

Editorial Foreword

by Vasile IȘAN,
Rector of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University

A long time ago, at one of the opening ceremonies of the academic year, the Rector of the Iași University said that the main characteristic of this institution is that it had been a European academic institution. His concern was not so much about the geographic location, although it is a feature which could be a right one. At that time - it was much before World War II - our University was the most Eastern European academic institution. Actually, he thought about the whole intellectual view and the fundamental principles of this university as being European, i.e. its roots had been nurtured and developed in the same great cultural tradition, and its modern shape was the outcome of the same Humboldtian idea of a university unity of research and education and academic freedom.

In the 1930s some intellectuals wrote on “the two Europes” as different forms of society, culture and economy. Not a long time after that, Europe was split in two parts by an ideological system for more than four decades. It was a hard time for the academic debate, intellectual inquiry and higher education behind the “Iron Curtain”. Despite the Marxist ideology and the socialist system, it still remained an alive connection to the “enlightened and free part of Europe”. The official regime was not able to transform all people in “captive minds”, as an insightful and well written book by Czeslaw Milosz supposed such a totalitarian policy would have done.

The *shortage economy*, which is the best concept developed by Janos Kornai for defining the material side of socialism, was not accompanied by a *shortage culture* and a locking of the intellectual capacity or openness towards European traditions and scientific accomplishments. However, our university, among the other old Romanian universities was captured in a struggle for survival. Being informed about the new ideas asserted in the core of the academic world, but having no possibility to address the challenging trends, is not the same as being involved in a flourishing exchange of ideas. Progress in different sorts of human enterprise and social life can not be achieved by relying exclusively on one-side activities and inward approach.

Theoretically speaking, a university might take into account the newest way of thinking and the best model of education and academic inquiry. But that is not enough in order to develop its own proper framework of doing right and good things.

John Stuart Mill has pointed out the strongest reason for free trade, emphasizing the cultural dimension rather than economic benefits. The exchange

of ideas across borders precedes the free trade of goods and, thereafter, of ideas, providing at least the same important advantages as any flow of goods which pass freely between nations – peaceful coexistence and prosperous life.

A university has to be free in order to get its development, that is, to use its both sides of institutional life - the capacity of absorbing ideas created by other higher education institutions, and the capacity of producing ideas which can be spread across the institutional borders. It was a problem of our university to be one-side relied for a long time. Due to that problem, its fields of humanities and social sciences have been forced to take an inward approach. These fields of study and research were in the situation of that mythological character, having only one eye. Despite his impressive body and power, he was defied by Ulysses who was an intelligent man with two eyes.

After the collapse of the socialist system, our university became endowed with two eyes: one looking inward to rediscover its intellectual legacy and to develop its inner structure, and the other being outward oriented in order to acquire valuable knowledge created by the Western academic world and to get involved in the affairs of so many flourishing “republics of intellect”.

Michael Oakeshott once said that a university is a permanent conversation between sciences, humanities and arts, as it is between those who teach and those who learn.

Perhaps we may add to this idea of the famous British philosopher that a university must have an additional permanent conversation with academic institutions which have inspired its development and challenged its community of professors and students to be actively engaged in the further development of that conversation.

Since the foundation of the Centre of European Studies, our university has stressed much more on this second permanent conversation than it had done before.

Somehow, it has encouraged the development of a particular area of studies and research – the European dimension. This European dimension is a focus of humanities and social sciences emphasizing both the traditions of the European culture and the recent developments of society, economy and policy in relation to the European Union. Somehow, the Centre of European Studies has been able to combine two main principles of the present academic development: *Specialization*, which is the requirement of efficiency or productivity, from the old principle of the division of labour and knowledge; and *Interdisciplinary*, which is necessary for getting an integrative intellectual framework or a holistic approach. Such a perspective of thinking and action is not a new one. It has always been a double way of thinking and of intellectual reflection: “l’esprit geometrique” which is an analytical way of thinking or reasoning, as it is understood in scientific inquiry and “l’esprit de finesse” which seems to be

judgmental thinking, or the intellectual capacity to see the whole situation and to put into context the findings of rigorous analysis.

The scholars and academia have preserved this double way of reflection on human beings, society and world, but the speedy changes of technology and science have been so impressive in the last three decades that every knowledge-inquiry enterprise seemed to be achieved through only narrow specialization. One of the factors which have contributed to the several good performances of the Centre of European Studies is its interdisciplinary approach to education and research.

Over a decade of hard working on a comprehensive programme of education at the master and PhD levels, as well as on many research and teaching projects, among them being several “Jean Monnet” projects, has prepared the intellectual ground open to a new project: the development of an academic journal. The Eastern Journal of European Studies is coming as an outcome of an effective and efficient activity of the Centre of European Studies and as a new challenge for its future development.

Horst Siebert, the former director of the Kiel Institute for World Economics, has written that the European Union is like a bicycle – in order to go ahead you have to put more pressure on the pedals and to accelerate the movement of your feet. In order to get progress, the EU needs both an enlargement process and an in-depth integration process.

It may be the same with the Centre of European Studies: it needs enlargement of education and research and, at the same time, it has to go further in depth or to get a more complex structure as a determinant of its competitive position. Still, the development of an academic journal is not as easy as writing a metaphor. It is a complex and uncertain project as any kind of knowledge enterprise can be. “Know why” has to be often complemented by “know what” and “know how” and even by “know who”.

Sometimes, the beginning of such a project is very long and it takes too many efforts and intellectual energies of the promoters. Anyway, the effectiveness and feasibility of the project are underlined by a well organized framework and a reliable strategic view.

Our distinguished colleagues from the Centre of European Studies have done all their best decisions and took actions for the development of this academic journal. Many foreign scholars and professors, and also many Romanian colleagues have been very supportive for this academic project, either as editors and members of the advisory board or as authors of insightful and valuable papers. It is encouraging and pleasant to see such generosity, intellectual engagement and professional excellence in a time of not so good economic news.

Maybe we, the economists, are very often tempted to emphasize too much the utilitarian philosophy anchor that is self-interest, forgetting that most people

may have some other inner reasons to choose something to do. This situation could not change our thinking habit as a usual business, but it puts at variance the standard perspective, creating alternative views. To their merit, many economists have recognized that ideas run the world more than anything else.

The Eastern Journal of European Studies will exchange ideas that might not change the world, in a concrete sense the world of the European Union, but surely they would contribute to the better understanding of the world. It has many times been said that the European Union is much more than an economic and political project; it is a peaceful expression of a great culture. Any reasonable academic project related to European affairs may bring a contribution to permanently rediscover and enhance this European great culture. With a good chance, the Eastern Journal of European Studies can become one of our university's most fruitful connections to this inspiring and ever renewing great culture.

We are grateful to those persons who have the vision of such an academic project and whose good intellectual abilities and hard work have transformed a designed matter into a real thing.

On behalf of the university management team, I wish to express the sincere gratitude to all the academics and administrative staff involved in this project and to warmly congratulate them.