

Editorial

The European Union: internal coherence, external relevance

By Rodica Milena ZAHARIA*

In the present changing world, the EU is active on two major battlefields: the internal one, where the EU has to define the future of its internal construction; and the external arena, where the EU has to establish what role it must play and how to do it with a stronger voice.

Both challenges are important and mutually reinforcing. The EU is strong outside as long as it is solid inside; it is a model for others as long as it is attractive for its members.

I am honoured to serve as a guest editor for this issue of the *Eastern Journal of European Studies*. The topics developed by the authors in the second part of this number bring into attention issues that express some of the most important challenges that the EU faces, at the moment: challenges relating to the struggle for its internal construction, and to its role in the world.

The article proposed by Selcen Öner brings into attention an important issue with impact on both the internal and the external position of the EU. The German-Turkish relations are important for the internal construction, as Turkey is a candidate country for EU membership. They are also important for EU's role on the international arena. The status of Turkey is, probably, the major signal the EU can send to the world regarding the limits of its expansion. As the author mentions, the attitude Germany develops towards Turkey, regarding its status as a future EU member, is very influential. Germany, from its position as the major contributor to the EU budget, but, mostly, as the economic engine of the EU, has one of the strongest voices in the EU. Therefore, the opinion expressed by German representatives is a barometer for the attitude this country will adopt regarding the future integration of Turkey into the EU. The author underlines the importance of the history of the German-Turkish relations in analysing the German position on Turkey's integration. Also, the current international context related to Islam and Muslims plays, according to the author, an important part in defining the German position towards Turkey's future role in the EU.

Tiiu Paas and Olga Demidova's article analyses the attitudes towards immigrants through a comparison between Estonia and Russia, which can be seen as a comparison between the EU area and the extra-EU area. The EU is

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affected by a major constrain that comes from its aging population. The shortage in workforce started to become more and more critical for EU members, in both Western and Eastern Europe. The stability and the prosperity image that the EU projects to the world works as an attraction for people outside Europe, and immigration may represent a solution for the labour force shortage. But the soundness of the immigration policies in the EU is determined by many factors, as the authors mention in their article: the attitude of European citizens toward immigrants, domestic problems in the EU member states, other economic and non-economic factors. The analysis provided by their article highlights the necessity to take into account different factors, in the process of designing migration and integration policies.

The final two articles lead the readers into some aspects related to the external role of the EU and to the history of the EU relationship with the United States of America. The complexity of the European-American interactions influences both the internal and the external dynamics of the EU. The US is not only an ally of the EU, but mostly a business partner and a major competitor in the world. The competition between these two economic powers shapes, in fact, the global competition for the rest of the world.

The article proposed by Nguyen Thi Thuy Hang analyses the attitude that a controversial president of the USA, Richard Nixon, developed towards the EU. The author concludes that, despite some conflicts between the two sides, the Nixon administration remained committed to EU integration and supported the EU project. The famous question asked by the US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, about whom he should call up in Europe if the world caught fire, has reached an answer 30 years later, when the EU was able to appoint a foreign minister to represent it in the international arena. This achievement wouldn't have been possible without the Europeans' continuous commitment to go forward with their ambitious project, despite many domestic and international difficulties, and without the support of the United States, in a period when the Cold War was a major threat to the world peace.

Another example of the mutual influence between the EU and USA is provided by Ondřej Filipec's article. The analysis presented by the author offers an example of the European Union's influence on American legislation, or – to quote the article – of “the Europeanisation of the chemical policy in the United States”. The author proposes a journey into the history of the concept of Europeanisation and explains how it spread outside the EU's borders. Thus, the policy of regulating the chemical industry in the United States is considered by the author as an example of the EU's “ability to export its influence through legal institutions and standards in areas related to its regulatory internal policies”.

The readers will find interesting aspects in the articles proposed by this issue of EJES, ideas that lead to debates and reflections. The contributions

included in this second part are associated to the dialectic relationship between the aspects that define the internal struggles of the EU, and its international role – a topic which is more salient than ever before. However, one aspect that is essential for both challenges is the enhancement of democracy inside the EU, which requires bringing the citizens closer to the European institutions. As long as they identify with the European values, and these values are respected in the political process involving the EU institutions and other actors, the European project can advance.