

Who is behind Gefira and the "Identitarians" of Defend Europe: Our interviews

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Whilst in Cyprus and Catania the C-Star (a vessel operated by an anti-immigration group calling itself Defend Europe) was stopped and rejected, the think tank Gefira and the movement of the Identitarians that initially triggered the campaign against the NGOs must be known more closely.

Lorenzo Bagnoli has reconstructed its history, origins (far from what they are now) and the political connections. He has interviewed both old and new Gefira members and the Italians of the Identity Generation.

They feel like being at war. They consider George Soros, the founder of the Open Society Foundation, as the source of all the world's evils, but first of all immigration. They want to stop the NGOs from continuing their refugee rescue operations. They have not contacted each other, yet they are part of the same army: the one who wants to "stop the invasion". Gefira Foundation and Defend Europe mission are the sparks that have fueled the discreditation campaign of the non-governmental organisations. This campaign had led to an analysis conducted by Carmelo Zuccaro, the head of the Procuratorate of Catania, no longer active now though. Gefira is the organisation which initially [showed through the Marine Traffic platform](#) the frequency of the NGOs' vessels entering the Libyan waters. On the other side, Defend Europe is the mission organised by the Identity Generation, a far-right group with branches in several European countries which ([perhaps](#)) would divert landings to Libya and Tunisia rather than to Italy. They are both forms of Europeanism based on the concept of defending the breed and the European gene from the *demographic replacement* currently underway due to the migratory phenomenon. Gefira and Defend Europe are defined as "apartheid and non-political". One is called "independent", while the other "identitarian".

Gefira vs Franck Biancheri's Friends Association (AAFB)

The Gefira Foundation is a think tank based in Nijmegen, on the border between Germany and the Netherlands. It provides geopolitical consulting services, risk analyses, economic scenarios. Gefira named the NGOs as "the mafia fighting against the European Union" and matches some political campaigns such as that of the Northern League for Italy's exit from the Eurozone for example. The think tank was created in 1987 by the political debater [Franck Biancheri](#), who died in 2012, and Bart Kruitwagen, the latter being the current president of the foundation. Biancheri has had [a quite full political life](#): the creator of the Newropeans party (which participated with the same logo and the same name in different countries in the 2009 European elections), promoter of several think tanks and of the first association of [European Students, AEGEE](#). "Biancheri's great goal was to democratise Europe, because the danger he saw was the fall of the European Union into the hands of the far right wing.

They were the first to organise themselves at European level and that's how it remained". These are the words of Marie-Hélène Caillol, Biancheri's widow, mother of Carla Biancheri and the president of Franck Biancheri's Friends Association. The idea of Europe's democratisation had led Biancheri to meet several actors (including [Beppe Grillo](#) in 2010 and 2012), and also to get accompanied by people whom even Mrs Caillol did not trust, we were told.

But the new Gefira has nothing to do with Biancheri's ideas. The two main actors of the new foundation are Bart Kruitwagen and Taco Dankers, to whom Biancheri's daughter also wrote two letters in order to stop them from using her father's political legacy ([one letter was published on the association's website](#); also a private one was sent and asked for [image damage](#)). Kruitwagen was the treasurer of the Newropeans party and founder of [Euractiv](#) (yet, he is no longer part of it now), a European Business information site. This was an idea which came in the context of the European Student Forum (Aegea) founded by Biancheri. "He was always attending the strategic meetings, sitting in the back of the room, but I think he was fascinated by Franck's figure", Caillol explains. Kruitwagen is the owner of the [Gefira and Newropeans, through his company named LTJ Kruitwagen](#). He was also nominated to run for the European Parliament in the Netherlands in 2009 with two other candidates, Arno Uijlenhoet and Veronique Swinkels. The first is now a member of the [GroenLinks \(Green Left\)](#) in the Netherlands; the second one is collaborating with the [Biancheri Friends' Blog](#), and she is manager of the [BBK / Door Vriendschap Sterker](#) communication agency (Powered By Friendship). Not exactly the same political path as Kruitwagen. "When Franck was very ill, Bart tried to get him to meet Geert Wilders (the leader of the Dutch neo-fascist party, NdB). We had never been in contact with him before. It was Bart's contact", remembers Biancheri's widow.

An interview with Taco Dankers

Taco Dankers was the IT manager of Newropeans and some other associations linked to Biancheri. Today he is the editor of Gefira's magazine. He has a philosophy degree, but he has never been a researcher. He is still part of several associations linked to Biancheri (Leap, Fefap, Irpa, Newropeans) but in September 2015 he and Bart Kruitwagen were expelled from Franck Biancheri's Friends Association. The two refused to use Gefira to fund other activities linked to Biancheri - as foreseen by the statutes - so the association decided to expel them. The Association of Biancheri's Friends is the real entity which holds together all the real entities left by Biancheri. "Knowing the strong dispute of September 2015, we are afraid that Kruitwagen might have his own political agenda - adds Caillol. "It is clear that he has dramatically betrayed all of Biancheri's messages and campaigns, not allowing his friends any choice but to republish Franck's old articles to defend his image and ideas."

Taco Dankers says Gefira is funded through a fund linked to Franck Biancheri's legacy and the subscribers of the magazine produced by the team of researchers. What Dankers does not say, but which emerges from the judicial file and dispute between Gefira and the Leap association, is that the funds belong to the Biancheri's group, and that his association has used a database of 60,000 contacts which did not belong to it. In fact, they would be subscribers to the Global European Anticipation Bulletin (Geab), a bulletin produced by other associations of Biancheri's, of which Dankers was the IT manager. According to Biancheri's Friends Association, Dankers would have also taken the

name: the new Gefira Bulletin, which is proposed as a new version of the previous one, is also called Geab (Gefira Anticipation Bulletin).

The association AAFB then claims that Gefira declared itself owner of the 60.000 Euros, which belonged in fact to different companies founded by Biancheri, and that Gefira moved the money to an account no one has access to. Probably it is the same "legacy fund" Dankers referred to; the person concerned did not want to be more specific. For the members of the Franck Biancheri friends' Association this was a coup: Gefira should not have brought funds out of the associations network. Dankers did not want to give his version with respect to the number of subscriptions, but claims that no subscribers have left. From this, it turns out that from 2008 to today, more than 2 million euros have transited the think tank's money accounts.

Dankers mentions: "We are divided because of the immigration policy divergences". We interviewed him on May 27, via Skype, for more than 40 minutes. Dankers told us about the thesis underlying Gefira's research on the NGOs: "Multiculturalism is not just an opportunity for ethnic inclusion; it is also about education, foundations, basic values. Here we know what the fundamental rights of people are, we have invented them. If, however, you bring all the Africans to Europe, you will obtain Africa. And that's not what Europeans want." The fundamental question for Gefira's studies is the demographic one: Africa has 1.2 billion people, and figures are growing, whilst Europe is in decline. "Immigration is not a problem if you remain in command, but it is only a matter of time and the situation will be out of control."

Whose problem is this? "There are many possible scenarios. I also imagine a war," says Dankers. "Look at the French elections: Le Pen was voted by the majority of French natives, because they opposed the migration policies of others." How do you get from demographic discourse to the NGOs? The step is simple: they would be responsible for the indiscriminate arrivals of migrants in Europe. "It has nothing to do with rescue operations. Why are they not landing to Zarzis, Tunisia or other safe harbors? A person who is saved at sea can not ask to be taken to the United States, right? "For a refutation to the topic, here is the guide [Know your rights of Cild](#) for the sea solidarity. But for Gefira's editor, the NGOs pose another problem: they have not asked for the European citizens' agreement to take migrants on the shores to their coast: "In Europe we lost democratic control. I think if the majority of Europeans are against, we should all accept it. And the majority does not want it. What is democratic legitimacy? "Racist? Xenophobic? Fascist? No, Dankers declares "independent": "It is said that those who have these ideas are racist, fascist or something. Instead you should tell European citizens, do you want to be replaced by Africans? I'm sure no one will want this as a destiny for themselves or for their children".

Of course, he adds, the problems of integration in Italy are little known: "Italy is not a country with a long history of immigration. There are not many Muslims over there. "

August 3, update info: Taco Dankers in an Open Migration note says "there is no connection between Geert Wilders and Bart Kruitwagen." He adds that the accusation of having reached 60,000 email accounts of subscribers is "outrageous" and that Marie-Helen Caillol "was removed from Newropeans", the owner and chairman of which since Biancheri's time is Kruitwagen.

The European Identitarians

Let's go back to Defend Europe, a mission at sea aimed at preventing the NGOs from bringing in Italy migrants saved in the Mediterranean waters. According to the organisers, no one will drown, but they will be saved and taken away from Europe; to Libya and Tunisia. Lorenzo Fiato, 24, is the president of the Identity Generation, a promotional association of Defend Europe in Italy. He arrives at the Magenta bar in Milan, a week before July 17, when he would meet other crew members who will sail on the C-Star, the vessel used to "stop the NGOs." He is wearing an Identity Generation Blue T-Shirt, with Chanson de Roland in the background. "I'm tired of the nostalgic and passatistic discourse made by certain movements," he says. "Ours is fluid, we want to question political issues such as immigration, multiculturalism, integration. The other topics do not concern us, as a fact". According to Fiato, it is useless now to have the classic extreme right fight 'the Italians' homes first', because Italians will no longer exist in twenty years' time. And this concept for Fiato is "apartheid and apolitical". Why would multiculturalism and integration be bad? Because coexistence between different ethnic groups leads societies towards social tensions: "Integration is not possible. It always means giving up something." The ideal country model exists: it is Switzerland, with its closed borders and cantonal autonomy. "I dream of a similar Europe, which has its own borders, without needing to fight wars hundreds of miles away."

The Birth of the Identity Generation in France

The founding act of the Identity Generation (IG) in 2012 was the occupation of the Poitiers mosque, a French city with symbolic value in the imaginary identity. There, in fact, Carlo Martello defeated in 732 the army of Abd ar-Rahman, Arab leader and governor of al-Andalus, province between Spain and France. Like the King of the Franks, the identitarians want to stop the advance of new invaders, as they call them: migrants. The origins (cultural, first of all) sink into the New French Right Wing. Among the participants in the mission of Defend Europe we find Jean-David Cattin, who is in the national board of the Bloc Identitaire, the organisation welcoming young French identitarians of thirty years old, explains Fiato. Cattin is the head of the [University of the Identity Age](#), a training school that teaches, besides "identity values", also how to manage an interview and encounters with the media. The Bloc Identitaire has existed since 2002 and has repeatedly deployed in political competitions alongside the [Marine Le Pen National Front](#). Philippe [Vardon](#), one of the leaders until 2016, joined Marine Le Pen's party. Final Breakup? Not necessarily, since the ties between the National Front and the identitarians have always been good. Vardon was, however, just the first transfer [of a long series](#). According to [LesInrocks](#), Marion Le Pen, Marine's niece, "flirts" with the Identities. "The Bloc made an election speech, but it understood that the National Front is already carrying it forward," adds Fiato. "There have always been relations between the two worlds, but the Identity Generation does not entirely embrace the National Front, and vice versa". The imaginary, however, is based on common authors:

especially the former legitimate neo-fascist [Dominique Venner](#) who committed suicide, or [Rinaud Camus](#), a theoretical writer of the "Great Ethnic Replacement." (The invasion), which claims to be out of the Right or left programmes.

The Identity Generation in Italy

In Italy, the Identity Generation is mainly connected to the Matteo Salvini League, especially since the Padana Party turned towards the National Front. In 2015, Lorenzo Fiato was already taking part in the [Conference Towards a National League](#), which united extreme right forces in the name of a common fight against migrants. Among the actors of the League with whom the Identity Generation has the most frequent relationships is Vincenzo Sofo, animator of the [Taleban blog](#) and the leghist initiative [A thousand patriots for Italy](#). With the League the circle closes: the first MEP to give credit to Gefira's "studies" at European Community level sits in the lines of Carroccio. And his name is [Lorenzo Fontana](#).