



BEYOND EUROPE AS A TASK: FROM PRAGUE TO POLITICO - AND BACK AGAIN

Interview with Chiara Rinaldi (POLITICO), led by Martin Vokálek (EUROPEUM)

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About EUROPEUM

The EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, and independent think tank focused on European integration and cohesion. It contributes to strengthening democracy, security, stability, freedom, and solidarity throughout Europe, while also supporting the Czech Republic's active engagement within the European Union.

EUROPEUM conducts original research, organizes public events and educational activities, and develops new ideas and policy recommendations with the aim of improving national and European decision-making processes

The Europe as a Task Conference is organized by AMO (Association for International Affairs), EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, and the Institute of International Relations Prague.



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As Europe as a Task 2026 comes to a close, EUROPEUM sat down with one of this year's speakers. **Chiara Rinaldi, Researcher at POLITICO Research & Analysis**, returned to Prague for the conference for the second consecutive year. Before moving to Brussels, she worked at the Institute of International Relations (IIR) and became part of Prague's international affairs community through her engagement with EUROPEUM and AMO, the organisations behind Europe as a Task. In this interview, she reflects on her journey from Prague to Brussels and back again, the role of expertise in European affairs, and the opportunities available to young professionals seeking a career in the field.

This year you returned to Europe as a Task as a speaker representing POLITICO Research & Analysis. What did that moment mean to you?

Returning to Europe as a Task felt like a full-circle moment. It was particularly special because this was the second consecutive year that POLITICO Research & Analysis was invited to contribute to the conference.

For me, the value of Europe as a Task lies in the people it brings together: decision-makers, researchers, media professionals and young Europeans who are ambitious, curious and serious about Europe's future. It is rare to find a space where these groups can engage with one another so directly.

Speaking to this audience in Prague reminded me how powerful it can be when young people are given access to expert discussions and treated as part of the conversation.

Before moving to Brussels, you worked at the Institute of International Relations. How did Prague shape your professional ambitions?

My time in Prague was extremely important because it gave structure to ambitions that, at the time, still felt distant. I knew I wanted to work in European and international affairs. I was interested in politics, policy and the way ideas move across borders. What Prague offered was an environment where I could take that interest seriously and begin turning it into a professional path.

Working at the Institute of International Relations was particularly formative. It exposed me to research, policy debates and experts working on questions that matter for Europe's role in the world. It also helped me understand how analysis

can contribute to public discussion: not only as an academic exercise, but as a way to make complex issues clearer and more accessible.

That remains central to my work today at POLITICO Research & Analysis.

Many young professionals are ambitious but unsure how to translate that ambition into a career. What helped you make that step?

Ambition matters, but it needs discipline and exposure. It becomes useful only when it turns into habits: reading, writing, applying, showing up, asking questions and accepting responsibility when opportunities appear.

For me, the most important step was understanding that a career is built through accumulation. Expertise accumulates. Confidence accumulates. Networks accumulate. You rarely see the result immediately, but every serious experience adds something.

For me, the value of Europe as a Task lies in the people it brings together: decision-makers, researchers, media professionals and young Europeans who are ambitious, curious and serious about Europe's future.

I also think it is important not to wait until you feel perfectly ready. Many young people hesitate because they believe they need to meet every requirement before applying for a role or approaching someone in their field.

Preparation matters, of course, but growth often comes from entering environments that challenge you. Some of the most valuable lessons in my career came from

being surrounded by people who knew more than I did. Those are the situations that push you to improve.

We often hear from students and young professionals who are worried about their future. What would you tell them?

I would tell them that their concerns are legitimate. They are entering a professional environment shaped by geopolitical uncertainty, economic pressure and rapid technological change. Competition is real, and expectations are high.

But uncertainty is not the same as a lack of opportunity. A difficult environment makes direction, discipline and adaptability even more important. Expertise still matters. Initiative still matters. So does the ability to keep learning when the path is not immediately clear.

Many young people look at professionals who are a few steps ahead and assume their path was obvious from the beginning. It rarely is. What looks smooth from the outside is often the result of years of work, persistence and decisions that only make sense in hindsight.

My advice is simple: take yourself seriously. Invest in your expertise. Be ambitious without being impatient. Seek environments where you can learn from people who challenge you. And do not underestimate the importance of being present in the room.

Conferences like Europe as a Task matter because they create precisely those moments of access, exchange and confidence.

As Europe as a Task 2026 concludes, what message would you like participants to take with them?

That Europe needs their ambition.

Throughout the conference, I was struck by the quality of the discussions and by the seriousness with which participants approached complex issues. Whether the

topic was security, competitiveness, technology or Europe's global role, there was a genuine willingness to move beyond slogans and engage with substance.

That gives me confidence. Europe is facing difficult choices, but it also has a generation of young people who want to understand those choices and contribute to them.

My own journey from Prague to Brussels has taught me that opportunities do not always appear fully formed. They often emerge through institutions, communities and people willing to invest in the new generation. That is why initiatives such as Europe as a Task matter. They create spaces where young people can engage with important debates and see themselves as part of Europe's future.

During Europe as a Task 2026, you presented POLITICO Research & Analysis' work on the Arctic. How did that topic fit into the broader conference discussions?

It fit very well because the Arctic brings together many of the questions Europe is now being forced to confront.

Through an interactive presentation, we highlighted the key findings of research developed by our team, under lead of Izabela Kantor, Intelligence Analyst and Chrystel Papi, Director of the POLITICO Research & Analysis Division.

The project examined the Arctic's growing importance for Europe's security, competitiveness and strategic positioning.

What makes the region so relevant is that it is no longer a distant or isolated issue. It now sits at the intersection of energy security, critical raw materials, trade routes, defense, NATO, climate change and geopolitical competition.

In that sense, the Arctic captured the broader spirit of Europe as a Task: thinking about Europe not only as it is today, but as it will need to position itself in a more contested world.

The main message of our presentation was that what happens in the Arctic does not stay in the Arctic. As the region changes, it raises difficult questions for Europe: how to secure supply chains, protect strategic interests, balance economic opportunities with environmental concerns, and respond to growing geopolitical competition.

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