# Transcript

# EuroStorie podcast, episode 1: Europe, its hopes and fears

[Bea Bergholm, BB] Hello everyone and welcome to the brand new podcast series called EuroStorie: stories of politics and human rights in Europe. My name is Bea Bergholm and hosting this podcast with me will be my colleague Paolo Amorosa.

[Paolo Amorosa, PA] Hello!

[BB] This podcast will bring you closer to high quality research about Europe and also give you an idea of what researchers from different backgrounds have to say about the history and current situation of Europe.

[PA] Thank you, Bea. Today we have the pleasure of talking with Kaius Tuori, the director of the EuroStorie center of excellence. Warmly welcome, Kaius.

[Kaius Tuori, KT] Thank you very much.

[BB] Welcome.

[PA] Kaius will be talking with us about what EuroStorie is, and all the interesting work we do here. And without further ado, then let's dig into it. We hope you enjoy listening to us and to the first episode of this new podcast.

[BB] Alright, Kaius, good to have you here. I was wondering, could you first tell us a bit more about EuroStorie in your own words, like how it was born and why?

[KT] So, even before Brexit there was something strange about how Europe was discussed. It seemed to me that both the political and the legal discussions did not make sense. The arguments were not rational. In a sense, they didn't speak to me. In that sense, I started wondering that what it is about Europe that makes people make these assertions, to make these claims that in the case of the kind of weird cucumber stories and so forth.

That there was something clearly behind those, something that was prompting people to make up these things. But I just couldn't understand why. And we had this idea and we discussed this with some of my colleagues. So, EuroStorie, even though we are an independent unit, came about through the collaboration of people who had background at the faculty of Law at the Erik Castrén Institute. And we started thinking of these themes that what could be a way of approaching this, and we came very quickly to the idea that it has to be multidisciplinary. You have to look at different approaches because it is a common issue, but you look at it through different approaches. An what we came up with is that we’re looking through, we have now three approaches. We have historical, philosophical, and anthropological.

And it is, I would say, a culmination of quite a lot of my own interests in the field. I've just been studying history, I've been studying anthropology, I've been studying law and I wanted to somehow have a project which would look at a problem and then to utilize these different approaches to bring about something novel.

[BB] Yeah, that sounds good. So, you said EuroStorie is multidisciplinary. So, what do you feel like are the advantages of such a combination of different research areas?

[KT] So, what we're looking at is that we want to deprioritize, take the focus off the official narrative, so what the European Union or European leaders are themselves, and look at how these are viewed. So it’s EuroStories, it's in plural. So it's about narratives.

So this is something that really confuses a lot of people who have been used to this kind of focus on the official narrative.

[BB] Right.

[KT] And what we want to do is to see how different people talk about this. How not only the Eurocrats in Brussels or the local politicians in Finland or Britain or Germany talk about, but also how those other people are viewing this. So not only Europeans themselves but also people who are looking at Europe from abroad. So what is the viewpoint? What is the narrative of the migrant who is you know, risking his or her life to come here? What is the rationale that prompts the, you know the English miners who are so much against Europe, for reasons that for them are, you know, very good reasons.

So this means that this is a very different project than what you would normally get. So European studies or European law has always been about the official narrative and the criticization of the official narrative. But we want to take a focus and look at something else, look at how the official narrative resonates and how those kind of changes resonate in the outside world.

[BB] Yeah, that's interesting. So it's like you're studying and looking at Europe, but also from other viewpoints than us Europeans.

[BB] So Kaius, you said that EuroStorie is a mix of these historical and contemporary narratives and viewpoints. So why do you think it is important to mix those two? Do you have any concrete examples of that?

[KT] So we have a lot of discussions. We have a lot of discussions within certain fields, but what those discussions do not really show is that they are talking very much amongst themselves and what really I find fascinating is that they're talking about the same things. They're talking about the similar kind of narratives, but they're talking about them separately. And what we want to do is to combine those and have a talk about the similarities and dissimilarities between these stories that the historical narratives and the contemporary ethnography show.

So that it is very much about what is the kind of grand line, what is the long historical development. and I think that something that is missing in these contemporary discussions, is that we have been talking about this in some cases since the end of the First World War and the similar kind of arguments and discussions have been presented for a very, very long time.

So just to take an example. If you have, and I'm just as a 46 year old man just taking this example out of nowhere, this kind of historical understanding about how people are, about their personalities and how their convictions of right and wrong are being formed. If you look at how, say, a 50 year old man living in Finland came to believe what he believes…That is a very long process of that individual having experiences, learning about things in school, having fears, having this kind of an idea of what he wants from life. And when those things suddenly, they change, this kind of event horizon changes. Then you have that individual who starts to think of why is that world not the way that I was expecting it to be?

And that, basically somebody is moving the goalpost. And that is something that is very, from an individual point of view. If you have like a factory worker who has grown up in places like Valkeakoski, a factory town. You are, at one moment, you are like the king of that city. You are getting paid well, you have social status and then when the factory closes down, you have literally nothing. You have a house that ties you there. You cannot get a job that would pay you a very good salary. You can just get jobs that you know pay the normal service industry salary.

So that is a very, very difficult situation and incomprehensible for the individual. And that is something that we need to understand, that that factory worker, he doesn't understand why there should be, you know, anything good with this kind of economic integration, if that economic integration means that everything that he has grown to believe in life is taken away. So there is a kind of a developmental process of the individual, and when there are rapid changes, that developmental process is lagging behind.

And of course, if you look at, you know, today's 40, 50 year olds, what they grew up with, was a very racist and very homophobic environment. So that is something that they grew up with and that becomes part of them. And so you can be at the same time anti-racist on a conscious level but still have a racist sub-consciousness. And that's something that, if you look at the American discussion, is still is very much recognized.

[PA] So, one of the points of this podcast is indeed, to go and show how the research we do at EuroStorie is relevant on the topical and societal questions that are being discussed in the news. So let's move a bit into that and try to make that connection. Well, let's see how this ages but one would sound a bit tone deaf if one would talk about topical questions without talking about the coronavirus crisis and COVID-19 at all these days. So this crisis has brought to the fore a debate that has been dominant in many of the crises that have shaken Europe throughout the 20th century.

The one of rule of law, states of emergency, the limits of constitutionalism, that's a very scholarly debate, but something that is very much talked about also in everyday discourse. I'm thinking of all the polemics that have been directed at governments for all the limitations to constitutional liberties to sort of address the crisis. So how, in your view, can these older crises help us address the current debate?

[KT] Thank you. When one talks about, as one does quite often in in the news programs, and mentions that something is unprecedented, and if you look at the historical perspective, that is not really the case. This is, Europe has faced vast, more serious crises. These crises and the crisis is, something of a central theme in our project, that the crises are these unifying, but also separating moments.

So, an American research is quite nicely put it, that crises are moments where you don't really get new ideas, but rather the old ideas gain new currency. And what we have here in the current COVID-19 or Corona crisis, is a retreat back into nation states.

And crises is where Europe has been created or the European integration has been created. Crises are the ones at the moments where we practice this kind of working together, and now it's really, we are at a very crucial point in seeing what will be the kind of European response. And will this be a crisis that strengthens the European solidarity and European cooperation, or something that erodes it?

But I would say that if we talk about this kind of ideas of rule of law, states of emergency, and so forth, if we look at how the European institutions were created in the latter part of the 1940s. The European human rights institutions were created by people who had seen terrible, terrible things had done terrible things.

These were people who had seen the most egregious violations of human rights, and they decided to sit down and decided that we have to do something about this. So, nowadays of course we are looking at a very serious crisis. Many people have been killed. Economic disaster of course, but still it is on a miniscule scale compared to what Europe encountered in the 1940s.

So just to take an example of the people who were in the front lines, making the European integration. We had people who had been in exile, we had people who had survived concentration camps… So, the level of trauma that they had gone through, there wouldn't be enough therapists in the world to deal with those in current day examples. So these people who were talking about things like rule of law…You had people like Franz Neumann who had been a labor lawyer in 1930s Germany who had escaped at the last minute before being arrested by the Gestapo. Most of his friends were killed.

And he escaped first to Britain and then to America. And what he comes up with there in America is a story of the rule of law as a fundamental societal value and his example of that rule of law, his experience of that rule of law is precisely that of being deprived of the rule of law, being arrested, being persecuted, but also that when he goes to America that he is for a very long time marginalized. He is one of those migrants who can't get a job. And so slowly, he will then prevail.

But still, it is a trauma for him and for those traumas that is very important to understand that European integration is born out of these disasters and traumas and horrible experiences. And it is not just some lofty ideals, it is those horrible things that are producing the reaction of those lofty ideals.

[BB] Yeah, that really makes one think.

[PA] Yeah, so an area in which the process, the events you were speaking out is playing out on several levels these days, is the plan to address the European economic recovery. These plans have given even further prominence to older narratives of European integration. Indeed, in the public, debate with the men of the street, let's say at the institutional level too.

So simplifying very much, on one end we have the Europe of mutual solidarity. On the other we have the Europe of fiscal responsibility and austerity. We have learned that there are some European states that think of themselves as frugal, as opposed to states that are supposedly less responsible. Then we have a nationalist opposition to the European project that is usually associated with the right, but it also comes from the left, that portrays European integration as an erasure of national autonomy and as a threat.

And of course, this is something that plays with legitimate hopes and fears of European people. But then the question is, how did we get here, to positions that end up being stereotyped in the public debate and not really respond to the personal issues and the personal fears and aspiration of people? How do we move towards more constructive narratives?

[BB] Oh, that's a big question. Good luck, Kaius.

[KT] That is a big question, yes. I'm sorry, but the answer won't be very short. So, there has never been a single narrative. There's always been a multivocality. There have always been these throwbacks of nationalism, so I would say that what we are experiencing right now is a kind of a hangover of the 1990s. But it's also when we talk about this crisis that it overshadows the kind of unseen progress that has been made.

If you look at how much progress has been made in both social and cultural issues. How much the European integration has progressed. It is inevitable that there is some kind of backlash or a reaction.

I would say that the historical point of view is important here. Also for the understanding of this kind of resurgences of nationalism, because we are informed by a historical consciousness. So that means what we believe is true. And there is really no way of doing this kind of, saying that what you believe in is wrong. There is no this kind of emancipatory narratives of exposure, saying that what you believe is actually this and this, and therefore it is wrong. And then people just, magically, you know, stop believing that. They believe that because they believe that it is true. And so, historically, it's when we're talking about historical events, it is easier to discuss why we believe something.

For example, we cannot really talk about migrants without discussing what we believe that we ourselves are and why these others are different than us. What I think is very important is that we have this multivocality. We have this in order to build up an, I would say a European empathy.

So, beyond these stereotypes of addressing these issues that we came up with a lot of nationalism, a lot of racism, a lot of homophobia. This is something that we, especially the older generation, picked up while we grew up, and that's something that's nobody's fault. They are not, you know, bigoted. It is just the way that they grew up with and that is something that needs to be addressed, that needs to be discussed.

We can also talk a bit about why these narratives are important, and narratives of course are just…A narrative is a story, a story that tells how things are and what they mean, so it's…A fact and a meaning combined is a narrative. And the stories do matter, so the stories convey hopes and fears. Stories convey stereotypes, they build connections, they build communities.

So, there is a kind of idea here… I think it is shallow to refer to a Ted talk, but there was a wonderful Nigerian-American writer called Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Ted talk, called the Danger of a single story. I think it's 2005 or something like that. It was making the rounds on Facebook all the time… And what she tells. When you have just a single story, a single definition of somebody or something, a group or individual, that sort of single story builds the stereotypes very easily. This kind of definitions of hate and exclusion. And what we need is this kind of mini stories and viewpoints in order to breed both pluralism and this kind of an understanding that it brings us.

So the ideas of economic solidarity, they have to be understood through the viewpoint of the individual as well, so that if you have, for example, now there is an ongoing debate over Brexit and the fisheries’ rights.

And if you look at the fishermen who had been very pro-Brexit and how in their sense, these fishing communities were very small communities, but also very international communities. There is a kind of logic and irrationality at the same time existing. So that there is a kind of learned nationalism of this kind of, what the single fisherman thinks of the foreigners, the outsiders. That is something that is very common. That’s the way fishermen think, that this something, somebody, comes to tell them what they should or should not do.

They are immediately in opposition to that. That is something that fishermen in Finland, probably fishermen in Italy share. That “get out of my face, I am in my boat and I’m happy there” attitude. But that also is when you have these interviews of these fishermen, there is a kind of mixture, that they do realize the indicates of if there's a hard Brexit, that they are fishing but they can't sell the fish to Europe because most of their fish goes to Europe. Or the processing of fish, and most of the fishermen in those boats are also migrants, so that they are really in trouble if there's a hard Brexit and migrant workers can't come. But still, the idea of this kind of self-sustained, Dunkirk Britain is so well ingrained.

When you have this, New York Times had this wonderful story about, they were interviewing people in these fisheries. So that they do realize this kind of incongruence or illogicality of that, but the realization of that Illogicality didn't do anything to dispel those notions.

[BB] Mm, that's a very good answer for how we can overcome this kind of stereotyped, opposed discussion.

[PA] No doubt that's the direction, then to achieve it, it's a more difficult matter.

[PA] Moving to another very topical question that wasn't planned to be so topical, but there is a lot going on in the United States at this time. In this case, we can really speak, I would say of historical decisions to defund entire police departments after the death of George Floyd and protests that went under the banner of black lives matter that followed and were caused by that.

And for a long time European identity has looked at the United States and what happens there, and shaped itself in relation to the United States. So on one end, US federalism has been taken as a sort of inspiration and comparison for the European project. On the other, Europeans have also opposed, at times, the US political culture, interference in European affairs, and that opposition has probably increased with the changing geopolitics of the 21st century and become more evident through the Trump presidency.

So how do you see the intense relationship between Europe and United States developing? And how will it affect Europe’s self-understanding and narratives?

[KT] This isn't really a podcast with easy questions, is it?

[PA] Well, it's starting points for us to talk about something [laughing].

[KT] OK, let's try. [laughing] If we look at the American involvement in Europe, the US has since the Second World War been a very big booster of European integration, it's one of the primary boosters of that. So the American policy approach has been to further European integration during the Cold War, of course as a counterpoint towards the Soviet Union, but also in a kind of way of bringing Europe together in a way that is profitable. And also to bring about a stable situation, which doesn't require millions of American soldiers brought in every few decades to hash out the problems of Europeans for them.

For that what we came to is another post-1990s hangover. So that after the fall of the Soviet Union there is a kind of an independence movement for Europe, in that America is no more this kind of a given, but it's rather, as Europe has been building its own institutions. It is more a moment of growth of what we are, in relation to the American big brother. And it is also the kind of European relation to America is that America is us.

America is a European setller state and there's a kind of a similar relationship as you have between, say, Great Britain and New Zealand and Australia. Because of the similarities of the fact that, for example, Finland has 5 million inhabitants, there's 1 million Finns living in America.

And the same story goes, in some other European countries the proportion is even bigger. So that there is this kind of, that they are us, but they are have become very different. And then the question is that are we wrong? Are they wrong? How did they become so different socially, and as kind of social mores.

There is also the kind of question of what can we or should we be able to learn about America, about what the positive of America is? And I'm of course, I've been living in America so I am a great fan of American civil society. American approaches to life, the kind of enterprising spirits and so forth.

But I would say mostly of the kind of the idea of the understanding of immigration. So, there is an understanding of immigration. There is an understanding of the kind of stereotypically said “American dream” that people come there to work, to develop, to build a better life and that is something that European societies and European individuals would be very well served to understand better.

That there is a legitimate desire to come to Europe, Europe offers a society that is free, a society that is equal to, you know more or less, at least in certain respects. There is a lot for offer for migrants and we should not be saying that we have to keep them out, but rather that there is a kind of advantage also for us, not only economically but also socially.

[BB] So those I guess were the super big and difficult questions and now we're heading towards some a little bit more light and creative ones. Kaius, you as a researcher probably read a lot, I mean thousands of pages in, I don't know what time. But do you have in mind a specific book that would have influenced your thinking or your work the most? Or inspired you? And I mean it doesn't have to be a factual or academic book. It can be a fictional one.

[KT] I would say that these kind of questions, there are two ways of answering that. One is the kind of uplifting “show your civilization” kind of answer, in which you just say that oh, I'd like to on my free time, I like to reread Derrida's early works.

[BB] So now you’re doubting where to go.

[KT] Or then you can just reveal your shallowness and the stuff that you actually do read.

[BB] Go with the latter one, I say.

[KT] Uh, you know, as you can just from this preamble, you can see that's where I was sort of like going for.

I was thinking of that question and then I just looked at the bookshelves and started thinking of what do I actually reread? What do I read again? And that's something that I’ve been looking at, and there's very few books that I actually have read several times. During the corona thing, we did for the first time in 20 years, this that we took down all the books from the bookshelves and vacuumed them and so forth. Things that one does when there's nothing else to do.

And then I started reading some of those inherited books, kind of Finnish classics of the later 19th century and early 20th century, and that was just awful. Just kind of so many of those were just like you know, dried re-dos of French classics or the kind of, this is the way that, you know, good literature was written in the 1920s and so forth. But what I've actually found is, I get back to the actual answer to the question of what I do reread. I notice that I've re-read mostly the works of Douglas Adams. So the Hitchhiker trilogy.

[BB] Uh, okay.

[KT] And I was just wondering that why is it that I just, you know, there's some other things that I have read several times. This is something that I’ve wondered, what is it there and then it came to me that it's actually the fact that when you are talking about something completely different, if you're making up worlds, as is the case in Douglas Adams, you are actually talking about yourself.

When you are let lose off the trappings of conventions, the conventional way of describing civil society or human interaction, then you are freer to use your creativity.

[PA] And the movie is is really good too. From the books.

[BB] I haven’t read that.

[KT] There's a movie? Oh.

[BB & PA simultaneously] Yes, there’s a movie.

[KT] Oh.

[BB] Maybe then that's the next.

[KT] I'm learning things! Nice!

[PA] Yeah, so moving on to another question. Well, you met Kaius here as a legal historian of the 20th century mostly, but Kaius is also an expert in Roman law and antiquity. So, this next question won't have a very obvious answer. We would like to know, if you could go back in the history of mankind, where would you go and why?

[KT] Uh, as you know, I'm a professional historian, so it sort of like skews my view, so if you look at how…What you have for kids, these kind of games of where you go somewhere back in history and so forth, it’s always that people are either, you know, knights or monks, or you know members of the court and so forth. It's always this idea of going up to the nobility. Whereas if you would just go somewhere into a historical period, most likely you would be dead by two years old, or that you know, life expectancy would be 29.

You would be living off the land an probably, you know, die of starvation.

[BB] That's a valid and very realistic point.

[KT] So I don't have any idea of, you know, going anywhere. I don't think I would like the people there. So even sort of my interest in antiquity, it is still a very, very different world and they have very different values. I don't think I would be happy there.

[BB] So do we take that as in that you are quite happy where you are and in what time you are?

[KT] I would probably go to last Tuesday.

[BB] Okay.

[KT] Uh, but there's kind of a larger point there. So that if Europe and Europe’s self-understanding is based on this kind of historical self-understanding… European nations like to invent themselves histories.

And that history is usually a product of this kind of identification with something. So that if you have, for example in Italy, you had a very long period of time in which there was this kind of, not only the fascist, but even before the fascist, you had this identification with ancient Rome.

And you had all this kind of building styles. Even now, the centers of European capitals are, you know, mostly decked out with buildings and classicizing style. Even the kind of anti-classicizing movements in style and so forth have their own ancient precedents. So you have the like the French or German, they look at the kind of ancient Germanic or Frankish tribes.

And you have this kind of idea of a great past, the visions of past glory, and so forth. And there is a kind of an idea that this is how we define ourselves, to look through what we have been before. And that's a fact that overlooks the fact that it is not us.

It is not people like us. These are people not in any way like us. These are people who have a completely different kind of value system. Different kind of mode of thinking even. There are things that we have picked up from there, but these are not us. And that's something that is really the trouble with this kind of formation of this historical consciousness through the popular historical writing, is that you develop these mirages of history.

[BB] That's a good point and good point also that you maybe wouldn't do so well with the people from, I don't know, the 1920s or something. So maybe going back to last Tuesday is the right choice, or would be if we had the choice.

[PA] Or maybe doing time travel in a more limited way so that I could, for instance, see the final of the World Cup in 1982 when Italy won, or something like that.

[BB] Right! [laughing]

[KT humming in agreement]

[BB] That's good. Alright, I think this has been a great chat with you. Thank you so much. Kaius and Paolo.

[PA] Thank you, Bea and thank you, Kaius, for engaging with our huge world-saving questions.

[KT] Thank you for having me. This was a bit of a surprise for me at least.

[BB] Hope it was a pleasant one.

[KT humming in agreement]

[BB] Good.

[PA] Good thank you and thank you also to our listeners. You could stay tuned for our next episodes that will come very soon and we will introduce you to other colleagues of said EuroStorie, that will give us more perspectives on Europe and where it's going.

You can follow us on the EuroStorie website eurostorie.org and on Twitter at handle EuroStorie.

We hope to get your feedback and hear what you tell us about this first episode of the podcast.

[BB] Alright, thank you so much and until next time! Have a good week everyone!

[KT] Thank you.