

interview _____

Angela Filote

Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Romania



At the beginning of 2014, you took office as the new Head of the EC Representation in Bucharest. In this capacity, could you please share with us some of your thoughts regarding the main actions and challenges of your mandate?

I really wish that the events we are going to organise help us to lay the foundations of a genuine dialogue

with as many Romanian citizens as possible. It is the only way we could meet their expectations and find common answers to the fundamental questions about Europe's future. This becomes even more important as Europe is subject to unprecedented geopolitical tests in the history of the Union, ever since the fall of the Berlin Wall. The security in the region depends on the way the EU, and Romania as a Member State, respond to these challenges.

Strictly from a communication point of view, the main challenge we are faced with is to change people's perceptions. I'm worried that some Romanians are under the impression that things are decided in Brussels, at a much higher level, even though their own representatives (Ministers in charge and Members of the European Parliament) work there and make decisions on the European policies and their funding... **p.2**

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event _____

Debate: Reform of the Economic Governance in the European Union

The Europe Direct Information Centre - Bucharest, hosted by the European Institute of Romania, in partnership with Bucharest University of Economic Studies held on **28 March 2014** a new debate within the „Vote for Europe! Vote for you!” project, entitled *Reform of the economic governance in the European Union* ... **p.6**



“I really wish that the events we are going to organise help us to lay the foundations of a genuine dialogue with as many Romanian citizens as possible. It is the only way we could meet their expectations and find common answers to the fundamental questions about Europe’s future.”

... I am also concerned that some Romanians still have the feeling that they are treated as second-rank Europeans. This feeling is still alive, after more than 7 years from accession and after the abolition of the last restrictions on the labour market in certain Member States. We’ll try to change this perception, as Romanian citizens are now enjoying all the rights conferred to them by the Treaty. And I can reassure them that, if any Member State, no matter which, violates their rights, as EU citizens, the European Commission would be the first institution to take notice and react.

Taking into account the importance of 2014 because of the European Parliament elections, which would be the main changes expected to happen in the structure of the European Institutions? Moreover, what are the actions that the EC Representation envisage so that to raise awareness of the significance of these elections and to increase the voter turnout amongst Romanians, respectively?

The elections on 25 May to form the new European Parliament are highly important. It’s a priority for us, even if we are not involved in the campaign, as we are not allowed to. But we want Romanians to exercise their right to vote, so that the next composition of the European Parliament should also reflect the will of the Romanian citizens. All the communication actions we have organised this year were meant to make the Romanian citizens aware of the importance of their vote to be cast in May. I’d mention here the two Citizens’ Dialogues with the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Dacian Cioloş, organised in Bucharest in March and April, which enjoyed a broad participation. From an institutional point of view, it is for the first time in the EU history that the future President of the European Commission will be appointed taking into account the outcome of the European Parliament elections. This is an opportunity not to be missed.

The EC Representation is in charge with the coordination of a range of communication tools, such as the Network of Europe Direct Information Centres and Team Europe. In your opinion, are there any other useful tools to increase the local visibility of the European message?

The Europe Direct Network is the daily partner of the European Commission and the EC Representation in Romania, contributing to our effort to better communicate the European Union to its citizens. In 2013, over 1500 events and local partnerships allowed the broadest communication on European affairs at local level. In a year marked by the effects of the European crisis and the preparation for the European Parliament elections, the Europe Direct Centres have approached complex issues such as the European citizenship, the Digital Agenda and Europe 2020 Strategy, through a whole range of events: seminars, communication campaigns and competitions. In 2014 as well, the Europe Direct Information Centres will focus on European citizenship-related activities to underline the importance of the rights and obligations arising from the EU citizenship. One of the tools that we are going to develop and integrate in these activities is the systematic use of the social media channels, in order to increase interactivity. Moreover, I would like to take part in a few local debates in order to better understand the European concerns of the Romanian citizens and to get an insight of the so-called “deep Romania”. We have also launched a partnership for the organisation of a competition of successful projects in using smartly the European funds, so that we could raise their quantity in the future (the famous “absorption rate”), as well as the quality of the projects meant to bring a genuine and visible contribution to society.

The academic world and the civil society are, by nature, the most dynamic structures in the public space. How would you describe their relations with the EC Representation in

On the 1st of January 2014, Ms **Angela Filote** took office as Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Romania. With over 20 years of experience in institutional communication management, Ms Filote worked in Romania, Turkey and Egypt, and as of 2010, she worked at the European Commission in Brussels. Ms Filote studied economics, political sciences and European affairs. In 1993, she took a Master’s Degree in Philosophy, with a major in international relations, at the University of Amsterdam.

In 1993, Ms Filote was selected to build the Press and Information Department of the new Diplomatic Representation of the European Commission in Romania. In 2006, she moved to Ankara, in Turkey, where she put into practice her experience in the EU pre-accession process when managing the main communication project of the EU Delegation in this country. Later on, she worked as Deputy Head of the EU Delegation in Egypt.

In 2010, Ms Filote became one of the spokespersons of the European Commission, responsible for the EU Enlargement and the Neighbourhood Policy. As of 2011, Ms Filote worked for the General Directorate for Agriculture and Rural Development, where she was Head of the Communication Department and prepared the information campaign on the EU-wide Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

Source: European Commission

Romania and what specific initiatives do you envisage to enhance cooperation with these structures?

The players of academia and civil society are our natural partners. They carry out relevant analyses that are extremely useful for us, as they help us get a thorough understanding of the various sectors. For instance, we have recently launched, in cooperation with the Romanian Academic Society, a study on the effects of Romania's accession to the European Union, an issue that we have further developed into a conference on 10 years since the EU enlargement in 2004. In the near future, we will organise a series of events around the publication of the new Country Specific Recommendations of the Commission, under the economic convergence of the EU Member States.

In fact, there will be a number of thematic workshops covering various fields, such as education, health, economic competitiveness, reform of public administration, that will help us explain the Commission's annual recommendations for each sector separately. We have signed a Strategic Partnership with the Ministry of Education, which makes sure that Europe and Romania's place in the European construction feature among the topics discussed in schools, all along the young people's training to play their part as responsible adults in the future.

Interview by Oana Mocanu
Project Coordinator, EIR

opinion – guest article

Polish Development Cooperation System

Poland actively participates in the international development cooperation, conducted in partnership with the developed and developing countries, international organizations and non-state institutions, to level out global development differences, by raising living standards in less developed countries. Development cooperation aims to reduce and eradicate poverty around the world.



The international assistance is an important tool of foreign policy which strengthens Poland's position, increases our security, promotes cooperation with international partners in political, economic and social transformation processes.

1. Legal framework

The Act on development cooperation, in force since 1 January 2012, has established systemic frames of cooperation which includes development assistance to developing countries, humanitarian aid and educational activities to increase the understanding of global issues and relationships. Based on this law, the Polish system of development cooperation is more coherent, effective and transparent.

Since October 2013, Poland has been a member of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD. The DAC membership requires alignment of the Polish international assistance with the UE and the OECD development policy. The participation in a leading body dealing with development confirms that Poland is becoming an increasingly more important player within the international development agenda.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs coordinates and provides coherence of development activities conducted by public administration bodies. The Development Cooperation Policy Council represents an advisory and consultative body and is chaired by the Minister for Development Cooperation in rank of Deputy-Foreign Minister. The Minister for Development Cooperation supervises the Department of Development Cooperation, which includes over 50 employees.

The Polish Development cooperation is conducted on the basis of a Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme. The Programme specifies the geographical and thematic priorities of development assistance, humanitarian aid and of global education. The first Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme for the period 2012-2015, presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, was adopted by the Council of Ministers. Annual plans are developed and implemented based on this Programme.

The priorities in the first multiannual programme included: democracy and human rights, and systemic transformation. Geographical priorities are the six Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine), and selected countries with high poverty levels in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. They comprise eight East African countries - Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda; two North African countries - Libya and Tunisia, as well as Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and the Palestinian Authority.

The Program requires that at least 60% of funds must be allocated to the Eastern Partnership countries. Our thematic priorities are the support of democracy and systemic transformation within the individual countries.

The Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of National Education, and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education are leading partners of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in the areas of humanitarian aid, global education and scholarships.

The consultations with social partners are held regularly and conducted at several levels: draft documents and government's positions; meetings at the level of the Undersecretary of State for Development and expert meetings. The Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs conducts hearings with the National Coordinator of Development Cooperation at least twice a year.

2. Implementation

Development cooperation is implemented by public administration bodies, self-government bodies, non-governmental organizations, and scientific and research centers and universities, the Solidarity Fund PL, as well as Polish diplomatic missions, through the Small Grants System.

The most important element in the implementation of development cooperation is the Solidarity Fund PL. Its role is defined in the Development Cooperation Act, under which the minister competent for foreign affairs may request the Fund to carry out tasks in a country which is in a special political situation. The Fund's work is funded, among others, from the national budget's special purpose reserve for development cooperation, which is administered by the MFA.

3. Financing

The amount of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) equaled PLN 1.45 billion (USD 430 million) in 2012, 75% of which was granted through a multilateral channel. In fact, the financial amount of ODA has increased as compared to the previous years, but it still constitutes only 0.09% of gross national income. An increase of ODA's amount should be balanced between the growth of GNP, society's expectations and financial capabilities.

The Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme is financed from the MFA funds and the specific budgetary allowances from other ministries. Call for proposals are the main tool of sharing funds dedicated to bilateral development assistance.

Multilateral cooperation is conducted mainly through Poland's participation in financing the EU budget, a contribution to the European Development Fund, as well as payments to specialized international organizations.

Conclusions

Today Poland's assistance has reached many regions of the world. We are active in front of the changes in the Middle East and North Africa. We supported Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. Based on our experience in systemic transformation, Poland supports the modernization and democratization processes in Tunisia, Egypt and Myanmar.

Supporting democracy has become a trademark of Polish aid. Today Poland is a positive example of peaceful political, economic and social transformation. Our experience is useful for other countries, being at the threshold of political, economic and social changes. However we do not intend to impose our solutions on anybody. We may at most share, upon request, our experience, best practices and assist in capacity building.

Poland is a natural „bridge” between the EU and countries which lay to the East of our border - post-Soviet republics. We consider that our obligation is to balance the disproportions of the level of development and to support democratization processes in those countries. We actively support the political, economic and social development of our Eastern neighbours. That is why Poland undertakes activities to build a strong partnership between EU and those countries. Poland's development assistance is an important element of these activities.

Krzysztof Jacek Hinz
Department of Development Cooperation,
Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Krzysztof Jacek Hinz is Minister-Counselor in the Department of Development Cooperation of the Polish MFA. Ambassador of Poland to Venezuela (2007-2012), Deputy Director of the Department of America (2005-2007), Ambassador of Poland to Brazil (2001-2005), diplomat, journalist, translator, M.A. in Iberoamerican Studies.

Learning and Togetherness – Two Words Defining Erasmus+

In public speech, European funding often brings to the forefront figures, technical and financial rules, criteria and absorption rates. Naturally, all these are relevant for both those interested in carrying out European projects and those simply wishing to be informed on the matter. Without seeking to diminish their importance, we believe that the discussion should also include other aspects related to European funding

to supplement the afore-mentioned ones: the European context, pursued objectives, needs and realities which these funding programmes seek to address, their potential impact, and the ensuing transformation. This is the approach we propose in the case of **Erasmus+** as well, the new European funding programme for Education, Training, Youth, and Sport that we are managing.



Erasmus+, which was recently launched officially in Romania in the presence of European Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou, ensures the continuity of former European programmes *Lifelong Learning Programme* and *Youth in Action*, managed by the National Agency for Community Programmes for Education and Professional Development (Agenția Națională pentru Programe Comunitare în Domeniul Educației și Formării Profesionale - ANPCDEFP) between 2007 and 2013. With a total budget of EUR 14.7 billion, 40 % more than previous spending levels in those sectors, Erasmus+ proves that, at European level, investing in education is deemed essential. Besides, the programme itself is not designed as an independent instrument. On the contrary, it aims to help meet the European objectives set in the Europe 2020 strategy as well as to reach the targets set by European strategies in education, learning and youth sectors. For this reason, figures aside, it is good to see this programme as having an extremely high potential, through the opportunities it provides, to generate a transformation through learning at national level and, implicitly, at European level.

What does Erasmus+ bring to the Romanian educational system in general? It brings Europe and the opportunity to work together with actors from other European or partner countries. It brings the concept of learning together, the exchange of ideas and experiences. Erasmus+ is an opportunity to find answers to the needs identified in education, training and youth sectors in creative, collaborative and strategic ways, in an international context.

The programme provides opportunities for different types of Romanian institutions and organisations involved in education, training and youth sectors: schools, universities, training institutions and centres, NGOs, public institutions, companies, etc. Although the programme focuses on the institution/organisation, not on the individual - in the sense that a project starts from the institution's needs and vision -, it will eventually reach those persons who can be trained through projects, who can learn through different types of activities available -

teachers, students, youth workers, volunteers, adults, people generally involved in education, training and youth sectors. These people can - based on their own example and the new skills they are developing - generate a transformation in the sectors targeted by the programme.

Erasmus+ focuses on mobility - 2/3 of the budget is directed to such projects - meaning that a significant number of persons involved in the afore-mentioned sectors can learn together with their colleagues from other countries, in different contexts. Moreover, Erasmus+ will finance strategic partnerships created, as the name itself suggests, on the partners' common vision, as a result of a clear analysis of needs. The programme allows for association with different partners, from different educational sectors or from companies, to work together in order to meet the identified needs. Last but not least, the programme will fund projects fostering dialogue between youth and those responsible for youth policies. There are simplified funding rules for all types of projects - which is another element devised to help the beneficiaries.

This year's budget for projects in Romania is almost EUR 50 million and is estimated to increase constantly over the 7 year-period for implementation, up to double its current size. What does this mean? Let us consider the results in the last 15 years since Romania joined the European education, vocational training and youth programmes: more than 160 000 persons involved (52 057 Erasmus students, 17 672 university professors, 8 232 teachers involved in Comenius mobility, 21 788 participants in Leonardo da Vinci vocational training programmes, 1 024 persons involved in adult education and 66 552 youth and youth workers involved in the Youth in Action programme). The programmes we managed amounted to almost 10 000 stories on learning, shaped as projects: 4 658 school-partnership projects, 1 645 mobility projects and 99 pilot-projects and innovation-transfer in vocational training projects, 998 projects in the adult education sector and 2 234 youth projects between 2007 and 2013.

In Romania, ANPCDEFP managed an amount of EUR 335 million, at an absorption rate of 98% for these programmes, which is an indicator for success. There is a clear competition for such funding, which means that in education, training and youth sectors there is a need, in the case of Romanian actors, for such opportunities in European context. These issues make us expect a new 7-year period to trigger in Romania a transformation through learning and collaboration at European level, an increase in the number of projects and the number of people involved. The Erasmus+ slogan at European level is: "changing lives, opening minds". This is what we think we'll see in the future.

Monica Calotă
Director of ANPCDEFP

Monica Calotă has been Director of the National Agency for Community Programmes for Education and Professional Development (Agenția Națională pentru Programe Comunitare în Domeniul Educației și Formării Profesionale - ANPCDEFP) since 2005. Previously Deputy Director of the Socrates National Agency since 1999 and Director of the National Centre for the "Leonardo da Vinci" program since 2004. Graduate of the Bucharest University - Faculty of Mathematics and of the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration - Master in Institutional Government and Development. Trainer of trainers in the educational management sector (traineeship completed at the National School of Management in the Netherlands) as well as member of TeamEurope, with competences in EU policies on education, vocational training and youth.

Project '15 European Parliament Votes that Shaped EU and National Politics 2009-2014' (final stage)



The project “15 European Parliament Votes that Shaped EU and National Politics 2009 - 2014” coordinated by “Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute” and Vote Watch Europe, to which EIR participates, is coming to a close. The role of the project is to contribute to increasing the information and participation level of citizens in the context of the European Parliament elections of 25 May 2014. The initiative is intended to increase the level of knowledge and awareness of the large public on the main policy dossiers which were subject to debates in the European Parliament.

Project activities include: editing and disseminating online publications and organising debates at European and national level on the stances adopted by the different political groups regarding certain dossiers in the European Parliament (EP) during the 2009-2014 mandate. The participating institutes intend to make a presentation of the most important resolutions adopted in the European Parliament in the period 2009-2014, which are relevant on the national level, as well as the manner in which they shaped up and transformed the European policy debates.

The topics analysed in the project include: agriculture subsidies as EU budget priority; euro-bonds; uniformisation of the maternity leave at EU level; shale gas exploitation; gradual transition from nuclear energy (nuclear phase-out); the introduction of the financial transaction tax; the adoption of the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement; and the creation of a single EU-USA market, etc.

The last stage of the project was marked by the organisation of a general conference in Bruxelles, on 19 March 2014, under the coordination of Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute and Vote Watch Europe, for communicating the research findings and for public debate. Several institutes involved attended the event. The debates focused on the questions: What are the cleavages currently existing in the European Parliament? How do national policies overlap with the activity of the EP? What is the relationship between nationality and ideology?

Further details on the presentations and the themes approached during the conference by the institutes and the research centres involved are available at: http://www.votewatch.eu/blog/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/votewatch-europe-presentation-notre-europe-19-march-2014_final2.pdf și respectiv <http://www.eng.notre-europe.eu/011-18101-Brussels-19-March-2014-15-European-Parliament-votes-that-shaped-EU-and-national-politics-2009-2014.html>.

All institutes participating in the project will publish their work shortly.

Agnes Nicolescu
Head *a.i.* of Studies and Analyses Unit, EIR

event

Debate: Reform of the Economic Governance in the European Union

The Europe Direct Information Centre - Bucharest, hosted by the European Institute of Romania, in partnership with Bucharest University of Economic Studies held on 28 March 2014 a new debate within the „Vote for Europe! Vote for you!” project, entitled *Reform of the economic governance in the European Union*. The event was moderated by Professor Dumitru Miron, Ph.D., Dean of the Faculty of International Economic Relations of the Bucharest University of Economic Studies. The guest speakers were Romanian Members of the European Parliament.

It was mentioned during the debate that following the economic crisis of 2008 the European Union slowed the enlargement process, starting another process of deepening the integration between the member states. This new phase of a “rather forced” integration had been imposed by the euro crisis and the European leaders aim to adopt a unique bank supervision system, thus paving the way to a Banking Union. Moreover, during the economic crisis, intergovernmentalism was strengthened. This led to an economic and ideological division (economic growth versus austerity) between the East - West and North - South. Francois Hollande proposed economic



growth for Europe, a solution which seems to be more efficient than austerity which comes along with social dissatisfaction. As for the structure of the European Parliament, the crisis emphasized the cleavage between socialists and People's Party members. For this reason, one of the participants in the debate stated that it is very important for people to have a clear doctrinal vision (a preference for right or left ideology).

Another subject debated on this occasion was the *cohesion/competitiveness* binome. The European Union is based on the principle of competitiveness and the crisis increased competition in every field, with positive effects on economic growth. For the European Union, cohesion is important on the political level (the harmonization of policies between the member states), while commercial competition is the driving force of economic growth and of the living standard

improvement. One of the guests brought into discussion the importance of achieving competitiveness outside the Union. At the moment, the EU has a harsh legislation for the European companies, which makes it less competitive faced with America, Russia or Asian countries.

The guests agreed that the role of the state in economy is not that of a commercial actor, but that of ensuring the general framework and establishing rules. Obviously, the role of the state can not be excluded from the overall picture (during the crisis, the state saved several large banks which were on the verge of bankruptcy), but its interventions should be limited.

The last topic discussed was the absenteeism of Romanians in the voting process. It was mentioned that, paradoxically, the most informed areas (the urban areas) are usually less present at the polls due to people's lack of interest. However, this is unjustified, because the elections influence directly the lives of the EU citizens. Approximately 70-80% of the member states' legislation is conceived in the European Parliament. On the other hand, the lack of information can lead to an easier manipulation of the population in certain rural areas.

Concerning this topic, the profile of a good politician was outlined. According to the guests, the politician should have a technocrat background, while being also able to assume political decisions. When drawing up the lists for the European elections, parties should take into account the potential activity of a Member of the European Parliament as well as the image he/she has in the country, so as to attract votes at the national level.

Irina Coman
EIR intern

Crimea Crisis: Potential Implications for the Eastern Neighbourhood of the European Union

The European Institute of Romania (EIR) organised on **8 April 2014** a debate on the *Crimea crisis: potential implications for the Eastern neighbourhood of the European Union*.

The event benefited from the presence of high officials, academia, researchers and independent analysts from the Presidential Administration, the Romanian-American University, the Institute for Political Studies of Defence and Military History, EURISC, the National University for Political Studies and Administration and Stratfor.

In the opening, the context of the voting on the UN resolution on the invalidation of the so-called referendum in Crimea was outlined. 100 states voted against secession, while 11 voted in favour and 58 abstained. A series of questions thus come up. Are we in a situation favourable to the emergence of a new Cold War following the recent events in Crimea? And to what extent is the stance of the European Union harmonised in order to respond to these developments? The different views shown by the media conflict ignited on this subject were mentioned.

The debate was intended to discuss the political and security developments likely to have an impact on the Eastern neighbourhood of the European Union (EU), especially the Eastern Partnership states.

The guests reviewed the recent events which lead to the occupation of the Crimea peninsula by forces of the Russian Federation under the false pretext of protecting the Russian minority. The review was followed by a detailed analysis of Russia's working scenarios consisting, on the one hand, in encouraging Ukraine's federalization and, on the other hand, in continuing to occupy regions such as those at the Eastern border, Kharkiv, Luhansk and Donetsk, as it already did with Sevastopol and Crimea. Moreover, separatist tendencies could raise concern in the region. All these events challenge international law in EU's neighbourhood, which once again brings into focus the concept of territorial defence. There are sensitive issues which require

reconsideration from the perspective of the Eastern Partnership such as the lack of a clear perspective for those states that completed the reforms necessary for political and economic association with the EU. In this respect, it would be necessary to approach the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in a coordinated manner.

It was mentioned that, on the European level, the current crisis surpasses in importance and in consequences even the issue of economic governance. As to the economic sanctions envisaged by the West against Moscow, the effects of restricting economic relations between the two are likely to be as painful, if not more so for the Russian Federation, with China on the point of becoming energetically independent.

However one cannot ignore the impact of these sanctions on EU member states, considering the large volume of economic exchange between EU and Russia, which is much larger than that of US and Russia. It was noted that the rules of the game must be radically changed. In the Western council rooms it is not yet acknowledged that peace in Europe should not be taken for granted. Considering the blatant transgression of international law by the Russian Federation, it is deemed that things cannot go on as before. It is likely that a modification will occur in the direction of EU-Russia relations, even though this change would be slow-paced.

Besides economic sanctions, it is envisaged to suspend negotiations aiming to lift off visas for Russian citizens. The guests also brought up the issue of reciprocity and interdependency as regards Energy Package 3 in the economic relations between EU and Russia. One of the speakers made reference to the fact that we are witnessing a reinforcement of the Western military forces on the Eastern flank, with movements of aircraft and military exercises. As for Poland's request for armed brigades, it has not received a response yet. It was emphasized that the West stressed that these displacements of forces are temporary so as not to violate the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. The West does not want a military confrontation and neither of the parties is willing to provoke the other. However, a question is being raised: what does the Russian Federation pursue: a re-negotiation of the territorial order or the right to re-organise the former Soviet space? In this respect, it should be noted that Moscow acts with remarkable speed in order to maintain the "strategic surprise" and also that Russian troops occupied Crimea without firing a single bullet. It remains to be seen to what extent the economic sanctions imposed by the West on Russia will have an impact.

Other topics tackled during the debate reflected the concern expressed by the EU member states in Eastern Europe in relation to Russia's actions, which have often been left in the background. Furthermore, the contrasting perspectives defining the economic, ethnic and geographic reality of Ukraine were outlined. It is obvious that for Russia, access to the Black and Mediterranean Seas is a priority that it will not give up easily. A large part of the Ukrainian defence industry is in the Russian-speaking East. It is worth noting that a number of multinational enterprises have already announced their intention to withdraw from the Black Sea region, but the role of the Western business community should not be minimised either. It cannot be neglected that significant economic and financial interdependencies between the Russian Federation and many of the member states add up to the complex setting of interactions in the region.

It was emphasized during the debate that it is necessary to understand better the Russian way of thinking. From the perspective of the Russian Federation, the question whether the Cold War truly ended is still valid. As in the case of Transnistria, Russia's tactics in Crimea is meant to procrastinate, while creating a de facto situation on the ground. It is worrying that the insecurity corridor might extend from Eastern Ukraine towards the South-West of the country, and towards the Republic of Moldova and the Danube. It should also be noted that it is not easy to isolate Russia on the international stage.

Another guest brought into discussion the issue of how Russia is perceived by the West. In this respect, Moscow made sustained efforts in order to maintain the Europeans' energy-dependency. While the United States are trying to coordinate their position with that of Europe in order to impose common sanctions to Moscow, it should be kept in mind that there are a number of other important international dossiers, such as the Iranian and Syrian ones, which can weigh in the negotiations regarding Crimea. Russia has a big stake in Ukraine, not only for its size and position, but also for the fact that the effects of the Orange Revolution in Kiev could be exported to Moscow. Meanwhile, concerning developments can be observed in Ukraine's Eastern cities with a majority Russian-speaking population and also in Tiraspol. Moreover, against the backdrop of Ukraine's approaching elections, Russia's interest in finding a dialogue partner remains all the more high. On the other hand, Moscow's partners from the so-called Eurasian Union do not fully support the annexation of Crimea, fearing that they would lose some of their own sovereignty.

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