Challenges and opportunities for European Union in the XXIst century

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Abstract

Where do we go and what is the fate of the European Union after Brexit Referendum? What are the prospects for the development of the '27-nation' formula and what are the real problems that the European Union cannot neglect for a long time? These are the most asked questions in the international press but also the speeches of Europe's important figures. The political leaders of the world propose a series of hypotheses and scenarios about the fate of the European Union. Some of them are encouraging, others grimmer, some more radical and others rather moderate. The present paper will discuss the most vulnerable points of the today European Union and will outline the scenarios for the future of this construction. It will be discussed the most plausible scenario and some political figures who sustain this evolution of the European Union by using a qualitative methodology.

Keywords: European Union, Post-Brexit, future, scenarios, policy making process

Introduction

Nowadays, the European Union is facing with serious problems for which it is necessary to take action to overcome this deadlock. We are referring to issues such as the identity crisis of the European Union, terrorism and migration, British Euroscepticism and their possible departure from the European Union, climate changes issues and energy dependence on Russia, ultra-nationalism led to extreme European states, the rule of law manifested in some European countries and the impossibility of the EU to sanction the lack of concrete instruments of action.

The identity crisis of the European Union is the most important issue which must take into consideration because it causes Euroscepticism among Member States. This is a whole new trend derived from classical populism and combined with neo-populism, an "updated" version of "classical" populism (Mișcoiu, 2013, p.16).

The term populism is now on trend and it has success in influencing votes and it affects the public opinion regarding major areas of interest for the EU. Cambridge Dictionary (2019) defines the term populism as a political ideas and activities that are intended to get the support of ordinary people by giving them what they want. Today populism spans a wide gamut of political movements,

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including anti-euro and anti-immigrant parties in Europe, and Syriza and Podemos in Greece and Spain, respectively, Trump's antitrade nativism in the US, the economic populism of Chavez in Latin America, and many others in between (Rodrik, 2018). Rodrik notes that the term originates from the late nineteenth century, when a coalition of farmers, workers, and miners in the US rallied against the Gold Standard and the Northeastern banking and finance establishment (Rodrik, 2018).

Sergiu (Mișcoiu, 2013, p.20) argues that neo-populism is anchored in everyday reality, the new populists limit themselves criticising the absence or the excess of reforms and to exploiting popular discontent against political opponents without promising the purification or salvation of the people. All it gets more confusing when populism became a political etiquette used in ordinary language to designate a propaganda discourse focused on mutual blames between governing parties and opposition parties (Gherghina and Soare, 2013, p.7).

Terrorism and refugees are two important subjects closely related with populism. For politicians it is easier to mobilize along ethno-national/ cultural cleavages when the globalization shock becomes salient in the form of immigration and refugees (Rodrik, 2018). There was the case of British Referendum which enhance Rodrick's assumption. In addition to this, Becker *et al*. (2016) find that austerity and immigration impacts both played a role in increasing the Brexit vote, in addition to demographic variables and industrial composition.

All of them promote an anti-European message (populist discourse), Eurosceptical leaders who have won more and more votes in local, national and European elections. First came the Brexit vote in the UK in June 2016, followed by the election of Donald Trump as president of the US in November 2016 (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018, p.5). They try to minimize the positive effects that the European Union has brought to citizens highlighting the shortcomings and vulnerabilities of European construction at the moment, but without providing concrete solutions for overcoming these crises. For Eurosceptics the saving solution is the promotion of an exaggerated nationalism that does not have a positive impact on the problems that Europe is currently facing with.

First came the Brexit vote in the UK in June 2016, followed by the election of Donald Trump as president of the US in November 2016 (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018, p.5). All of these issues have intensified on the background of parties that promote an anti-European message (populist discourse), Eurosceptical leaders who have won more and more votes in local, national and European elections. They try to minimize the positive effects that the European Union has brought to citizens highlighting the shortcomings and vulnerabilities of European construction at the moment, but without providing concrete solutions for overcoming these crises.

This paper discusses the major challenges for the European Union in the XXIst Century, starting with Brexit and ending with issues such as energy policy or climate changes field. There are some

research questions developed on this paper such as Is Brexit the beginning of the end of the European Union? What is the most important scenario for the future of the European Union? In this paper, a qualitative analysis will be used to highlight the novelty elements analyzed by the proposed theme. As a research method of this paper, the author proposes a study case using the discourse analysis and content analysis. The discourse analysis will help us to outline the scenarios and content analysis will have as main objective the highlighting of some key concepts that will guide us during the research.

1. Risk factors for the European Union

'*The present of Europe is made up today of doubts*' said Rene Girault (2004, p. 11). Actual doubts of the European Union are based on loss of confidence in European values. Actual risks threaten the European Union with disintegration and European leaders are searching for a solution. The main risk factors for the European Union are issues related to the identity crisis of the European Union, terrorism and migration, British Euroscepticism and their possible departure from the European Union, climate change issues and energy dependence on Russia, ultra-nationalism led to extreme European states, the rule of law manifested in some European countries and the impossibility of the EU to sanction for lack of concrete instruments of action.

1.1. Brexit Referendum and its consequences

The analysis of risk factors begins with the newest issue – the departure of United Kingdom from the European Union - which is in course of developing. Brexit is the product of a fully promoted Euroscepticism that showed how vulnerable the electorate is in front of a political game. That political game wanted to leave British democracy triumphant, a political decision that was supposed to be backed by the British government at that time. Brexit Referendum was an imminent mistake made by British government and now, British Parliament has to assume the fate of United Kingdom's Government and they have to decide what way they will follow. The European Union has given United Kingdom the opportunity to remain in the Communitarian Bloc by canceling Brexit procedures. They also have the possibility of leaving the European Union with an agreement, but they have voted with 'no' all the solution that the European Union had proposed for Brexit issue. Returning to Brexit and its long-term implications, United Kingdom game was extremely dangerous for its own economy, for instance, long-term implications on its trade relations with the other states of the European Union. But the dice was cast and they must take a decision with reference to Brexit Deal or a No Deal Scenario. What is sure is the fact that British politicians are much concerned with their

nationalism and their domestic values than with the European ones, and this attitude is a strong desire embedded in the British tradition.

Some voices said that the whole episode of Brexit would eventually be just a *blow of image to bring London to the center of attention*, and the European Union to negate with those to get privileges. But there are just some suppositions supported by different political or critical voices. The reality is completely different, because this episode is just for the fame of the London to be again in the heart of the global political scene as it was in the past years with events full of glamour (Naumescu, 2017, p. 33) and other events which put it on the attention of the Europe. London knows better than any other capital of Europe to be the star, to capture the interest worldwide, to appear the most important.

The end of this story is approaching fast, with or without the delay requested by Theresa May in front of the European Union officials. But not the result of Brexit is the most important issue for the European Union, more important than a European Union without United Kingdom is the lesson learned by this referendum. Brexit was the first signal alarm that a member state from the European Union has decided to leave this construction and they want to protect their national values. But the history holds over and it is possible to create a trend among the states.

1.2. The rise of Euroscepticism

Another risk for the European Union, which may have also stood behind Brexit, is the current rise in populism. The rise of populism in Member States level was intensified on this basis of the political leaders' populist discourse and states' nationalism. Populists try to manipulate the mases in favor of growth in surveys and to gain the popularity of mases by speaking about national principles, sovereignty of the state and the limitation of the decision-making power within the state by the rules coming from Brussels.

Euroscepticism is a phenomenon characterized by the states' failures in identifying with European values promoted by the European Union. In Western societies, political parties are against the EU institutions, against its enlargement and the Schengen area. The free movement of persons is beginning to be disapproved, and even to be a powerful reason to blame the efficiency of joining the European Union. In this respect, religion becomes a sensitive point and solidarity comes out of the landscape, because we can ask ourselves: Is it possible that we are solidary even though our specificity is restricted? Obviously, the answer is no, and this answer also underpins Euroscepticism.

Therefore, the problem of populism is it helps the growth of Euroscepticism in surveys and emergence of leaders with populist views in pro-European states. Populism should be a problem because the story of Brexit can be repeated with other states and the departure may endanger the EU

project with a breakdown. For avoiding the risk of disintegration is important for the European Union to take safety measures. Now, it is important for the European Union not to just focus all their efforts on Brexit, but to find a solution for its own future development.

For dealing with new challenges, democracy needs to be strengthened inside the European Union and mechanisms need to be created to generate the economic growth and expected jobs by citizens. If Britain's departure will be a loss for the European Union, it will have to strengthen its own mechanisms of action and its instruments. It is widely accepted that the European Union has undergone fundamental transformations since the accession of Great Britain. The fall of the Iron Curtain has led to the European project expansion (16 countries becoming new member states), the birth of the euro and European rules currently governing national policies on a very broad spectrum, from environmental to social. It is clear that Britain's membership of the European Union has proven beneficial in certain areas. At the same time, this also meant a loss of national sovereignty and a multiplication of bureaucratic procedures for the business environment, resulting in a lower desire for British citizens to become members of the European Union.

1.3. Security challenges

Another issue of the European Union today's challenge is related to the violation of human rights and the right to stay safe in a country. Nowadays, countries are facing with serious security border's problems, the wave of refugees arriving in Europe seeking a safe place to escape the terror they have experienced in the place where they come from. For some European countries that do not have enough mechanisms to identify the people who are crossing a territory of Europe, the question is whether the European Union will succeed in overcoming the current crises or they will ruin the entire European construction? Is Europe capable of ensuring transparency, accountability and democratic control to restore citizens' confidence?

The answer is quite difficult, because there are many scenarios and points of view of specialists from different fields. In the context of Brexit, Eurosceptics has started stronger to criticize the European values. Eurosceptics have the example of the vote which show that people were not pleased with the European Values and they decided to leave. They are arguing that the European Union did not take into account the issue of safety, economic cooperation and establishment of a common identity for the Member States. They augmented the European Union does not currently have enough means of action to ensure its success in overcoming this deadlock in Europe. Their main critique is the lack of effective European policies and also the fact that states still retain their sovereignty and do not want to give up certain areas of action of the European Union. The President of European

Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, encourage states to cooperate because he considers that cooperation is the key for the survival of the European Union. He also adds that moving forward together as a Union is the key for all of the scenarios regarding to the future of the European Union (European Commission, 2017, p. 15).

Terrorist actions are becoming more frequent due to high extent of technology and dependence on new technologies. Terrorism affects the safety of the population, international system is being overcome to numerous changes and crises. These crises, in addition to the number of deaths they produced, cause panic among the population and create a sense of insecurity and citizens are forced to change their daily routine, for example, by using safe means of transport.

The issue of terrorism is not a strange concept for the European continent, because there had been many episodes throughout history when European citizens were forced to confront this problem. Several attacks which became well-known took place in London in 2017, in Brussels in March 2016, in December 2016 in Berlin, in Paris in November 2015, etc. There were other terrorist attacks in the world and for this reason we can conclude that terrorism is one of the main problems faced by Europe. Those incidents have marked the European continent, spreading fear among citizens, and now the issue we are dealing with is not about the detection of terrorist causes, but about trying to get citizens to continue to believe in the values of the European Union and not to be afraid that it is not able to provide them security.

European realities following the signing of the Treaties establishing the European Communities have meant cooperation on the most important levels, including border management, defense and security against both internal and external threats. Thus, Justice and Home Affairs are a basic pillar of the European Union. However, this Community policy is constantly threatened by the dynamics of the international system that can generate new threats to the integrity of Europe.

Even if, at the beginning of the construction, economic integration was a priority, over the years Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) touches many aspects of politics, justice, freedom and security. Creating this pillar was not an easy step, was difficult to fully integrate JHA policies, since the whole international and European system calls for more and more frequent compromises and reticence, especially in the case of the transfer of sovereignty or cooperation to prevent and stop organized crime.

Nowadays, leaders of the European Union speak about necessity of a common force, established within the European Union, to protect their common borders and fight against terrorism. Security is not a new subject for the European Union, it has been avoided for a long time on agenda's priorities because of Britain's opposition. President of France, Emmanuel Macron, proposes again the idea of the European Defence Union (Europarl, 2019), he tries to convince European states why is so important that topic. When Macron pleaded for defense, he stressed clearly that *our objective*

must be to give Europe the capacity to act autonomously, in complementarity with NATO, adding that the European Defence Union is a necessity for the success of the European Union (European Commission, 2017, p. 7).

Emmanuel Macron's idea of having a European Defense Union was repeated in his interviews on TV and radio or in his public speeches, but his idea was embraced with reaction from Donald Trump. When Macron became president, in May 2017, in his discourse, Macron said "we have to protect ourselves with respect to China, Russia and even the United States", adding that we will not protect Europeans unless we decide to have a true European army (Euractiv, 2018). In response to his affirmation, Trump claimed that European Defence Union is like a nonsense which will not work (Lockie, 2018).

President Macron's terrible mistake was also sanctioned by European Commission. In her speech, Frederica Mogherini, repaired Macron's mistake claimed "We are a political union. There is no competition, there is no mention of a change. We are not building a European army, no one here speaks of a European army…" (Mogherini, 2018).

The story of European Defense Union is not a new topic discussed by France at European Union' meetings. France was mentioning the idea of a European Commonwealth Defense for the first time in 1950. French Socialist Prime Minister, René Pleven, proposed the establishment of a European Commonwealth under the umbrella of the European Defense Initiative. The Treaty was also signed in Paris, in May 1952 – Pleven Plan – signed by the six founding states of the European Community. Surprisingly, in August 1954, Pleven Plan's European Commonwealth Defense it was also rejected by France when a new ad-hoc majority in the National Assembly voted against the Treaty on the idea that it would allow rearmament of Germany. So, French has killed itself their initiative, when their interests and the orientation of the Parliamentary majority has changed. The question now is *Can we still trust the French defense policy of Europe?* (Naumescu, 2018). European Union, despite the Lisbon Treaty and its own ambition to become a security agent on the international scene, has not been capable of fulfilling a replacement role U.S. - E.U. relationship and American supremacy of NATO have still influenced in the positive way the security of European continent (Naumescu, 2014).

With or without doing rumors, France will remain one of the most important stakeholders of the European Union in the next period of discussions about the future of Europe. Probably President Emmanuel Macron generated tensions with the idea of creating the European Defense Army, but as long as France will remain pro-European, it is a clear sign that European Union will survive. Is the idea of European Defence being realistic and what are the chances of being successful? The future evolutions of this topic of interest for the European Union will give us a proper answer.

1.4. Energy dependence and climate changes issues

Now, moving the focus of our attention to another issue of the European Union, we find another hot issue on the European agenda. It is about energy dependence and the impact of climate change on the environment.

In the context of economic growth of Russia, on the international area and the European states' dependence on the natural resources, Europe is facing with serious problems in the context of energetic field. A series of tensions and challenges with reference to the security of the European continent are being highlighted when we discuss about assurance the energy' necessary of the European states. It is essential to develop an energetic policy at the European level which will include the states of the European Union (these states are affected in a direct way by the issue of secured provision with natural gases) and states situated in the proximity of Eastern-European Neighborhood (because they represent a potential partner for the development of the European Union). In this context, we can take into consideration, the opportunities of cooperation between the states and finding the solutions to solve the energy dependence problem.

A sustainable energy policy for the European Union member states will help Europe to succeed in resolving the energy dependence on Russia, by interconnecting alternative routes of transporting natural gasses from outside the Europe in the heart of Europe. Also, a common energy policy for the member states can assure a negotiation with Russia for a lower price of these resources, negotiation carried on behalf of European Union which guarantee a common tariff applied to all member states.

Energy policy affects all Europeans and European Union law has a great influence on national legislation. When the European policies are drafted is important to have a dialogue between European institutions responsible for decision-making process and civil society and professional organizations involved in this field of action. In that way, European Commission will avoid to design an idealistic public policy without a real applicability on member states. In the XXIst century it is clear that the European Union and member states need concrete actions, not European policies without applicability.

From the first attempt to achieve the energy policy until the today Energy Union, it took about sixty years. This policy has not had a continuous development because this initiative stagnated for a long time on the agenda of the European Commissioners. There were a series of crises for the energy and environmental policy. It takes a long period of time to adopt a series of strategies and decisions with reference to energy and also for underpinned the legal framework of implementing an Energetic Union Project at the European level.

Energy Union is currently the most important achievement of European Union in the field of energy and climate changes issues. Its main aim is the reform of European governance on energy field, regional policy and cooperation between member states. Energy Union "gives hope for resolving a major paradox of EU energy policy - the inherent tension between national sovereignty over the energy sector and a solidarity – based on Community perspective and cooperation on a scale-by-scale basis Europe" (Szulecki, 2015, p. 2).

The Commission's vision on the Energy Union "an integrated continent-wide energy system where energy flows freely across borders, based on competition and the best possible use of resources, and with effective regulation of energy markets at EU level where necessary" (European Commission, 2015, p. 2).

To summarize this chapter, we can underline some key ideas. From problems related to Brexit to those related to climate change, the European Union is dealing with a series of challenges which it has to resolve urgently to overcome the actual crisis. Actual risks threaten European Union with disintegration and European leaders are searching for a solution. The main risk factors for the European Union are issues related to the identity crisis of the European Union, terrorism and migration, British Euroscepticism and their possible departure from the European Union, climate change issues and energy dependence on Russia, ultra-nationalism led to extreme European states, the rule of law manifested in some European countries and the impossibility of the EU to sanction for lack of concrete instruments of action. The key of resolving those problem is cooperation between state and a concrete action plan drafted by European Commission and accepted unanimous by the decisional triangle.

In the following chapter we will continue the discussion about the future of the Europe, about the consequences of an important problem which European Union is confronted with – Brexit outcome and the future previsions about the so called "*begging of the end*".

2. Brexit - "*the beginning of the end*"?

Nowadays, news, written press and online media discuss extensively about the Brexit issue and about the long-term effects on European construction's future. There are different opinions regardless this topic and some critics stressed the idea of *end of this construction* after the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union. But at the moment, the action is in progress and the end is uncertain being as a ship without a concrete destination. There are many clues for the end of this story but we do not know exactly what will happen.

Surely, the date - 23 June 2016 – will mark in the history of European Union, one of the most unexpected moment in its evolution. Although the Euroscepticism of the British political class should not surprise us so much because we have become familiar with this kind of attitude. Throughout the period in which Britain stood outside the European Union but also inside of this construction, British citizens were skeptical to the idea of a supranational power which decide their interest. They were used to be traditionalists and conservative, they always fight for its nationalism in relations with European Union. Throw the years, they were used to gain privileges from the European Union and they always strongly negotiate with Europeans for a privileged position. So, this attitude was not a surprise for Europeans, the result of the elections was unexpected because we are used to see discussions initiated by United Kingdom but without a concrete end. The outcome of the election was a surprise for David Cameron himself, the figure who had proposed the idea of a Brexit referendum, to consult citizens towards this issue.

British referendum will remain in history of European construction, as a turning moment of this construction and it will be a lesson both for the European Union and United Kingdom. It is uncertain whether Brexit impact on the evolution of pro-Europeanism will be a lesson for the European Union to redefine its tools of action or is the time of "beginning of the end of the European Union". Today, we are currently talking about two different scenarios - a complete reconstruction of the European Union as President Emmanuel Macron predicts, or a repair of what has been built so far, as President Jean Claude Juncker recalls in his speeches. What are the dilemmas for European Union and what should EU do to keep up with the new global context? Which are the main policy areas where European Union needs to take urgently measures? What governance formula is needed to be adopted in the near future?

The idea of the end of the European Union after Brexit departure is still debated. Felix Gilbert and David Clay Large, in their book entitled *The end of the European era: 1890 to the Present,* examines how twenty-first-century Europe has addressed issues such as immigration and migration, economic globalization, environmental degradation, and terrorism (Gilbert and Large, 2009). They pointed out all the negative effects and they highlighted how vulnerable the European Union is. Past decades have revealed how much the Euroscepticism trend was intensified in the interior of states. James Kirchick, the author of book entitled *The End of Europe,* reveals 'Brexit' is a product of politicians discourse more than the result of all the negative actions which happens around Europe. And when we talk about populism figures, we can start with populism from Latin America, there was Venezuela's late President Chávez, in Spain, where the Podemos party is, in Greece the label has also been applied to Syriza. Nowadays, According to Molloy (2018), the most successful populists today are on the right, particularly the radical right, "politicians "like Marine Le Pen in France, Viktor

Orbán in Hungary, and Donald Trump in the US, who combine populism with anti-immigrant nativism and authoritarianism".

Besides the promotion of nationalism at the state level and the trend to multiplicity the Brexit effect throughout the states, there are also states which underscored the necessity of a common goals for European states to win the battle with the external dangers. One of the states which is still pro-European and it has a strategic position for a strong European Union is Germany. According to Moller (2019), the position of Germany towards the Brexit and towards the future of the European Union is to maintain "an even greater focus on the cohesion of the remaining 27 – no easy task given the increasing fragmentation of the last few years". The chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, proposed a closer cooperation for *more Europe and deeper integration* (Janning, 2018). Germany is an important resource for the European Union - the engine of this construction - because of its important position in International Relations System and for its pro-European attitude promoted at the European level (Sabbagh and Partington, 2018). So, Germany, from that point of view, remains a most important actor for the European scene, being capable to change the fate of the European Union and save construction from disintegration.

Also, France believes in the European Union because it understands the importance of European Union in the fight against dangers from outside Europe. First sign which stressed the idea of a united European Union was shown by signing the Treaty of Aachen, on January 22, 2018. France President, Emmanuel Macron, confirms the desire of France and Germany to build a united and democratic Europe, by signing the treaty of cooperation and federal-German integration. He underlined the idea that

> *no single or two country can do what we all can do together (…) unity, solidarity, cohesion are the words of order of this treaty. Europe would not survive if it were not united. Franco-German responsibility is to give Europe sovereignty (Lupiţu, 2019). Macron also added "We do not always move fast enough, but that's what we've done in these decades. I prefer to strengthen the European Union. The world and all our citizens need that. I want a Europe that goes further and builds on these new ambitions. We love our countries and love Europe because we know they are inseparable" (Lupiţu, 2019).*

This symbolic treaty comes to strengthen the conviction that Europe will go on with or without the United Kingdom, showing that Europe will continue despite of all this nationalism which tries to disintegrate the European Union. Moreover, this treaty illustrates that co-operation and common goals to carry out are more important in fighting with nationalism. After the vote against Brexit Deal, the European Union is also preparing for the grim scenario of a hard 'Brexit'. Now, they are ready for a

Hard Brexit scenario and European leaders claim they took all the precautions for a departure without an agreement. Some voices said that there were not expectations of a softer Brexit (Quinn, 2017) and for this reason is most important that Europeans should be ready for this scenario.

Regrading to the evolution of the European Union to *a beginning of the end*, the reality is that Brexit is not the end of EU, Brexit is just another crisis of the construction. In the history of European Union, there were many episodes of crisis but what makes this moment different from earlier existential crises is that the direction of integration is more diffuse now than in the past (Techau, 2016). Niall Ferguson pointed the fact that *immigrant overload, not Brexit, heralds the end of the European Unio*n (Ferguson, 2018)*,* so his statement shows that there are some sensitive issues that threaten the future of the European Union.

It is hard to believe in the idea of disintegration of the European Union after Brexit because not United Kingdom is the resistance pillar of the entire European construction, there are other states which maintain the equilibrium of this construction and the European Union is used to see Eurosceptical Britain attitude. I also believe that is not the end of the United Kingdom – the European Union relations because British will not want to leave the Europe with loosing of all the privileges that they had in the course of holding the status of member country in the EU.

3. Scenarios on the future of the European Union

"The European Union of tomorrow will be defined by more integrated foreign policy, the end of the euro, a more complete single market, and more realpolitik" (Techau, 2016). The key word that best describes the future of the European Union is *unity* that will be made on the basis of states cooperation, cooperation which will help Europe to relaunch from crisis. There are no doubts that European Union will continue after Brexit because European leaders will find the key solution for a stronger Europe.

European Commission has made steps towards dialogue with the other parties involved in reforming the European Union, by launching a public consultation in 2016 in order to find solutions for a strong European Union. This dialogue was initially proposed on 2013, but it was successful after Brexit, when the idea of a disintegration of Europe has widespread in mass-media. The results of this extensive consultation with citizens was published in an European Commission document entitled *Citizens' Dialogues and Citizens' Consultations - Progress report*, on 11 December 2018. Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission underlined the importance of citizens in the process of reforming the European Union saying that "*Europe is above all a Union of citizens. They are the heart, soul and driving force of our project*" (European Commission, 2018). The purpose of

European Commission is to provide guidelines for other institutions of European Union and for member states. The future of Europe is in citizens' hands and 'New' Europe should be in the spotlight by identifying with citizen from each European's state and with European values. This issue will help Europe to pass over this crisis and will restore the trust of the citizens in the EU.

Moving back to the solutions proposed by the European Commission for the future of Europe, there are five scenarios developed on the evolution of Europe, scenarios proposed by *The White Paper*. All scenarios follow the idea of Europe with 27 states and the discussion on Europe's future has been boiled down to a binary choice between more or less Europe (European Commission, 2017, p. 15). Scenarios themselves were not considered detailed blueprints nor policy prescriptions; according to the Commission, they are primarily aimed at steering a debate on the future of the European Union. On the following fines, we will examine all the fifth scenarios by analyzing the impact on the states, both the ricer and the poorer states of the European Union. We can also see differences between the politicians' discourse depending on the interests for a subject or another.

The first scenario named "Carrying On", envisaged a Union going on in its present state, "implementing and upgrading its current reform agenda". By 2025, the EU27 would manage to "positively shape the global agenda in a number of fields such as climate, financial stability and sustainable development". Progress would additionally be made regarding unity on foreign affairs. Although the positive agenda was speculated to yield concrete results, the Commission warned that decision making could remain complex, and that the capacity to deliver may fail to match the expectations.

The positive effects on the agenda of action regarding these scenarios that it continues to deliver concrete results, based on a shared sense of purpose. Citizens' rights derived from EU law are upheld. The unity of the EU27 is preserved but may still be tested in the event of major disputes. Only a collective resolve to deliver jointly on the things that matter will help close the gap between promises on paper and citizens' expectations.

The second scenario, "Nothing but the Single Market", imagined the single market as main focus of the European Union. The latter would consequently step down its work in most policy domains. This scenario would enable a strengthening of the single market for goods and capital. Yet, due to reductions in regulations at the EU level, it could entail a deepening of differences between Member States in areas such as consumer, social and environmental standards. Overall, it may stir growing divergences and limited cooperation.

The EU's re-centered priorities mean that differences of views between Member States on new emerging issues often need to be solved bilaterally, on a case-by-case basis. Citizens' rights derived from EU law may become restricted over time. Decision-making may be simpler to understand but

the capacity to act collectively is limited. This may widen the gap between expectations and delivery at all levels.

In the third scenario, "Those Who Want More Do More", the EU would proceed as presently, yet one or more "coalition(s) of the willing" would emerge to cooperate on certain policy areas, such as defence or taxation. Concretely, new groups of Member States would agree on budgetary and legal arrangements to deepen their cooperation in chosen areas. The countries remaining outside the alliances would simply carry on with the present state of the Union. This multi-speed Europe would logically entail variances, although the Commission expressed the hope that all the Member States would eventually join the coalitions.

The unity of the EU at 27 is preserved while further cooperation is made possible for those who want. Citizens' rights derived from EU law start to vary depending on whether or not they live in a country that has chosen to do more. Questions arise about the transparency and accountability of the different layers of decision-making. The gap between expectations and delivery starts to close in the countries that want and choose to do more.

The fourth scenario envisaged by the Commission, "Doing Less More Efficient", would see the EU focus on a reduced number of policy areas, amongst which for instance innovation, trade, security, and migration. Consequently, the EU would act less - or stop acting altogether - in domains where it is perceived as less necessary, or less productive. Such domains might involve regional development or public health, as well as parts of the employment and social policy. In selecting its new priorities, the Union "seeks to better align 5 promises, expectations and delivery". However, agreeing upon the areas to prioritize might prove challenging.

Ultimately, a clearer division of responsibilities helps European citizens to better understand what is handled at EU27, national and regional level. This helps to close the gap between promise and delivery, even if expectations remain unmet in certain domains. Citizens' rights derived from EU law are strengthened in areas where we choose to do more and reduced elsewhere. To start with, the EU27 has real difficulty in agreeing which areas it should prioritizes or where it should do less.

Last scenario, "Doing Much More Together", reflects an ideal of further integration. The Member States would agree to share more power, resources and decision-making. In other terms, "cooperation between all Member States goes further than ever before in all domains". Eventually, this scenario might lead to faster decision-making, yet creates a risk of alienating a part of the population that does not believe in EU legitimacy.

There is far greater and quicker decision-making at EU level. Citizens have more rights derived directly from EU law. However, there is the risk of alienating parts of society which feel that the EU lacks legitimacy or has taken too much power away from national authorities.

The most important weaknesses of this paper presented by Jean-Claude Juncker with reference to the fate of the European Union is the fact that "the Commission presents its five scenarios in the belief that, between now and 2025, the same old ideological rut can be sustained; it does not even choose one and stand up for it" (Frassoni, 2018).

Nowadays, European arena looks quiet and predictable with many crises and a multitude of challenges. The spring fresh air seems to lead the political desire of change, a harmful battle for popularity at the European level and a Europe which seems to prepare for the war of values, principles and own beliefs. It will be a tenacious campaign both for the European Parliament and for the head of states, because the stake of dispute is huge – a seat for the next five year, in a decisional venue is not an insignificant prize. More and more discourses are under a sign of change, making people feeling unsecured and without more options. Citizens want to renew the political class with new and fresh figures, but sometimes something new is not always the best option. It is time to vote, to decide our own faith and to see what will happen with the European Union next years.

Probably on the ground of an electoral campaign year, things should seem unpredictable because of the multitude of speeches, visions and proposal come from politicians. In the next few years we will see the direction of things and we will observe if things will go better.

Returning to scenarios, "*Those Who Want More Do More*" is the proper option in a tired European Union threatened by disintegration, a Europe with brave and lazy states, developed and undeveloped states, pro-European and Eurosceptical states, big or small states, etc. This scenario emerges states to cooperate and to make "coalition(s) of the willing" for the success of a certain policy areas, encouraging states to be more competitive and to want more for the European Union. This is probably the best scenario in the vision of European Commission because the European Union leaders want a clear way of performing with the European Union and avoiding critics with reference to development of this structure. They have a clear way but also an option for each state – *a multi-speed version* - where states have to choose the best option for their development. Germany and France adhere to his scenario saying that this scenario will guarantee a complex solution for all the states of the European Union and those states invite others states to talk about "a la carte" Europe. First sign which stressed the idea of a united European Union was shown by signing Treaty of Aachen, on January 22, 2018. France President, Emmanuel Macron, confirms the desire of France and Germany to build a united and democratic Europe, by signing the treaty of cooperation and federal-German integration.

A multi-speed Europe is the best option for developed states which were tried to motivated undeveloped states to do more that their normal rim of development. As one of Vote Watch Europe's study said "a multi-speed Europe". Relevant political data clearly indicates that Western European delegations are much keener on establishing a multi-speed Europe, which would allow a core group

of Member States to take the lead on tax harmonization, establishment of a Eurozone governance and military cooperation. On the other hand, Central and Eastern European countries would support a scenario where the EU focuses more on defence and security and less on harmonization of economic policy. Finally, Nordic countries such as Sweden and Denmark are wary of both perspectives (multi-speed Europe and security oriented Europe) and seem more willing to stick to the status quo. (Vote Watch Europe, 2017).

So, there are states which will loss from this point of a "multi-speed Europe" like countries from the Eastern-Europe because they have a low rite of development and they cannot keep up with the Western-Europe. This region must become more competitive and it cannot afford just to wait a marvel from the "heart core" of the Europe.

I adhere to the idea of Emmanuel Macron, advocating for a more competitive Europe to bring Europe out of the current crisis they are facing. As he said, "the Europe that we know is too slow, too weak, and too ineffective" (Chrisafis, 2017). A radical transformation and a deeper political integration will help the EU to regain the trust of citizens. The pace at which it has gone so far is not possible to go further because this would lead to an even greater weakening of the citizens' trust in the European Union, but also an upward trend in the growth of Euroscepticism. So, the suitable scenario is to increase confidence in the European Union's mechanisms, new strong mechanism of action in taking decision at the European level by involving states and citizens and rethinking the tools that currently seem to have been designed to be effective and sanctioning and correcting mistakes that states do.

Conclusions

In the current article "*Challenges and opportunities for European Union in the XXIst Century*" some of the major issues related to the actual crisis of the European Union were highlighted: terrorism and migration, British Euroscepticism and their possible departure from the European Union, climate changes issues and energy dependence on Russia, ultra-nationalism led to extreme European states, the rule of law manifested in some European countries and the impossibility of the EU to sanction the lack of concrete instruments of action.

All of these issues have intensified on the background of parties that promote an anti-European message (populist discourse), Eurosceptical leaders who have won more and more votes in local, national and European elections. They try to minimize the positive effects that the European Union has brought to citizens highlighting the shortcomings and vulnerabilities of European construction at this moment but without providing concrete solutions for overcoming these crises. For Eurosceptics

the saving solution is the promotion of an exaggerated nationalism that does not have a positive impact on the problems that Europe is currently facing with.

Two questions were behind our analysis in the paper. Regarding the former question, based on study cases, we have demonstrated that the answer is "*No*". Following the history and the evolution of European Union from the beginning to present, the reality is that Brexit is not the end of EU. Brexit is just another crisis of the construction. In the history of the European Union, there were many episodes of crisis that have been successfully overcome. Developing new policies and searching for solution of the most controversial subject have a major impact on surviving the European Union. States learned that the key of all these issues is a continuous dialogue and cooperation for solving all the problems. As for the latter question, the answer is quite predictable for the option of "Those Who Want More Do More". It is the proper option in a tired European Union threatened by disintegration, a Europe with brave and lazy states, developed and undeveloped states, pro-European and Eurosceptical states, big or small states, etc. This scenario emerges states to cooperate and to make "coalition(s) of the willing" for the success of a certain policy areas, encouraging states to be more competitive and to want more for the European Union. This is probably the best scenario in the vision of European Commission because the European Union leaders want a clear way of performing with the European Union and avoiding critics with reference to development of this structure. They have a clear way but also an option for each state – a multi-speed version- where states have to choose the best option for their development.

From problems related to Brexit to those related to climate change, the European Union is dealing with a series of challenges which it has to resolve urgently to overcome the actual crisis. Actual risks threaten the European Union with disintegration and European leaders are searching for a solution. The main risk factors for the European Union are issues related to the identity crisis of the European Union, terrorism and migration, British Euroscepticism and their possible departure from the European Union, climate change issues and energy dependence on Russia, ultra-nationalism led to extreme European states, the rule of law manifested in some European countries and the impossibility of the EU to sanction for lack of concrete instruments of action. The key of resolving those problem is cooperation between state and a concrete action plan drafted by European Commission and accepted unanimous by the decisional triangle.

Regarding to Brexit, I personally believe that the story of this issue will not end here. The vote in the British Parliament was rejected and for this reason Theresa may will not expect the UK to leave the Union without an agreement and that is why she will try to find a compromise solution. First step will be to invoke the Article 50 to postpone the data of the Brexit exit and under the pressure of resignation to reject the agreement, it will hold a second referendum to consult citizens. But also, the

postponement of United Kingdom exit, a scenario in which I personally believe very much, will also be a challenge for the United Kingdom. Why do I say that? Because, in this case the grace time can be both an ally and an enemy. If it takes advantage of its time in its favor and the British Prime Minister will reach the wise decision to convene a new referendum on the fate of leaving the European Union, then the story will probably have a happy ending. If the United Kingdom will postpone the exit for another year just to ask for new concessions to Brussels and other more advantageous conditions for a new agreement, I personally think it will be a new failure to pass the time and postpone the taking of a decision that will have an unfortunate ending for the United Kingdom.

If in the case of Brexit there is a happy ending and an unfortunate end, finally written by the British themselves, when we talk about the future of the European Union, there are just a happy new beginning, maybe just a little better for some states and not as good for the rest who are not competitive and have lazily. But maybe just under the sign of competitiveness will change things for the better in Europe and with it the European Union would be saved from self-destruction.

Definitely, the future of the European Union must take into account the priorities in the field of energy and climate changes because it is our responsibility to keep the Earth safe and to protect the environment. The Energy Union needs to be improved for bringing the desired results and not simply remain announcements of good intentions. Since we are talking about defending, Emmanuel Macron proposes European Defense Army and it remains to be seen if this idea will convince European leaders to be supported. Here, there are some potential economic gains for some Member States and therefore the biggest stake of these proposals is to be accepted to the rest of states.

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