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Contending Visions on the Future of the European Union**

Abstract

In the shadow of the recent crises such as Eurozone crisis, Brexit, mass migration flow, the rule of law concerns in some Member States, the debate about the future of the European integration has restarted both within politics and political science as well. Several EU-level, regional and national initiatives were born in the last few years.

The paper aims to overview the most important initiatives and plans were made at different level and by different actors, find the common elements and the most dividing issues of them via discourse analysis. At the same time not only the so called top-down initiatives are in the focus of the research, but it plans to map the public opinion about the possible future of the integration through the analysis of the relevant recent polls.

Since most of the initiatives emphasize the necessity of unity of the integration but at the same time Member States are divided on certain policies, this unity can be achieved only via differentiated integration. Comparing to the previous waves of such a debate, we can witness that the main issue is not deepening and/or widening of the integration now, but deepening and differentiation.

1. EU-level discussions and plans

In the *Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap* adopted on 16 September 2016 the leaders of the 27 Member States admitted that it was a critical time for the European project since one Member State had decided to leave the EU previously, and decided to start a broad

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discussion about the future of the integration resulting an attractive vision of the EU.¹ They identified priority areas such as migration and external borders, internal and external security, economic and social development, youth, where concrete steps have to be taken in order to tackle the multi-dimensional crises of the European integration.² The importance of the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap is that these documents started the EU-level discussion on the future of the integration and initiated concrete measures on certain policy areas with the intention to follow-up the process.

The European Commission's *White Paper on the Future of Europe* adopted on 1st March 2017 outlined five, at least theoretically, possible scenarios regarding the future of the European integration with the aim to provoke thinking about the issue. As the document stresses: "The starting point for each scenario is that the 27 Member States move forward together as a Union".³ The five options cover a wide range of, sometimes overlapping, possibilities of the European integration as it is detailed below.

1. *Carrying on*: basically this scenario would preserve the status quo, so EU focuses on implementing and upgrading its current reform agenda on several policy area e.g. asylum and migration, economic and monetary union, single market. Priorities are regularly updated and problems are tackled as they arise.⁴ As *Matej Avbelj* stresses, in this scenario any further development of the integration depends on the political willingness of all Member States.⁵
2. *Nothing but the single market*: in this case the EU 27 cannot agree to do more in many policy areas (monetary and fiscal issues, migration, security and defence), consequently the EU is gradually re-centred on the strengthening of the single market. Cooperation on new issues of common concern is often managed bilaterally on a case by case basis. Significant level of deregulation is expected on European level being coupled with easier and faster decision-making. On the other hand in this scenario citizens' rights derived from EU law may become restricted over time.⁶
3. *Those who want more do more*: the Commission's document doesn't use the expressions of flexible integration such as multi-speed or multi-tier Europe, enhanced cooperation or the concept of concentric circle, but this scenario basically covers this option. The policy areas where the "coalition of the willing" might be formed are defence, internal security, taxation or social matters. In this

¹ EUROPEAN COUNCIL: *The Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap* Bratislava, 16 September 2016 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21250/160916-bratislava-declaration-and-roadmapen16.pdf> (2019.03.24.) 1.

² EUROPEAN COUNCIL 2016, 3-5.

³ EUROPEAN COMMISSION: *White Paper on the Future of Europe 2017 Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025* COM(2017)2025 of 1 March 2017 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/white_paper_on_the_future_of_europe_en.pdf (2019.03.25.) 15.

⁴ EUROPEAN COMMISSION 2017, 16.

⁵ AVBELJ, MATEJ: *What Future for the European Union?* Berlin Social Science Center Discussion Paper SP IV 2017-802 July 2017 <https://poseidon01.ssm.com/delivery.php?ID=972064069115120121081123120004003007052078071079001010121095005004104126069126067086114022115039108097048077024006094110028113009041064065027089102126089116087075049051021008071105102012072123076077109114102096100100072094103010010079074124110090117&EXT=pdf> (Letöltés ideje: 2019.03.25.) 3.p.

⁶ EUROPEAN COMMISSION 2017, 18.

option different clubs of the Member States appear and citizens' rights derived from EU law may start to vary depending on whether or not they live in a country that has chosen to do more.⁷ Disadvantages of this option are the decrease of transparency of the decision-making and the possibility of formation of a second class EU-membership, while the main advantage is that this scenario reflects to the existing significant differences among the Member States' vision on the future of the integration.

4. *Doing less more efficiently*: the EU focuses on delivering more and faster in selected policy areas where there is a consensus among the Member States such as innovation, trade, security and defence, or border management, while doing less elsewhere such as regional development, social policy, public health, and consumer protection.⁸
5. *Doing much more together*: means basically the implementation of the formation of an ever closer union envisaged in the Article 1 of the Treaty on the European Union.⁹ In this scenario the Member States admit and accept that they are not well-equipped enough to face the current challenges on their own, so they decide to share more power and competencies on the European level. While this option gives the opportunity for faster decision-making and implementation and more right for the citizens derived from EU law, it didn't reflect to the problem of the lack of legitimacy and the democratic deficit of the EU.¹⁰

On the basis of the white paper series of reflection papers covering key topics for the future of the European Union (such as social dimension, harnessing globalisation, deepening the economic and monetary union, defence policy, the future of EU finances, and sustainable development) have been published subsequently by the European Commission evaluating the scenarios available for the specific policy areas.¹¹

In the *Rome Declaration* which was made on the 60th anniversary of the signature of the Treaty of Rome 25th March 2017, leaders of the 27 Member States and the president of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission decided to make the European Union stronger and more resilient, through even greater unity and solidarity amongst them and the respect of common rules. They declared:

"We will make the European Union stronger and more resilient, through even greater unity and solidarity amongst us and the respect of common rules. Unity is both a necessity and our free choice. [...] We will act together, at different paces and intensity where necessary, while moving in the same direction, as we have done in the past, in line with the Treaties and keeping the door open to those who want to join later. In the ten years to come we want a Union that is safe and secure, prosperous, competitive, sustainable and

⁷ EUROPEAN COMMISSION 2017, 20.

⁸ EUROPEAN COMMISSION 2017, 22.

⁹ "This Treaty marks a new stage in the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as openly as possible and as closely as possible to the citizen."

¹⁰ EUROPEAN COMMISSION 2017, 24.

¹¹ More details available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/future-europe/white-paper-future-europe-and-way-forward_en

socially responsible, and with the will and capacity of playing a key role in the world and of shaping globalisation.”

The Declaration follows the multi-speed Europe concept: moving into the same direction, but at different paces and intensity where necessary. It's important to note that there is no explicit reflection to the Commission's White Paper and its five scenarios in the Rome Declaration, nevertheless priority areas envisaged in the Rome Agenda are mostly overlapping with those defined in the Commission's documents.

1. A safe and secure Europe: via secured external borders, efficient, responsible and sustainable migration policy, fight against terrorism and organised crime.
2. A prosperous and sustainable Europe: via jobs, investments and sustainable growth, developed single market, more stable single currency, completion of the Economic and Monetary Union, converging economies, clean and safe environment and last but not least secured energy.
3. A social Europe: through fighting against unemployment, discrimination, social exclusion and poverty, preservation of cultural heritage and promoting cultural differences.
4. A stronger Europe on the global scene: via development of existing and new partnerships, promoting stability and prosperity in its immediate neighbourhood to the east and south, creating a more competitive and integrated defence industry, strengthening the common security and defence policy, promoting free and fair trade and a positive global climate policy.¹²

Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission called for a more united, stronger and more democratic Union in his 'State of the Union' 2017 speech. In order to be more united, EU has to encourage the completion of the Eurozone, the Schengen cooperation and the creation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Towards the stronger Union faster decision-making in the field of single market, European Minister for Economy and Finance, a European intelligence unit and a fully-fledged European Defence Union is needed. Last but not least in favour of a more democratic Union the concept of 'Spitzenkandidat' has to be preserved and the merger of the presidency of the European Council and the European Commission is needed.¹³

Donald Tusk, President of the European Council proposed the *Leader's Agenda*¹⁴, a new work programme of the European Council for the request of EU leaders at a meeting in Tallinn, Estonia on 28 September 2017 and the concept was endorsed by the European Council on 20 October 2017. The Leader's Agenda is on one hand a new format of the European Council since it's an informal meeting of the 27 heads of state and government and on the other hand it's a new working method in which instead of striving to find a

¹² EUROPEAN COUNCIL: *The Rome Declaration*. Declaration of the leaders of 27 member states and of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission European Council Statements and remarks 25/03/2017 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/03/25/rome-declaration/> (2019.03.25.)

¹³ JUNCKER, JEAN-CLOUDE: *State of the Union Address 2017* Brussels 13 September 2017 http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-17-3165_en.htm (2019.03.26.) 6-9. p.

¹⁴ See the topics and notes of the Leader's Agenda: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/tallinn-leaders-agenda/>

consensus on a draft conclusion regarding highly sensitive and contentious issues, leaders of the Member States first discuss the topic in an open, free-flowing debate and then return to it at a future European Council meeting, with the aim to reach agreement. The Leader's Agenda may be perceived as a significant institutional innovation of the European Council derives from the future of Europe debate at EU level.¹⁵

The discussion on the future of the EU had an impact on the *European Parliament* as well. First of all the European Parliament adopted several resolutions as a contribution to the debate. In its *first resolution*, right after the Brexit referendum, the Parliament pointed out that it was a critical moment for the EU and that the interests and expectations of the Union's citizens must have been brought back to the centre of the debate. It laid down the possibility of a multi-speed integration in which „some Member States may choose to integrate more slowly or to a lesser extent, but the core of the EU must be reinforced and à la carte solutions should be avoided”¹⁶. In its *second resolution* adopted on 16 February 2017 the Parliament suggested to exploit the unused potential of the Lisbon Treaty (e.g. the passerelle clauses). It stressed that the community method was best suited for the functioning of the Union and had a number of advantages over the intergovernmental method, as it was the only one that allowed for greater transparency, efficiency, qualified majority vote in Council, and the equal right of co-legislation by the European Parliament and Council. Intergovernmental solutions should only be an instrument of ultima ratio, subject to strict conditions¹⁷. In its third resolution the Parliament called for the reduction of à la carte solutions namely the Member States opt ins and opt outs, but at the same time it emphasized the importance of enhanced and structured cooperation proposing less restrictive requirements of them (*European Parliament, 2017b: 9.*). It also envisaged the systematic revision of the Treaties in which the Parliament should make an own proposal for Treaty amendment.¹⁸ In October 2017 the Parliament set out its overall vision for the future of Europe which basically summarized the suggestions of the previously adopted resolutions.¹⁹

The European Parliament takes part in the debate on the future of the integration not only via setting out its own position, but through providing a democratic and open forum for the discussion. President of the European Parliament at that time, *Antonio Tajani* announced that the Parliament would host a series of *Future of Europe debates* during

¹⁵ ANGHEL, Suzana – DINAN, DESMOND – DRACHENBERG, Ralf: *From Rome to Sibiu. The European Council and the Future of Europe Debate*. European Parliamentary Research Service April 2018 [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/615667/EPRS_STU\(2018\)615667_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/615667/EPRS_STU(2018)615667_EN.pdf) (Letöltés ideje: 2019.03.25.) 8. p.

¹⁶ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: *European Parliament resolution of 28 June 2016 on the decision to leave the EU resulting from the UK referendum* (2016/2800(RSP)) <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+TA+P8-TA-2016-0294+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN> (2019.03.26.) 1-2.

¹⁷ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: *European Parliament resolution of 16 February 2017 on improving the functioning of the European Union building on the potential of the Lisbon Treaty*. (2014/2249(INI)) <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+TA+P8-TA-2017-0049+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN> (2019.03.26.) 7.

¹⁸ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: *European Parliament resolution of 16 February 2017 on possible evolutions of and adjustments to the current institutional set-up of the European Union*. (2014/2248(INI)) <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+TA+P8-TA-2017-0048+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN> (2019.03.26.) 18.

¹⁹ See: European Parliament: *Future of Europe: European Parliament sets out its vision 2017* <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/media/20171023RES86651/20171023RES86651.pdf>

plenary sessions giving an opportunity to the heads of state and government to express their visions on the issue. Up to the time of writing this paper 18 leaders of the Member States accepted the invitation and took part in the debate on the future of the EU.²⁰

Last but not least we have to mention the *Commission's initiative on the protection of the Union's budget in case of generalised deficiencies as regards the rule of law in the Member States* which aims to address the processes emerged in two Eastern Member States, namely in Hungary and Poland. As the document lays out:

*“Respect for the rule of law is important for European citizens, as well as for business initiatives, innovation and investment. The European economy flourishes most where the legal and institutional framework adheres fully to the common values of the Union. [...] Effective respect for the rule of law is a prerequisite for confidence that EU spending in Member States is sufficiently protected. [...] The different constitutions and judicial systems of the EU Member States are in principle well designed to ensure the rule of law and equipped with in-built safeguards to protect citizens against any threat to the rule of law. However, a number of recent events have demonstrated generalised weaknesses in national checks and balances and have shown how a lack of respect for the rule of law can become a matter of serious and common concern within the European Union. The result has been a clear request from institutions such as the European Parliament as well as from the public at large for the EU to take actions to protect the rule of law.”*²¹

The proposal sets out different measures (depending if the Commission implements the Union's budget in direct, indirect management or in shared management) should be taken in case of generalised deficiencies as regards the rule of law e.g. a suspension of payments or of the implementation of the legal commitment, a prohibition to enter into new legal commitments, a suspension of the approval of one or more programmes or an amendment thereof, a reduction of pre-financing. The report on the legislative proposal was backed by the vast majority of the European Parliament since 397 MEP voted in favour, 158 against and 69 abstained. As *Petri Sarvamaa*, co-rapporteur for the report pointed out: the voting made “a division between those member states where the state of the rule of law has already been questioned, and the rest.”²²

II. Regional²³ and national initiatives

Winning the presidential elections in spring 2017 an undoubtedly Europeanist leader, *Emmanuel Macron* got into power in France, who shared his visions and proposals on the

²⁰ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: *Future of Europe debates III Parliament hosts Heads of State or Government. Briefing* [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/633159/EPRS_BRI\(2019\)633159_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/633159/EPRS_BRI(2019)633159_EN.pdf) (2019. 03. 26.) More details available at: <http://www.futureofeuropedebates.eu/>

²¹ EUROPEAN COMMISSION: *Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of the Union's budget in case of generalised deficiencies as regards the rule of law in the Member States Brussels. 2.5.2018 COM(2018) 324 final* <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018PC0324&from=EN> (2019.03.25.) 1.

²² BAYER, Lili: *European Parliament backs plan to link EU funds to rule of law.* Politico 1/17/19. <https://www.politico.eu/article/budget-hungary-poland-rule-of-law-european-parliament-backs-plan-to-link-eu-funds/> (2019.03.26.)

²³ The expression doesn't refer to the regions of the EU (NUTS2), but to the groups of certain Member States.

future of Europe at Sorbonne University 26 September 2017. In his highly ambitious speech, which was generating lots of reflections, he called for a sovereign Europe, sovereignty of which consists of the following elements:

- a) security and defence: launching a common European intervention force, common defence budget, shared strategic culture, setting up a European Intelligence Academy and a European Public Prosecutor's Office for organized crime and terrorism;
- b) control of our borders and protection of our values: setting up a European Asylum Office, a strengthened European Border Police, launching commonly financed integration programmes for refugees;
- c) foreign policy: consolidated and re-centred foreign policy on the Mediterranean and Africa;
- d) ecological transition: a really working European energy market, reform of the Common Agriculture Policy, setting up a European investigation and inspection force for food safety;
- e) digital technology: becoming the leader digital actor ahead the US and China via the creation of digital single market;
- f) monetary economic power: stabilisation of the Eurozone through setting up a *separate budget* for it which is under the political guidance of a common minister for finance and strict control of the European Parliament.²⁴

Macron emphasized the unity of EU as well such as many others before, but unity which doesn't chase uniformity, but unity in diversity. In order to keep unity of the EU we have to accept that it cannot operate like the original six-member bloc. Multi-speed EU, which is already a reality, could be the solution, especially after the accession of the Western Balkan countries which is highly desirable. He stressed the importance of social convergence in the EU with the harmonisation of social models of the Member States, the revision of the posted workers directive and the setting up of a European Labour Authority. The French President emphasized the role of the culture as well, which basically the strongest cement that binds the EU together. He initiated to create European Universities, a network of universities across Europe with study programmes conducted in at least two European languages. The Sorbonne speech contains two important initiatives regarding the European institutions as well. On one hand he suggested to decrease the number of the members of the European Commission to 15 to strengthen its supranational role. In his opinion the major funding countries should give up first their commissioners to provide an example. On the other hand he proposed a transnational list of the European Parliament on the upcoming 2019 elections recommending that 73 seats which is freeing up because of Brexit shouldn't be shared among the staying Member States but should become of the transnational list. Last but not least he suggested holding so called democratic conventions on which the elements and roadmap of the EU reform could be

²⁴ MACRON, Emmanuel: *Speech on New Initiative for Europe*. 26 September 2017. <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2017/09/26/president-macron-gives-speech-on-new-initiative-for-europe.en> (2019. 03. 27.)

shared and discussed on an open, transparent and free forum involving Europeans to the reform process actively.²⁵

Macron's plan about the future of the integration, especially on the risk-sharing reform of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) wasn't to everyone's liking. German minister for finance, *Wolfgang Schäuble* summarized his country's view, characterized rather as risk-reduction approach, on the issue in a non-paper was circulated to his Eurozone colleagues in October 2017. He admitted that the improving short-, medium- and long term governance of the EMU is indispensable in line with three principles:

- a) fiscal responsibilities and control should be kept together: instead of transferring parts of national sovereignty and control of fiscal rules to the EU level via the creation of a Euro Finance Minister, an intergovernmental solution has a reality since there is a little willingness from the side of the Member States to change the treaties. The already existing European Stability Mechanism (ESM) is the appropriate measures for this intergovernmental solution.
- b) better instruments to foster the implementation of structural reforms: structural reforms are necessary to modernize economies and to catch up with the rest of the Eurozone. Mutualizing existing or future challenges instead of tackling them would end up in a weakened currency union as a whole.
- c) credible stabilisation functions to tackle domestic and global crises: *national automatic stabilizers* should be used to absorb shocks. According to Schäuble debt mutualisation would create wrong incentives, raises fundamental legal issues and would therefore put the stability of the whole Euro area at risk.²⁶

Later, the French and German visions on the Eurozone reform were harmonised by June 2018 in the *French-German Roadmap for the Euro Area*. The document sets out:

- a) there is a need to change the intergovernmental Treaty of the ESM in order to include a common backstop instrument. ESM should have the capacity to assess the overall economic situation in the Member States, contributing to crisis prevention;
- b) the proposal of establishing a Eurozone budget within the framework of the European Union to promote competitiveness, convergence and stabilization in the euro area, starting in 2021. Resources would come from both national contributions, allocation of tax revenues and European resources;
- c) Financial Transaction Tax would be a suitable instrument for the supplementary taxation of the financial sector;
- d) all of the Eurozone member states should have functioning unemployment protection schemes, a social safety net and appropriate minimum wages. Minimum standards for unemployment protection should be accomplished within the Eurozone. In a severe economic crisis the national systems could be supplemented by the European Unemployment Stabilization Fund. The fund could lend money to

²⁵ MACRON 2017.

²⁶ SCHÄUBLE, Wolfgang: *Non-paper for paving the way towards a Stability Union 2017* <http://media2.corriere.it/corriere/pdf/2017/non-paper.pdf> (2019.03.28.)

a national social-security system, and once the economic crisis is over, the country would be obliged to pay back the funds it borrowed.²⁷

The *New Hanseatic League*²⁸ which was launched in February 2018 by the *financial ministers of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Sweden* provided a position paper in March 2018, in which they laid down their common view on the strengthening of the EMU, which is different at several points from Macron's proposals.

- a) strengthening the EMU requires first and foremost decisive actions at the *national level*;
- b) initiatives that have public support in Member States should be preferred;
- c) ESM should be strengthened and possibly developed into a European Monetary Fund, which should have greater responsibility for the development and monitoring of financial assistance programmes, but at the same time decision making should remain firmly in the hands of Member States;
- d) the new multiannual financial framework (MFF) should help to foster sustainable growth and the implementation of structural reforms whilst respecting the responsibility and ownership of Member States for such reforms.²⁹

Visegrad Group, regional cooperation of Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia is involved actively in the debate on the future of the European integration in general and on specific policy areas such as asylum and migration as well.

The Hungarian Presidency Programme (2017/2018) set the idea of a *stronger and more efficient Europe* instead of the idea of more Europe. To reach this goal EU has to take into account the opinion of all Member States, has to pay more attention to the voice of the European citizens and has to strengthen the role of the Member States within the Union. The document emphasises the aim to prevent any further fragmentation of the EU, the respect of national and regional diversity (unity in diversity). Respecting the principle of subsidiary as well as the strategic leadership of the European Council and strengthening the national parliaments are inevitable for the stronger and more efficient Europe.³⁰

²⁷ French-German Roadmap for the Euro Area (2018) https://www.economie.gouv.fr/files/files/PDF/2018/Finances-Euro_Area_Roadmap-EN.pdf (2019.03.30.)

²⁸ The main aim of the League to counter balance the Franco-German tandem after the UK leaves the European Union.

²⁹ NEW HANSEATIC LEAGUE: *Finance ministers from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Sweden underline their shared views and values in the discussion on the architecture of the EMU.*

<https://vm.fi/documents/10623/6305483/Position+EMU+Denmark+Estonia+Finland+Ireland+Latvia+Lithuania+the+Netherlands+and+Sweden.pdf/99e70c41-6348-4c06-8ff8-ed2965d16700/Position+EMU+Denmark+Estonia+Finland+Ireland+Latvia+Lithuania+the+Netherlands+and+Sweden.pdf.pdf> (2019.03.28.) 1-2.

³⁰ VISEGRAD GROUP: *V4 Connect*. Hungarian Presidency Programme 2017/2018 of the Visegrad Group http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/presidency-programs#imageid_766_1467897651302 (2019.03.28.) 7.

In January 2018, still during the Hungarian Presidency, members of the Visegrad Group adopted the *V4 Statement on the Future of Europe*. The document defined six elements of the common vision of the Visegrad countries:

- a) save already achieved results: economic and Monetary Union, proper functioning of Schengen Cooperation, control over the external borders, protection and further development of the Single Market and enlargement should be in the focus of the EU;
- b) unity in diversity: strong Europe means on the one hand the unity of EU, and strong member states with respecting their identities, history and culture on the other hand. EU Institutions should treat all Member States equally and act strictly within the remits of their respective Treaty-based competences;
- c) an inclusive debate on the future steps: based on the Bratislava and Rome Declaration EU 27 should be engaged in collective and inclusive considerations on the future;
- d) competitiveness: the competitiveness of the Union should be strengthened in internal and global terms as well. Digitalization (European Digital Single Market), innovation, development of human resources and reduction of the administrative burden on entrepreneurs are the main element of this process;
- e) democratic legitimacy: the inter-institutional balance is the most important basis for a well-functioning, democratic and legitimate European project. The European Council should maintain the key role in defining the general political directions and priorities including the future of Europe. The decisions made by the Heads of State and Government must not be disregarded at the lower levels of the decision-making process. Visegrad 4 disagreed with the establishment of a transnational list. Democratic legitimacy of the EU legislative process can be based on and strengthened through the democratic control by national parliaments by the introduction of the red card system.
- f) comprehensive approach to migration policy: guarantee the protection of external borders and the differentiation between genuine asylum seekers and illegal and economic migrants should be in the centre of the crisis management. The document emphasises: experience has shown that only those solutions that have been approved by consensus bring the best results in practice and are able to effectively address the crisis. Any overall solution for the crisis must therefore be constructed with the objective of not to distribute but to prevent the migratory pressure on Europe.³¹

³¹ VISEGRAD GROUP: *V4 Statement on the Future of the EU*. 26.01.2018 <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/0calendar/2018/v4-statement-on-the> (2019.03.28.)

On 29 January 2019, the *Southern European Union Countries* (heads of state and government of Cyprus, France, Italy, Greece, Portugal, Malta, and Spain) made the *Nicosia Declaration* in which

- a) they reaffirmed their commitment to the European project and common values, such as the rule of law, freedom, democracy, human rights and solidarity;
- b) they called for the deepening of the Single Market, including the development of a digital one;
- c) similar to Macron, the ‘Southern Sevens’ supported the establishment of a European Labour Agency, with the aim to enhance EU rules on fair labour mobility;
- d) they stressed the deepening the EMU, completion of the Banking Union and setting up a full-fledged European Deposit Insurance Scheme to be able to tackle economic and financial shocks;
- e) regarding border control and asylum policy they called for shared responsibility and solidarity among the Member States, and the disembarkation of rescued migrants in the Mediterranean should be addressed through permanent solutions in the framework of international law. In order to address the root causes of irregular migration EU has to intensify work with all our partners outside the EU, by further promoting a comprehensive partnership with Africa;
- f) security and defence is also in the focus of the Southern EU Member States. They stressed that EU must become a credible security provider for its citizens, so they welcomed the launching of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the negotiations for the establishment of a European Defence Fund.³²

III. Expectation and view of the European citizens regarding the future of the European Union

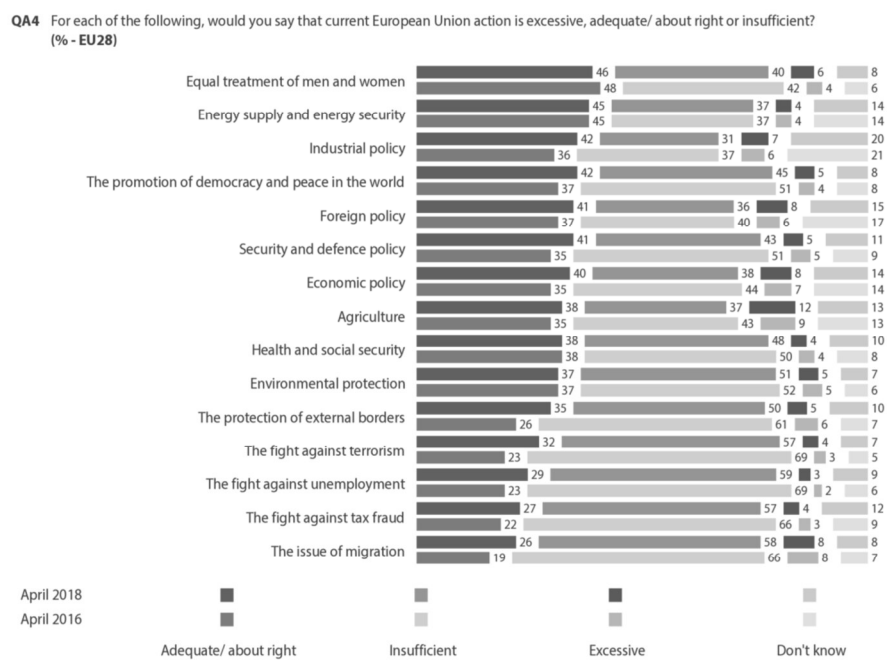
After the overview of the different EU-level, regional and national plans and concepts on the future of EU, it’s worthy to examine how the above-mentioned concepts reflect to the expectations and opinion of the European citizens.

European Parliament’s report on citizens’ views on current and future EU action shows, among others, the citizens’ preferences about the perceptions of current EU action, the level and territories of the EU’s intervention, and the attitude towards a multi-speed integration.

³² SUMMIT OF THE SOUTHERN EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES: *Nicosia Declaration*. 29 January 2019 <https://presidency.gov.cy/international-presence/2019/01/29/summit-of-the-southern-european-union-countries-%E2%80%93-nicosia-declaration/> (2019. 03. 29.)

Chart 1.

Perceptions of current EU action: Evolution from 2016 to 2018



Source: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, 2018:11.³³

As the data of perception of current EU action show (see 1st chart above), in 2016 citizens thought that the first five policies on which EU action is the less sufficient are: fight against unemployment and terrorism (69-69%), migration and fight against tax fraud (66-66%), and the protection of external borders (61%), so three policy areas out of five connected to the issue of migration crisis. In 2018 fight against unemployment (59%), migration (58%), fight against terrorism and tax fraud (57-57%) as well as environmental protection (51 %) were perceived as the less sufficient EU policies by the citizens.

In 2016 the five most adequate policies were: equal treatment of men and women (48%), energy supply and security (45%), health and social security (38 %), the promotion of democracy and peace in the world, foreign policy and environmental protection (37-37%) and last but not least industrial policy (36%). It's important to emphasize neither of

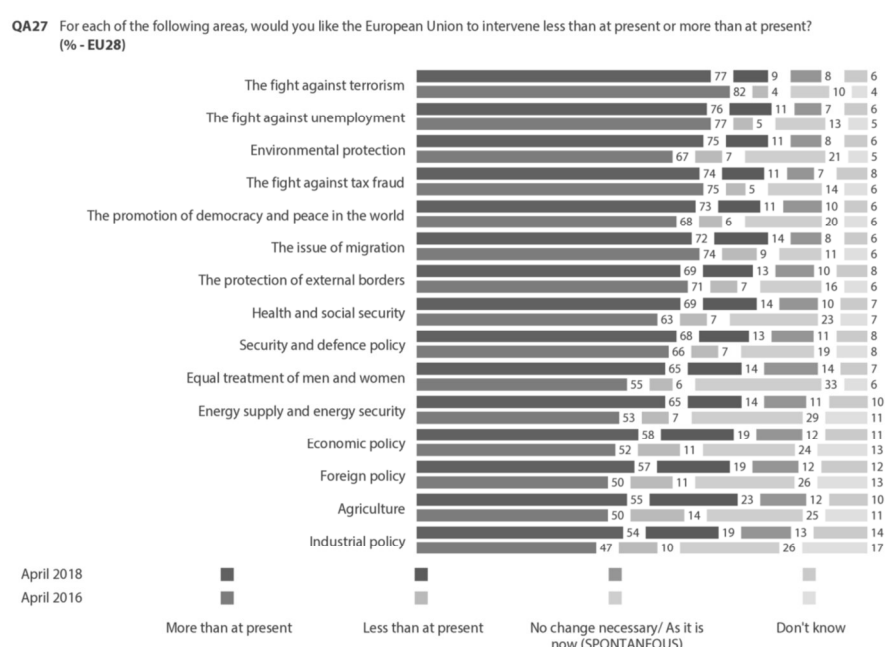
³³ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: *Delivering on Europe*. Report. Eurobarometer Survey 89.2 of the European Parliament. A Public Opinion Monitoring Study 2018. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/files/beheard/eurobarometer/2018/delivering_on_europe_citizens_views_on_current_and_future_eu_action/report.pdf (2019. 03. 29.) 11.

the above-mentioned policy areas were perceived as adequate by the absolute majority of the respondents.

An additional interesting question is where the citizens expect more EU action or intervention. According to the 2nd chart (see below) in 2016 fight against terrorism (82%), fight against unemployment (77%), fight against tax fraud (75%), fight against migration (74%) and the protection of external borders (71%) were that policy areas where citizens wanted more EU action. In 2018 EU citizens expected more intervention by the EU in the field of fight against terrorism (77%), fight against unemployment (76%), environmental protection (75%), fight against tax fraud (74%) and the promotion of democracy and peace in the world (73%).

Chart 2.

Expectations for future intervention of EU action: Evolution from 2016 to 2018



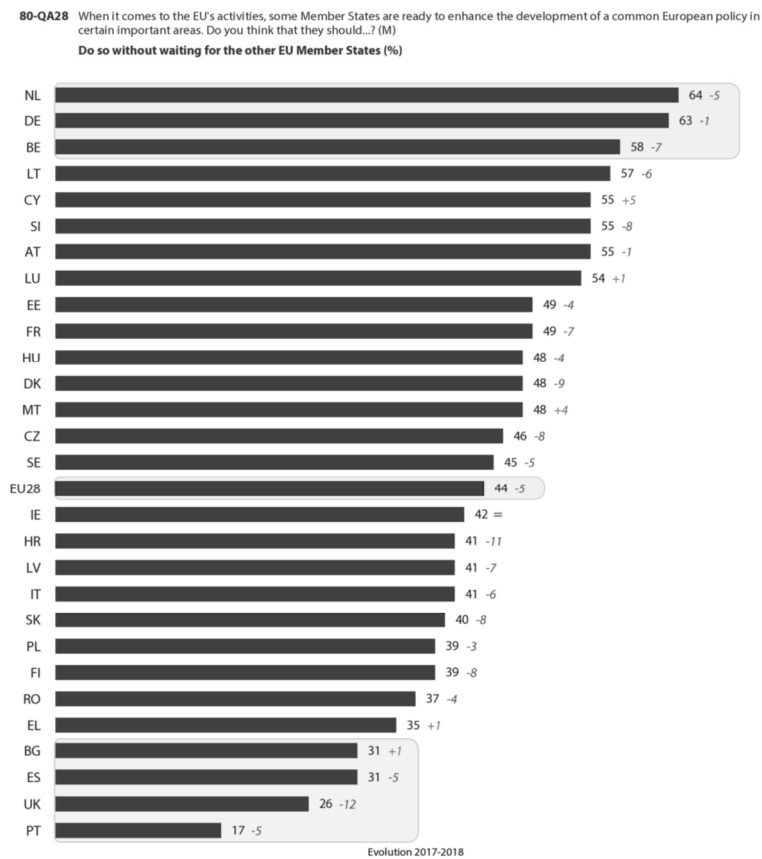
Source: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT 2018,10.

Not only specific EU policies, but the general development of the EU were asked too, since the issue of one-speed vs. two- or multi-speed EU has been being on the agenda for a while (see the 3rd chart below). In 2018 44% of respondents (EU28 average) thought that differentiated integration is desirable on certain policy areas, this is 5% less than in 2016. It's worthy to note that there is a wide spread among the respondents of the Member States regarding the question. The Netherlands (64%), Germany (63%), Belgium (58%),

Lithuania (57%), and Cyprus, Slovenia, Austria (55-55-55%) are the five countries where the most citizens think, Member States which want to enhance cooperation in certain policies should do it without waiting for others. Respondents in Portugal (17%), United Kingdom (26%), Spain and Bulgaria (31-31%), Greece (35%) as well as in Romania (37%) prefer the less the idea of two- or multi-speed integration, sometimes much below the EU 28 average. Interestingly, Great Britain which decided to leave the EU in June 2016 and had chosen opt out from several EU policies before (such as EMU, Schengen, or the Charter of Fundamental Rights) was one of the countries respondents' of which preferred the less a two-or multi-speed EU. It's important to emphasize that in most of the Member States support of the differentiated integration decreased comparing to 2016, except for Cyprus, Luxemburg, Malta and Greece.

Chart 3.

Proceed without waiting for the other EU Member States



Source: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT 2018, 21.

IV. Conclusions

The multi-dimensional crises of the European Union generated an active and inclusive thinking and discussion about the future of the integration. Comparing to the previous waves of such a debate, we can witness that the main issue is not deepening and/or widening of the integration, but deepening and the inclusivity. The latter means if the 27 Member States should go into the same direction at the same pace or if some countries of the EU want, may go ahead and create closer cooperation on certain policy areas making the integration (more) differentiated.

One of the conclusions can be drawn that the idea of differentiated integration emerged in most of the visions as a desirable way of achieving the ever closer union envisaged in the Article 1 of the Treaty on the European Union. At the same time some Member States such as Hungary and the majority of opinion polls' respondents in a significant number of the Member States don't prefer the concept of a multi-speed EU.

If we take specific policy areas such as economic and monetary union, single market, security and defence, migration and border control, we can conclude that most of the initiatives agree that these policies should be enhanced, but issue of the way in which it should be implemented (community versus intergovernmental) divides the Member States. According to the public opinion polls, European citizens would like more EU actions and competences on these most dividing policy areas.

After the overview of the EU-level initiatives we could see that European Council, the Commission and the European Parliament are involved into the discussion actively. At the same time since the European Council is the responsible institution for identify the general political direction and priorities of the integration we have to pay special attention to its conclusions on one hand and to a new form and working method of the European Council initiated by Donald Tusk, the Leader's Agenda.

Due to the number of the Member States, the diverting views on the future of the integration in general and in the case of specific policies, as well as to the fact that differentiated integration is already an existing phenomenon within the EU, it's highly likely that the forms of differentiation (opt outs, enhanced cooperation, permanent structured cooperation) will be used more frequently in the future, especially that the reality of a new treaty or a treaty amendment is really small. Further enlargement of the EU (special regards to the countries of Western Balkan) also justifies the concept of a multi-speed European integration.

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Az elmúlt évek válságainak árnyékában – úgy, mint az euro zóna krízise, a Brexit, a tömeges bevándorlás problémája, valamint a jogállamisággal és demokráciával kapcsolatos aggályok néhány tagállam vonatkozásában – az európai integráció jövőjével kapcsolatos viták új lendületet kaptak, mind a politika mind a politikatudomány világában. Számos uniós szintű, regionális, valamint nemzeti kezdeményezés látott napvilágot az elmúlt néhány évben.

A tanulmány a különböző kormányzati szinteken és szereplők által megfogalmazott Európa-terveket igyekszik áttekinteni, feltárva azok közös, valamint legmegosztóbb elemeit a diskurzuselemzés módszerét alkalmazva. Ugyanakkor nem csak az ún. top-down kezdeményezések állnak a vizsgálódás fókuszában, hanem az európai integráció jövőjére vonatkozó uniós polgári attitűdök feltérképezése is, a releváns közvélemény-kutatási adatok elemzésével.

Tekintettel arra, hogy a legtöbb Európa-terv az integráció egységességét hangsúlyozza, ugyanakkor a tagállamok számos politika tekintetében megosztottak, ez az egység csak a differenciált integráció útján érhető el, illetve tartható fenn. Ellentétben tehát az EU jövőjével kapcsolatos diskurzusok korábbi hullámaihoz, most nem az integráció bővülése és /vagy mélyülése a központi kérdés, hanem a mélyülés és a differenciált integráció.