

The EU Integration And Further Challenges

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ABSTRACT:

The last years of the European integration can be labelled as the years of identity crisis of the European Union itself. Therefore, it seems that the vision of a common created Union is unpredictable environment which has serious challenges as new fragmentation lines are appearing in the integration process.

This article aims to present the infrastructure of the integration process and the future perspectives and challenges that the European Union is facing with. The EU is unique partnership in which Member states have pooled sovereignty in certain policy areas and harmonized laws on a wide range of economic, social, and political issues, there is a list of unsolved issues which have to be taken into serious consideration from Member states as well as from the whole Union. Tensions have always existed within the EU legal and institutional framework. This article is trying to elaborate and to emphasize the importance of some specifics related to the political and economic areas.

The essential elements of Anti-EU or "Eurosceptic" Political Parties are subject of deeper research in order to present the importance of the influence of different opinions and functionality.

The modern future European Union Strategy is facing challenges to use unique levers in order to promote integration. The conceptual meaning of integration is connected with migration as ongoing process which is promoting within the EU borders. The migration is a growing and become a permanent part of Europe's future.

The Union is trying to be a decent place for living as a highly desired final destination.

Key words: *Integration, European Union, challenges, perspectives*

Introduction

The European Union is a spectacular success story of the integration of European states that used to fight between each other in the past. The current EU infrastructure is the latest stage in process of European Integration, to promote peace, security and economic development. At the same time the EU is a unique model in which Members state have pooled sovereignty in certain policy areas and harmonized laws on a wide range of economic, social and political issues.

EU Member states share a customs union, a single market (in which goods, people, and capital move freely), a Common Trade Policy, a Common Agricultural Policy, and a Common Currency (the euro) that is used by 19 Member States (collectively referred to as "the Eurozone").

Twenty-two EU Member States participate in the Schengen area of free movement, in which individuals may travel without passport checks.

In addition, the EU has taken steps to develop common foreign and security policies, has sought to build common internal security measures, and remains committed to the process of enlargement, especially to the countries of the Western Balkans.

The EU is largely viewed as a success story and as a cornerstone of European stability and prosperity. Net migration into Europe is increasing, and is now the largest component of population change. Migrants, moreover, come from a far wider range of countries, and bring a greater diversities than in the past.

Migrants bring significant economic and cultural benefits. Some newcomers are very successful in the labor market and enjoy positive relations with other residents. There is substantial evidence that many face disadvantages on all the key indexes of integration as well as the legal rights, education, employment, criminal justice, health, living conditions, and civic participation

Currently, however, the EU faces a range of political and economic pressures, including slow growth and persistently high unemployment in many EU countries, as well as the rise of far-right populist parties, at least some of which harbor anti-EU or "Eurosceptic" sentiments.

Tensions and Differences

The process of European integration project has long been viewed as a way for participating countries to magnify their political and economic clout.

Tensions have always existed within the EU between those member states that seek an “ever closer union” through greater integration and those that prefer to keep the EU on a more intergovernmental footing in order to better guard their national sovereignty. As a result, some EU countries have “opted out” of certain aspects of integration, including the Eurozone and the Schengen area. In addition, different histories and geography often influence member states’ policy preferences.

In practice, some critics charge that EU decision making processes remain extremely complex, lack transparency, and are still too slow and unwieldy. Others note that differences in viewpoint are inevitable among 28 countries and that decisions thus take time in what remains a largely consensus-based institution.

While the EU maintains that the enlargement door remains open to any European country that fulfills the political and economic criteria for membership, some European leaders and publics worry about the implications of additional EU expansion on the EU’s institutional capacities, its finances, and its overall identity.

The EU needs to tackle the challenges and seize the opportunities which the global environment presents. An effective response depends on the Union’s ability to make choices and prioritized areas where it is willing and able to make a difference. It also depends on whether the EU’s external action instruments are fit for purpose. [1]

Political and Economic institutional Context

A number of political and economic factors are contributing to the current uncertainty surrounding the future of the EU. To varying degrees, they are also challenging the legitimacy and structure of the EU and its institutions.

In the fact, the EU has a Common external trade policy, which means that Trade Policy is an exclusive competence of the EU and no member state can negotiate its own international trade agreement.

The EU’s Trade Policy is one of its most well-developed and integrated policies.

It evolved along with the common market which provides for the free movement of goods within the EU to prevent one member state from importing foreign goods at cheaper prices due to lower tariffs and then re-exporting the items to another member with higher tariffs. The scope of the common trade policy has been extended partially to include trade in services, the defense of intellectual property rights, and foreign direct investment.

The European Commission and the Council of Ministers work together to set the common customs tariff, guide export policy, and decide on trade protection or retaliation measures where necessary. EU rules allow the Council to make trade decisions with qualified majority voting, but in

practice the Council tends to employ consensus. The European Commission negotiates trade agreements with outside countries and trading blocs on behalf of the Union as a whole.

As a result of the Lisbon Treaty, both the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament must approve all such trade agreements before they can enter into force.

The process for negotiating and concluding a new international trade agreement begins with discussions among all three EU Institutions and a Commission impact assessment, including a public consultation on the content and options for any future trade accord. Provided there is a general agreement to proceed, the Commission initiates an informal scoping exercise with the potential partner country or trade bloc on the range and extent of topics to be considered in the negotiations. Following this dialogue, the Commission then formulates what are known as “negotiating directives” (sometimes termed the “negotiating mandate”), which sets out the Commission’s overall objectives for the future agreement.

The “directives” are submitted to the Council for its approval, and shared with the European Parliament. [2]

Ongoing Economic Difficulties

Many EU countries continue to struggle with sluggish growth, high unemployment (especially among young people), and dissatisfied publics. Economic disparities within the EU have also generated tensions and contributed to policy divisions among member states. Greece, for example, has bristled at perceived “diktats” for more austerity from economically strong Germany.

Some Central and Eastern European members have objected to contributing financial assistance to Greece, as well as to doing more to help manage the migratory flows, in part because of their relatively less affluent economic positions within the EU. Currently, many observers suggest that more robust economic growth could help ease some challenges currently facing the EU.

Increasing of Anti-EU or “Eurosceptic” Political Parties

Over the last few years, many EU countries have seen a rise in support for populist, nationalist, anti-establishment political parties. They are often termed “Eurosceptic” because many have also been fueled by worries that too much national sovereignty has been relinquished to Brussels.

Although not a completely new phenomenon in the EU, the popularity of populist and Eurosceptic parties has been increasing largely in response to Europe’s economic stagnation, austerity measures, and the Eurozone crisis. For some voters, how the Eurozone crisis has been handled has renewed long-standing concerns about the EU’s “democratic

deficit “a sense that ordinary citizens have little say over decisions taken in far-away Brussels.

Growing fears about immigration and globalization have also contributed to increased support for such parties.

Eurosceptic parties, however, are not monolithic. While most are on the far right of the political spectrum, a few are on the left or far left.

The degree of Euroscepticism also varies widely among them, and they hold a range of views on the future of the EU. [3]

Perspectives and expectations

The future of the European Union Strategy is facing challenges to use unique levers in order to promote integration. The conceptual meaning of integration is connected with migration as ongoing process which is promoting within the EU borders. The migration is a growing and become a permanent part of Europe's future.

The two main factors have led to pressure for a more effective EU Strategy to promote the social, economic, political, cultural and political integration of migrants and the next generation.

The first one is recognition of the failure to integrate past migrants effectively, and the second is concerning about rising support for the far right. [4]

The further EU Strategy is focusing to the following:

- Establishing a mechanism for dialogue and coordination among member states.
- Develop and share good practice on essential elements of an integration strategy such as induction programmes for new migrants.
- Reviewing existing and proposed EU immigration and asylum measures.
- Ensure secure legal status, rights and responsibilities to the migrants arose EU.
- Access to the rights that promote integration, employment and family reunification.
- Promoting communication and contact between people from different religious and cultural backgrounds and building a consensus that racial prejudice is socially unacceptable.
- Taking steps to promote a common understanding across EU Member states of the barriers to integration.
- Ensuring implementation of the EU discrimination directives and establishment of effective bodies to promote and enforce them.
- Engaging EU Member states, the social partners, NGOs, and migrant organizations, learning from them, sharing ideas on good practice, and enabling migrants to contribute to decision-making, as an essential element of civic participation.

- Conducting a review to identify which EU policies, programs, budgets, and policy levers are most relevant to integration, including strategies on employment, social inclusion, and health, and ensure that integration objectives are mainstreamed within them. [5]

Can the EU meet the challenges ahead?

In a broader context the EU Strategy and trends is based on the essential segments as well as:

- Integration of euro area, insecure environment, low growth.
- Eurozone integration.
- Unsustainability of current welfare systems.
- Shrinking labor force.
- Need structural reforms for investment and saving allocation.
- Education key in ageing society.
- Crisis in the energy mix of many Member States.
- Slow recycling of toxic assets.
- Moderate growth without debt.

European Union remains one of the most open economies, vulnerable to downturns in global trade.

In this context, five broad trends can be discerned:

1. The human race is growing older and richer with a growing middle class and widening inequalities.
2. Economic weight and political power shifts to Asia; sustained development of the world economy becomes more vulnerable to challenges to and weaknesses in the globalization process.
3. A revolution in technologies and their applications transforms societies in almost every aspect. Additionally, digitization is the invader and radical, disruptive change the consequence.
4. Managing scarcity of resources becomes an increasing challenge, with rising energy consumption and shifting patterns of production.
5. The interdependence of countries, now a fact of global life, is not matched by strengthening global governance. The world order becomes more fragile and unpredictable. [6]

In respect of the functionality of then State of Union, compared to most other regions of the world, the EU is a haven of peace, prosperity, and security. Following the global economic crisis, however, there are several major challenges facing the EU that, if not tackled with urgency and determination.

Namely, the EU has grown and integrated rapidly without commensurate strengthening of its political and economic institutions. The emerging gap between necessary coordination and institutional capacity in the EU suggests a lesson for other regional groupings if and when they arrive at later stages of the integration process.

The first challenge is increased fiscal coordination amid a worsening economic outlook.

The EU needs to cleanse the financial system and follow through on austerity measures introduced by almost all member states.

The major risk today is the continuing fragility of the economies of some eurozone member states such as Greece, Spain, and Portugal, and the possibility of renewed speculation in the financial markets. Although there are some positive signs of economic recovery in Europe, many economists continue to warn of a possible "double dip" recession and the likely impact of the ongoing problems of many European banks.

While most passed the "stress tests" at the end of July 2010, there was broad agreement that these tests were not as strenuous as they could have been.

The second challenge is resolving the EU's long-standing identity crisis. Member States have never been able to agree on the *finalité politique*, making the European experiment a journey to an unknown destination. Academics have described the debate as one between widening and deepening. On the one hand, the EU has progressed from a customs union to a single market and a eurozone. On the other hand, it has gradually extended its membership from six to twenty eight countries with more to join covering almost the whole European continent. The EU, however, has proved unable to strengthen its political institutions at a pace and with a depth consistent with the needs of its integration, as well as the number and heterogeneity of its membership. Faced with widespread public skepticism about the EU, European capitals remain attached to national sovereignty and reluctant to give great powers to Brussels. [7]

The European Union face comprehensive problems such as climate change, the economic crisis or demographic change. The Member States of the European Union are more interconnected than ever, also due to the multiple political, economic and social challenges which have created dependencies and can only be tackled successfully by working together. However, this implies that more and more decisions are made as a necessity by governments and citizens are excluded from decision-making.

The public is aware of the fact that established democratic procedures are no longer adequate and instead demand more involvement and more opportunities for political participation.

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