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DEBATE

Four Scenarios: EU and the East in 2030 Future relations between the EU, the Russian Federation and the Eastern Partnership countries

(Rapsodia Hall, Intercontinental Hotel, Bucharest)

- EVENT REPORT -

On 14 May 2015, the European Institute of Romania, in partnership with Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES), organised the debate "**Four Scenarios: EU and the East in 2030**". On which occasion, the publication regarding the scenarios conceived for the relation between the European Union, the Russian Federation and the common neighbourhood was launched. The event was thus part of the European efforts to promote the work of the FES working group. Similar forms of meeting will also be put into practice in other European chapters as follows: Chisinau, Paris, Prague, Moscow and Kyiv.

The debate brought at the same table delegates of the European work group (20 experts from 12 countries have been contracted to work on these scenarios, and five researchers were present in Romania), Romanian decision-makers (**Leonard Orban** – Presidential Adviser for European Affairs, **Ana Birchall** – Member of Parliament, President of the Committee for European Affairs, **Sergiu Celac** – Ambassador, National Centre for Sustainable Development) and representatives of the European Parliament (**Ioan Mircea Pașcu**, Vice-President of EP, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs).

As noted by **Matthias Jobelius**, Representative of Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Romania and Moldova, the Romanian state is interested that the European Union develops pro-active strategies concerning the Eastern countries, and such an event based on a presentation of scenarios is intended to show what could happen by the year 2030. **Gabriela Drăgan**, Director General of the European Institute of Romania continued mentioning that the object of this debate is closely connected with the current consultations on the renewal of the European Neighbourhood Policy and with the upcoming Eastern Partnership Summit, scheduled to take place in Riga, 21-22 May 2015.

The general presentation of the group of scenarios EU+EST 2030 was given by **Felix Hett**, Desk Officer for the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus at FES Berlin. Starting by saying that the project based on scenarios originated in the year 2013 when the FES team considered there is need for a debate to generate concrete results, **Felix Hett** mentioned that the logic of the scenarios derives from the dichotomy present at European level: we have, on the one hand, the objective to maintain a strategic partnership with the Russian Federation and, on the other hand, we intend to sign Association Agreements with different European states from the Eastern Area. Given that these scenarios mark a compromise between the 20 experts invited to take part in the working group, the FES representative emphasized that the scenarios are not predictions, but are meant to point out what might happen in a context with changing variables.

Henrik Hallgren, President of Eurasia Forum, Stockholm, spoke about the first scenario named "Shared Home", which is based on the idea that all Europeans share the same house for pragmatic reasons. Thus, the main characteristics of this scenario are:

1. There will be no significant improvements in the bilateral relations between the European Union and Russia by 2024;
2. Afterwards, starting from the context of the "lost decade" for the whole Europe, the Russian elites initiate reforms and the EU member states start a process of revitalising relations with the Russian Federation;
3. The states from the former Eastern Partnership system (EaP) are no longer in the position to choose between aligning to EU or to Russia and the economic cooperation intensifies given



that a new free trade agreement between EU and Russia would be signed, which would also include the EaP countries.

Alexandru Baltag, Adviser for European Affairs at the Ministry of Economy, Republic of Moldova, presented the second scenario, "Common House", which is based on the idea that "Europe is the house of nations reunited around common values". Emphasizing that this optimistic scenario could materialise after 2024, once a new president will be installed in Russia, the European Affairs Adviser pointed out some essential aspects:

1. The annexation of Crimea will not be recognised by the European Union member states, but they will tacitly accept this fact;
2. The energy field will no longer be politicised, as a result of oil and gas importance decrease;
3. As new global powers rise, Russia and the EU will join forces not only to end conflicts, but also to counter common threats.

The third scenario, "Broken Home", less idealistic and more realistic, was described by **Tatiana Romanova**, Associate Professor at the Faculty of International Relations, State University of St. Petersburg. In brief, the scenario sums up as follows:

1. In the context of an unresolved conflict in Ukraine, relations remain tensed between the European Union and Russia and the arming race is underway;
2. The economic interdependence between the EU and Russia is unwinding and new ideologies emerge on both sides, each considering itself a status-quo power and seeing the other one as a revisionist power;
3. The Eastern Partnership states represent an area of instability in Europe, having become objects of confrontation between the two powers.

The fourth scenario – "Divided Home" contains the same seed of realism and the main idea is that Europeans are neighbours who live separately. The presentation on this subject was given by **Maryna Vorotnyuk**, Researcher at the National Institute for Strategic Studies, Odessa. The characteristics of the scenario are:

1. Given the general lack of trust, EU and Russia are stuck in a stalemate called "Cold Peace";
2. The Eastern Partnership states oscillate between East and West and this is also caused by the constant conflict between the integration projects (the perspective of joining the EU vs. the belonging to the Eurasian Economic Union);
3. Fragile security is an aspect which describes the fourth scenario, therefore, 40 years on from the end of the Cold War relations between EU, Russia and the states in their close neighbourhood are still marked by a relation of force and competition between EU and Russia as regards the attractiveness of their different models of regional cooperation.

General remarks on the scenarios were made by **Reinhard Krumm**, Head of the Department for Central and Eastern Europe (FES Berlin), who spoke about the implications for a future Eastern policy of the European Union. Thus his speech was outlined around 5 aspects:

1. Good relations with states associated to the Eastern Partnership are crucial for the European Union;
2. The European Union has to know very clearly what it wants to achieve in the Eastern Partnership countries and what it wants to avoid;
3. As regards the future of the Eastern Partnership, we must look at the interests of the states belonging to this area, as well as at the interests of the Russian Federation;
4. We need to avoid the competition between the different models of integration which currently exist (European Union vs. Eurasian Economic Union);
5. We want decent relations with all the neighbours of the European Union, including the Russian Federation.

In the comments session, the Vice-President of the EP, **Ioan Mircea Pașcu** had the first intervention noting that: "*In the European Parliament too there is a sense that we are at a turning*



point as regards the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership'. The speaker mentioned that in the beginning, the Eastern Partnership was seen by the EU as a normal thing, and the surprise-answer given by Russia was a geostrategic one. Therefore, *"we have to start from the concept of European security, to know that EU wants to make this area steady"*. Of course, this could be interpreted in a negative way, because from the Federation's point of view, the European Union and NATO are regarded equally bad and Russia is and will remain a geo-political actor first and then a commercial partner.

Stating his own views, **Leonard Orban**, Presidential Adviser for European Affairs, said: *"I believe there never was after WW2 such a disastrous situation as concerns the European trust"*. As for the bilateral relations between the European Union and Russia, Leonard Orban said they will be based on a limited dialogue focused on common challenges that the two entities have to respond: environment protection, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism etc. Referring to the material presented by the organisers, the former European Commissioner pointed that the optimistic scenarios related to Russia and the EU are not likely to happen because "we do not share the same values with those in the Russian Federation".

Furthermore, the President of the Committee for European Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies, **Ana Birchall**, mentioned that the EU has to adapt its policy regarding the Eastern neighbourhood. *"I believe that through a smart foreign policy, we can be a generator of stability and security in the region"*, concluded the Member of Parliament.

The last intervention in this session belonged to Ambassador **Sergiu Celac**, who on a straight-forward note, said that *"the best thing the European Union can do these days is to stay alive"*, given that there are few things that can be done by the member states when the dominant element is a military-strategic one.

In the questions and answers session closing the event, an interesting comment came from **Marina Vorotnyuk**, who said that *"the European Union's capacity to respond to challenges by intangible resources should not be underestimated"*.

Report by **Eliza Vaş**
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