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Krakow - European Congress of Local Governments



The third edition of the **European Congress of Local Governments** was held in Krakow on **27 and 28 March 2017**. The mission of the Congress is to create a positive atmosphere of knowledge exchange and to improve cooperation between European regions. The event aimed to be a platform for exchange of ideas and a venue for local government leaders and regional elites to meet with representatives of national administration, non-governmental organisations and business ... **p.2**

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EIR-EDIC joint conference: Ten years from Romania's accession to EU and thirty years since the launch of the Erasmus Program

On **10 March 2017**, the European Institute of Romania (EIR) and the Europe Direct Information Center (EDIC) in Bucharest have jointly organized a conference-round table with the general theme of **"The Europe of young people, Europe's youth! #RO10@EU and #ERASMUS30"**, an event which took place under the aegis of a broader public debates campaign aimed at stimulating a process of collective social reflection with regards to Romania's priorities in view of its presidency ... **p.5**



Within the Congress program, the European Institute of Romania (EIR), in partnership with the Institute for Eastern Studies (IES, Warsaw) and Research Center Silvia Santagata - CSS Ebla (Italy), organized the panel-debate on **Creative Regions: Challenges and Opportunities**. The debate was moderated by Mrs. **Gabriela Drăgan**, Director General of the EIR, with the participation of Mrs. **Martha Mary Friel**, Programme Manager in Tourism and Local Development, Research Center CSS-EBLA (Italy), Mrs. **Alina Bârgăoanu**, Dean of the Communication and Public Relations Faculty, School of Administrative & Political Studies (Romania) Mr. **Emil Boc**, Prime Minister of Romania (2008-2012), Mayor, City Hall Cluj-Napoca (Romania), Mr. **Wojciech Przybylski**, President of the Board, Cracow Technology Park (Poland), Mr. **Oleg Vostrykh**, President, Foundation "High School of Professional Politics" (Ukraine) and Mrs. **Oksana Prishchepova**, President, KROO "World of Woman" (Russian Federation).



The debate was opened with the presentation made by Mrs. Martha Friel, on the topic related to the **UNESCO Creative Cities Network**. 116 CITIES are registered by March 2017 (the deadline for registration is June 2017). These cities placed creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans and are cooperating in order to: strengthen the production and distribution of cultural activities, goods and services; develop hubs of creativity and innovation and broaden opportunities for professionals in the cultural sector; improve access to and participation in cultural life; fully integrate culture and creativity into sustainable development plans. The Network covers seven creative fields: Crafts and Folk Arts, Media Arts, Film, Design, Gastronomy, Literature and Music.

The main aspects underlined by Mrs. Alina Bârgăoanu in her speech focused on the importance of creativity and innovation in order to get out of the financial and economic crisis. Innovation in terms of governments is also a key issue, regionalization being important in the creation of creative cities, creative regions and networks. The competition at the European and global level is sustained through education. In Romania, investment in education is a must, alongside a strategy to keep people with higher education in the country (jobs, industry to generate growth and development). Her conclusion: Romania has a huge potential for creativity.

Mr. Boc began his intervention by saying that there is no other alternative for cities to survive in this competitive world other than creativity and innovation. From this point of view, every city must see which are its main resources in this field, and then emphasize and promote them. Also, it is important for the local authorities to create infrastructure for creative and cultural industry development, to support start-ups etc. Cluj-Napoca has the advantage of having talented people, and this is a huge potential to generate a creative city. Last, but not least, it is important to use the culture in order to attract both talented people and investors (see for example the *Untold Festival*).

Krakow Technology Park (KTP) represents a business support institution that has successfully supported the economic development of Małopolska region for years, the Krakow region having also potential on creative and cultural industry, said Mr. Wojciech Przybylski. KTP is a highly specialised institution that is: operating in the business environment thus having a powerful impact on the economic development of Małopolska; supporting development of entrepreneurship; creating festivals for start-ups in the creative industry (IT and videogame industry); creating clusters for the South part of the country and supporting specialised education activities. Some of these activities were developed using structural funds or the financing provided by EU programmes in this field.

Mr. Oleg Vostrykh concentrated his speech on tourism. "It is developing, each year we have more and more tourists, most of them are domestic tourists from Ukraine." Mr. Vostrykh stressed out that there is a number of places to see and visit. He also pointed to the fact that the creative industry is something Ukraine needs to invest in.

Instead of conclusions: Cultural and Creative Industries play an important role in the economic development of cities and regions. One of the big challenge is the cross-cutting approach to creativity in order to boost competitiveness and innovation and to develop cross-sectoral collaborations. According to the panellists, the key words in this context are engagement, inclusiveness and legacy.

The second panel where EIR was represented was **Municipalities in the Face of the Challenges of Migration Policy in Europe** organised in partnership with UNCEM Piemonte "ACCESS Project" Europe for Citizens Programme. The debate was moderated by Mr. **Mihai Sebe**, PhD, expert, European Institute of Romania, with the participation of Mr. **Marco Bussone**, Vice President, UNCEM Piemonte (Italy), Mr. **Giacomo Lombardo**, Mayor, Ostana Municipality (Italy), Mr. **Boguslaw Sonik**, Member, Parliament (Poland), Mrs. **Doris Kersten**, Desk Officer Public Relations and Projects Ministry of Labour, Social and Family Affairs and Integration, City



of Hamburg (Germany), Ms. **Lucija Staut**, Technical Assistant, Regional Development Agency Zasavje (Slovenia) and Mr. **Dmitry Karnaukhov**, Professor, Department of International Relations, Novosibirsk State Technical University (Russia).

As a result of the intensification of migration in Europe, local governments are facing numerous challenges. There is a need for legal regulations, institutions and educational policy, so on the one hand, migrants could find themselves well in a new place, on the other, to overcome the fear of the local population before the influx of migrants. The panel-debate tried to provide an answer to the following question: *What instruments of migration policy should be*

implemented by local governments to achieve this goal? In the context of the debate the moderator reasserted the central role of cities in the integration of refugees and migrants by mentioning the historical example of ancient Rome, a city that attracted from its beginning refugees and migrants, “*asylum*”.

The answers provided depend a lot on local and national circumstances as countries like Italy and Germany have implemented regional and local models for the integration of refugees and migrants (the City of Hamburg being in the frontline of active integration policies). Countries like Slovenia are more transit than destination countries, thus the local responses are in an *in nuce* phase. Poland has underlined another less discussed topic, that of the Ukrainian refugees in Poland, which need to be taken into consideration as we speak at the European Union level of the relocation of refugees. Russia also has to deal with the issue of Ukrainian refugees and with the integration of migrant workforce from Central Asia and Caucasus, thus a series of new innovative programs being required, in order to facilitate a better integration.

Florentina Costache
Communication and Marketing Unit

Mihai Sebe
Studies and Analyses Unit

How does the European reconstruction look like in Brussels?

The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) organized, in Brussels, the 4th edition of the *CEPS Ideas Lab* debate forum between 23 and 24 February 2017. On this occasion, the European Institute of Romania was represented by Eliza Vaş, expert within the Studies and Analyses Unit. With over **100 speakers, 2 plenaries, 33 sessions, and more than 800 participants**, CEPS Ideas Lab was focused this year on reconstructing the European Union theme and included the participation of various national and European personalities related to EU affairs (universities, think-tanks, national and European institutions, private companies, NGOs, trade unions etc.). The event was designed to be an idea lab, compelling various simultaneous sessions on specific themes: digital economy & innovation, better regulation & sustainable development, energy & climate, trade & the single market, finance, economy, social Europe, rights & security, institutions, Europe in the world, Brexit.

The keynote speech in the opening session was delivered by Mr. **Joseph Muscat**, Prime-Minister of Malta, who brought into discussion a few personal ideas concerning the European reconstruction process: **Europe should become the bitcoin continent** (the European regulators should innovate and create mechanisms in which to regulate crypto currencies);

the mainstream concept of citizenship is as conservative as it might get (the Union should promote the citizenship as an innovative policy tool); **the development of a European Social Pact** (the globalization not only has its limits, but has created new inequalities and we should move towards a Social Union aimed at promoting all types of equalities and social mobility); **the European Integration Brexit Fund** (a substantial part of the settlement negotiated in the Brexit process should be used to create a new European fund aimed at investing in communities which feel most detached from the European project); **the opening of the negotiations on Chapter 24 with Turkey** (given the delicate situation of the Turkey, the EU should play a more active role in this regard).

The parallel sessions which followed the official plenary took place according to the Chatham House rules, and the main ideas revealed during the discussions are presented in brief, as follows:

Circular economy

- ❖ The circular economy is gaining momentum among the decision-makers and researchers, being seen as a way to increase the Union's competitiveness, to stimulate investments, the economic growth and create new jobs;



- ❖ For the time being, we are using 10% less resources as we did 20 years ago, but 50% of these resources are linear;
- ❖ In 2050, we will have as much plastic waste as we have fish living in the world;
- ❖ If the Union would adopt a circular economy model, the potential economic growth would reach 700 billion euro/year;
- ❖ The energy and food industry represent two of the most profitable sectors in a transition to a circular economy;
- ❖ We need to limit the mix of resources in producing a good to a maximum of 5, so that the recycle process becomes more efficient.

Youth

- ❖ The Youth Guarantee was adopted too late (in 2013), and included insufficient funds for the problems that had to be tackled (in 2007, the employers started to hire less young people, affecting negatively the unemployment rate);
- ❖ The Youth Guarantee was like a revolution, because out of the 14 million young people that have entered Youth Guarantee schemes since January 2014, around 9 million young people took up an offer, the majority of which were offers of employment; however, the youth represent the most affected target group when it comes to the economic and financial crisis, and the measures taken by the national governments and European institutions proved to be scantily;
- ❖ A similar project to the Youth Guarantee was implemented in France, targeting the young NEETs (18-25 y.o.), the preliminary results showing that the path followed was a correct one (national funds and approaches supplemented by European ones in order to solve specific problems).

Politics and populism

- ❖ Hungary is no longer a liberal democracy and it should not be considered as being one;
- ❖ We have witnessed an exponential growth of globalization since 1989; the globalization had positive outcomes for the capital, but negative ones for labour;

- ❖ There are different kinds of inequalities: inequality of access (not all citizens have the same access to the respect of rights), inequality of attention (not all citizens receive the same attention);
- ❖ Russia looks to weaken and divide the EU, therefore it is really important how we build our foreign policy with this state;
- ❖ Populism has led the political leaders to act as ventriloquists, as the American case proved it: Donald Trump - 'I am the people's voice';
- ❖ Populism draws a line between the people and the others, who are not 'real', as it was in the UK: Nigel Farage - 'The Brexit vote was a victory for the ordinary people, the real ones';
- ❖ The negative evolutions of the free speech due to the internet's development include: fragmentation (there is an infinity of platforms); undermining the traditional way of publishing newspapers; the transition to a post-truth and post-fact era;
- ❖ If we expect the Eurozone to have better results, we should be in favour of a Eurozone Parliament;
- ❖ The number of citizens who believe that democracy no longer works has tripled;
- ❖ We should leave aside the North-South, East-West paradigms, and focus more on the discrepancies that exist between the centre and the periphery, and between the urban and rural areas;
- ❖ The EU should provide tax harmonization, voting equality and social rights for everyone;
- ❖ A possible victory of Emmanuel Macron in the French presidential elections will not remove the perils represented by the National Front, instead it will be just a postponement till the next elections.

EU Budget Reform

- ❖ It is almost impossible to start a reform on own resources without questioning the political opinions of the national leaders;
- ❖ The changes in the EU budget are inevitable, but we need to maintain the multiannual financial framework;
- ❖ In the last 2-3 years, we had to overcome the challenges posed by the migration crisis without having a specific budget on the issue;
- ❖ One excuse for delaying the negotiations over Brexit is going to be the EU budget;
- ❖ If we look to the majority of the member states, we can see that they are run by right or left centre governments, which try to win votes by lowering taxes, but we need these governments to invest more in the EU;
- ❖ The EU needs, overall, more legitimacy, not communication tools.

As for the general organisation of the event, we have addressed a couple of questions to the CEPS organising committee, so that we could present an internal overview regarding the debates that took place. **Sophia Russack**, researcher, has kindly answered to our queries.

CEPS has also released during the event a Task-Force report focused on ideas for a more responsive and effective European Union. Which are the key messages brought forth by the report?



Photo source: CEPS Ideas lab 2017

The report of the Task Force on EU reform¹ offers concrete recommendations for how the Union can improve in three policy fields: 1. Border management (internal and external); 2. Socio-economic and monetary integration (EMU, social dimension of economic governance and trade); 3. Citizen's Union (more democratic legitimacy through a) national parliaments, b) EP and c) ensuring compliance with EU rules.

For each of these three fields we formulated recommendations (which are listed in the end of each chapter; please see also an overview on all recommendations in the very end of the report). The recommendations (18 in total) are the main messages of our report. We call on politicians and policy-makers to implement

these suggested steps, to make the EU (as the title suggests) more responsive (in terms of democratic legitimacy) and more effective (regarding the two mentioned policy fields).

Overall, the message is also that the European project is worth continuing, but that 'muddling through' is not an option anymore. We need reform, however, we do not propose a great overhaul of the European project, but rather these above mentioned 18 concrete and actionable ideas, many of these implementable without treaty change, to a) produce better policy results and b) ensure more democratic participation.

Given the theme of the current edition (Reconstructing the Union), how did you perceive the general feeling among the participants? Are we heading to a process of reconstruction or disintegration triggers more acceptance?

Regarding the overall theme 'Reconstructing the Union' I can only give you a personal assessment: I got the feeling that there was by no means approval of disintegration triggered. The overall atmosphere among the participants matched very well with the concept 'reconstructing' - which is meant in a constructive way. There is general awareness among policy makers, politicians, think tankers, academics (etc.) about the urgent need for reform and change. Again, disintegration or 'deconstruction' did not gain broad support, according to the discussions which I followed (Institutions lab) and the participants I talked to.

Eliza Vaş
Studies and Analyses Unit

EIR-EDIC joint conference: Ten years from Romania's accession to EU and thirty years since the launch of the Erasmus Program



On 10 March 2017, the European Institute of Romania (EIR) and the Europe Direct Information Center (EDIC) in Bucharest have jointly organized a conference-round table with the general theme of "The Europe of young people, Europe's youth! #RO10@EU and #ERASMUS30", an event which took place under the aegis of a broader public debates campaign aimed at stimulating a process of collective social reflection with regards to Romania's priorities in view of its presidency of the Council of the European Union due in the first semester of 2019.

Against the backdrop of the marking of 10 years since Romania's accession to the EU leitmotif, the main focus of the discussions was the celebration of 30 years since the launch of the Erasmus program. Throughout 2017, there will be events across Europe, in all Member States, to mark the 30th anniversary of the quintessential exchange

programme giving higher education students a taste of life and learning abroad. The first panel was moderated by Ms. **Gabriela Drăgan**, General Director of EIR, and it offered an institutional viewpoint on the aforementioned topics. The second panel, moderated by EIR Expert **Bogdan Mureşan**, consisted of various testimonials and personal experiences of former beneficiaries of Erasmus mobilities shared with the audience.

During the introductory panel, some of the main aspects brought up were: **Romania and Europe will continue to grow if the decision-making elites will listen to the voice of the youth**, as long as the latter will upkeep an active involvement in the public life; during the 2016-2017 academic year, around 7,000 Romanian students will enjoy the benefits of Erasmus study mobilities, while no less than 3,000 foreign students are expected to come to higher education institutions in Romania during

¹ <https://www.ceps.eu/publications/regroup-and-reform-ideas-more-responsive-and-effective-european-union>.

the same period; approximately **9 million persons**, not necessarily in their prime, **have benefited from various mobilities** of academic and professional development by taking part in European projects **ever since 1987**.

Among the **main ideas** expressed during the second and closing panel feature: Erasmus powered mobilities make for some unique opportunities which every young person ought to try at least once in his or her lifetime; **education gives us power, mobility gives us the freedom to fully materialize our potential**; going abroad on Erasmus and experiencing multiculturalism consistently contributes to breaking down prejudices and stereotypes related to peoples or places; the Erasmus program may be conceived as a bidirectional *soft power* tool of the European Union: firstly, it **consolidates the sentiment of belonging to the Union** for European citizens, and, secondly, it **fuels the power of attraction of the European construct** for open-minded foreigners.

As a corollary of the whole conference, it stood out the fact that *the Erasmus program is arguably the most successful program underwritten by the European Union* due to its invaluable contribution to the process of Europeanization through youth mobility.

The full Event Report (in Romanian), together with short descriptions of the speakers, may be accessed here: [http://ier.ro/stiri/dezbatare-\"europa-tinerilor-tinerii-europei\"-ro10ue-și-erasmus30.html](http://ier.ro/stiri/dezbatare-\).

Bogdan Mureșan
Studies and Analyses Unit

The impact of migration on the European labour market. How does Romania respond to the new challenges?

On 9 March 2017, the European Institute of Romania (EIR) organized a debate concerning «*The impact of migration on the European labour market. How does Romania respond to the new challenges?* ». The event was organised as an outcome of the research conducted for the strategy and policy study «*The relationship between the legal migration phenomenon and the labour market in Romania. Relevant developments, potential impact, policy recommendations*», authored by Mrs. **Rodica Milena Zaharia** (coord.), Mr. **Cornel Ban** and Mrs. **Alexandra-Maria Popescu**. Therewith, the event is included in the *public debates campaign aiming at encouraging the reflection over the priorities related to the Romanian Presidency of the Council of European Union, in the first semester of 2019*.

Throughout the day, different important aspects were brought into discussion, such as: the necessity to integrate third-party citizens, the need to support the migrants' origin states and to improve the legal receiving conditions, the social concerns spurned by migration, the labour market evolutions at national and European level, and the intra-national and European labour force mobility.

According to the research findings provided by the team of authors, Romania has one of the highest emigration rates, mostly at intra-European level (in 2015, the net emigration in Romania amounted to 4.39 at 1000 inhabitants). Some of the measures proposed by the researchers in order to revert the demographic decline and to increase the attractiveness of the labour market were: funds for the employers that decide to open kindergartens and nurseries; a generous maternity/paternity leave for both parents; reconciliation of professional and private life; reducing the financial burden on labour and transfer it on the capital; developing the public transport infrastructure between the suburban and urban areas; investments for creating brain circulation networks; attracting immigrants that hold at least average professional qualifications.



Moreover, during the interventions, the speakers called attention to the fact that migration cannot be seen only as an economic and social phenomenon, separated from the politics. On the long term, emigration has a negative impact on Romania, even though in the first years of accession to the EU the remittances were really high.

As for the European Union, there is a clear need to differentiate the refugees from the migrants and to solve the problems in their origin countries. The idea of flexible solidarity needs to be taken into account by all member states. The public anxiety in EU has increased due to migration, being a phenomenon that has to be carefully tackled and treated with maximum gravity in order to surpass the populist trends. Nevertheless, another idea emphasised during the debate was that no singular policy will be able to address the complex and multidisciplinary process of migration.

The event's report, together with the speakers' presentations are available on EIR website: <http://ier.ro/evenimente/dezbatare-impactul-migrației-asupra-pieței-muncii-la-nivel-european-cum-răspunde-românia->.

Oana Mocanu
Studies and Analyses Unit

National Network of Correspondents Project Debate: The accessibility of the medical and care services in Romania



In the framework of the Eurofound project, the European Institute of Romania and its partners organized on 22 March 2017 the first quarterly debate on a very hot topic of interest and research for Eurofound and for the Romanian labour market - **The accessibility of the medical and care services in Romania**. National correspondents involved in the project, representatives of the Romanian Government, of trade unions and employers' associations, and members of the Eurofound Governing Board representing Romania were invited to express their points of view.

A report published by Eurofound on the quality of medical and care services at European Union level¹ served as a background document for the debate. The report is focused on the role and contribution of the private providers (for-profit and non-profit) on health services at European level. Also, the report provides important data on the implications of services delivered by the private providers for public sector and the efficiency, accessibility and quality of the services delivered.

During the debate there were mentioned aspects concerning the performance of the medical system in Romania. In the Romanian health system, there is a need and necessity for monitoring the accessibility of the medical services and care to the general population. It is important for the patient to receive the services he/she needs, whether they are private or public, access being the most important aspect. Providing the services by the public or private sector is influenced by many factors related to the types of services and reimbursement mechanisms offered.

Efficiency and sustainability inside the Ministry of Health should be monitored by applying specific and strict measures that will lead to funding of public hospitals based on performance criteria.

Access to health and care services is an important part of the European Pillar of Social Rights and, together with other European instruments, such as the European Semester, the framework in which these rights should be respected is created.

Nicoleta Voicu
Projects Unit

¹ The Eurofound report can be found here: https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1653en.pdf

The European Union: priorities and challenges after six decades of existence

On 24 March 2017, the European Parliament Information Office in Romania, together with the European Institute of Romania and the Europe Direct Information Center in Bucharest, have jointly organized the debate entitled "**The European Union: priorities and challenges after six decades of existence**". The event focused on the main theme of possible reforms of the current institutional framework of the European Union, against the backdrop of the 60th anniversary of the European project, a moment deemed for celebration, but also for critical reflection among the remaining 27 Member States.

The general debate, moderated by journalist **Dan Cărbunaru**, was structured in two consecutive panels, which centred, on one hand, on the **Institutional policies and strategies**, and on the **Challenges confronting Romania in the new European context**, on the other hand.

At the same time, there were mentions related to some of the main elements of three resolutions adopted in the 16 February 2017 plenary session of the European Parliament meant to tackle the major political challenges ahead, improve the EU's capacity to act, restore citizens' trust and make the euro zone economy more resilient to outside shocks. On the same occasion, the five scenarios put forth by the European Commission in the White Paper were analysed, on the eve of the extraordinary European Council Summit on 25 March 2017 when European Union heads of state or government converged to celebrate 60 years since the signing of the Treaties of Rome.

During the first panel, composed of Romanian MEPs and representatives of the national central authorities, the following aspects were touched upon: **the past 60 years were marked by three big political evolutions: decolonization,**



the democratization of Southern Europe and the fall of Communism, however, the reunification of the continent is not yet accomplished; as we speak, **the European Union means the Common Market, free movement, continental unity and, last but not least, peace; the EU does not have a problem of speed and institutions, but rather of direction, policy and way of functioning**, and the White Paper may just institutionalize practical ways of evading the established decision-making process; if an institutionalized form of division will be agreed, the first to fall victim will be the Cohesion Policy, closely followed by the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy.

Also, with regards to the **main priorities and challenges for the European community**, and to Romania's future role as Member State, the following **arguments** have been made: *currently, we are dealing with four challenges*: threats spurred from **populism and extremism**, the difficult processes of **economic and social convergence**, the **migration crisis**, and **cybersecurity**; it is very important to **define the European Union**: what does it stand for, how much can European integration deepen and widen; **there is a latent tension between part-time Europeans and full-time Europeans**, which **undermines the EU's global relevance**; Romania's stance inside the reflection process regarding the future of the EU will remain a positive and pro-active one, aiming to identify the best practices and ways to move forward, with the overall objective of achieving more unity and cohesion within the Union.

As for the second panel, made up of representatives of the academia and the non-governmental sector, some of the **main ideas** that emerged were: *the biggest challenge for the EU may be defined in terms of security: the European societies are reorienting inwards* (the citizens are invoking the social contract which they have signed with their respective states, fuelling a surge in nationalism and protectionism); **Romania has to avoid the danger of becoming a country fractured on the inside and isolated on the outside** - we need a national White Paper; the much talked about **variable geometry** is, in fact, an expression of the *enhanced cooperation* introduced by the **Treaty of Amsterdam** in 1997; the variable geometry, which scares us now, served our cause back in 2007, when Romania joined the European Union.



Two other points made by the speakers of the final panel may serve as a corollary for the whole discussion: **the EU is undergoing a severe crisis, and its future depends a great deal on its instability management capacity, both on the inside and on the outside**; and, *in order to better understand the European Union's priorities, it is very useful to look at the budgetary allocations within the multiannual financial framework, looking beyond political rhetoric*.

The full event report (in Romanian) may be accessed here: <http://ier.ro/stiri/dezbateri-uniunea-europeana-prioritati-si-provocari-dupa-6-decenii-de-existenta.html>.

Bogdan Mureșan
Studies and Analyses Unit

All roads lead to Rome: The EU at sixty

Ceterum censeo Europam esse aedificandam (Joseph Bech)

On **25 March 1957**, 60 years ago, two key treaties for the future of Europe were signed in Rome: the Treaties establishing the European Economic Community (Treaty of Rome) and the European Atomic Energy Community.

Through the Treaty of Rome was established the European Economic Community (EEC) that brought together six countries (Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxemburg and the Netherlands), all of them wanting to act in order to integrate and have economic growth through trade. Thus, a common market was created based on the free movement of goods, persons, services and capitals.

It was a very important symbolic moment when former enemies reunited into signing a series of agreements with an extraordinary significance in a Europe that was still not fully recovered after the Second World War and was struggling in the midst of the Cold War.

The wish of the signatories' parties of building the basis for an "even closer union" between the European nations and unite their own resources in order to maintain and consolidate the peace and freedom while also making an appeal to other European nations that shared this ideal, in order to join these efforts, paid off. 60 years have since passed, marked by fundamental transformations for the European citizens. Europe reunited and transformed itself under the pressure of globalization, becoming for many of us a natural construction. The passage of time lead however to the fading of the common historical memory, we have started to forget the sacrifices done by our forefathers in order to build a continent of peace. Today's European Union represents that sort of presence that we realise we need only when it is no longer here, a presence that we take for "granted".



Photo source: European Union

Thus, we are now in a difficult moment of the European construction when, in a complicated socio-economic context, various opposing forces openly talk about a possible dissipation of the European Union after the model of the United Kingdom exit process from the European Union.

The European construction has been, from its beginnings, ambivalent, both a reaction to the existing crises and an answer to the challenges of the future. Just like 60 years ago the the current European elites realize that the European Union cannot stay the same, but must change in order to respond to older and newer challenges: crisis of the European social model; economic crisis; European Union neighbourhood geopolitical challenges; Brexit; populist movements resurgence; refugee and migrant crisis; new industrial and political revolution generated by the new technologies.

A first institutional answer was given by the European Parliament through its three Reports approved by the plenary on 16 February 2017, Reports that tackle various issues of the challenges the European Union must face in the current context: Treaties Reform, building on the potential of the Lisbon Treaty, on budgetary capacity for the Eurozone.

We must add to this the *White Paper on the future of Europe: Avenues for unity for the EU at 27*, launched by the European Commission on 1 March 2017, which was debated before and during the Rome Summit of 25 March 2017.

The Rome Summit had therefore a powerful symbolical charge, the future of Europe discussion dominating once more the agenda. Romania, as Member State, stood firmly against any initiative that would formalize the creation of two-speed Europe. Any differentiation between the member states would lead only to the weakening of the Union and would favour the centrifugal tendencies. Europe must remain consolidated and strong, able to stand up to the major challenges of today. The development solutions cannot and must not be individual ones, but they must be collective.

Europe must return to the original project intentions, it must (re)gain the lost or never owned trust of the European citizens. The new Europe that would rise following the Brexit ordeals must be a Europe of the citizens, meant to keep peace and bring welfare. We need founding myths of Europe, and Rome, with its universal vocation and historical tradition, can be at the basis of these new myths, being understood not as external symbols, but as internalized myths by each European citizen. The refugee and migrant crisis acted not as a starting point, but as a revealing factor of the internal cracks of the Union. We are not in crisis due to the migratory flows, but we are in crisis due to past, long ignored, evolutions. Europe was the victim of internal political games, never really being internalized, but at most mentioned in political speeches as a body distinct in regards to the national project.

The four pillars of the European Union, as they are revealed by the Rome Declaration: a safe and secure Europe; a prosperous and sustainable Europe; a social Europe and a stronger Europe on the global scene, are the premises of a future stable construction. The problem would be that of going beyond the intention commitment and start integrating them in the day to day life. The extraordinary technological progress, the fast communication and the expansion of elites of any sort have led to an out of the chart activation of the importance of citizens. Europe would thus need to respond to these challenges and realize that it must harmonize the strategical interests with the individual ones.

Every citizen matters, each individual story needs to be taken into consideration because we either matter altogether or no one matters. Fighting this democratic deficit, implementing the priorities above mentioned, the citizen empowerment and the realization of a truly social Europe which would act as a safety net for all the European citizens would represent the challenges of today and of the immediate future. It is up to every one of us to make sure that the quality of life improves for everyone and that we build a secure and prosperous common future.

Mihai Sebe
Studies and Analyses Unit

Two new entries in EIR's micro-studies series



The first paper published in 2017 in the European Institute of Romania's micro-studies series (*Working Papers and Policy Briefs*) was written by Ms. **Oana Ludmila Popescu**, a graduate of the Applied Modern Languages Section of the University of Bucharest and the holder of two MA titles in the Culture and Language of European Organizations and Translation of the Contemporary Literary Text respectively. Ms. Popescu had obtained in 2016 her PhD title from the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, and the *Working Paper* "The new generation of Europeans. How the high school students perceive the European Union" (in Romanian) is based on her doctoral thesis.

In her Working Paper, posted in January on EIR's website, the author invites the readers to discover the way in which high school students from Romania feel and think about the EU. The paper, which uses a quantitative research method, presents the results of a larger inquiry which aimed at finding out how 11th and 12th graders from six Bucharest high schools position themselves relative to the European Union, while highlighting the factors that help shape their perceptions. Given the fact that, a decade after joining the European community, most Romanians continue to remain euro-optimists, the results of the present research suggest that the way in which young students perceive the European Union depends a great deal on the pragmatic analysis of the costs and benefits of EU membership.

The second publication from the *Policy Briefs Series*, entitled "Left behind? Reassessing the Balkan quest for EU integrations" (in English), made available in February, is the work of Mr. **Horia Ciurtin**, a legal adviser in the field of international investment law and international arbitration and Expert for *New Strategy Center*, a Bucharest-based think tank. Mr. Ciurtin holds a Bachelor of Laws (2011) from the Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, and finished a Master specialization in "European and National Business Law" (2012) at the same university. By using the metaphor of an "unconsummated romance", the author tries to portray in a rather novel way the complex dynamics of the EU-Western Balkans relations, with a focus on the cumbersome efforts made by the former "powder keg of Europe" in order to integrate in the European community. While warning against the EU's temptation to take its privileged position in the region for granted (by ignoring the growing influence of other actors such as Russia and Turkey), Mr. Ciurtin emphasizes the added value and positive boost which the democratic transition expertise of Member States such as Romania and Greece could bring about in the integration process of the Western Balkans.

The **micro-studies collection** coordinated by the European Institute of Romania tackles relevant International Relations and European Affairs topics, adapted to the ever changing domestic and European contexts.

The full papers can be accessed at the following link: http://www.ier.ro/en/publications.html?categorie_publicatii_id=414155.



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