

## FOREWORD

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**T**wenty years after the Treaty of Maastricht created the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Europeans face the risk of being marginalised on the international scene. The euphoric period following the fall of the Soviet Union – when it seemed obvious that the world would westernise and that politics would become more democratic and economies more liberal – has ended.

Long-term economic shifts underway since the 2000s – the rise of ever more economically potent and politically assertive powers – have translated into a gradual yet relentless reversal of global relationships of power. 2012 will be remembered as the turning point when the production of the rising economies exceeded that of old industrialised countries. With this shift of economic power – mainly towards Asia and soon towards Africa – European influence and regulatory capacity on the global level are increasingly questioned.

In this time of complex evolutions and shifting tectonic plates, the ‘Think Global – Act European’ project brings together 16 think tanks and over 40 experts to examine the EU’s external action.

The economic crisis has commended EU efforts to concentrate on the internal challenges of recovery and fiscal consolidation. Yet the EU is entering a new phase of its existence in which it is called upon to anticipate the negative spillover of the crisis on the attractiveness of the EU model both at home and abroad. To do so the EU must equip itself with an integrated global strategy introducing more coherence with its internal policies.

Developing a common foreign policy reflecting both European values and interests is an instrument for the much needed legitimisation of the European

project in the eyes of our fellow citizens. The way we view foreign policy is not just the way of having a say in international affairs, but it's also a key element in the internal consolidation of an innovative and inspiring European common project.

At a moment when the forces of discordance amongst Member States intensify, as increased economic competition fosters the renationalisation of European policies, the fourth edition of this report assumes, with more resolve than ever before, the 'united in diversity' motto that has been the guiding principle of the project since its inception.

The 'Think Global – Act European' report is indeed the product of a process of collective thinking, outlining key recommendations for strengthening and increasing the coherence of the EU's instruments of external action as well as providing the building blocks for new strategic thinking in the ambit of the EU's external action.

We are proud to present the product of such a stimulating process of cooperation, which has allowed for the constructive and enlightening confrontation of different viewpoints.

The hope is that this report will provide the impetus for new strategic reflection on the EU's role as a global power, allowing the EU to achieve a new and open outlook on the evolution of the new trends that are reshaping our current world order. Our wish is that European institutions as well as national diplomacies will grant serious consideration to the relevant and innovative proposals for concrete action put forward by the authors of this valuable report.