

EIR

Editorial release: EIR Strategy and Policy Studies SPOS 2018

The European Institute of Romania would like to invite you to read the Strategy and Policy Studies (SPOS) elaborated in the year 2018.

Aiming to support the national decision makers in drafting the country's positions within the European institutions, the SPOS project addressed current topics on the European agenda.

The research themes were focused upon:

1. The multiannual financial framework post-2020: risks and opportunities for Romania (coordinator *Daniel Dăianu*);
2. The revival of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region - between economic interests and political priorities (coordinator *Sorin Ioniță*);
3. The transition towards a circular economy. From waste management to a green economy in Romania (coordinator *Valentina Elena Târțiu*);
4. The European Pillar of Social Rights: the reduction of social inequalities and disparities in Romania. Developments of European policies and initiatives in the youth field (coordinator *Dragoș Nicolae Pîslaru*).

The variety of topics, the prestigious authors, the pragmatic, applied research results and their utility in substantiating the decisions recommend these studies.

We thank again the researchers - authors of the studies and the MFA representatives, as well all the other ministries participants in the working groups for their high commitment and support during the research process.

The studies are available online on EIR website, at [Publications](#) section.



Oana Mocanu
Studies and Analyses Unit

event

CEPS Ideas Lab 2019 - Europe's choice

During 21 - 22 February 2019, the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) organized its annual event - CEPS Ideas Lab in Brussels. For this edition, the Ideas Lab's main topic was Europe's choice. This has been reflected in the discussions on the common European values and the relationship between the European institutions and national sovereignty. Based on the hypothesis that both the institutions and the values are under the threat of an accentuated populism that some politicians use for short-term electoral gains, the organizers focused on the elections for the European Parliament and the European Council summit, scheduled for May 2019.

In addition to the previous editions, the organizers also prepared a report¹ on the policy priorities of the Juncker Commission, by analysing what has been done so far and referring to the policy recommendations that might be considered for the next Commission. Among the suggestions made by the team of authors were the following: setting up a new EU ...p. 2

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Periodic Review on Democracy, Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights covering all member states; adopting and implementing a 'Migration Union' based on more intra-EU solidarity and supervision, including a fully-fledged operational EU Asylum Agency, European Border and Coast Guard. In fact, the report was presented on the very first day of the conference on the occasion of **Frans Timmermans'** speech, the Vice-President of the European Commission and S&D lead candidate for the next European elections.

As far as the organization of the sessions of the event was concerned, they were held in parallel, with the exception of the plenary ones, and were structured on topics such as: digital economy, regulation and innovation; energy; trade; finance; economy; Social Europe; rights and security; institutions; Europe in the world; the UK and the European Union; agriculture.

The first session that I attended together with my colleague **Mihai Sebe**, from the Studies and Analyses Unit, was focused on what citizens think about the European Union and how they will vote in the next elections. On this occasion, the following guests took the floor: **Wolfgang Wessels** (Professor, School of Transnational Governance), **Simon Hix** (Harold Laski Professor of Political Science, Department of Government, London School of Economics and Political Science), **Philipp Schulmeister** (Head of Public Opinion Monitoring Unit, European Parliament), **Aart de Geus** (Chairman Executive Board, Bertelsmann Stiftung) and **Nicolas Bécuwe** (Senior Director, Public Kantar).

The main ideas expressed were the following: 2/3 of the European citizens think the past was better than the present, and have a strong feeling of nostalgia; in a world with more and more space for development, people tend to focus on closed spaces that can offer them security and stability; we have never had such a high number of people supporting EU membership since 2007 (72% of the European average); over 40% trust the European Union (the percentage increased compared to 2014); for the first time since 2014, European citizens are inclined to believe that their voice matters in the EU; less than 20% of Europeans trust the political parties (only 17% trust, in Romania); migration is a priority topic for citizens, but it is not the only one (53% of Romanians are concerned about economic issues).

Mugur Isărescu, Governor, National Bank of Romania, was invited to address a speech² during the official opening of the event. On this occasion, he made a few remarks on the following issues: the debate is all the more important as it is at a time of relative economic slowdown at European level and erosion of multilateralism, as well as the propagation of commercial conflicts; the economic recovery over the last few years has been overwhelmingly dependent on the unconventional operations of the main central banks and the very low interest rates; very low inflation leads some to say that the normalization of monetary policy should still wait, but the negative effects should not be underestimated.



Subsequently, in the speech held by Frans Timmermans, the Vice-President of the European Commission and Spitzenkandidat of the European Socialists for May 2019 elections, several proposals were made on the future of the European Commission. Beginning by saying that, for the first time after the Second World War, we have an American president who believes in a weaker Europe, one he could take advantage of from transactional advantages, he then gave an overview of Europe. In this respect, he said that two scenarios are possible:

- **Option 1:** Let's go back to national construction, with the purpose of finding solutions for our citizens; this way of thinking is often combined with various types of nationalism (which also means having some enemies that you project in this way); if you cannot offer solutions to people, at least give them scapegoats - many think, while others use antisemitism to justify everything that goes wrong in society;
- **Option 2:** we need to act together as Europeans; there is this support that we have from the European citizens and a good part understands that we are stronger together; I found out, due to Brexit, that if we continue to attack the European Union in the end there will be a negative impact, even if before we could have thought it was indestructible.

Also, as recommendations, the following ideas were presented: if there is one thing that the European Union needs to focus on, it should be a sustainable partnership with Africa; we must take into account the demographic growth in Africa, and what it will mean for Europe, both as a migratory pressure and as an opportunity for the European labour market; each Member State should have a minimum wage so that European citizens benefit from a higher degree of social welfare; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should be a central element for the next Presidency of the European Commission.

In another session I attended, which was discussing the future configuration of the European Parliament, the following representatives were invited to speak: **Doru Frăntescu** (CEO, VoteWatch), **Job van den Berg** (Counsellor, Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to the European Union), **Tobias Gerhard Schminke** (Founder, Europe Elects) and

Sophia Russack (moderator and CEPS researcher). During this session the survey applied by Europe Elects³ on drafting their projections for the next Euro-parliamentary election was presented.



Moreover, some aspects were mentioned about: right centre and left centre forces are expected to decrease as number of votes; the most important issues that are being debated are those related to migration, public debt and terrorism; the liberals will benefit from the fragmentation of the political scene, gaining more votes in their favour; the big coalition (EPP and S&D) will not have enough votes to hold the majority in the next parliamentary term and will have to associate with other parties.

The second day of the event also included a plenary session on the summit in Sibiu, scheduled to take place in early May 2019. During the session, several official representatives of the Member States were invited to speak: **Jacek Czaputowicz** (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Poland), **Paolo Gentiloni** (Member of the Italian Parliament and Former Prime Minister of Italy), **Andreja Metelko-Zgombić** (State Secretary, Croatia), **Fredrik Reinfeldt** (former Prime Minister, Sweden) and **Daniel Gros** (Research Director, CEPS). On this occasion, certain ideas were expressed such as: history has come back in Europe, choosing the national states and not the Union in the last 10-15 years; in Brussels, democracy is understood as functional when the citizens elect the right government; if the transatlantic relationship is seen from a purely economic perspective, we will have great issues; the liberal democracy system is under attack, and the European values need to be protected more than ever.

This last statement was also one of the main conclusions of the event. Various speakers, belonging to either the governmental, research or non-governmental area, have referred to the perils the European Union is facing both from the inside and from the outside. Whether it is about misinformation campaigns, or extreme candidates who may end up taking a seat in the European Parliament, finally it is about the continuity of the European project in uncertain times. Citizens' civic and political participation must be encouraged, especially by going to vote. This should be seen as a symbol of democracy and not as a recurring obligation.

Eliza Vaş
Studies and Analyses Unit

1 The report is available in English and may be downloaded here: <https://www.ceps.eu/publications/what-comes-after-last-chance-commission-policy-priorities-2019-2024>.

2 The speech is available in Romanian at: <https://www.bnro.ro/Discurs-in-cadrul-evenimentului-CEPS-Ideas-Lab-cu-tema-Europe's-Choice-19253.aspx>

3 More information available at: <https://europeelects.eu>

Model European Union Iaşi 2019 - a teamwork opportunity for young people residing in 18 countries

The Law Students' Association within the "Al. I. Cuza" University organized the third edition of the decision-making simulation - Model European Union Iaşi 2019.

Between 5 and 10 March 2019, under the High Patronage of the European Commission Representation in Romania, the event had as partners several public institutions and non-governmental organizations, such as: the European Institute of Romania (EIR), the Faculty of Law - "Al. I. Cuza", Europe Direct Iaşi, the Bringing Europeans Together Association (BETA) and the Association for Ecology and Sustainable Development.

Model European Union is a project that has been implemented across various countries from the European Union, and not only, with the purpose to simulate the European legislative process in a realistic way, and to bring together young people belonging to different countries.

With Romania having taken over the presidency of the Council, the Iaşi event organizers sought to underline



source: Europe Direct Iaşi

this by choosing the debate topics according to Romania’s agenda and priorities for the European future, targeting thus two proposals related to measures to further improve the effectiveness of the fight against illegal content online and the European Defence Fund.

On this occasion, more than 60 young participants (18-28 years old) coming from different EU member states, but also from outside the Union (Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Turkey, United States of America, etc.) took part in the proceedings of the specialized commissions and debated in the plenary sessions the final resolutions concerning the proposed themes. On 9 March, the closing ceremony of the event was scheduled, and the list of guest speakers included: **Ioana Maria Costea** (Faculty of Law, “Al. I. Cuza” University of Iași), **Oana Mocanu** and **Eliza Vaș** (Studies and Analyses Unit, European Institute of Romania), **Paul Matei** (Europe Direct Information Centre Iași) and **Emanuel Zanoschi** (volunteer of the European Parliament Liaison Office in Romania).

As a representative of the European Institute of Romania, Oana spoke about how a project initially funded by the European Commission became later on a stand-alone institution. More specifically, she referred to the following activities carried out within the framework of the EIR: publishing the impact studies (PAIS) during 2000-2006 that contributed to preparing the Romania’s accession to the European Union; the implementation of the Strategy and Policy Studies project (from 2007 to the present), which included research on various European sectoral policies and topical issues; the training of more than 1,000 civil servants in the pre-accession years, which later on developed their career, including in Brussels-based institutions; the continuous publication of the Romanian Journal of European Affairs and the organization of hundreds of specialized events; the involvement of the EIR in the preparation of Romania for holding the presidency of the Council (training civil servants, organizing events, running citizens’ consultations, etc.). Referring to the almost 20 years of professional experience in European affairs, Oana stated: “Today, the European Union is no longer a dream. It represents a tangible fact, part of our present and future. The affiliation to the European family helped us benefit from the stability and the development opportunities. At the same time, the European Union remains a challenge. Taking into account the nationalist and Eurosceptic trends, which have become much more vocal across Europe, we must be careful to ensure the continuity of the European project. Stability and Peace, freedom of movement, cohesion, solidarity and opportunities for young people are, in my view, arguments for the development of the Union.”

Later on, Eliza spoke about the perspectives of the European elections in May 2019, mentioning two possible scenarios: consolidation of the European project or its destabilisation. Recalling that nearly one-third of the votes are expected to be directed to Eurosceptic or extremist candidates, she referred to the issues that may characterize the following elections. If we consider the positive things (at least in appearance), we see that people who do not feel represented by traditional parties will have new options to choose from, and diversity within

the European Parliament will be stronger with new ideas and attitudes emerging. Moreover, new political priorities could be promoted by the next elected representatives, or older ones that did not have sufficient public exposure (border security, social model, etc.). On the other hand, several negative aspects may be expected: European citizens will also be represented by politicians who do not believe in the European project and who would not want to contribute to its future; the newly elected representatives will have the necessary tools to make decisions in favour of diminishing European integration or even limiting the membership to the European Union; several candidates with extremist affiliations have been identified as having links with anti-European propaganda and misinformation activities, so that external influence within the European Parliament can be a worthwhile threat.



source: Europe Direct Iași

At the beginning of the intervention, Eliza made a quick exercise asking the participants about the scenarios they consider most feasible about the elections. A few considered that following the European Parliament elections, the European project would be consolidated, while a similar number of participants said the European Union would be destabilised. The majority of those sitting in the room voted that things would remain the same. This result triggered debates in the Questions and Answers section when various participants expressed the need to talk more about the problems that the Union is facing, otherwise we will only believe that everything remains the same way we know it today. In addition, some comments were made regarding the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union, the accession of Romania to the Schengen area or the political priorities related to the accession of some of the Eastern Partnership countries.

Those present at the event managed to capture successfully the state of affairs, which made them to be even eagerer in promoting the European values. That is why events such as the Model European Union Iași 2019 have a special role to play in developing the critical thinking, fostering debates and strengthening negotiation skills among young people because, by discussing topics that are part of the European Union’s real agenda, not only do they understand better the decision-making process, but also they feel much closer to the European project.

Eliza Vaș
Studies and Analyses Unit

Romanian Parliament: Conference on Common Foreign and Security Policy



Source: www.parl2019ro.eu

On 7-8 March 2019 took place in Bucharest the Inter-parliamentary Conference on Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CFSP / CSDP). Its goal was to provide a platform for the exchange of information and good practice between national parliamentary committees of the Member States that work in the field of foreign, security and defence policy, the European Parliament, and the European Commission.

The main objectives of this conference were to strengthen security, ensure peace, promote international cooperation and develop democracy. This event brought together up to six members of each national parliament and up to 16 representatives of the European Parliament.

The first meeting in this format was held in 2012, in Cyprus. Since then, the event has been organized twice a year in the Member State holding the rotating Presidency of the EU Council.

At the Bucharest reunion were addressed topics such as the Eastern Partnership, the strategic importance of the Black Sea on the EU agenda, military mobility, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, cyber security and hybrid warfare and a credible prospect for enlargement and a strengthened EU commitment to the Western Balkans.

The event enjoyed a high level participation of both Romanian and European officials. The opening speech of the Conference by the President of the Senate, Mr. Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu, presented the key lines of the Romanian message: the need of “cohesion and solidarity rooted in a shared vision for the future.” In his opinion “this vision is gradually losing coherence and the policies painstakingly put in place to support it start losing their sense of purpose in the aftermath of several recent crises that have shaken our societies” while we are dealing also with “the challenge of legitimacy of the current European Commission”.

The Final Statement of the conference reviewed the main aspects discussed underlining that “the time has come for the EU to develop a genuine common foreign and security policy (CFSP) to promote its interests, principles and values in the face of increasing challenges, notably in its neighbourhood.”

For more details please visit http://www.parl2019ro.eu/dp.events?id_evn=4&idl=2#stiricomunicate

Mihai Sebe
Studies and Analyses Unit

The European Parliament engages the youth NGOs in consultations

On 7 March 2019, the European Parliament (EP) held a consultation on “What should the EP do for the youth?”. The event was carried out by Parliament Outreach Unit and involved more than 80 representatives of various European, national or local non-governmental organizations. On this occasion, I represented the YMCA Europe (as a member of the [Youth Policy Group](#)) and I took part in the discussions facilitated by **Ian Andersen**, participatory leadership adviser within the European Commission.

The Youth Outreach Unit was set up by the Parliament in 2018 to develop the team that organizes the European Youth Event (EYE). Promoting the principle underpinning EYE, the Youth Outreach Unit aims to facilitate a dialogue between young Europeans and European youth organizations on one hand and the European Parliament on the other. **Laura Popa**, member of the Youth Outreach team, told us: “We strive to create and maintain this dialogue and give young people a voice to nurture their interest in the European Union and to encourage them to actively participate in the democratic life and in elections.”

Consequently, at the March event, we put into practice these goals set by the Youth Outreach unit. In particular, I attended a “World Café” session where we all answered questions such as: what does the European Parliament mean for you and your organization? Which are the obstacles you see for yourself and the NGO you are part of concerning the vote participation; what kind of contribution you could bring to encourage the young people you work with to go and vote.

Some of the ideas that emerged from the talks concerned the following: young citizens often do not understand how the European Union works and what it does for them, so they are not very willing to vote; many do not vote either lacking the information they need to make a decision or because they are not interested in what happens after the elections; it was said that it is important not to tell people who to vote for, but rather to help them make informed decisions; to do this, it is important to promote the positive parts of the European legislation, but also to discuss the problems that the Union is facing.

Another aspect mentioned in the debates was the one concerning the vote for Eurosceptic / extremist candidates. Several participants said that many who vote for such parties do not act in this way because they strongly believe in their alternative, but as a sign of frustration towards the traditional parties. That is why it is very important to have open discussions, including those who share a different view compared to ours, and to ask them how they see the future of the European Union.



Another activity during the meeting was focused on the proposals on how to improve the interaction between the European Parliament and young people. Thus, several suggestions have been made on: improving access to vote for young people with disabilities; supporting the development of critical thinking of young people and media literacy; encouraging young candidates to step in the elections; transmitting official information in a way that is easier to understand by reducing the jargon; promoting the results obtained in the previous legislatures so that there are clearer pictures of what can be achieved in the decision-making process.

All these ideas were generated by the participatory leadership exercises facilitated by Ian Andersen. On this occasion, I asked some questions about how the European Commission and the European Parliament involve young people in the consultations they are organizing. Ian noted that: *“If you want to explore the realities of a complex system and get to workable results that are important to the people involved, the best methods we have found so far at the European Commission are the conversational methods and processes collected under the umbrella of Participatory Leadership. We have been increasingly using these methods for the past 12 years - training a large number of staffs in their use on the way.”*

Regarding the 7 March event, Ian said that: *“With the Youth Network Event, the European Parliament wanted to engage young Europeans in a real, two-way exchange, first and foremost focused on listening and understanding how the EP could best support the projects youth organizations wanted to create. I was invited to help design the meeting, which started with a focus group of Brussels-based youth organizations five weeks before the event. We wanted to explore a sample of the needs and views of the future participants in order to make sure the design was relevant for all participants.”*

Last but not least, Ian mentioned that: *“The Commission already uses a participatory approach in a large number of internal processes and in contacts with stakeholders. Most recently in Citizens’ Dialogues and with the creation of a peer network of European Solidarity Corps volunteers at the forthcoming 4-day founder meeting for the network in Brussels. It is generally recognized in the EU-institutions that if you want to engage with people and really understand their needs and what you can do together, the best way is a series of facilitated processes that focus sharply on the purpose of the gathering and the needs of the participants”.*

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* The texts published in this Newsletter express the authors’ opinion and do not represent the official position of the European Institute of Romania.

ISSN 2065 - 457X

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