



EIR newsletter

Year III, no. 25 - January 2011

interview _____

Smaranda ENACHE

Member of the Board of Directors of the European Institute of Romania



The today's society is in perpetual movement, the young segment being the most dynamic, a fact which determined the European Commission to declare 2011 as the European Year of Volunteering. How do you evaluate the involvement of the young people in voluntary activities and what do you think are the most attractive areas for such actions?

By declaring 2011 the **European Year of Volunteering**, the European Commission aimed to honour the European citizens of all ages who practise this form of civic generosity and, at the same time, to highlight the need to implement public policies to encourage voluntary activities, especially among young people.

Among the European states, regions, nations, there are differences as regards the tradition and culture of volunteering. We often complain that in our country the volunteering is limited. If in Romania there were reliable statistics on the size of the phenomenon we would be positively surprised. The volunteering happens often in the Romanian society, from the employees who do unpaid overtime, to the passionate people involved in the ecological campaigns, in the social, sporting, cultural and philanthropic projects. What we lack is organising and registering this voluntary activity. 2011 is an invitation to celebrate the volunteers, mostly anonymous, to include the pro-volunteering education in the school curriculum, to convince the associations and foundations to specialize in attracting and motivating volunteers ... **p. 2**

in this issue _____

1	<i>Interview – Smaranda Enache</i>
3	<i>“Romania France: Together in Europe”</i>
3	<i>A new series of strategy and policy studies under the auspices of EIR</i>
4	<i>EIR in the international networks: EPIN, EADI</i>
4	<i>EIR facilitates students' transition from school to working life</i>
5	<i>Policy Memo EIR</i>
6	<i>European capital of culture 2011</i>
7	<i>The European Year of Volunteering – EYV 2011</i>
7	<i>Launch of the first European Semester</i>
8	<i>Euro - official currency in Estonia</i>
8	<i>2011 - Challenges for the EU</i>
9	<i>EIR Staff News 2010</i>
10	<i>EIR training courses – March 2011</i>

analysis | opinion _____

2011 – Challenges for the EU

Opinion article on the keynote speech by Mr Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, at Europe House – London, 13 th of January 2010

Herman van Rompuy, President of the European Council, held a speech on January 13th 2011 at Europe House - London, following a meeting with the British Prime Minister David Cameron, in preparation for the workings of the upcoming European Council meetings. During his intervention, the European official presented the European Union's main challenges for 2011 ... **p. 8**



... I personally think that the Romanian youth shows more openness towards volunteering than ten years ago and they are not avoiding even the difficult area of militancy, such as human rights, fight against corruption, defending the diversity.

The freedom of religion is one of the basic freedoms of democracy. In your opinion, what is the degree of religious freedom in Romania, specifying at the same time whether Romania is a secular or a religious state.

De iure, Romania is a secular state. The constitution provides for the autonomy of the cults, but this principle is only partially found in the laws governing the functioning of the cults. For example, the limitation in the number of cults, or favouring some cults over others, present in our country, is against what is happening in Europe at the moment. It was natural for the state to be willing to provide moral and material compensation for the cults after half a century of state atheism. But the relation between the state and the church went beyond mere historical reparation. More and more often we ask ourselves if Romania is still, *de facto*, a secular state. The model chosen for financing the cults, the involvement of cults, particularly of the orthodox one in the overly festive national events, the confessional nature of teaching religion in schools, the omnipresence of religious symbols in public administration show incapacity of promoting a balanced solution: it would have been ideal that neither the autonomy of the cults, nor the neutrality of the state were affected. The minority cults have repeatedly denounced the discriminatory and biased measures of the majority orthodox church. One of these intolerable situations is the failure to return the goods seized by the communists to the Romanian Church United with Rome, Greek-Catholic, an abuse unmatched in the European Union.

Every society has its own prejudices. What is the nature of the most common prejudices in Romania and what solutions would you recommend for combating them?

The opinion polls reveal that the Romanians have plenty of prejudices. Are they more numerous than those of other Europeans? It appears so, although recent developments in other European states show the increase of the national extremist, anti-Semite, islamophobic and xenophobic forces, a fact which was unimaginable not long ago. What is somehow specific for us, a state with quite few immigration minorities, is the resentment towards our fellow citizens with a mother tongue other than Romanian or a religion other than orthodox. The homophobia also reaches record levels. There is no reason why this phenomenon should be surprising, the national mythology has frozen in the incipient stage. The school, the church, some media, most of the politicians have given, during the years of transition, a dangerous impulse to these lamentable attitudes and trends. Neither the democratic civil society has been unanimous in combating them.

A very serious warning signal is the fact that the fundamentally anti-Roma, anti-Semite and anti-Magyar attitudes have become part of the socialising rituals among the middle class. The apex is reached by internet anonymous comments. There is one thing to be done: the society which rejects the hatred to boldly promote the respect for the otherness. The state wants to be its partner. This means new manuals, opening the public symbolism towards the otherness, programmes of leaning about the language and culture of minorities, ecumenism, intercultural dialogue.

What measures would you recommend for integrating the Roma in the European community? How do you foresee the near future as regards this issue in the context of Romanian bilateral relations?

We should make it clear from the beginning that the Roma integration, the equality of opportunity lie mainly with the states whose citizens they are. I deplore the trick by which the responsibility of the national states is eluded under the pretext that “the Roma problem is a European one”. The European contribution should be that of providing support, resources and a proper legislative framework for guaranteeing the personal achievement and the future of Roma in their native countries, with no discrimination, isolation or exclusion. The European Community should ensure the prevention and sanctioning of deviations, whether there are incidents in Romania, France or Italy. Similar to all European citizens, Roma’s fundamental rights and freedoms, including the right to free movement, must be respected. The discrimination on ethnic grounds and collective blaming, as it was the case in the recent expulsions from France, must be brought to an end. True change will come when we will no longer consider affirmative actions in favour of the Roma as a

gift, but as a just historical remedy meant to heal the historical wound of slavery.

A concluding question about EIR in whose Board of Directors you are a member since 2008. In your view, what new directions should EIR approach in order to strengthen the relation between Romania and the EU?

EIR is an important and praiseworthy institution in Romania’s Europeanization. By being open towards the Romanian civil society, by approaching sensitive topics in the current Romanian and European reality, it will continue the tradition of the Romanian pro-European attitude, encouraging a climate of civility and intellectual probity absolutely necessary for the future of our nation.

Interview by **Mădalina Magnusson** and **Maria Toader**

“Romania France: Together in Europe”

The public conferences launched in the spring of 2007 to mark Romania’s accession to the EU and the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome are among EIR’s successful projects. The project is conducted in partnership with the French Embassy in Romania.

The series of conferences “Romania France: Together in Europe”



These public communication events aim to contribute to the analysis of European topics which are important both for the European Union, as a whole, and in particular for the two countries, leading to a better understanding of the Community policies, the institutional developments as well as to a stronger bilateral relation between the two member states in the area of European affairs.

During the 25 conferences organised so far (2007 - 2010), political personalities and high officials of the French administration put forward for debate topics from the Community agenda, such as: social policy, territorial reform, budgetary reform, defence policy, multilingualism and francophony, environment protection, agriculture, institutional reform, etc.

Among the speakers at these conferences there have been: **Alain Lamassoure**, member of the European Parliament, President of the Committee on Budgets, **Dominique Perben**, deputy, Vice-president of the General Council of Rhône, rapporteur for the draft law on territorial communities reform; **Jacques Toubon**, former minister, former deputy, former president of the Eurimages funds; **Jean-Louis Bourlanges**, associate professor at the Institute of Political Studies (IPS), former member of the European Parliament; **Gilles Briatta**, Secretary General for European Affairs of the Prime Minister of France; **Hubert Védrine**, former French minister of Foreign Affairs, **Hubert Haenel**, president of the Delegation of the Senate of France for the EU; **Bernadette Malgorn**, prefect, Secretary General of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of France, of the French overseas departments and of the territorial communities; **Jean-François Cirelli**, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Gaz de France; **Luc Guyau**, president of the Permanent Assembly of Chambers of Agriculture (APCA); **Michèle Pappalardo**, president of the French Environment and Energy Management Agency; **Jean de Ponton d’Amecourt**, Director for Strategic Affairs in the French Defence Ministry, etc.

These conferences are attended by representatives of central and local public administration, representatives of the academic and research community, of the civil society, students.

The topics of the debates, the time frame chosen for the conferences, the accessibility are the strong points which allow us to say “we play with all the tickets sold out”. And to prove our words right we invite you to attend the 26th conference of the project which will have as special guest **Philippe Herzog**, the founding president of *Confrontations Europe*, adviser to the European Commissioner for internal market and services. The conference is entitled *After Lisbon: strengthening the internal market and rethinking the economic competitiveness of the European Union*.

The event will take place on 17 February 2011, in the main hall of the Bucharest Central University Library. For additional information on this conference and/or the project please contact the project coordinator, Florentina Costache (florentina.costache@ier.ro) or access www.ier.ro Section Communication/Previous events.

Florentina Costache

A new series of strategy and policy studies under the auspices of EIR

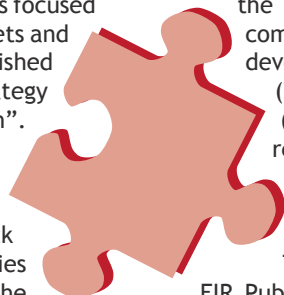
During 2010, the team of the European Studies and Analysis Unit of the EIR coordinated the publishing of a new series of studies aiming at supporting the process of drawing up and substantiating Romania’s strategies and policies in the post-accession period, the Strategy and Policy Studies Project SPOS 2010. The studies have been finalised and will be launched during the first quarter of the current year in a public conference dedicated to this event.

Study no. 1 “The Lisbon Treaty. Impact on the Romanian institutions and policies” analyses the European Union after the Lisbon Treaty, Romania’s place and role in this new European context. The study previews policy elements oriented towards capitalising the European Union’s new way of functioning after the entrance into force of the Lisbon Treaty. To this purpose, it points to the development of the administrative capacity of Romania and, therefore, of the

public institutions, policies and strategies. The study gives recommendations on reforms both of the institutions and of the public policies.

Study no. 2 “The new European strategy for economic growth and employment (Europe 2020): objectives, instruments for monitoring implementation, institutional resources, implementation recommendations” is focused on assessing the signification of the nature of targets and their quantified value, as they have been established in the document “Europe 2020 - a European Strategy for an intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth”.

Study no. 3 “Romania and the European Union’s strategy for the Danube region. Process, implementation, priorities” keeps track of the methods of promoting the national priorities in the European and regional area, within the Danube Strategy. The main stakes for Romania are pointed out: to be maintained among the main promoters of



the initiative on the *Strategy* and to have as many priority projects as possible included in the Action Plan.

Study no. 4 “The competitive potential of the economic growth: guidelines for a new industrial policy in Romania” addresses the subject of the development of the industrial policy in Romania and of its promotion in the context of the European policies and experiences. The paper comprises a series of case studies on (1) the industrial development of the North-East region of Romania, (2) identifying the industrial agglomerations and (3) the issues of industrial development in two representative sectors: the agri-food industry and the textile industry in the North-Eastern region of the country.

The studies will soon be available online in the EIR Publications section and the printed version will be available for sale.

Mihai Sebe

in focus

EIR in the international networks: EPIN, EADI

The EIR partnerships shaped during the ten years of activity as a result of the implication of the institute in various research, training and communication projects developed both at national and international level, either within some think tank networks or institutes with similar activity profile in the European Union.

Since 2002 EIR has been a member of the **EPIN (European Policy Institutes Network – www.epin.org)**, network which is composed of the most prestigious think tanks and European policies institutes involved in the debate and analysis of the institutional and political European framework evolutions.

The network is managed from Brussels by CEPS (Centre for European Policy Studies – www.ceps.eu) and has at present 31 members from 26 states (members of the European Union, but also candidate states). The EPIN network is a dynamic network and through its activities it aims to contribute to the debate concerning the future of Europe through specialised analyses and comments, but also to ensure an easy access to a better understanding and knowledge of the different discussions and national debates on European themes.

In the autumn of this year, in partnership with the Representation of the European Commission, EIR will organize in Bucharest a conference under the aegis of EPIN, event that will gather specialists in European affairs from the EPIN member institutes and experts from Romania interested in current themes such as



the European institutional architecture and the UE future.

Since 2011 EIR is a member of the **EADI network (European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes – www.eadi.org)**, located in Bonn, having 30 years of activity in promoting in Europe of the research and education in the field of development and regional studies. To this network belong 150 research institutes and think tanks from Europe, with multidisciplinary activity, supporting the European debate platform on development issues.

Thus, EADI facilitates the discussions between the network members by organizing conferences and seminars and other online communication means. By its programmes, EADI facilitates the cooperation of its members, putting at their disposal a work platform, through which the member institutes may identify partnership opportunities, in their specific fields of activity. Moreover, EADI offers training to the interested ones through its programmes and platforms.

EIR proposes to be an active EADI member, to develop partnerships with other members of the network and to contribute to the development of the European debate platform in the field of development.

Mădălina Magnusson

EIR facilitates students’ transition from school to working life

On 31 January 2011 the strategic project **Facilitating the transition from school to working life for the students in Economics International Affairs** has been launched. The project is co-financed by the European Social Fund through the Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007 - 2013.



The main beneficiary is the Academy of Economic Studies which will carry out the project in partnership with the European Institute of Romania, "Ovidius" University of Constanța, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași, Bucharest Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Constanța Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Navigation and Agriculture, SC SOCEP SA, the Romanian Commercial Bank, Ensign Management Consulting SRL and Eurogroup SAS, France.

The project aims to contribute to a better correlation between the skills and competences of students in Economics - International Affairs and the specific requirements of the specialised labour market through the internships organised during the duration of the project. Namely, it facilitates the transition from the academic environment to the working life one for 400 students.



The project will be based on four essential pillars: university, business environment, chamber of commerce and research institute specialised in European affairs.

FONDUL SOCIAL EUROPEAN
POS DRU
2007 - 2013

During the internships organised by the partner institutions, the students learn to take action in the global world of business, developing skills of working in a competitive environment and, thus, increasing their employability after graduation.

In this project, the EIR's team will participate in developing support materials on students' internships, will train the internship tutors, will organise internships, will monitor and assess their performance during the internship.

The project has a duration of 36 months and a total value of 11,168,004 lei of which 10,944,643 lei are non-refundable financing.

Mădălina Magnusson

publication

EIR POLICY MEMO

In a European context in which Poland and Hungary are due to hold the Presidency of the EU Council in 2011, the policy memo intends to analyze the possible topics where Romania might deepen its cooperation with the two countries mentioned. As part of the Visegrad Group, Poland and Hungary have shared a long and strong tradition of political consultation, which has been materialized into reinforced cooperation on issues of mutual interest and coordinated positions on certain policies, at the European level.

On this occasion, under the EIR aegis, in December 2010, appeared within the Policy Memo series, the paper on the "Perspectives on a Potential Deepened Political Cooperation between Poland, Romania and Hungary", by Agnes Nicolescu and Gabriel Szekely. The paper can be accessed online in the section EIR Publications of www.ier.ro



As far as *recent developments with impact on the potential trilateral cooperation* are concerned, it is very likely that the Hungarian Presidency of the Council will focus on the Danube Strategy, a topic which also enjoys high attention from Romania. Another relationship which should be much valued by Bucharest is with Warsaw, considering the large range of issues where the two share interests. Furthermore, deepened cooperation is needed in order to ensure common positions on major issues such as energy security. In spite of contradictory positions towards Russia, the Danube Strategy and common concerns over a more efficient use of the European structural funds by the new Member States, as well as shared security and agricultural interests represent the basic premises for better cooperation in the region.

Starting with a presentation of the *institutional framework*, Agnes Nicolescu stresses the fact that all Central and Eastern European countries have witnessed the difficult experience of transition from authoritarian regimes to democratic political systems, the absolute common priorities for them being the accession to EU and NATO membership. A working framework of cooperation inside the Visegrad group is a complex task, yet, bearing in mind the "ultimate utilitarian purpose of an instrument aiming to secure more political weight for the region"¹, the Visegrad - 4 (V- 4) countries are more likely to engage in negotiations between themselves before proceeding to support certain positions at the level of the EU institutions.

A particular attention is paid by the authors to Poland's consolidated status inside the Visegrad group and also in Central and Eastern Europe, which has emerged as a winner in terms of economic and political weight. Romania's participation in this framework depends on its ability to identify and work on common substantial issues alongside the Visegrad group, on which a more lasting cooperation might be built up. These common topics may include the Common Agricultural Policy; the position towards the candidate countries in the Western Balkans and South Eastern Europe such as Croatia and Serbia; implications of these countries' accession to the EU; the European Strategy for the Danube; the situation of minorities in the region; the international status of Kosovo and participation in projects aiming to ensure the economic development of local communities through increased capacity to attract and use existing EU funds.

Through an *economic and financial overview*, **Gabriel Szekely** analyzes the different effects the global financial crisis has had on the Visegrad group countries. While most of the EU was struggling with economic stagnation, Poland has been the only European country that completely bypassed the continent-wide recession. Romania, on the other hand, has faced poor economic conditions, tough austerity measures, and the pledge given to international financial institutions. It has become clear, from an economic standpoint, there are two distinct Europes, having contradictory structure: “the core” of the Union (Euro zone in general) and “the periphery” (recent member states, non-euro zone states), that could continue to develop, but not without serious reform and structural rethinking².

As advantages of a solid *V4+2 Group*, it is worth mentioning: increased coordinated policy regarding the absorption of structural and cohesion funds; sharing of experience leading to easier adoption of the common European currency; strong

lobby factor for the EU budget reform; lobbying inside the EU against protectionism; ensuring energy independence; creation of a proper and fair legal framework for financial reform.

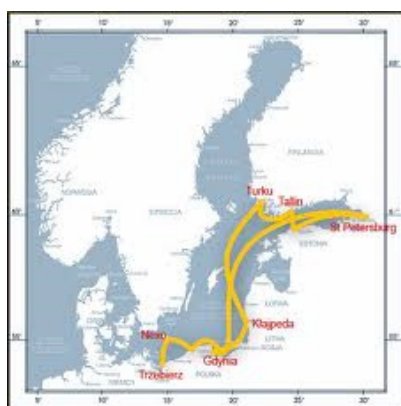
In conclusion, the paper offers a complex perspective upon the factors which have an impact on cooperation relations among the Visegrad members, as well as on those with neighbouring countries. Poland emerges as the strongest country of the Visegrad group as well as of the region in terms of economic and political status. Romania’s involvement in a consolidated cooperation with the V-4 group largely depends on its capacity not only to identify new topics of common interest but also to find practical ways in which to bring a valuable contribution to current projects.

Mihai Sebe
Alexandra Ivanov

in focus

2011 EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE

The European Commission announces on its website¹ that this year two north cities, both harbours, will have the role of European Capital of Culture: Tallinn (Estonia) and Turku (Finland).



Source: klubmorski.waw.pl



Source: <http://www.tallinn2011.ee/eng>

TALLINN has on its agenda an attractive series of events - some of them are the continuation of the programme started in 2010 - bringing to the public especially the visual arts. Here are some of them, therewith invitations to travel. The blend between sculpture, colour and music in the **Chromatic** project is a travel through the last 300 years of classic and popular music. **Colours of the Earth** is a competition for the worldwide artists aged between 3 and 17. **Urban Symphonies** reveals, in turn, the thousands of faces of the

city, of the urban space which is today the space in which live more than half of the Earth’s inhabitants.

The music, the show, the charm are cultivated in **TURKU**, city promoting itself also by *Turku 2011 - European Capital of Culture is on Facebook*², website on which more than 15500 persons have already left messages. The programmes address especially to youth and make them curios on the most fascinating themes: from **Absurd History of the Opera** to heavy metal in the show about the great fire in **1827 Infernal Musical** or to the fantasy of imagining the music of the future in **Children’s Opera Turku 3011**.



Source: <http://www.turku2011.fi/en>

In 2011, for the first time, two capitals of culture are so closer located to each other, for instance a daily flight Turku - Tallinn takes approximately 40 minutes, to facilitate the travels of the visitors wishing to discover close values, cultures and ways of living. The tourists’ mobility is thus encouraged and supported through organization and data communication³.

The dozens of programmes announced in both cities are financially supported by European funds in the amount of 1.5 million Euros for each city, allowing municipalities, museums, exhibition rooms, theatres to be refurbished up, to develop the local economy, to attract tourists to whom they could offer high quality programmes.

Mariana Bara

* *Policy Memo, “Perspectives on a Potential Deepened Political Cooperation between Poland, Romania and Hungary”*, Agnes Nicolescu and Gabriel Szekely, December 2010, European Institute of Romania, p. 7.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/news/culture/110111_ro.htm

² <http://www.facebook.com/Turku2011>

³ <http://www.turku2011.fi/en/travellers/getting-turku-tallinn-and-back>

The European Year of Volunteering¹ - EYV 2011



European Year of Volunteering 2011

Volunteering under all its aspects will be celebrated in Luxemburg between 16 - 19 February, following an EYV 2011 tour stop in Lisbon, in early February, during which meetings of the youth in national and international relevant associations took place. The purpose of these meetings was the creation of a database of the volunteering associations.

Communicating experiences brings to light fragments of biographies of the youth involved voluntarily in drawing up publications, in helping persons who are drug addicts or who become prostitution victims, etc. The personal motivations underline the psychological dimension of volunteering as an action directed towards others as well as towards oneself (finding a leisure activity, a desire to overcome loneliness, to meet new people, distant countries, etc.). The testimonies of the volunteers on the European Commission's website² talk about knowledge, about the human condition, closely observed in some of the most dramatic circumstances (prostitution, begging, etc.), about emotions and about life.

In an increasingly complex society, with practices which are becoming more and more codified and with demands for high

standards, the youth's volunteering activity appears to be an opportunity for knowledge and for more pragmatic action, with visible results both for individuals and for community. These organisations work in fields in which well-known volunteering organisations, such as *Doctors without Borders* or the *Red Cross* are involved.

The activities of young volunteers are directed towards current themes and issues in Europe or on other continents, such as teenagers, disabled persons, aged persons, environment, gender equality, human rights, minorities, refugees etc. For future events, please visit <http://europa.eu/volunteering/ro/conference-events>. For instance, on 21 February, EYV 2011 will be launched in Berlin, an event which welcomes the participation of interested youth.

EYV 2011 is supported by a press campaign sustained by 27 journalists who go on the tour and publish articles, video and audio clips on the site. The volunteer teams of each Member State and their initiatives are, thus, made known. The national bodies for coordinating the EYV 2011 are involved together with national ministries in issues concerning family and youth, in the favourable development of stages and in disseminating information to the youth who might decide to become members of volunteer associations, and EYV 2011 will be officially launched in each Member State.

In Romania, EYV 2011 has been launched on 14 January and it is estimated that around 4 million Romanians are involved in these activities³.

Mariana Bara

Launch of the first European Semester

The Economic and Financial Affairs Council has announced on 18th of January 2011 the launch of the first European Semester, a six-month cycle aiming to reinforce the coordination of Member States' economic and budgetary policies.

This programme emerges after the publication of the Annual Growth Survey, issued by the European Commission, which evaluates the EU economic situation and sets out ten priority actions to ensure a sustainable growth at the level of the Member States, grouped in three categories: fundamental prerequisites for growth, mobilization of labour markets and creation of job opportunities, measures for stimulating growth.

The European Semester is correlated with the Stability and Growth Pact (prescribing the national fiscal policies regulation in the economic and monetary union, EMU) and with the Europe 2020 Strategy (representing the EU growth strategy for this decade).

Largely, this programme aims at a series of concrete actions based on the cooperation between Member States and the exchange of experience and opinions between the EU homologues, among which: return of unemployment back to work, creating a more attractive working environment, correction of macro-economic imbalances, reform of pension systems, public debt control and exploration of the single market possibilities.

This cycle shall be put in a concrete form in March when, based on a European Commission report, the European Council shall identify the main economic challenges and shall agree upon the strategic directions. Afterwards, in April, the national governments shall review the medium-term budgetary strategies and shall establish the necessary reforms in the economic field. This review shall be included in one document submitted to the European Commission. The last stage of the European Semester takes place in June and July when the European Council and the Council of Ministers shall issue recommendations to Member States before their budgets are submitted to the vote of the national parliaments.

The approach of the European Semester European is supported by more than three quarters of Europeans wishing a reinforced cooperation between national governments as regards the fight against the economic crisis corroborated to a constant economic growth.

For more details, please access: http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/articles/eu_economic_situation/2011-01-annual-growth-survey_en.htm.

Maria Toader

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/news/employment/110106_ro.htm

² E.g.: <http://europa.eu/volunteering/ro/node/1234>

³ http://www.provobis.ro/downloads/comunicat_post_lansare_AEV_dec2010.pdf

Euro – official currency in Estonia

The euro currency was created in 1999, when 11 states blocked the conversion rates of the national currencies and adopted a single monetary policy administered by the European Central Bank located in Frankfurt. In 2001 the euro area extended to Greece, but the notes and coins began to circulate one year later. In 2007 Slovenia also adopted the common currency, followed by Cyprus and Malta (2008) and then Slovakia (2009).

In 2011 the euro area continues to expand to its 17th member - Estonia. Once the Baltic Tiger entered in the area, the euro will circulate in the pockets of more than 330 million of Europeans, creating stability and improving their daily life.

The preparations for the passage to the euro currency began in 2004 when the National Changeover Committee was set up, together with other seven working groups which had as objective an easier transition to the single currency.

Also in 2004, the Estonians launched a contest for choosing the image on the reverse of the Estonian euro currency. A jury selected 10 proposals from the 134 received proposals, the artist Lembit Lõhmus being designated the winner of the competition as a result of a national televoting.



Thus, Estonia adopted the “big-bang” strategy, putting into circulation the single currency even from the first day of 2011. Although there was a transition period of two weeks

in which payments in both currencies could be made, the Estonians were prepared. According to a survey of the European Commission (Flash Eurobarometer 308, 30 December 2010), 60% of them already had euro coins and 50% bank notes. This can be also related to the fact that the inhabitants of Estonia had the possibility to acquire, starting with 1 December 2010, 600,000 kits made available by the Estonian Bank which contained 42 coins in the amount of 12.75 euro.



Another measure to support the Estonian citizens was that, between 1 July 2010 and 30 June 2011, the Estonian traders could display the prices in both currencies, the conversion rate being frozen at 1 euro = 15.6466 Estonian kroons.

It is interesting to mention that in order to introduce euro in cash in Estonia, 194 millions coins and 45 millions notes will be needed.

In order to access the national plan of Estonia for the transition to euro and to consult the communication strategy, you may see http://euro.eesti.ee/EU/Prod/Euroveeb/Main_Page/index.jsp.

Mädalina Magnusson

analysis | opinion

2011 – Challenges for the EU

Opinion article on the keynote speech by Mr Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, at Europe House – London, 13th of January 2010

Herman van Rompuy, President of the European Council, held a speech on January 13th 2011 at Europe House - London, following a meeting with the British Prime Minister David Cameron, in preparation for the workings of the upcoming European Council meetings. During his intervention, the European official presented the European Union's main challenges for 2011, from the perspective of last year's achievements and challenges.

Throughout his speech, the common emphasis is put on interdependence and consensus. As the crisis in 2010 has shown, European Member States are all connected more closely than ever, especially those from the Eurozone. This means they face common difficulties and must find coordinated responses. Thus, they need to work together in reaching objectives they jointly agree upon, while taking into consideration the views and issues of each partner.

First and foremost, Van Rompuy tackles the issue of the debt crisis within the Eurozone and notes some of the 2010 achievements in this respect, as being part of the biggest reform of the Economic and Monetary Union since the creation of the euro. Though confident in the strong fundamentals of the common currency, and in the recent developments, he further stresses the importance of cooperation between Member States so that the Eurozone stability is increased by means of political determination.

To his view, improving the core economic structure on longer term can be accomplished by means of deep structural reform, as it was the need in Spain or Portugal, by providing support such as the joint EU-IMF support for Greece and Ireland, and better governance of the banking sector. Yet, prospects of growth are still low, and the single market has not fully recovered the crisis. In order to prevent many issues as those in the 2010 crisis, the Eurozone states should become aware of the fact that they are connected even more than those not sharing the currency, and that they would highly contribute to the strengthening of the EU economic pillar if they were to converge their economic policies.

To anticipate the concerns of the British audience, it is also mentioned that such convergence would not involve states that do not wish to be involved, but only that it would be advisable that meetings be organized between heads of state and government of the Eurozone to demonstrate their willingness to do whatever necessary in order to ensure the stability of the Union. An encouraging step already taken in this respect was the set up of a permanent crisis mechanism.

Having in mind future progress and appealing to the British pragmatism, the president of the European Council put forward his subjects for the European agenda in 2011: attractive jobs, healthy aging, green and low-carbon economy, secure energy supply.



Improving competitiveness and productivity, especially in peripheral countries facing low growth prospects, could only be achieved by common policies and consolidation beyond the borders of each state, while taking advantage of all the benefits a large single market provides. Aware of the difficulty of achieving such development, Van Rompuy values the Single Market Act proposed by the Commission last October, as being highly ambitious, but able to

reconcile the often conflicting interests of both citizens and entrepreneurs.

In anticipation of the February European Council, he also addressed the issues of Innovation and Energy, with a special focus on Research and Development expenditure which should be increased and the success of the European Patent. Innovation should also be used for the development of the energy sector, as the citizens are entitled to sufficient and affordable access to environmentally acceptable energy. In order to achieve such goals, there is once more need for cooperation between Member States so that an integrated European market is consolidated, as well as proper infrastructure for the benefit of all.

Foreign policy is an aspect the EU is highly dedicated to, struggling to maintain and develop its global role. In order to achieve this, it is important that all Member States speak with one voice and act collectively so that the advantage they have as the world's biggest economy and largest single market could be transferred into political influence. While acknowledging the success registered so far such as the strategic partnership with South Korea, the package offered to Pakistan, and the negotiations with Iran, Van Rompuy appreciates the major role played by the High Representative Catherine Ashton in improving EU's credibility. Furthermore, the President of the European Council expressed hope for a closer trade agreement with India starting this spring and emphasizes the relations with Turkey. Ankara's efforts towards meeting adherence requirements are appreciated, as well as its high value due to the active role it plays in its neighbourhood.

To conclude, the President of the European Council expressed his hope for the year to come that the EU becomes the most influential worldwide, in all its aspects, and that its members are as competitive as possible.

The speech can be downloaded from the weblink:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/118794.pdf.

Alexandra Ivanov
Agnes Nicolescu

EIR staff news 2010

In 2010, the EIR team became larger as some members of the staff returned from parental leave: Carolina Ionescu, Legal Reviser, and Mona Răus, Linguistic Reviser, at the Translation Coordination Unit and Mădălina Neacșu Paraschiv, Legal Advisor.



Carolina Ionescu

My colleagues were the ones who helped me to successfully overcome the anxieties of coming back to work after the "motivated absence" of two years. In this way the readjustment was much more rapid than I had initially believed.



Mona Răus

The moment of returning to work after the well-deserved "rest" of the parental leave was a delicate one, but I have easily overcome it exactly because I missed very much the whole atmosphere and my colleagues from the institute.



Mădălina Neacșu Paraschiv

I stayed away from my colleagues and work for four years as my most important achievements, which you can see in the above picture, required all my available time.

Gilda Truică and Laurenția Mereuță have begun their new role as mothers and will dedicate the next period to raising their little daughters.



Sara Alexandra (May 13th 2010)

If you thought that the national vanities in the European Councils are hard to moderate, you have not tried to temper Sara when she is forbidden to bite the household appliances with her five strategically placed teeth... She is almost nine months old, loves to walk held by her arms and to permanently be the in centre of attention. She is always intrigued and curious and does not spare any ear in the house until she gets what she wants. And finally, she succeeds...

Patricia Ioana was born on Sunday, October, 17th 2010, at 12.45.

Patricia is the most beautiful thing which has happened to us and our biggest achievement, unmatched by even the most beautiful professional and personal accomplishments so far. She is a happy, curious, smiling, dynamic, playful and very communicative little girl. She has the sweetest smile in the world and her little hands stretched towards mummy and daddy make impossible any refuse from us. She is our little treasure and not even a million words could describe all the beautiful feelings and love we have for her!
Mummy (Laurenția) and Daddy (Cătălin)



In January we have wished Happy Birthday to:

Mariana Bara
Cristina Chiriac
Monica Dumitrescu
Laurenția Mereuță
Bogdan Stavarache

In the same year, **Alexandru Stroe**, EIR's expert in public procurement, concluded his professional activity.

Two colleagues decided to continue their career in other institutions. Thus, from March 2010, **Iulia Serafimescu** is Program Assistant in Corporate Development and Restructuring Department, The Rompetrol Group Corporate Centre, and, from June, **Elena Bodea**, is Lawyer-Linguist at the European Central Bank.

Starting with November 2010 **Alice Olaru**, Terminologist at the Translation Coordination Unit, will be in charge of the good execution of several training projects as Project Coordinator in the Training Unit of the Institute.

promo

EIR training courses - March 2011

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 7 - 11 March | • Expert in accessing structural and cohesion funds |
| 14 - 18 March | • Public Procurement Expert |
| 21 - 25 March | • Development of competences for the translation and revision of legal texts |
| 28 March - 1 April | • General Training Program in European Affairs |

Editor-in-Chief: Mădălina Magnusson
Editors: Mariana Bara, Agnes Nicolescu, Alice Olaru, Mihai Sebe
Graphics & DTP: Monica Dumitrescu
English version: Loredana Licuța, Mihaela Papa, Diana Popa, Mona Răus

* 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

In order to receive future issues of the EIR Newsletter, you can subscribe accessing the following link: www.ier.ro.



European Institute of Romania

7-9, Regina Elisabeta Bvd., RO - 030016, Bucharest, Romania

Phone: (+4021) 314 26 96/ 133 / Fax: (+4021) 314 26 66

Contact: newsletter@ier.ro

Web: www.ier.ro