



Reflections of a volter

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Roberto Bonino

Volteuropa Brussels and LUSVAL Paris

This storyboard is constructed from the narratives collected at Meet VoltEuropa sessions.

The narratives have been edited slightly to weave something that looks like a stream of consciousness of an individual participant.

A few days ago I was standing quietly at the back of a church for the funeral of my neighbour's sister. She was ninety-seven years old. As I listened to the ceremony, I found myself thinking about the life she had lived. She grew up during World War II and lost her mother when she was young, becoming the caretaker of her younger siblings. I tried to imagine what that must have been like—being forced to grow up so quickly. Walking out of the church, I caught myself hoping that none of us would ever have to experience something like that again. (Reference: *"Reflections at a funeral"*)

On my way home, I thought about something that had happened recently in the Netherlands. A few days of heavy snow had practically shut the country down. Trains stopped running, the main airport struggled to operate, and supply chains began slowing down. It surprised me that a country known for being highly developed could be disrupted so easily. It made me wonder if we sometimes design our systems assuming the best-case scenario instead of preparing for crises. (Reference: *"Infrastructure in the Netherlands"*)

Not long after that, I attended my first meeting with a political movement I had just joined. I didn't know what to expect, but the welcome I received was incredibly warm. People greeted me enthusiastically, and the atmosphere felt open and encouraging. I left the meeting feeling grateful and curious about what might come next. (Reference: *"Welcome to Volt"*)

Back at the university where I often spend time, a debate had erupted over a planned political event. A conservative party had been scheduled to hold a talk in the academy building, but strong opposition from many students led the administration to move the event off campus. What followed was an intense discussion about freedom of speech and the boundaries of political debate within universities. Listening to people argue both sides made me realize how complicated these questions really are. (Reference: *"Freedom of speech"*)

A few days later, I spoke with a friend who is not originally from Europe. She told me she no longer felt completely safe here. The rise of far-right politics had made her and many people in her community uneasy. Hearing that worried me. I started thinking about how political changes can affect the sense of security people feel in their daily lives. (Reference: *"Non-democratic position increases fear and political and social instability in Europe"*)

Living in several European countries has also shown me how complicated everyday administration can be. Recently I needed to access government services online, but every country seemed to have its own incompatible system. In Belgium I had used an identification app linked to my ID card, but it stopped working once the card expired. In the Netherlands there is DigiD, but it is only for Dutch citizens. Sweden uses a system that requires confirming your identity at a specific chain of grocery stores. Eventually I realized I would have to travel to Brussels just to obtain a special access key. It felt strange that Europe still struggled to create unified digital systems. (Reference: *"Digital EU not quite"*)

At the same time, my brother has been facing a difficult situation in the Netherlands. He has a good job as a risk analyst and a permanent contract, yet he has been unable to find an apartment after months of searching. If someone with his qualifications cannot find housing, I wonder who can. As

someone who will soon finish my own education, it makes me question what the future housing situation will look like.(Reference: *"Housing crisis"*)

Recently I also spoke with a friend I studied with in the UK. They are intelligent, motivated, and highly educated, yet they have been unemployed for eight months while searching for an entry-level position. Some companies even charge applicants for access to internships. We talked about it, but they decided not to pay for such opportunities. It left me wondering what kind of labour market young people are entering today.(Reference: *"Death of the young worker"*)

In another conversation, someone brought up the political system of Switzerland. I was struck by how much direct participation citizens have there through referendums and public votes. It made me think that perhaps Europe could learn something from this approach and find ways to involve citizens more directly in decision-making.(Reference: *"Swiss democracy"*)

Then one evening, while walking home, I witnessed something unsettling. Three men were confronting another man aggressively. For a moment it looked like it might turn violent—and it did. I stopped and watched, trying to decide what to do. I thought about calling the police or stepping in somehow, but I hesitated. In the end, I did nothing. Afterwards, I kept questioning myself. It wasn't only about my own lack of courage. It made me think about how we, as a society, react to violence and conflict. Do we intervene? Do we stay silent? And what does that say about the kind of community we are building together?(Reference: *"Casual violence"*)