countries outside the EU like the UK and Switzerland. And, of course, modern technology makes connecting people much easier, and not just within Europe.

Volt aims to create a sense of community in facing shared transnational problems such as climate change, migration and threats to democracy. The media, on the other hand, especially in the UK, concentrate mainly on domestic policy, and use other countries to highlight national differences. Volt tries to use only positive messages about what we can change, stressing that the present may be a transition to a better future. Post-Brexit developments in the UK are used to illustrate what can go wrong.

(Lisa Burton, the Chair, pointed out at this point that Volt's very young membership had been raised in the Chat, and invited Raquele to explain how that was achieved and how to encourage young people to join pro-European movements and take a more positive approach to future campaigning.)

Rachele replied that the main need is a change of perspective. Traditionally, young people had been listened to and a document created from their ideas (e.g. as in the Conference on the Future of Europe), after which the powers that be thanked the young for their participation and then decided what, if anything, to do with the information. Volt's aim, on the other hand, is to empower people to take the lead with new ways of doing politics. Volt uses a structure called 'community organising,' in which individuals can be their own project manager, leading the change they want to see. However, responsibility is also shared, as indicated by Raquele's position as co-president of Volt Spain. The fundamental idea is that we all face the same problems, such as the rise of the far right throughout Europe. For Rachele that was something 'existential' and one of her main reasons for joining a political party. So the emphasis must lie in focussing on issues in a pan-European way.

Whether this approach will change things or not remains to be seen. On the positive side, the far-right nationalist parties who attacked the EU have so far recoiled from leaving the EU. On the negative side, they are trying to return to a system of European institutions which gives more power to nations, which is what led to Brexit.

**Arantza Gomez Arana:** The UK government's request that universities submit names of academics teaching about the European Union together with the content of

their lectures was a critical and profoundly shocking moment. Many academics teaching about the EU are themselves from Continental Europe and therefore had to apply for residency. Much that has happened during the last few years has left bad feelings, prompting many academics to leave the UK. Moreover, recent measures mean it will become increasingly difficult for people to come to the UK. The government's recent changes in immigration policy underline the fact that although the term Brexit is no longer used, anti-migration attitudes, one of its key tenets, are constantly being reinforced.

With the likelihood of a Labour victory in next year's General Election, Keir Starmer is playing his cards close to his chest. Today's 18-year-old students were just 10 when the referendum was announced so all their young political lives have been lived in the shadow of Brexit. It is not surprising that there is Brexit fatigue, not just in the UK but in other European countries. When regularly visiting family in Spain Arantza is aware that Brexit has become a thing of the past. When the Rejoin marches took place she was surprised to be asked if the UK was considering rejoining, as this was not what was being reported. Young people are subject to a lot of populist misinformation via social media and the viewing choices that they make. More than ever before different generations access a range of media sources. It was reported that in recent elections in Argentina, many young people may have been influenced to vote for Milei as an effect of their media choices.

Until recently, Arantza was very worried about a move to the right following European Parliament elections next year. However, although she feels that the result will be polarised, the outcome of the Polish election does give rise to hope. Many countries in Europe are not populist in relation to European membership. Over the seven years since the referendum Europe has moved forward, with member states working more closely together on vital issues such as the pandemic. That crisis necessarily brought more collaboration and integration from a regulatory point of view, with leaders sharing opinions as to how to respond. This also applies to the Green Deal, with environmental policies becoming a huge topic across Europe.

However, the UK's view of the European Union has failed to move forward. So, even if the UK were to attempt to rejoin, possibly in 2030 near the end of a second Keir Starmer term, the degree of integration within the EU could represent a problem for British society.

In the UK there has been a move away from binary voting patterns where the electorate is either the elite or working-class. People are tired of lies and broken promises, and this then turns into the politics of discontent. The green agenda, gender issues, migration and security concerns do not fit into a strict two-party political mould and are better represented through PR. Although coalitions can sometimes prove difficult and there is no perfect political system, they are becoming the norm across Europe. The European Union works by consensus when taking major decisions, such as new treaties. If some member states disagree fundamentally over a key issue, other EU countries will respect those positions.

In general, we are poorly educated about the way in which the European Union functions. Since it is extremely complex with its myriad rules and regulations, it is not surprising that even politicians frequently get things wrong and say things which are incorrect. The vital need to educate everyone across Europe as to what the European Union really stands for and how it operates should be addressed urgently, as a failure to do so facilitates lies and distortions.

## **Q&A**

**Q.** Does your branch of Volt have a wide age range or is it primarily young people?

**Rachele Arciulo:** The majority are between 16 and 35 years old. The Generation Z and Millennials had the privilege of studying and working in Europe, so they are pro-European, and then we have another range of voters that are between 40 and 60 years old, professionals and businesspeople working across Europe. We are not a mass party. We are a party of people that feel European and that's maybe why people often call us a technocracy political party, though that is not completely true! How do we attract young people? I'll tell you a story. I was in Galicia in a small village called Amoeiro that has about 2000 inhabitants where we ran in the local elections last May. And in even in this small village, I was campaigning alongside a colleague from Greece, another from Portugal and another from Italy, and we were all talking about the same problems that our people face in small villages such as wildfires linked to the spread of eucalyptus trees, effects of climate change and the problem



that they're starting to have in Galicia with fish. So our work is partly just talking to young people and connecting them with other communities in towns and villages and trying to spread the message that they are not alone. They are frustrated and isolated. We try to help them with technology and other means to connect on the ground, with other associations and NGOs across Europe, and to take action that has an impact. Young people are impatient, they don't want to wait for the end of a five-year mandate to see political change. That's why in Volt we have a double identity: we are an NGO, and also a political party. We are trying to change things in a different way in a different context and with different concepts and campaigns. But we need to see the change right now. So maybe we just need to change the mentality, connect people and produce results that they can see immediately. So that they are using the time in useful way, not feeling that they are wasting their time.

**Q:** What can campaigns and organisations in the UK do to engage with foreign media and get our messages out?

**Carlos Fresneda:** We have a strong community, a very close group of Spanish journalists here in London which is supported by the Foreign Press Association. A good thing might be to choose one of us to keep the rest aware about what's going on. Maybe I could take that role, because I've been here for more than ten years. We're very supportive of each other and it sometimes takes someone pushing the others to go on covering certain issues. I'm very aware of and very pushy about environmental news, which it is part of my work to cover. Something which maybe I can talk with Helen Johnston (Bremain in Spain) about is that I can be a little bit of a go-between, between the organizations in UK, Spain and Europe dealing with Brexit and my Spanish colleagues here and even the Foreign Press Association, whose director, the Italian journalist Deborah Bonetti is very well known and very influential. That could be a good start. And then a focus for news coverage could be key dates, anniversaries – January 31st is the anniversary of Brexit for example, we need something which can be a focus of a news story. It would be good to have a calendar of special dates that reporters can work on. And hopefully in the coming elections, sooner or later Brexit will be discussed. There is the big debate about Labour's Brexit strategy which is maybe either going backwards or going through the back door, I

don't know which. But we could expect there will be a lot of debates with various viewpoints and a news focus about that and the pro-Rejoin campaign would be a good excuse just to put Brexit again on the front pages.

**Lisa Burton (Bremain, Chair).** Thank you, we will be taking you up on that. For example, we have an action day for Rejoin coming up on the 23rd of March, which is being run by the National Rejoin March team. And we will be hopefully having events in the UK and across Europe. There's a Bremain in Spain event here and we're hoping to have an event in Barcelona, and one in Malaga. We'd really appreciate help with some local press coverage around those events.

**Q:** Young people in UK are very engaged in climate protests but our pro-European groups struggle to attract them. Any ideas how we can attract more young people to pro-European engagement?

**A: Arantza Gomez Arana.** The problem is much wider than a problem about young people, and young people's engagement in the one major issue of climate change may not extend as far as a new will to engage with Europe. What happened in this country with Brexit was an earthquake. The UK is clearly not seeking total isolation and still open as a country to multilateral international cooperation, but the level of antagonism towards Europe has been striking, and meanwhile the EU is moving ahead in new directions and will not have time and desire to discuss more than minor TCA revisions with the UK. For the UK the real question is still: does it wish to be actively part of the European project or not? And if young people are pro-European, then right now there is no major party they may feel like voting for. There is still tremendous public confusion about Brexit and the damage to trust in politics has been huge.

**Chair:** So it's our job as campaigners to put the positive case about the European Union towards our fellow citizens and our young people.

**Q:** A big thank you to Carlos Fresneda for his excellent reporting for *El Mundo* on the second National March to Remain. We were pleased that Helen Johnston was

able to arrange with you to translate the article for [publication here](#) in *North East Bylines*, which we hope will also be carrying a report on our discussion here. We also share your appreciation of Deborah Bonetti and her work at the Foreign Press Association: she helped us a lot with international coverage for the march, as she has done on previous occasions. It's important that people here working to turn the Brexit situation round can feel they are not alone and that there is international awareness and interest in the growing strength here of the resistance to Brexit. Going forward, your offer of help to get this story out to your Spanish media colleagues and others, also with the help of the FPA, sounds like a great idea and tremendously welcome, and I'm sure that the *Bylines* network of citizen journalists would also definitely be very interested in feeding their stories through to you. Turning to the question of the supposed political apathy of young people and their level of interest in Brexit, it's worth mentioning that there is some disinformation going on here at present. Arantza mentioned an attempt by a government minister here to inspect university teaching about Europe. Well, we have also just seen a well-funded flagship academic thinktank for research on UK in Europe giving high-profile publicity to a [report on 'Bregret'](#) they commissioned from a lobbying firm run by people with very close links to government and the Brexit campaign, and their spin was that many Leavers are mostly still pro-Leave while young people are lot less sure about rejoining the EU than is usually suggested. But their actual polling data shows that young people are massively pro-Rejoin and not at all inclined to stop talking about Brexit and let things stay as they are. And that's a message we'd certainly like to share with people in the EU.

**Carlos Fresneda:** A suggestion: why don't all the UK groups and expats get together during the coming election campaign and write a letter to Starmer reminding him of his position during the Brexit referendum and asking him to be a little ... braver? That could be a good prompt for some Spanish news coverage.

**Chair:** Thanks for that good suggestion, Carlos, which we'll take back to the groups!

**Q:** Turning now to development in Spain, do you think that the [centre-right] PP party would really have formed a ruling coalition with the [hard-right] VOX if they had had

the numbers, and what would that have meant for Spain? And following those parties' success in local elections, how and why was Sánchez able to fend them off in the general election he then called? Was there something specific about the way they campaigned, or was it more that people were seriously concerned to keep VOX out of power?

**Carlos Fresneda:** The polls are never totally reliable, and a lot of people always make up their minds only at the last moment. I do think that people were mindful about what would happen if VOX were to repeat their success in the local elections. I know people in my family who voted VOX in local elections but returned to PP in the general election. If VOX had won, they would have made Gibraltar a high-profile issue. Hopefully we'll see progress on the Gibraltar issue because it's been taking too long. In terms of UK relations with Spain, if the Labour party wins power, we should absolutely be able to expect some improvement in the future.

**Arantza Gomez Arana:** The national elections were called less than 24 hours after the outcome of the local elections, and what Sánchez did was, in my opinion, seriously risky, because this was at the beginning of the Spanish EU presidency. So, he was unable to deal with the Gibraltar issue because he was acting as EU president. Many people thought, including myself, that what he was doing was simply too risky.

Why did people then vote as they did? I do think that some people got a surprise with the outcome of the local elections and decided that they had to vote to avoid a bigger problem, because local elections are important, but the impact is more limited: government is a different story. I think that VOX became popular overnight, because of the Catalan issues<sup>1</sup>, and in particular, because of the illegal referendum of 2018. Andalusia, which had the next regional elections after that referendum, became the first region where VOX did very well, and from then on it continued to gain in popularity. Sometimes it's difficult here to explain regional politics in Spain,

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<sup>1</sup>Arantza Gomez Arana, Politics of discontent in Spain: the case of Vox and the Catalan independence movement, *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, Volume 14, Issue 3, November 2021, Pages 439–456, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rsab027>

which are so different from in the UK. Here during the Scottish referendum, which happened literally two days after I moved here to teach in Birmingham, no one in Birmingham was interested in the topic. In England I found that people do not talk about Scotland or Northern Ireland, which is completely the opposite of Spain. In Spain, we always talk about each other a lot, and it can become very theatrical: you have given them this, we should get the same. But I don't see that in the UK at all. And I think that because of the way autonomous regions were created so quickly overnight and the way the legal system became politicised by Catalonia explains to some extent why our regions are so much involved in each other's politics. Fortunately, the tensions in Catalonia have gone down, because from what I hear, it wasn't a nice time to be there. Over the last few years, for different reasons, including conciliatory steps taken by Sánchez, the tension has been healing to some extent, but there is still a lot of anger, obviously, and continuing issues between Catalonia and the rest of Spain. If we had had national elections with tensions at the same level as in 2017, I'm pretty sure VOX would have got more votes, and they would be now inside the governing coalition in Spain.

**Rachele Arciulo:** Right now, we are at very important moment of political history in Spain, because we have now left behind the old post-Franco system of two major parties alternating in power. What we currently have is two rival, alternative party blocs. When the election was called, we had only two possibilities for forming a government, either Sumar [Left] together with PSOE [centre-Left], or PP [centre-Right] with VOX [hard Right]. But voters were not making a rational choice between alternative ideas, proposals or values. The party electoral programmes were almost the same. Two things happened that really impacted on the election first. First, the famous interview with the PP leader Núñez Feijóo: there was this moment where the journalist Silvia Intxaurrenondo demolished every item of fake news that Núñez Feijóo was saying, with hard evidence, on live TV. And because of that, Núñez Feijóo decided not to participate in the final debate, the main debate on TV with the four main candidates in their two rival blocs. In the debate there was on the one side the team formed by Sánchez [PSOE] and Yolanda Díaz [Sumar], who were very professional and debated about their plans and programmes and didn't attack the VOX leader Santiago Abascal. But on his side, Abascal was operating in fight mode

with fake news, personal attacks, and whatever. The effect was to suggest to voters that a coalition of the no-show candidate and VOX would not be capable of leading the country at a critical historical moment. These two things affected the whole campaign; it was not so much the fear of VOX or the fear of the far right, which may have been felt by people who were more interested in politics, but for most people the TV debate was what decided it.

**Q:** Going back to the topic of how to get young people to be more pro-European, both in the EU and in the UK: I was much impressed by the runaround rail ticket that was provided in the EU and I have a grandson who benefited by that to travel from Brussels. We've lost that now in the UK. But I think we ought to work to revive it preferably by next summer, because there's nothing to stop the railway companies just linking together and deciding that a cheap youth ticket could be used in the UK. EU youth who've got that ticket should be encouraged to come to the UK and young Brits who want to travel in Europe should be able to buy a ticket that enables them to go to Spain. Spain is particularly important in terms of railways now. It's Spanish finance that is financing a new train between London and destinations on the continent. Is it possible to persuade the Spanish rail company to take part in offering a shared youth rail ticket?

**Lisa Burton** (Chair): An excellent idea. Incidentally, Spain has the second-largest high speed railway network in the world next to China!

**Q:** Europe faces huge challenges helping Ukraine to win against the Russian invasion, and achieve environmental ambitions, with some members states (Hungary in particular) standing in the way. How could a more EU friendly UK government help the EU meet those challenges? Will necessity force the UK and EU closer together?

**Arantza Gomez Arana:** The Ukraine war, the ongoing Russian threat and issues with China should all tend to push UK and EU into closer cooperation. UK's military strength is a key potential asset for Europe. At the moment, the NATO alliance dispenses from the need in Europe to think about a reversal of Brexit – for which the EU has little current appetite; but a Trump win later this year would change all of this.

If Trump wins, would UK align with Trump or EU? There is reason to question the UK's readiness to commit to long-term strategic alliance, over and above the one-off crisis of the Ukraine war: at the moment; the Brexiters' obsession with sovereignty and their transactional approach in international relations does not inspire great confidence, and it is arguable that a deep strategic cooperation could only be established on the basis of a full and wholehearted embrace by the UK of the European project.

## **Attendees**

### **Chair**

Lisa Burton                      Bremain in Spain

### **Speakers**

Arantza Gomez Arana              Northumbria University  
Rachele Arciulo                      Volt Spain  
Carlos Fresneda                      *El Mundo*

Tom Brake                              Unlock Democracy  
Paul Browne                            Cambridge for Europe  
Valerie Chaplin                        Bremain in Spain  
Mark English                            European Movement UK  
Chris Hammond                        European Movement East Kent  
Else Kvist                                The New Europeans  
Sharon Leclercq-Spooner              Pro Europa  
Charlotte Mbali                        Kent and Surrey Bylines  
Rachel Morris                            Bylines Cymru  
Richard Morris                        European Movement UK  
Peter Packham                         Leeds for Europe  
Andrew Plant                            European Movement UK  
Dr Charles Smith                        Bremain in Spain  
Rosemary Watt                         Glasgow Loves EU  
Debbie Williams                        Brexpat's Hear Our Voice  
Richard Wilson                         European Movement UK

### **RT team**

John Gaskell                            Grassroots for Europe  
Colin Gordon                            Grassroots for Europe  
Helen Grogan                            European Movement Staffordshire  
Jonathan Harris                        East Kent European Movement  
Dr Monica Horten                        Reading for Europe  
Helen Johnston                         Bremain in Spain  
Juliet Lodge                             Women for Europe  
Lilian McCobb                         Hull and East Yorkshire for Europe  
Tony McCobb                            Hull and East Yorkshire for Europe  
Jo Pye                                      London for Europe  
Magdalena Williams                    Kent and Surrey Bylines

### **Apologies:**

Luke Cooper	Another Europe is Possible
Jane Golding	British in Europe
Fiona Godfrey	British in Europe
Andrew Hesselden	Save Freedom of Movement
Sandra Khadhour	Keeping Channels Open
Tamsin Shasha	Festival of Europe
Seema Syeda	Another Europe is Possible
Sue Wilson	Bremain in Spain

### **Next meeting**

**Tuesday January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 5:00pm – 6:30pm GMT. EU and Brexit: perspectives from Central Europe, with Wojciech Przybylski (Editor-in-Chief of *Visegrad Insight* and President of the Res Publica Foundation) and other panellists [tbc].**

### **Suggested reading.**

We recommended some sources for context and background:

**Sunak reopens the Tory war with the return of Cameron Carlos Fresneda, *El Mundo* 14/11/23 (article in Spanish)**

**Welcome back, Mr. Cameron? El País in English, 20/11/23**

**Pedro Sánchez voted back in as Spain's Prime Minister after securing controversial support of Catalan separatists Simon Hunter, The Olive Press, 16/11/23**

**Conservatives protest over Catalan deal Simon Hunter, The Times 13/11/23 (paywall)**

**Nationalists, extremism and Tucker Carlson: why Spain's bizarre politics are heading for Britain Graham Keeley, The Telegraph, 16/11/23 (Paywall)**

**The Observer view on Pedro Sánchez's election deal to take power: it undermines democracy 19/11/23**

**Opinion: The investiture of the amnesty El País in English, 16/11/23**