

Dan LUCA

European Union: Views from Brussels

70 articles about
EU Actors & EU Citizens, Future EU,
EU Communication,
Romania in EU, Management & Business,
EU Education and Technology & Media

2013

Descrierea CIP a Bibliotecii Naționale a României

LUCA, DAN

Views from Brussels / Dan Luca. - Cluj-Napoca : Qual Media, 2013

ISBN 978-606-8154-38-1

821.135.1-92=111

Table of content

Dan LUCA - European experience from the Brussels, Bucharest, Cluj triangle	1
Foreword by the author – The anthropology of European dilemmas	4
Introduction from Hannes SWOBODA, President of the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament	7
Foreword: Support to the “Erasmus generation” by Prof. Vasile PUȘCAȘ	10
I. 2009, 2010, 2011... Prologue	13
1. Romanians abroad want impact on their country	14
2. 2014 EP elections via a European public sphere	23
3. David Miliband – President of the European Commission in 2014?	29
4. What kind of primary election in EU?	32
5. David Miliband – back in Europe?	34
II. EU actors & EU citizens	35
1. Working in EU affairs in Brussels – beyond the EU institutions	36
2. Europe of the “small” topics	41
3. Two systems, one person: diaspora in Europe	43
4. 700,000 local actors in EU affairs	44
5. Brussels – the place where “HR signals” make a difference	47
6. EU: consultation or participation	51
7. How is Belgium “playing” in the EU?	53
8. What I did for the EU	56

9. The impact of the BRIC countries on EU affairs	59
10. Rating of the EU citizens	61
11. The job market and the "Community of EU actors"	64
12. Universities and Euro-Brussels	72
13. Brussels: the list of the interest groups	74

III. Future EU 89

1. Status of Europe's "Ministry of Foreign Affairs"	90
2. Van Rompuy's second mandate. EU visibility.	93
3. Accountability and the EU (I)	95
4. Is it still possible to have European primary elections?	97
5. The next European decade	100
6. European External Action Service and Prime Ministers	102
7. Liquid democracy	104
8. The European Commission: review 2012	106
9. Brussels: forecast for 2013	108
10. Accountability and the EU (II)	112
11. What is the future of political parties in the EU?	119
12. EP elections 2014: an ugly scenario?	122
13. "Future of Europe" – view from US	126
14. The European socialist's candidate	128

IV. EU communication 131

1. EU communication and European leaders	132
2. Branding in EU affairs	135
3. Communication budgets of Brussels' EU affairs stakeholders	137
4. Promoting the EU via the works of Dan Brown?	139

V.	Romania in EU	141
1.	EU funds change economic structures of member states	142
2.	Adapting Romania to the European political thinking	144
3.	Romanians in Brussels on the evolution of Romania	147
4.	Romanian leaders in Brussels	150
5.	Cluj's strategy in the European Union	152
6.	Results 2012: from a European and a Romanian perspective	155
7.	Moving towards regional elections in Romania?	158
8.	Romania and the future of European institutions	164
9.	A study: Romania and the future of the European institutions (Cluj event)	166
10.	Romania, the "energetic player"	170
11.	Romania – "mature positioning" after 2014?	172
12.	Brussels Memorandum: Romania	175
13.	EU: the Romanian-Polish partnership	182
14.	EU: the Romanian-Italian partnership	186
15.	EU: the Romanian-German partnership	190
16.	The Romanian debate in Brussels: "Future of the European institutions"	193
VI.	Management & business	197
1.	Work flexibility	198
2.	From idea to project management	201
3.	How to make money in EU affairs in Brussels?	203
4.	Business in Brussels: formal or informal	205
5.	The secret to finding a job in Brussels	207
6.	Launching "products" in Euro-Brussels	208
7.	The part-time "shadow" managing director	212
8.	Effective communication through ethos, pathos	

and logos	214
9. Competition as a form of involvement in projects	216
10. The difference between a manager and a leader	220
VII. EU education	221
1. Where is the innovation in EU education?	222
2. The academy of European studies	227
3. Adapting your career to contemporary reality	229
VIII. Technology & media	234
1. Future of the media	235
2. To institutionalise email addresses?	238
3. Presidents using Web 2.0? Let's be serious!	239
Instead of a final conclusion	241
A European integrated Romania	242

Dan LUCA - European experience from the Brussels, Bucharest, Cluj triangle

Born in Cluj (Romania) in 1971, Dan Luca is currently active in Brussels. He has worked as a European affairs professional for 20 years: four years in Cluj, a year in Bucharest and the last 15 years in Brussels.

He was one of the first Romanians to do an internship at the European Parliament (1996), where he presented the study "State of the Environment in the Danube Delta."

He was the first Romanian elected to enter the European Board of the European Students Association (AEGEE) in Brussels (1997). In 1998, he was appointed first deputy president of the student network. Between 1997-1999 he coordinated a number of projects in the field of European integration in Brussels, including "Socrates Action Day", "Romanian-Hungarian relations in 2020" and "European Education in 2020".

He spent a year in Bucharest in 2000, as part of the team which implemented the PHARE project "Training in European Affairs", whose beneficiary was the European Institute of Romania.

In 2003 he co-founded the media portal EurActiv Romania, and in 2004 he opened his consulting firm DL International in Brussels. He is in permanent contact with EU institutions, the industry sector, consulting companies, NGOs and representatives of the regions.

He has given training courses on European affairs for more than 10 years; preparing hundreds of people for better professional connections within Brussels. Having been involved in dozens of European projects, he has organised many conferences and debates on European issues.

In 2008 he obtained a PhD in "International Relations and European Studies" with a specialisation in Communication. In his doctoral thesis he analysed the development and trends of European educational programs in an enlarged Europe. The motivation for the research was to analyse the educational policy of the European Union and its impact on young people in Europe, openly expressing a desire to propose new education programs.

He gives lectures on the European Union and communication techniques at 10 European universities. He is now an associate professor at the International University Institute for European Studies in Gorizia (Italy) and the National School of Political Studies

and Public Administration (SNSPA) in Bucharest.

He has written three books and hundreds of articles linking Romania to the European Union, and for more than six years he has posted daily on his blog about how decisions from Brussels affect Romanians.

In 1996 he founded the “House of Europe” association in Cluj; in 2003 the “Romania-EU” Club in Brussels - the established platform for Romanians working in the capital of Europe; and in 2009 he founded the first Romanian think tank in Brussels: GrupRomânia. He highlighted the potential of Romanians in the EU to the public through a 2006 study called “Footprint Romania”.

In 2008, inspired and supported by the French Socialist Party and British Labour, and in permanent contact with the Romanian Social Democratic Party (PSD), he founded the first subsidiary outside Romania for a Romanian political party: PSD Brussels.

Editor

Foreword by author - the anthropology European dilemmas

What will happen with the European Union in the next 10 years? How “deep” will European integration of 28 countries be? Can we actually talk about a European public sphere? Romania joined the European Union almost seven years ago, and the conclusions that arise prove that there are still many gaps in adapting the EU mechanism to Romania.

I have studied the EU, in theory and in practice, on a daily basis for years now and I am glad to have been invited to various European universities, such as Brussels, Gorizia, Bucharest and Cluj, to deliver lectures to their students about EU communication techniques.

Over six years ago I launched a blog (www.casaeuropei.blogspot.com) with articles and opinions about the EU and how Romanians are affected by changes in contemporary Europe. The amount of information collected in over 1,500 messages is considerable and for me it was time to try to project the “Web 2.0 world” into the “serious world” of books. So in 2009, I published a book on “EU Communication Dilemmas” in Romanian.

The impact of the book exceeded my expectations, and the feedback I received led me to this initiative to present my articles and opinions in English as well, so that the messages could be received by a wider audience. That is why in 2009 I started publishing views on topical European issues from a Brussels perspective in English. In early 2012, I took the decision to publish weekly messages in English, and what I published in 18 months allows me to assemble approximately 70 articles in book form.

The material this book contains is a reflection of how it was published on the blog, thus maintaining a “scent” of the period it was written in. The messages are presented chronologically; however, I introduce segmentation following certain topics: EU actors & EU citizens, Future EU, EU communication, Romania in EU, Management & business, EU education and Technology & media.

It would have been hard to imagine such a book five years ago, when I published the first article in English on the blog, but I am happy with the consistency of the work, which includes ideas about EU decision making and the impact of those decisions on European citizens. Just months before the European elections of May 2014, publishing these messages is particularly timely now.

I want to thank everyone who supported this idea - a book about the EU, seen from a Brussels perspective, with Romanian views filtered through it. Many thanks to those who believed in this project: Mr. Johannes Swoboda, MEP and leader of the Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament and eminent professor Vasile Puşcaş for their kindness in introducing this book; to my colleagues Nienke van Leeuwen, Jeremy Fleming-Jones and Raluca Dan for their feedback, to the publishing house and other “unseen” people who helped in coordinating this project.

Dan LUCA
10 July 2013

Introduction from Hannes Swoboda, President of the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament

With the creation of the European Communities – later to become the European Union – a new political layer was created that would have not only legal repercussions on the lives of people in Europe. Not only would the European institutions create new and align national legislation, Europe would also become an additional sphere of decision-making and debate.

One goal of the European Union is that people “feel” European, that they are confident that the EU represents them and works in their best interest. But one of the most frequent obstacles to that feeling is the impression that “Brussels”, removed from people’s lives in meanwhile 28 member states, is making top-down decisions for citizens, rather than listening to their needs.

The absence of a genuine European communication sphere – due to a multitude of factors, including the challenge of multilingualism and the domination of national interests in the media – can take, in particular in times of crisis, a heavy toll on European

“conscience-building”.

I therefore welcome that Dan Luca, with this collection of articles, is aiming to bridge the gap between Europe and his home country, Romania. I have myself visited Romania many times, before the accession and since, and it remains to me a vibrant country, with a dynamic culture and very lively political debate.

To make the work of the European Union more efficient, more useful and more relevant to the people in Europe, it is crucial that the ties between both side’s media and political spheres grow tighter.

Next year will see the 8th European elections, the first elections since Croatia joined the EU and the first ones where the major parties will present a common candidate. For the European elections in 2014, it will be crucial that there information and communication goes both ways, from member state to the EU institutions and from Brussels to Bucharest, Baia Mare, Timișoara and Iași.

With modern means of communications and the countless opportunities of online communications, it will be a greater challenge than ever but also a greater opportunity than ever to really communicate with all European citizens, so that together we can

build the open and inclusive Europe that the Social Democratic parties stand for.

Hannes SWOBODA

15 July 2013

Foreword: Support to the “Erasmus Generation”

While some European leaders announced that the financial crisis in the European Union (focused on sovereign debt in euro area) is at its end, it is felt more widely that the situation worsened the social crisis, as well as the crisis of liberal and democratic values. In Brussels and in several capitals of the euro zone countries people plead the need for “more Europe”, but European citizens put their hopes in a “better Europe”. It is clear that there is a wide perception of “their Europe” versus “our Europe”. It is not about two Europes within the European Union or any reference to a “two-speed Europe” or a “concentric Europe”, but it emphasises the socio-economic and cultural-political chasm at the level of European citizens. European citizens believe in their chances as socio-political actors of the European Union - their designs and hopes in the EU. However, they do not believe in the EU in its current form - one that allowed for the current crisis; nor in the political leaders who have proven unable to manage the crisis acceptably, but in a renovated European Union, with structural innovation capable of socio-political, economic, and efficient management of global interdependence.

This volume compiled by Dan Luca, "European Union: Views from Brussels", is a European communication exercise - both for the European citizen and European policy experts. The title immediately highlights the author's personal belief in the validity of the European project. Whether the public notes are made from Bucharest, Brussels, Cluj-Napoca or other places in the European Union, the central message is that the citizens of all Member States of the European Union want a structural transformation of the EU. This change would have to be initiated by the European political and economic elite, and needs the involvement of citizens of the Union in order to be consistent. In short, this book outlines a vision about the future of the European Union. A thought, designed and strategised by a young European of what I like to say is the "*Generation of the European Erasmus program*". A generation consisting of young professionals educated at universities in several European countries, a generation which is connected to liberal democratic values; whose identity is predisposed to be constructive; which is deeply attached to its Europeanism; and believes in the chance of a globalist system.

The author of this volume of articles and essays reminds the world of today and tomorrow about something that politicians and managers of contemporary markets have lost in an environment

of individualistic selfishness: private goods can be produced more efficiently if there are enough consolidated global goods. Everyone has increased expectations about the compliance with European fundamental freedoms concerning the movement of persons, goods, services, capital, knowledge, and technologies. But while conservative political dogmatism freezes the European project and utilitarianism socialists place European interest only within narrow electoral constituents, the “Erasmus generation” wants a new European Union, innovative and competitive, with strong internal mechanisms and natural movement within the complex space of globalisation. This European generation is willing to participate in a battle for a new European Union. Let’s give him our faith and support!

Prof. Vasile PUȘCAȘ
15 July 2013



2009, 2010, 2011... Prologue

Romanians abroad want impact on their country

3 June 2009

Looking towards the 2014 elections, we need European leaders who can campaign for two or three years – as in the US, Dan Luca, candidate for the European elections based in Brussels, told *BlogActiv* in an interview.

You are one of the many Romanians working in Brussels after your country's accession, and you have decided to run for the EU elections. Why?

I have been working in European affairs since 1993. Before I left for Brussels I had been involved in student organisations at local level. I arrived in Brussels in 1997, and started out working on the executive board of the European students association.

I have since gained extensive experience in civil society, and now I think it is time to take a decisive step towards making a bigger impact, and the European Parliament is certainly the perfect tool to make an impact.

There are many capable Romanians, not only in Brussels, but more of them need to get involved in politics. A lot of them have EU affairs experience, but when it comes to politics, they are reluctant to get involved, and this is a pity.

You have founded a branch of the Romanian Social Democratic party (PSD) in Brussels. What motivated you to do so?

At the beginning of 2008, a group of Romanians, including myself, decided to set up a political organisation connected to the Romanian Social Democratic party. It was the first time a Romanian political party had opened an office outside of Romania. I think it was the first time a Central and Eastern European party has taken such a step.

We looked at similar steps taken by the French, the British Labour party, the Spanish; they have had officially recognised party organisations abroad since around 1990. But, of course, for us this was a pioneering initiative.

I was surprised to see just how many people want to get involved in this kind of political enterprise. Some of them are frustrated; they want to do something for their country. They may be involved in the media,

NGOs or consultancies, but they feel there is something missing. As a result the arrival of a centre-left political party in Brussels received a warm-welcome from the Romanian community abroad.

Is the Romanian diaspora quite important?

Yes, about 10 per cent of our population is based outside of Romania. We have a significant diaspora in Italy, approximately one million Romanians; a very strong diaspora in Spain – again approximately one million; in Belgium it is not very big, about forty thousand people, with half of those in Brussels.

Not all the twenty thousand Romanians are working in European affairs. Our estimation is that between 1,500 and 2,000 Romanians work inside the institutions, or in European affairs circles.

If a Romanian decided to join a branch of the PSD, what would be the advantages of joining for them?

It is very difficult to talk about advantages in the short-run. An activist may join a political organisation because he or she wants to do something, such as to change the community for the better, and of course, if they are active for two or three years at local level, they might be elected to a local council, regional

council, and eventually to the national assembly. For us it is very difficult to give members' guarantees that if you work for two or three years in our organisation you will be elected to the local commune.

But what we have tried to do is build a very strong cooperation with the socialist parties in Belgium. We have very good relations with Parti Socialiste and the sp.a, the two Belgian socialist parties. What we intend on doing in the future is to have Romanian candidates, who may or may not have dual citizenship, in the regional and local elections.

Of course the election is a very important process. It is an immense responsibility: being on the list; being a candidate; eventually getting elected, and fulfilling your manifesto promises. But it is also important for people to feel that they can really do something for their country. They feel that this kind of political movement, integrated within the Romanian political system, can help Romania a lot. They find this a positive way to funnel their frustration.

Politics is about making things change. Is it easier to change things from abroad than from within Romania?

It was encouraging to discover that there was a group of us in Belgium that wanted to get involved, that we

were not alone. Now we have over 100 Romanians in this movement in Brussels, and in the rest of Belgium we have started to enlarge the circle of the organisation and welcome in new members.

Of course it is very important to have an impact in the country. We are lucky in this way because we have a very good relationship with our party in Bucharest. It is a wonderful cooperation, and we hope to improve it even further in the future.

My presence on the list for the European Parliament is also a very important symbol that shows the party in Romania takes our proposals into consideration. It's a big political system, and the changes may take time, but at least we feel that we are heading in the right direction.

You are number twenty on the list. It is difficult to imagine the first twenty candidates on the list will make it to the European Parliament. Perhaps half of them will. Will you be frustrated if you are not elected?

No. I will not be frustrated. It is true that it is difficult position to be in. It is hard to imagine that the party will have the 60% or 65% in the election needed to elect all 20 candidates.

But it would be even more frustrating not to be involved in the campaign, to stay on the sidelines and watch this election, and only act as an expert from the outside. At least I got involved, and we have a feeling in my team that we are in play. To be in play is the first prerequisite to be elected. If you are not in the game, you will never win.

It is very difficult to define our electorate. If you don't have streets and areas that are specifically Romanian, where you can put leaflets through letter boxes, then communication becomes an interesting exercise. A lot can be done with web-based communication, but not all Romanians in Belgium have an email address. It is an interesting challenge to communicate with potential voters, and it is also an interesting exercise to get people involved.

It is a paradox sometimes. There are many Romanians living in Brussels who have no idea about these European Parliament elections. At least we manage to connect with them; we discover a lot of interesting issues that affect the Romanian Diaspora, not only in Belgium. It is a very interesting exercise.

Are you going to vote in the Romanian embassy or the Belgian commune?

Basically what I recommend, and I will do the same, is to vote in the Romanian embassy on 7 June. Either you vote for the Romanian list or the Belgian list. If you want to vote for the Belgian list you ought to have registered before the end of March. Most of the Romanians have not registered, but this does not mean that they will all come and vote in the Romanian embassy. There are other places besides the embassy where Romanians can vote in Belgium. There are other polling stations for Romanian citizens in Liège and Antwerp.

What is next after the elections?

This election is obviously very important for us. But we also want to build something for the future, beyond these elections.

For the election our aim is to have a good result for PSD in Belgium. We also want to prove internally that we can do a good job outside Romania – as you know the results of the Social Democrats outside Romania are not incredible. I know we can improve, and I hope the results can prove that we can do a good job. At the same time, it is very important for us to discuss with our partner organisations – the social democrats and socialist organisations – where we are, because I would not be surprised to see only 35%,

or 40%, or at maximum 50% turn out to vote for the European Parliament election. We may well have to ask ourselves why this problem of the citizens failing to turn out continues to plague European politics.

According to a Eurobarometer survey 66% of the citizens in Europe get their political information from the media. Basically voters are impressed and influenced by the media. At the same time the media – not only the European, but also the international and national media – see the EU as a political identity, a political structure. Of course, not the British press, who see the EU as an economic structure. We want to better understand the reasons for the low turnout. It cannot be that the mistake is only in the communication of Europe, but perhaps the concept of Europe must be looked at.

When we talk about elections, we talk about candidates. At the moment you see the political parties in Europe have candidates, and most of them have manifestos – very good, very clever, and full of good points – but there are not too many European faces, or personalities, who can promote these manifestos to European voters. Maybe this is the weakness of the European system. When you have some European party groups, you cannot call them political parties because these European elections are

all conducted at national level, with a little bit of help from the centre.

Maybe it is time Europe started to think about the 2014 election. You need to have European leaders who can campaign for two or three years, as happens under the American model. Why should we not take inspiration from them? The voters will connect more with European politicians if we have leaders who can give a face to the campaign. It would be very interesting to have an internal competition within each party group for the leadership. At least then people will connect more with the European political dimension, and will understand more about the institutions, and all that is happening in Brussels. But it would be wonderful to vote for a person rather than party groups, because that is a little bit too technical to understand.

2014 EP elections via a European public sphere

23 May 2010

Successful European integration requires more than the implementation of efficient institutions and the harmonization of national and European policy making. It also involves processes of communication and the appearance of a public sphere that allows citizens to get involved in public debates about European politics.

Public sphere?

The idea of the public sphere can be traced back to ancient Greece. In ancient Greece, the polis-oikos division existed. Political life took place in the polis; the public sphere existed as a realm of discussion and common action. Citizens were free of productive labour, but their status depended on their role as the head of the oikos, or household. The Greek public sphere was the sphere of freedom and permanence, where distinction and excellence were possible. Nowadays we speak about a public sphere as a social area in which private citizens come together to discuss matters of common concern. In the public sphere a

public opinion will eventually be formed.

A public sphere began to emerge in the 18th century through the growth of coffee houses, literary and other societies, voluntary associations, and the growth of the press. Public conversations continue to be most important medium for the development of public knowledge, values, interpretations and self-understanding for change and innovation. Mass media play an essential role in the process of creating the modern public sphere; citizens depend on the media's information in order to establish their opinions and constructing public discourses.

Current discussions

Debates on public spheres mostly concern whether the European Union has its own public sphere or not and whether it is possible to talk about a pan-European public sphere independent of individual states or a European public sphere as a result of the Europeanization of the national public spheres.

Growing interest in the EU might also be triggered precisely out of the lack of transparency and accountability of the system. Empirically, we observe that citizens today can find more discussions of EU matters in quality newspapers than 20 years ago

following the increase of competencies of the EU.

According to relevant authors, a pan-European public sphere requires the existence of a common language in which EU citizens can communicate with one another, the existence of mass media with EU-wide reach and the existence of uniform journalistic and media cultures across all EU states.

A communicative space (or spaces) in which relatively unconstrained debate can take place is a vital ground for democracy. It has become increasingly relevant to discuss whether there could be a European public sphere. Traditionally, political theory and media theory have conceived of communicative spaces and public spheres in terms of what goes on inside nation states.

The introduction of the euro has created a symbol of Europe into the everyday lives of a wide audience, and therefore the argument concerning the public's detachment from European policies may no longer be as valid as it used to be.

Public sphere and the media

The mass media are the institutionalised forum of debate. According to a Eurobarometer survey

66% of the citizens in Europe get their political information from the media. So voters are impressed and influenced by the media. At the same time the media - not only the European, but international and national media also - see the EU as a political identity, a political structure.

National media organisations devote rather limited resources to their news infrastructure in Brussels, and Brussels correspondents face tough competition with other foreign correspondents.

The media plays an important role in the Europeanization of the public sphere, but news coverage is strongly bound to national and international information sources and news-generating events, neglecting European politics.

So what next?

The existence of a pan-European public sphere is rejected by the majority of relevant writers. The public sphere remains an ideal, but it becomes a contingent product of the evolution of communicative action, rather than its basis. The public sphere is a precondition for realising popular sovereignty, because, in principle, it entitles everybody to speak without any limitations. The EU cannot continue

its integration process without appealing to the consensus of its citizens. It is a must to link the institutional structure and decision-making process with active involvement, acceptance and legitimacy among citizens.

For example, when we talk about elections, we talk about candidates. At the moment we can see that the political parties in Europe have candidates and most of them manifestos – which are all very good, very clever, and full of excellent ideas – but there are not too many European faces, or personalities, who can promote these manifestos to the European voters. Maybe this is the weakness of the European system. Currently, European party groups cannot be considered as political parties, because the European Parliament elections are conducted at national level, with a little help from the centre in Brussels.

Maybe now is the time for Europe's political leaders to start to think about the European elections in 2014. We need to have European leaders who can campaign for two or three years, similar to the American model. And why should we not take inspiration from our transatlantic neighbours? Voters will connect better with European politicians if we have leaders that can give a face to the campaign. And why not organise an internal competition within each European party

group to determine its leadership? At least then the citizens will connect more with the European political dimension, and might even learn more about institutions and everything that goes on here in Brussels. But above all it would be wonderful to vote for a person rather than a party group, because by the time the voters are able to understand all the technical information involved, it will be too late.

David Miliband - President of the European Commission in 2014?

3 October 2010

It was a pleasure for me to look at the recent dispute around the leadership of the British Labour Party. A campaign and congress in Manchester were full of suspense. David Miliband lost the Labour leadership elections by just over 1%. It's very clear for me that after these results David will leave Ed to set up his team and to prepare the party for the upcoming British elections.

From a European point of view David inspires as a real politician, with big potential to become the President of European Commission in 2014. But the EU and the election system needs to change in order to get politicians like David involved at a European level.

In November 2009, UK foreign secretary David Miliband ruled himself out as a candidate for the new EU "top job" of High Representative for Foreign Policy. This resulted in Catherine Ashton taking on the position (coming from the same party as David). At the time he wanted to lead the Labour Party, considering the possibility of becoming the next British PM. He clearly

preferred a tough campaign over a comfortable seat in Brussels. Many analysts will see this as political suicide, but I do not agree.

David can do more for Britain and for Europe. Now is the time for Europe's political leaders to start to think about the European elections in 2014. We need to have European leaders who can campaign for two or three years, similar to the American model.

The key to my proposed mechanism is to conduct open elections for a representative of the Left as a candidate for the President of the European Commission. The selection phase should be very easy, clear and transparent. The decisive line is empowerment of the members, the activists. Their choice is the most important here. If too many bodies of the Socialists come together to "elect" the leader, it would not be good.

In each of the 27 countries there need to be primary elections in 2013. A more complicated election formula will be demotivating for the members.

In my opinion, David Miliband is one of the possible candidates for such an “exercise” and I am sure a lot of socialists would like to see him in the position of the President of the EC in 2014.

Have we spotted a European “Obama” in the political arena?

What kind of primary election in EU?

22 February 2011

In December 2010, at the PES Council it was decided that the European socialists and social-democrats would select their candidate for the European Commission Presidency through a democratic and transparent process. Therefore the PES Council will set up a Working Group "Candidate 2014" to discuss and propose a process by the end of the year. 2011 is the crucial year for the development of such a mechanism. The PES Council 2011 will adopt the criteria to stand as a candidate, including proposals for endorsement and the selection procedure at the end of the year.

A democratic and transparent process for designating the PES candidate is needed. European citizens should be confident with this approach. To make European politics more accessible and understandable it is necessary to propose leaders for this project, the leaders who are more accountable to the citizens.

More than that, I propose that the winner of the Socialist primary elections, the official candidate of the Left to candidate for the position of the

President of the European Commission, should have the responsibility to name the heads of the election list in each EU country for the European Parliament elections 2014. There needs to be a clear link between the primary elections and the EP elections and “the president team” is key to this process.

I do not believe in the model of a separate list, presented recently by MEP Andrew Duff, the Parliament’s *rapporteur* on a proposal to introduce a transnational list at the 2014 European elections. An additional list, for the “28th state, the European list”, will go in the wrong direction in building a European public sphere. What we want in the EU is not to have a European public sphere, independent from the 27 European national public spheres; we need a process of Europeanization of the 27 national public spheres.

I hope that EU leaders will now understand the importance of a transparent system during primary elections for the EP elections. I hope that the PES candidate for Presidency of the European Commission, together with the national heads of the lists of the member parties, will convey this message to European citizens.

David Miliband - back in Europe?

14 March 2011

I was positively surprised to see David Miliband back in the political arena, with a speech on the European left delivered at the London School of Economics. Last October I already expressed my view that David Miliband is one of the possible candidates from the socialists for the position of the President of the EC in 2014. But for this to happen, EU leaders of the left need to understand the importance of a transparent system for Primary elections before the EP elections. 2011 is the crucial year for the development of such a mechanism.



EU actors & EU citizens

Working in EU affairs in Brussels - beyond the EU institutions

9 January 2012

Brussels hosts more than 100,000 persons working in EU affairs. Less than 50% are based in the EU institutions, the vast majority: over 50,000, have a job in industry federations, consultancies, media, corporate, non-profit organisations, think tanks or regional and city representations.

As Europe's capital, Brussels has an atypical and specific job-market. It hosts national, regional, international and sectoral stakeholders who, together with the EU Institutions, form the so called "Community of EU actors".

Perm Rep's: countries, regions and cities

Every EU member state has a Permanent Representation to the EU, based in Brussels. These offices represent the country's interest in the EU, as well as giving policy advice to their national politicians like the Europe Minister and Prime Minister.

In addition there are also permanent representations

of European regions to the EU, based in Brussels, like the West Midlands European Service – a region in the UK; or the West Finland European office. These regional offices represent and promote their regions, providing services to their people.

Adding another layer to this are the representations of cities to the EU, based in Brussels, like the city of Prague. These offices represent, promote and organise their cities' interests, like the representations above, but on a narrower scale.

Industry & unions

About 3,000 corporations (Microsoft, Shell, Visa), trade associations, industry federations (European Banking Federation, European Wind and Energy Association, Eurometaux), unions and chambers of commerce (British Chamber of Commerce, Serbian Chamber of Commerce, Eurochambers) have an office in Brussels in order to be present in the community of EU actors. Even though most of these offices are relatively small, employing between one and five people, almost 50% of people employed are doing work related to public affairs.

Member organisations of Eurometaux make clear why this federation is present in Brussels: they

feel that the federation “constitutes the interface between the European non-ferrous metals industry and the European authorities and international or intergovernmental bodies” and that Eurometaux: “... is committed to establishing dialogue with the latter in order to ensure early consultation in all fields of policy and legislation that may affect industry and to asserting the sector’s views and positions in this respect.”

Consultancies

There are about 400 consultancy companies based in Brussels. They are unlike other consultancies in the sense that they mainly focus on EU affairs. Consultancies focus on public affairs (Edelman, Pleon, Fleishman Hillard), public relations (Ogilvy, Hill & Knowlton, Grayling), EU project management (Tipik, Quentes) and association management (Kellen Europe, AGEF).

Consultancies such as Hill & Knowlton ensure that clients communicate their points of view to the audiences that matter. The teams working at these consultancies are international, multilingual, diverse and dynamic, consistently delivering services with real, commercial return.

Media

95% of the journalists in Brussels are correspondents of national media. However, this number is declining, due to money issues, but also because of technological developments which make it easier to report on the EU from national offices.

The remaining 5% is covered by EU specialised media (3%) such as EurActiv, European Voice, EU Observer and by international media (2%) such as the FT, BBC, International Herald Tribune.

NGO's and think-tanks

NGOs like WWF, Greenpeace, Oxfam, Red Cross, Youth Forum, and Caritas Europe have EU offices in Brussels. Greenpeace "EU-Unit" says it is "based in Brussels, where we monitor and analyse the work of the institutions of the European Union (EU), expose deficient EU policies and laws, and challenge decision-makers to implement progressive solutions."

Brussels also houses a lot of think-tanks, like Friends of Europe, Centre for European Policy Studies, European Policy Centre. The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) was founded in Brussels in 1983 and "is among the most experienced and authoritative think-tanks

operating in the European Union today”. They provide a forum for debate on EU affairs, and have an in-house research department as well as an extensive network of partner institutes across the world.

Map of Brussels

This is just a superficial glance at job opportunities in Brussels. There are more sectors/fields to look at depending on your interest and background: law firms, political parties, platform organisations, international organisations in Brussels (UN, etc.).

From research it seems that all legal entities present in Brussels are here mainly for this purpose: to advocate/communicate their views or the views of their members as stakeholders in EU affairs – and they need employees to accomplish this.

Being in constant contact with them and providing coaching on the spot, it is my experience that most of the 3,000 industry associations; 400 consultancy companies; 300 region representations; and 200 non-profit organisations across Europe employ people in Brussels, providing a world of opportunities when you know where to look.

Europe of “small” topics

5 February 2012

More than 75% of legislation in EU member states originates from Brussels. It is important that the citizens are aware that legislation from Brussels not only covers very visible topics such as euro and finance, foreign policy or defence, but also technical and specific topics in the area of consumers and markets, such as air quality, water and food.

Basically, it needs to be clear that Europe is not only about “big” topics like EU funds or Schengen, the EU is also the place for activities on intricate technical issues, or “small” topics. Elected people and unelected national and European public servants continuously try to contribute to the quality of life for us and our families through legislation and policies on the European level.

These so-called EU standards and policies did not appear out of nowhere. They are the result of tough negotiation processes on several levels – from technical experts until adaptation at the political level. And I want to highlight that we also must allocate attention to these “small” topics, since they affect

the daily life of citizens.

It's important to bring these topics to citizens' attention. Moreover, it is imperative that the formulation of these legislations and policies is done in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, both national and European. We have to take into account their knowledge, skills, legitimate sectoral interest and any technical alternatives, which will contribute to a balanced political decision making process.

Two systems, one person: diaspora in Europe

10 March 2012

Diaspora can be likened to a Möbius strip. As a mathematical concept this strip is one surface with only one side and one boundary. Much like the people part of the diaspora, who live in two systems, two cultures, but bring both together in one person.

Even though people live in and out of their country of origin, they keep the same values and norms, enriched with other cultural influences. This makes them tremendous assets for their country of origin, as they still think based on those values and norms – they maintain the roots of their country of origin.

It's especially good when they get involved in politics in their country of origin. On the other hand they are big assets to the "adopting" country as well, with possible projection in the political system, especially at the local level. They enrich the way of thinking in both places – bringing experience and best practice to the table.

700,000 local actors in EU affairs

16 March 2012

The EU is a complex game in which Brussels has a key role in close connection with the 27 capitals of the EU member states. In previous messages I identified the 100,000 EU actors in Brussels, and now the “local EU actors”: those working in the member states will be mapped out.

On the executive level there is a unit in each ministry involved in the country’s position towards the relevant policies and thus in charge of national views in EU legislation. These units consist of about 10-20 people. Of course, some ministries have more people working on EU legislation issues, namely the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and EU Affairs. On top of this, there are also a number of national institutions or agencies who employ people who spend at least 50% of their time working with EU affairs.

On the legislative level, hundreds of people contribute to the connection of their country to the European agenda, especially with the Treaty of Lisbon. Now the national parliaments have the prerogative to spend more resources on the EU legislative process, and

each member of national parliament, each political group, and each political committee have their experts in EU policies.

Of course there are more institutions and people who play a role in this EU affairs mosaic. I don't believe I exaggerate when I say there are 10,000-15,000 people in the national institutions, in each of the 27 Member States, who can be considered "local actors in EU affairs", even though they are part-time in the majority of cases.

To all of this, we can add other sectors that are dynamic in relation to the capital of Europe: many companies, via their department of regulatory affairs, are active in legislative lobbying (direct or indirect) and know the EU arena in detail. Industry federations, chambers of commerce, NGOs, employer associations, unions, consultancy firms, and law firms are active also in EU affairs.

There are hundreds of journalists in each country that are writing about dynamics of the EU system, even though they may not be 100% aware of it all of the time. They write about politics, finance, education, and all kinds of other topics that have an EU dimension. There are also hundreds of teachers, university lecturers and professors who teach their students of

the world of co-decision and the construction of the EU institutions.

Without exaggerating I estimate that there are another 10,000-15,000 people in the private sector who are making a living (partially) by working in EU affairs.

Thus, looking at the public and private sector in each country there is a total of 20,000-30,000 people working in connection to the EU. It is normal that in each country the number of people involved in EU affairs will vary depending on population, how long the country has already been an EU member state, government structure, the culture of the country and the level of leadership in the EU.

Basically an average of 25,000 people work in EU affairs in each country – which means 700,000 people in the EU who are rather more connected than “the ordinary citizen” to Brussels.

Brussels - the place where “HR signals” make a difference

22 March 2012

For about five years, I have taught courses on EU communication techniques in Belgium, Italy, and Romania. The strength of the course lies in the presentation of “actors” in the so-called “private sector of European affairs” – and not in the EU institutional world of Brussels.

The most interesting and captivating part of the course is about communication and EU actors, and especially how the private sector plays a role in EU affairs. Being in constant contact with private sector companies, and considering there are lots of training possibilities for the EPSO competitive examination (to become an EU public servant); I launched a product that provides coaching on this topic. There is no other training for the approximately 50,000 jobs available in the private sector (of the 100,000 people working in EU affairs in Brussels)!

Practically, those interested in finding a job in Brussels will learn about the “EU job market”, industry federations and unions, from corporate to consultancy

firms, and from regions to NGOs - in one training day. In order to offer a complete package, there is a human resources (HR) expert, to explain concretely how to write a good CV and letter of motivation, prepare an interview, but also how to act during an interview and how to follow up after the initial recruitment phase, all focused on the Brussels job environment.

The aim of this message is not to advertise the next training, but to present some of the following tips which mainly arise from this training. There is a fantastic pool of expertise in Brussels, with a pile of diplomas and skills, but it is a pity that they understand little of the market surrounding them.

The private sector part of the EU affairs job market is very superficially presented in higher education (as opposed to the institutions and their possibilities). This creates the situation that young graduates from prestigious universities in Europe do not see the 20,000 jobs to be found in for example the EU federation sector. An even more frustrating and ridiculous picture: statistics show that 5,000 of these jobs (incl. starter- mid- and high level jobs) are available every year, due to the dynamics of the Brussels EU job market.

Yes, Brussels is a very atypical market, but full of

sense when you start to understand it. If you want to work here, you need to understand the market of employers and their needs and requests.

It's a paradox, but 95% of private sector recruitment is done by people who have no training or professional experience in terms of HR. There are secretary generals, directors, and consultants who lead small companies (most of them with a team of fewer than 10), also taking care of the recruitment process. But whether it is a good or bad thing: it's reality!

Given the particularities of employers and the intercultural environment, the issue that is often very confusing is which "signals" you can give that make the difference in the majority of cases. "He studied law": means that he understands legal mechanisms; "she did an MA in London": means she is perfect in English; "he was an MEP's assistant": means that he has good political connections'; "she was active in NGO as a student": means she knows how to work without too many comments and questions.

These are thoughts that can occur in a 30 seconds time-frame when a CV is read, or rather when it is scanned. A person will not spend more than two minutes looking at a CV; a five minutes delay to a meeting can even shorten this time and can be fatal

to your application. There are mental filters making selections, which eliminate CVs, in order to have the best in the micro-system that is Brussels.

EU: consultation or participation

6 April 2012

When it comes to involving and engaging citizens in the decision-making process on a European level, there is confusion about terminology.

Some see “asking interested citizens what they prefer” as active public participation. “Asking the interested citizen” is not what consultation is about. Consultation is a top-down professional or bureaucrat-led process. At best, consultation produces choices from which the selected consultants can choose. The worst-case scenario is that community preferences are ignored, because they do not fit some preconceived model of “what the public needs”, designed in the minds of bureaucrats, politicians and professionals.

Participation is a process of setting up structures, within which professionals or bureaucrats become facilitators of a broad-based deliberative process. Participation is more difficult and time-consuming than consultation. It requires the leaders of the process to have the commitment to public participation and at the same time also the techniques to enact it. It requires skills in working with groups, but also skills in keeping the

lobby group representatives or vociferous individuals to dominate and unduly influence proceedings.

Often enough there is confusion between consultation and participation processes. People taking part in a consultation process can be disappointed and disillusioned when the results clearly show that their recommendations/opinions/ideas have not been taken up. So when questions such as “why are citizens not engaged?” are asked - well, the system is just not structured to facilitate engagement.

How is Belgium “playing” in the EU?

28 April 2012

I have lived in Belgium for 15 years already – in Brussels, the capital of Europe, to be more precise. I’m amazed how this “small” city managed to adapt and to open itself to fit in the European structure. To host the main offices of the EU institutions and the “army” of the EU lobby, Brussels needed to bring a lot of logistics and planning skills to the table. However, the Belgians viewed it as an incredible opportunity for them, and currently the EU is a prominent local industry. It’s not by chance that the Brussels region is the 3rd developed region in the EU, behind the rich London metropolitan area and Luxembourg. Yes, it is the same official ranking of the 268 EU regions, where the North-East Region of Romania is last.

The Belgian business community adapted to these European opportunities. The European Business Summit (EBS) is perhaps the most visible expression of how the business community takes advantage of the geographic proximity to the “heart of Europe”. The department in charge with external relations for the Federation of Enterprises in Belgium (FEB), proposed to the EU Federation of Enterprises: BusinessEurope,

to organise an event in Brussels, for the EU business community. The first edition took place in 2000 and was held every two years, after the model of an event called "European Davos". The event flourished and it became an annual event from 2006. Some data about the event over the years: it attracts 2,000 participants each year, 5 European Commissioners, tens of MEPs, hundreds of CEOs, numerous journalists – all with a budget of over 2 million euros each year, bringing together business and politics.

The EBS 2012 was built around the theme of "Skills for Growth". It was a great success with the attendance of high level guests and keynote speeches from Herman van Rompuy, José Manuel Barroso, Mario Monti and Elio Di Rupo.

Since 2002 I have been part of this event and it is always a wonderful and interesting experience. When you think that the Romanian associations are still fighting to show the business community in Romania that the EU is important, and that it is imperative to have policy papers about EU sectoral legislation from a Romanian perspective. It wouldn't be bad if Romania looks ahead - why not organise and host a "Balkan Business Summit", an annual congress in

Bucharest, in the future? Poland, for example, already hosts the “Central European Economic Forum” in Krynica, so why not?

What I did for the EU

3 June 2012

Forbes took a very interesting initiative: they asked several personalities what they have done for their countries. Instantaneously I asked myself the same question, but to add an original touch, I asked myself what I did for the EU.

From 1993 until 1997 I coordinated activities for the local branch of the European Students' Forum (AEGEE) in Cluj. I organized events, with the main purpose to link Romanian student activity with the EU reality. Via these initiatives hundreds of young Romanians have a better understanding about the European system through conferences, seminars or summer universities. In short: via active participation. Later between 1997 and 1999, I was elected to sit in the European Board of AEGEE Europe, coordinating the Public Relations Department from Brussels.

In 1996 I founded an organisation called "House of Europe" in my home city Cluj with the main object to put together the local community and decision makers from Brussels. Existing more than 15 years, this organization did various projects which have an

impact on the life of the citizens.

Founded by me in 2003, the Romanian-EU Club in Brussels is now the established platform for Romanians working in the capital of Europe. Via a study done in 2006 called “Footprint Romania”, we publicly presented the potential of Romanians in the EU.

In 2004 I was the co-founder of EurActiv in Romania – a technical media specialized in covering EU legislation and policy news. This portal helped thousands of Romanians to get a better understanding of EU affairs before the accession into the EU, as well as after accession when Romania became a full member state.

In 2007 I started a blog, which I still maintain, in order to give Romanians insights into the EU system.

Together with some friends from the Brussels community, since 3 years, under the brand GroupRomania, we try to identify the direction of a possible evolution of the Romanian system, for a better anchor to the EU policies.

For more than 11 years, I contribute to the EurActiv project and moreover in the last 18 months I have

the honour to coordinate the offices in 15 capitals across Europe.

After I obtained my PhD, I developed a lecture in “EU communication techniques”, which I teach to students in Brussels, Italy and Romania.

I wrote three books about the EU and its contemporary dilemma’s, and published more than 1,000 articles about Romania and the EU. The main purpose of these materials is to create a dialogue on EU citizenship.

Less than one year ago I set up a one day intensive course, helping people to find a job in Euro-Brussels, complementing knowledge on the well-known public sector with my expertise and experience in the private sector.

And finally, through my candidature for the European Parliament elections in 2009, I tried to explain the citizens that the EU makes sense, and that political implication is needed for one who wants to assume his or her responsibilities.

The impact of the BRIC countries on EU affairs

15 June 2012

The European Business Summit (EBS) is a mirror of current trends in EU affairs, much like the concept of the “Facebook timeline”. When ten years ago the EBS panellists were mainly from Western Europe, progressively we have seen a change towards business people and politicians from Central Europe. This was especially due to the big EU enlargement of 2004. This trend however was not very sustainable, because of the economical profile of these countries.

I also remember five-six years ago there was a great stir when ArcelorMittal bought the Belgian steel factories in Belgium. At the time we noticed many expressions referring to the Indians as the masters of the leading industry in Wallonia. In that year at EBS Mr. Mittal was one of the VIP’s at the opening ceremony, along with the President of the European Commission.

After some years have passed, what is the current trend at EBS 2012? The BRIC countries: Joao Pedro Taborda of the Brazilian aviation company Embraer

explained the Brazilian investment in the Portuguese economy in one of the panels. The Russian ambassador to the EU and energy giants from Russia (like Gazprom) were very present in the programme as well. A lot of Indians participated in panels, next to European commissioners and top representatives from the private sector. But also the Chinese were very present, an outstanding example is Huawei.

Rating of the EU citizens

13 July 2012

The EU is going through a difficult phase currently, but at the level of the EU citizens signals have already been clear before. I'll give you a clear personal example regarding this issue.

In 1985 the European Students' Forum (AEGEE) was born in Paris. Everything was done from Paris, but in coordination with other university cities in Germany, Belgium, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and France – basically the main EU members. Due to the iron curtain, Romania and other Eastern-European countries have not been involved from the beginning. It was only in 1989, right after the events known to all of us, which AEGEE moved very fast with expanding to the Eastern-European countries.

In my home city Cluj-Napoca, the association was already present in spring 1990. However, when I started to lead AEGEE-Cluj-Napoca in 1995, the EU was still very far and untouchable for almost all Romanians. Only the rector of the "Babeş-Bolyai" University, Mr. Andrei Marga, the present Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, connected to the

Community and its structures in his speeches.

In 1997, I was elected in the EU board of the association, working from Brussels. And I started to feel that I could explain the “EU phenomenon” more easily. It was, for example, not at all popular with the youth in France, in Italy and Spain it was something reduced to a tourist and cultural summer experience, and in Germany and the Netherlands it was seen as a good experience to put on the CV. Instead, Polish, Hungarians, Slovenians, and lots of Romanians (Oana, Călin, Diana, Voichița, Anca, etc.) came to Brussels, as members of the European Board. It was the time that EU was very popular in candidate countries, but losing ground to the 15 EU Member States.

After 2005, paradox or not, the interest from people of the Eastern-European countries in the European movement (AEGEE is not a pro-European association, but a network of people debating about the EU) went down. Taken advantage that AEGEE is present in 40 countries, the European board started to include youth from Serbia, Croatia, Ukraine, Russia and even Georgia. This shows indirectly that EU has a lot of fans in that area.

I don't want to put forward a superficial conclusion, but I feel that the EU project is kind of "tired", and the youth explains this directly via their lack of engagement.

The job market and the “community of the EU actors”

18 July 2012

“The community of EU actors” is huge with 100,000 people working in Brussels and an additional 700,000 people working in the member states - in the public sector, as well as the private sector. What profile do these people have?

I. Working in Brussels – beyond the EU institutions

Brussels hosts more than 100,000 persons working in EU affairs. Only 50% of the jobs are to be found in the EU institutions. The other 50,000 EU actors work at industry federations, consultancies, media, corporate organisations, non-profit organizations, think tanks, region and city representations, etc. The objective of these entities is to advocate and communicate their views or the views of their members as stakeholders in EU affairs – and they need employees to accomplish this, providing a world of opportunities.

As Europe’s capital, Brussels has an atypical and specific job-market. It hosts sectorial, national, regional, and international stakeholders that, together with the EU

institutions, make up the so called “community of EU actors”. Statistics show that 5,000 jobs from all levels (start- mid- and high level), are available every year, due to the dynamics of the Brussels EU job market.

This is therefore only a superficial glance on job opportunities in Brussels. There are more sectors/ fields to look at, depending on your interest and background: law firms, political parties, platform organisations, international organisations in Brussels (UN, etc.).

1. Perm Rep's

Every EU member state has a Permanent Representation to the EU, based in Brussels. These offices represent the country's interest in the EU, as well as giving policy advice to their national politicians like the Prime Minister and Europe Minister. In addition there are about 300 European regions and cities, who also have their “permanent representations” to the EU based in Brussels, like the Representation of Veneto Region, West Finland European office or the city of Prague. These regional and city offices represent and promote their regions and cities, providing services to their people, but on a more narrow scale.

2. Industry and unions

About 400 corporations, like Microsoft, Shell, and Visa; 3,000 industry associations, like the European Banking Federation, the European Wind and Energy Association, and Eurometaux; numerous unions and chambers of commerce, like the British Chamber of Commerce, the Serbian Chamber of Commerce, and Eurochambers have offices in Brussels in order to be present in the community of EU actors. Even though most of these offices are quite small, employing 1-5 people, almost 50% of these employees are doing work related to public affairs.

3. Consultancies

There are about 400 consultancy companies based in Brussels. They differ from mainstream consultancies in the sense that they mainly focus on EU affairs. Consultancies focus on public affairs (Edelman, Pleon, Fleishman Hillard, Cabinet DN); public relations (Ogilvy, Hill & Knowlton, Burson-Marsteller, Grayling); EU project management (Mostra, Gopa-Cartemill, Tipik, Quentes); and association management (Kellen Europe, AGEF). The teams working at these consultancies are international, multilingual, diverse and dynamic, consistently delivering services with real, commercial return.

4. Media

There are approximately 1,000 journalists reporting from Brussels. 95% of the journalists in Brussels are correspondents of national media. However, this amount is declining due to financial crises, but also because technological developments make it easier to report on the EU from the national offices. The remaining 5% is covered by specialized EU media (3%) like EurActiv, European Voice, EU Observer and by international media (2%) like FT, Wall Street Journal, International Herald Tribune.

5. NGOs and think-tanks

NGOs like WWF, Greenpeace, Oxfam, Red Cross, Youth Forum, and Caritas Europe have offices in Brussels. Brussels also houses a lot of think-tanks, like Friends of Europe, Centre for European Policy Studies, European Policy Centre. They provide a forum for debate on EU affairs, and have an in-house research departments as well as extensive networks of partner institutes across the world.

II. Brussels – the place where "HR signals" make a difference

Brussels: the a-typical and specific job market

requires an atypical and specific approach to applying for a job. There is a fantastic pool of expertise in Brussels, with a pile of “diploma’s and skills”, but practically few people understand the scope of the market surrounding them. The private sector of EU affairs is furthermore very superficially presented in higher education (as opposed to the institutions and their possibilities). This creates the situation that young graduates in Europe do not see for example the 20,000 jobs to be found in the EU federation sector.

To work in Brussels requires an understanding of the market of the employers, their needs and their requests. It’s a paradox, but 95% of private sector recruitment is done by people who have no training or professional experience in terms of HR. There are secretary generals, directors, and consultants who lead small companies (most of them with a team of less than 10), also taking care of the recruitment process. And whether it is good or bad: it’s the reality.

Given the particularities of the employers and the intercultural environment, the issue that often is very confusing is which “signals” can you give that makes the difference in your application in the majority of cases. “He studied law”: means that he understands legal mechanisms; “she did an MA in London”: means she is proficient in English; “he was

an MEP assistant”: means that he has good political connections; “she was active in NGO’s as a student”: means she knows how to work without too many comments and questions. These are thoughts that can occur in a 30 seconds time-frame when a CV is read, or rather: is scanned. A person will not spend more than 2 minutes looking at a CV, and a 5 minutes delay to a meeting can even shorten this time and can be fatal to your application. There are mental filters making selections and eliminating CVs, in order to have the best in the micro-system that is Brussels.

III. Life outside Brussels: local actors in EU affairs

The EU is a complex system in which Brussels has a key role. However, it is imperative to realise that Brussels works in close connection with the 27 capitals of the EU member states. What about the “local EU actors”, working in the member states?

A unit in each ministry is involved in the country’s position towards the relevant EU policies. The people in charge of national views in EU legislation are thus scattered across the national ministries. The units exist of about 10-20 people. Logically, some ministries have more people working on EU legislation issues than others namely the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and EU Affairs. In addition, there are also a number of

national institutions or agencies who employ people who spend at least 50% of their time working on EU affairs.

Hundreds of people contribute to connect their country's interests to the European Agenda. Especially now with the Treaty of Lisbon, the national parliaments have the prerogative to spend more resources on the EU legislative process, and consequently each member of national parliament, each political group, and each political committee have their experts in EU policies.

To all of this, we can add other sectors that are connected to the capital of Europe: many companies, via their department of regulatory affairs, are active in legislative lobbying (direct or indirect) and know the EU arena in detail. National industry federations, chambers of commerce, NGOs, employer associations, unions, consultancy firms, and law firms are also active in EU affairs.

There are hundreds of journalists in the member states writing about dynamics of the EU system, even though they may not be aware of it 100% of the time. They write about finance, transport, agriculture, education, and all kinds of other topics that have an EU dimension. There are also hundreds of teachers,

university lecturers and professors who teach their students about the world of co-decision and the construction of the EU institutions.

Looking at the public and private sector in each country there is a total of 20,000-30,000 people working in connection with the EU affairs mosaic – the local EU actors. It is normal that in each country the number of people involved in EU affairs will vary depending on population, how long the country already is an EU member state, government structures, the culture of the country and the level of leadership in the EU. However, if we take an average of 25,000 people working in EU affairs in each country, this means that 700,000 people in the member states work in EU affairs.

Universities and Euro-Brussels

20 July 2012

We are used to see the university as a centre of higher education. I remember a research done in 2000, together with an international team for the European Institute of Romania, regarding 4 topics in the agenda of the Romanian universities: education, training, research and consulting.

But what is happening in Euro-Brussels from the university point of view? Most of the big universities understand how the system functions and they actually maintain a “permanent representation” in the capital of Europe. I remember a meeting I had some years ago with the Director of the International Relations Department of the University of Madrid. He explained why his university has 10 people permanently on staff in Brussels: “EU research funding programmes contribute millions of euro every year to our university. It is normal to have people to implement and manage the relationship especially with the European Commission”.

Given that the EU has little competence in field of education, most of the universities therefore focus

their lobby activities in Brussels on the research policies. This is the priority of the European University Association as well, representing the interests of more than 800 universities.

There are 2 more associations of universities with permanent representations in Brussels: the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe and the Santander Group European Universities Network.

The University of Madrid, the university with the biggest number of students in Europe, is not only university with physical presence in Brussels: the University of Helsinki has support from the Representation of Helsinki to the EU; the University of Ljubljana can count on support from the Slovenian Business and Research Association; and the University of Parma is supported by the regional representation of the Emilia-Romagna Region.

In my opinion the universities have a very good relation with the local and regional representations in Brussels, but they don't manage to have a common agenda to the chambers of commerce and industry.

To summarize, the motto of universities in Euro-Brussels combines "academic seriousness" with "financial pragmatism".

Brussels: the list of the interest groups

11 April 2013

In Brussels, there are approximately 3,000 offices of European associations. Having been actively involved with them between 2001 and 2010, I had approximately 2,500 meetings where I discussed their communication strategy. Here I will try to analyse the key interest groups for specific EU policy areas and place each organisation on maximum in two representative European policies. The main associations present in the capital of Europe:

I. Energy policy

1. AEBIOM - European Biomass Association,
2. CECED - European Committee of Domestic Equipment Manufacturers,
3. CEDEC - European Confederation of Local Public Energy Distribution Companies,
4. CEFIC – European Chemical Industry Council,
5. CEWEP - Confederation of European Waste-to-Energy Plants,
6. COGEN EUROPE - European Association for the Promotion of Cogeneration,
7. EAA - European Aluminium Association,

8. EASE - European Association for Storage of Energy,
9. EBB - European Biodiesel Board,
10. EBIO - European Bioethanol Fuel Association,
11. EFET - European Federation of Energy Traders,
12. EGEC - European Geothermal Energy Council,
13. EHA - European Hydrogen Association,
14. ENERGIE-CITES - European Association of Local Authorities Inventing their Energy Future,
15. ENTSO-E - European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity,
16. EPIA - European Photovoltaic Industry Association,
17. EPPSA - European Power Plants Suppliers Association,
18. EREC - European Renewable Energies Council,
19. ESHA - European Small Hydropower Association,
20. ESTELA - European Solar Thermal Electricity Association,
21. ESTIF - European Solar Thermal Industry Federation,
22. ESWET - European Suppliers for Waste-to-Energy Technology,
23. EUBIA - European Biomass Industry Association,
24. EUFORES - European Forum for Renewable Energy Sources,
25. EU-OEA - European Ocean Energy Association,
26. EUnited - European Engineering Industries

- Association,
- 27.EURACOAL - European Association for Coal and Lignite,
- 28.EUREC Agency,
- 29.EURELECTRIC - The Union of the Electricity Industry,
- 30.EURIMA - European Insulation Manufacturers Association,
- 31.EUROACE - European Alliance of Companies for Energy Efficiency in Buildings,
- 32.EUROFUEL - European Heating Oil Association,
- 33.EUROGAS - European Union of the Natural Gas Industry,
- 34.EUROHEAT & POWER - International Association for District Heating and Cooling,
- 35.EUROMETAUX - European Association of Metals,
- 36.EUROPIA - European Petroleum Industry Association,
- 37.EWEA - European Wind Energy Association,
- 38.FEDARENE - European Federation of Agencies and Regions for Energy and Environment
- 39.FORATOM - European Atomic Forum,
- 40.FUEL CELL EUROPE - European Association of Fuel Cell Manufacturers,
- 41.GIE - Gas Infrastructure Europe,
- 42.IMA EUROPE - European Industrial Minerals Association,
- 43.OGP - International Association of Oil and Gas

Producers.

II. Environment policy

1. ACE - The Alliance for Beverage Cartons and the Environment,
2. APEAL - The Association of European Producers of Steel for Packaging,
3. CEI-Bois - European Confederation of Woodworking Industries,
4. CELMA - Federation of National Manufacturers Associations of Luminaries and Electro technical Components for Luminaries in the European Union,
5. CEMBUREAU - European Cement Association,
6. CEOCInternational-InternationalConfederation of Inspection and Certification Organisations,
7. CEPE – The Voice of Paint, Printing Ink, and Artists’ Colours in Europe,
8. CEPF - Confederation of European Forest Owners,
9. CEPI - Confederation of European Paper Industries,
10. CEPIFINE - European Association of Fine Paper Manufacturers,
11. CEPIPRINT - Association of European Publication Paper Producers,
12. EURO-GRAPH - European Association of Graphic Paper Producers,

13. COCERAL - European Association Representing the Trade in Cereals, Rice, Feedstuffs, Oilseeds, Olive oil, Oils and Fats and Agro supply,
14. COPA-COGECA – The United Voice of Farmers and their Co-operatives in the European Union,
15. CPIV - Standing Committee of the European Glass Industry,
16. ECPA - European Crop Protection Association,
17. EFFA - European Flavour & Fragrance Association,
18. Fertilizers Europe - European Fertilizer Industry,
19. ELC - European Lamp Companies Federation,
20. EMPAC - European Metal Packaging,
21. ESA - European Seed Association,
22. EUREAU - European Union of National Associations of Water Suppliers and Waste Water Services,
23. EUROALLIANGES - Association of European Ferro-alloy Producers,
24. EUROCITIES - Network of Major European Cities,
25. EUROCOMMERCE – The Voice for Commerce in Europe,
26. EUROFER - European Steel Association,
27. EUROGYPSUM - Association of European Gypsum Industries,
28. EUROPEN - European Organization for Packaging and the Environment,

29. FACE - Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the European Union,
30. FEAD - European Federation of Waste Management and Environmental Services,
31. FECC - European Association of Chemical Distributors,
32. FEFCO - European Federation of Corrugated Board Manufacturers,
33. FEVE - European Container Glass Federation,
34. Plastics Europe - Association of Plastics Manufacturers,
35. Vinyl2010 - European PVC industry.

III. Transport policy

1. ACEA - European Automobile Manufacturers' Association,
2. AEA - Association of European Airlines,
3. ACEM - Motorcycle Industry in Europe,
4. ACI-Europe - Airports Council International,
5. ASD - Aerospace and Defence Industries Association,
6. ASECAP - European Association of Operators of Talled Road Infrastructures,
7. CER - The Community of European Railway,
8. CESA - Community of European Shipyards' Association,
9. CLECAT - European Association for Forwarding,

Transport, Logistic and Customs Services,
10. CLEPA- European Association of Automotive Suppliers,
11. CORTE - Confederation of Organisations in Road Transport Enforcement,
12. EBAA - Association for Business Aviation in Europe,
13. ECA - European Cockpit Association,
14. ECAR - European Campaign for the Freedom of the Automotive Parts and Repair Market,
15. ECF - European Cyclists' Federation,
16. ECG - European Car-transport Group of Interest,
17. ECTA - European Chemical Transport Association,
18. EFIP - European Federation of Inland Ports,
19. EIA - European Intermodal Association,
20. EIM - European Rail Infrastructure Managers,
21. ELFAA – Low Fares Airline Association,
22. ERTICO-ITS Europe - Intelligent Transport Systems and Services,
23. ETRMA - European Tyre & Rubber Manufacturers' Association,
24. ESPO - European Sea Ports Organisation,
25. ESC – European Shippers' Council,
26. FEHRL - Forum of European National Highway Research Laboratories,
27. FIA – International Federation of Automobiles,
28. IACA - The International Air Carrier Association,
29. INE - Inland Navigation Europe,

- 30. IRU - International Road Transport Union,
- 31. UIRR - International Union of Combined Road-Rail Transport Companies,
- 32. UITP - International Association of Public Transport,
- 33. UNIFE - Union of European Railway Industries.

IV. Health policy

- 1. BEUC - European Consumers' Organisation,
- 2. CAOBISCO - Association of Chocolate, Biscuit and Confectionery Industries of the European Union,
- 3. CED - Council of European Dentists,
- 4. Cosmetics Europe - European Cosmetics Association,
- 5. CPME - Council on Podiatric Medical Education,
- 6. EAEPC- European Association of Euro-Pharmaceutical Companies,
- 7. EAHP - European Association of Hospital Pharmacists,
- 8. EAMDA - European Alliance of Neuromuscular Disorders Associations,
- 9. ECCO - European Crohn's and Colitis Organisation,
- 10. ECPC - European Cancer Patient Coalition,
- 11. EGA - European Generic Medicines Association,
- 12. EFN - European Federation of Nurses

Associations,

13. EFNA – European Federation of Neurological Associations,

14. EFPIA – European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industry Associations,

15. EMHF – European Men’s Health Forum,

16. EPHA – European Public Health Alliance,

17. EUCOMED – The Voice of the Medical Technology Industry in Europe,

18. EuropaBio – European Association for Bioindustries,

19. EPF - European Patients’ Forum,

20. FoodDrinkEurope – Confederation of the Food and Drink Industries of the European Union,

21. FVE – Federation of Veterinarians of Europe,

22. IFAH – The International Federation for Animal Health,

23. PGEU – The Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union.

V. Agriculture policy

1. AAF – European Starch Industry Association,

2. AEBIOM- European Biomass Association,

3. AIJN – European Fruit Juice Association,

4. AIPCE – European Fish Processors Association,

5. AMFEP - Association of Manufacturers and Formulators of Enzymes Products,

6. ASSUC – European Association of Sugar Traders,
7. BREWERS OF EUROPE - Voice of the European Brewing Sector to the European Institutions and International Organisations,
8. CEEREAL - European Breakfast Cereal Association,
9. CEEV - European Wine Committee,
10. CEFS - European Association of Sugar Producers,
11. CEJA – European Council of Young Farmers,
12. CEPF - Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund,
13. CIUS – European Sugar Users,
14. COCERAL - European Association Representing the Trade in Cereals, Rice, Feedstuffs, Oilseeds, Olive oil, Oils and Fats and Agro supply,
15. COPA-COGECA - The United Voice of Farmers and their Co-operatives in the European Union,
16. CPIV – Comité permanent international du vinaigre,
17. ECPA – European Crop Protection Association,
18. EDA – European Dairy Association,
19. EFEMA – European Food Emulsifiers Manufacturers Association,
20. EFMA – European Fertilizer Manufacturers Association,
21. EISA – European Initiative for Sustainable Development in Agriculture,
22. ELO – European Landowners’ Organization,

- 23. ENSA – European Natural Soy food Association,
- 24. ESA – European Seed Association,
- 25. EUROPECHE – Association of National Organizations of Fishing Enterprises in the European Union,
- 26. EUVEPRO – European Federation of Manufacturers, Distributors and Users of Vegetable Proteins for Human Consumption,
- 27. FEDIMA – Federation of European Union Manufacturers and Suppliers of Ingredients to the Bakery, Confectionery and Patisserie Industries,
- 28. FEDIOL - EU Oil and Protein meal Industry,
- 29. FEFAC – European Feed Manufacturers’ Federation,
- 30. FIC – Federation of the Condiment and Sauce,
- 31. FoodDrinkEurope – Confederation of the Food and Drink Industries of the European Union,
- 32. FRUCOM - The Official Representation of Body of European Traders in Dried Fruit, Edible nuts, Processed Fruit & Vegetables, Processed Fishery Products and Honey,
- 33. OEICT – European Organisation of Tomato Industries,
- 34. Potato Europe – Committee of the European Starch Potato Processors’ unions,
- 35. PROFEL - European Association of Fruit and Vegetable Processing Industries,
- 36. SpiritsEurope - European Spirits Organisation.

VI. IT policy

1. ACT - The Association of Commercial Television in Europe,
2. AeA Europe – The Association of the European Hearing Aid Acousticians,
3. AER - The Association of European Radios,
4. AFCEA Europe – The Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association,
5. BSA - Business Software Alliance,
6. Cable Europe - European Cable Communications Association,
7. CETIC – Centre of Excellence in Information and Communication Technologies,
8. CISAC – International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers,
9. COMPTIA – The Computing Technology Industry Association,
10. Digital Europe – Voice of the European Digital Technology Industry,
11. EARTO – European Association of Research and Technology Organisations,
12. EBU – European Broadcasting Union,
13. ECSDA – European Central Securities Depositories Association,
14. ECTA – European Competitive Telecommunications Association,
15. EGTA – Association of Television and Radio

Sales Houses,

16. EMCITA – European Media, Communication and Information Technology Association,

17. EMO – European Music Office,

18. ETIS – The Global IT Association of Telecommunications,

19. ETNO – European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association,

20. GESAC – European Grouping of Societies of Authors and Composers,

21. GSM Europe – European Interest Group of the GSM Association,

22. IFPI – International Federation of the Phonographic Industry,

23. ISFE – Interactive Software Federation of Europe.

VII. Financial services policy

1. AIM – Mutual Insurance Companies Corporate,

2. AMICE – Association of Mutual Insurers and Insurance Cooperatives in Europe,

3. BIPAR – European Federation of Insurance Intermediaries,

4. CFE – European Fiscal Confederation,

5. EACB – European Association of Co-operative Banks,

6. EALIC – European Association for Listed

Companies,

7. EAPB – European Association of Public Banks,
8. EBF – European Banking Federation,
9. EBIC – European Banking Industry Committee,
10. ECBS – European Committee for Banking Standards,
11. EDFI – European Development Finance Institutions,
12. EFAMA – European Federation of Investment Funds and Companies,
13. EFBS – European Federation of Building Societies,
14. EFR – European Financial Services Round Table,
15. EFRAG – European Financial Reporting Advisory Group,
16. EMF – European Mortgage Federation,
17. EPC – European Payments Council,
18. ESBG – European Savings Banks Group,
19. EUROFINAS – European Federation of Finance House Associations,
20. Euroshareholders – The confederation of European Shareholders Associations,
21. EVCA – European Private Equity & Venture Capital Association,
22. FEE – Federation of European Accountants,
23. FESE – Federation of European Stock Exchanges,
24. INSURANCE EUROPE – European Insurance and Reinsurance Federation,

25. Leaseurope – European Federation of Leasing
Company Associations,

26. SWIFT - Society for Worldwide Interbank
Financial Telecommunication.



Future EU

Status of Europe's "Ministry of Foreign Affairs"

11 February 2012

An interesting approach is taken by Stefan Lehne, visiting scholar at Carnegie Europe, about the European External Action Service (EEAS). The big paradox seems to be that since the EEAS has become active – European foreign policy is less visible and effective than before its existence.

There are several technical issues, or "design flaws", that Lehne addresses in his publication. But that is to be expected – transforming plans on paper to practice always needs reviewing and adapting. There are practical circumstances that one could never have foreseen whilst working out an idea on paper. These issues can be resolved in time though. For example, not every member state has embassies all over the world – this is where the EEAS can win in effectiveness.

However, if we want Europe to be big in foreign policy, we need to take care of how this "Foreign Ministry" of Europe is perceived inside and outside the EU. The success of the EEAS not only hinges on technical

issues: visibility is at least as important.

Look at Hilary Clinton, in charge of the foreign ministry of the US. As Secretary of State, she is a well-known face across the globe. We just cannot compare her with Baroness Ashton, who is not as well-known as Europe's "high representative", although she does great work behind the scenes.

Now, with the Treaty of Lisbon, whether we like it or not, we already have four visible leaders of the EU: the president of the EU (Council), the president of the European Commission, the president of the European Parliament, and the leader of the country currently in charge via a six months rotating presidency. To push a fifth person to an external visible position – to have another leader – is difficult. We see this clearly in a survey circulated internally in the Commission. The survey shows that Ashton's visibility in national media is the second lowest out of all commissioners.

Granted: visibility is a challenging problem. Not in the least due to the fact that the EU is not one state - there are 27 voices, representing 27 individual national interests that need to be taken into account. It will be next to impossible, for example, to imagine Ashton addressing the press at the UN Security Council to speak for Europe, as Clinton does for the US. We need

to find a balance to carry out one European foreign policy, while still keeping the traditional national foreign policy channels running.

Van Rompuy's second mandate. EU visibility.

1 March 2012

Introduced by the new Treaty of Lisbon, the Council has a president for 2.5 years – extendable for another 2.5 years. As the first ever president of the Council, Herman van Rompuy is almost at the end of his first term and is likely to be reappointed for a second term, according to The Guardian.

This reappointment is not widely covered in the media; moreover it is much in the shadow – and not too visible to the EU citizens. We notice that when we elect national presidents, especially by popular vote, that this has huge coverage across the borders and it catches the interest of citizens all over Europe.

Let's take France, where Sarkozy takes up the challenge to be re-elected in April. Not only the French are invested and interested in this – throughout Europe people are interested and knowledgeable about the upcoming elections and Sarkozy's opponents. EU citizens are connected in a way that is never matched by politicians or policymakers from an EU level.

Even the elections in the United States seem to be of more interest to the people in the EU, than the reappointment of our European President. Although Van Rompuy might be more visible than Baroness Ashton, he is not nearly as visible as Hillary Clinton or even Europe's national leaders, like "Merkozy".

I hope that the EU will put a lot of practical effort in their work on transparency and connecting the EU citizens for the elections of the European Parliament, and implicitly the president of the European Commission, in 2014 – following France's great example and momentum.

Accountability and the EU (I)

31 March 2012

“Accountability” as a concept can have several meanings, depending on the situation it is used in. In his article *“Analysing and Assessing Public Accountability, A Conceptual Framework”*, Mark Bovens claims that “accountability” for the European Commission, for example, is not only synonym for “clarity”, “transparency”, and maybe most importantly: “responsibility”, but that it includes concepts like “involvement”, “deliberation”, and “participation” as well.

The last three concepts touch upon the very core I want to explore here, because how can concepts like “involvement” and “participation” be implied by the European Commission as part of “accountability”, when the Commission leaders – the commissioners, and the president in particular – are not even elected by popular vote?

And as they are not elected, who will hold the commissioners and the president accountable when a (political) mistake is made? Who will be held responsible? The growing interest in these questions

could come from the lack of transparency and accountability of the system. We notice therefore that this might be a deficit that runs parallel to the democratic deficit.

A solution might be for the commission leaders to be “accountable” to the European political parties. Realistically though, a solution might never be found. Therefore a better use of “infopolitik” is imperative. Infopolitik implicitly acknowledges both that the EU institutions should take pro-active international communication seriously and that the nature of that communication should be grounded in accurate and impartial information.

Is it still possible to have European primary elections?

4 May 2012

In a recent debate, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, representative of the Greens in the European Parliament (EP), presented a proposal to organize primary elections in order to elect the successor of José Manuel Barroso.

Also recently, Guy Verhofstadt, leader of the liberals in the EP, highlighted the possibility to elect the president of the European Commission from the Members of the European Parliament. All these debates are taking place 2 years before the EP elections (in 2014), but already in 2010 I expressed a possible realistic calendar for primaries.

A recent visit to Bucharest of ex-prime minister Tony Blair confirmed my theory that it is important to have primary elections in the EU. National politicians showed enormous interest in Tony Blair, and national media largely covered his presence in Romania: all this visibility for a person who, although he did influence recent history of the EU, hasn't held any official political position in Europe for a while.

Let's imagine a mechanism in which a left-wing oriented person, like Blair, will run as a candidate for the presidency of the EC. Moreover, in order to have a "complete menu", it would be interesting to organise primaries, where the left-wing candidate for the presidency is chosen by the European citizens from, for example, four eligible left-wing candidates. Much like the French Socialists primaries in autumn 2011 (it's true that in this example, the primaries were for the national elections, but it was still interesting).

Let's take the argument a bit further and say that the 4 other left-wing candidates are for example: David Miliband, Sergei Stanishev, Jose Luis Zapatero and Alfred Gusenbauer. All of them would go to each Member State to claim the votes of the Socialists or Social Democrats from that state. I am sure that in the weeks leading up to the primaries, there will be big media coverage around this nationally: debates will be aired live across the country where the primary will be held next, and the subject of campaigns will clearly be European topics, not necessarily directly connected to local and national subjects and issues.

This would facilitate the dream of the EP, and the EU in general: debates across Europe focussing on EU topics, which will be featured on front pages of newspapers, and hours and hours on national television in order to

“mediatise” the possible leaders of the EU.

More and more academics say that “the EU public sphere will merge with the national public spheres”. The mechanism discussed here will give more legitimacy to EU institutions, involving the citizens in this communication game. I expressed this publically already in 2009 and I hope that the window of opportunity offered by the 2014 elections will not be missed.

The next European decade

24 June 2012

I recently read an interesting book, written by George Friedman, "The Next Decade". Some parts of Friedman's book touched upon Europe, and I would like to highlight some of his ideas.

He states there are two dilemmas for Europe in the next ten years. The first one is linked with the relation between Europe and Russia, and the second dilemma is connected with the role of Germany, the most dynamic European country. The rest of the European states will need to define their bilateral relations with these powers.

Friedman furthermore urges us to not forget that the EU was founded with two main objectives. The first was to integrate Western Europe into a federation with limited power, hereby solving the problem of Germany and to link it close to France, hence limiting the threat of war. The second one is to reintegrate Eastern European states into the European community.

If France and Germany continue their cooperation, they will be at the heart of the European project. If

France and Germany will be in a conflict, the crash will destroy the EU, leaving big space for the members to set up other (intercontinental) coalitions.

Although Great Britain in general didn't block the development of the EU, they didn't want to get engaged in this project and thus they limited their commitment – geography allowed this to happen.

Germany needs natural gas, of which Russia has enough. Russia in turn needs Germany's abundant technology and expertise. It will be interesting to see the developments in the German-Russian relations in the coming ten years.

The final idea I'd like to highlight from "The Next Decade" concerns the tension between the centre and the periphery in the EU, which is well known. The centre of the EU, the heart of the European industrial development, is represented by Germany, France, the Netherlands and Belgium. The periphery then is considered to be represented by Ireland, Portugal, Greece, Spain, Italy and the Eastern European countries.

European External Action Service and Prime Ministers

15 September 2012

Recently the European Policy Centre organised an interesting event on reviewing the European External Action Service (EEAS). One of the panellists was David O’Sullivan, Chief Operating Officer of the EEAS, involved with the development of the EEAS from the start in 2011. He said: “these days prime ministers can text each other; therefore the role of the ministries and ambassadors has diminished. That’s the new reality”. It is fascinating to see how the public figures in national foreign policy have shifted from the foreign ministers and their ministries to the heads of states.

Previously I posted on the lack of visibility of the EEAS, and the need to find a balance to carry out one European foreign policy, while still keeping the traditional national foreign policy channels running. The latter still plays a big part in the practical challenges the EEAS faces and was touched upon by O’Sullivan as well when he emphasized that “the EEAS [isn’t] supposed to replace the national foreign policies, but to complement them.”

A particularly interesting development over the last year is the role that the crisis played in strengthening the EEAS and in particular the buy-in they need from the Member States. The EEAS must demonstrate added value. The crisis may help in this regard. "The colocation of embassies and pooling resources has become not just fashionable, but a necessity", O'Sullivan pointed out.

In short, the EEAS is doing well – it's doing better each day in fact, but they still have a long way to go.

Liquid democracy

17 October 2012

An interesting article on “liquid democracy” was published earlier this year. It explained that one of the political parties in Germany uses an online tool to engage the citizen in the decision making process, consequently activating a liquid democracy system.

Any member using the tool can submit a policy proposal, after which others can amend and revise it. Members also have the possibility to put up counter proposals. In the following weeks people can vote for their favourite proposal.

The voting process is the most interesting part in this process: each member has one vote, but that vote can be given to a so-called “representative”. You decide if he/she can use your vote on anything, or just on certain topics or proposals you think are important. You can take your vote back at any moment thus holding your representative accountable at all times.

This, according to the article, is liquid democracy: a form of democracy that combines direct democracy and representative democracy. You can at any

time decide where you want to be – to engage in the decision-making process yourself, or to have somebody else to represent you.

There are limitations as well, for some topics it is just not only a matter of voting for a proposal on the online tool – decisions can also be made at conferences, by an elected group of people, etc. But liquid democracy has also already seen slight success in Germany regarding the EU Data Protection Directive. The most voted proposal was put forward in the Berlin parliament, and although it wasn't directly successful, an amended proposal was indeed accepted.

The European Commission: Review 2012

24 November 2012

Recently Burson-Marsteller and EurActiv conducted an interesting survey: "The 2010-2014 European Commission Mid-Term Review". More than half of the respondents rated the performance of the commission "bad" to "very bad". Also looking at specific policy areas, the Commission does not score higher than a four (from ten).

However Karel Lanoo, chief executive of the Centre for European Policy Studies, stated that public opinion has been too critical – the economic and financial crisis has stabilized for the moment and the markets are calmer now, but public opinion has yet to catch up.

Looking at commissioners individually, Neelie Kroes (Digital Agenda) received the best grade: 6/10. The worst marks are for President José Manuel Barroso (2/10), and Vice President and High Representative for Foreign Affairs Catherine Ashton (2.5/10). But are the commissioners really to blame for these perceptions? Karel Lanoo states for example that Baroness Ashton can only be blamed partially; the biggest problem is

that the member states do not want it.

Added to that, Ashton faces internal struggles as well. As I wrote earlier, with the Treaty of Lisbon, whether we like it or not, we already have four visible leaders of the EU: the President of the EU (Council), the President of the European Commission, the President of the European Parliament, and the leader of the country currently in charge via the six months rotating presidency. To push a fifth person, like Catherine Ashton to an external visible position – to have another leader – is difficult.

Look at Hilary Clinton – in charge of the foreign ministry of the US. As Secretary of State, she is a well-known face across the globe. We just cannot compare her with Baroness Ashton, who is not as well-known as Europe's "high representative", although she does great work behind the scenes.

Brussels: Forecast for 2013

6 January 2013

Looking back at a year marked by interesting developments, we can look ahead to 2013 anticipating lots of exiting new things.

The European economic crisis continues in 2013, and its impact will further influence the European construction. A new "European Union Treaty" would increase European integration. Most likely a broad debate on the future of EU institutions and their effectiveness will be launched in 2013, especially because such debates are useful in a pre-election year.

This autumn, European parties shall appoint, after internal procedures more than primary elections, the candidates for the position of President of the European Commission (My predictions: Martin Schulz for the European Socialists, Donald Tusk for the EPP and Guy Verhofstadt for the European Liberals). And the campaigns for the European elections in May 2014 will begin as early as this fall.

September will be marked by the elections in Germany,

which will be followed by the European Powers with great interest. It will be very interesting to see if Angela Merkel wins a third term as chancellor.

Mid 2013, Croatia becomes the newest Member of the European Union, which could lead to the appointment of a Croatian commissioner from July 1, 2013. I already suggested that Croatia could be granted the tourism portfolio, if they desire such an approach.

Turkey, in EU accession negotiations since 2005, will probably resume the offensive after the break occasioned by Cypriot Presidency of the EU – as Turkey does not recognize Cyprus, an EU Member since 2004, it has been boycotting all meetings of the EU summit chaired by Cyprus.

From a Romanian perspective the new government will continue the debate already launched in 2012 on a new constitution, but it will also reinforce Romanian regional development.

I want to welcome the idea of having a minister for major projects in the country. In the new Romanian government, the minister for big infrastructure projects and big national and foreign investment projects is now Dan Sova. The government needed to have a person for that. Even before EU accession

Spain already had a ministry dealing with matters like this and immediately after accession they went to Brussels and had clear and concrete project proposals.

As I mentioned before, Romania needs better representation in Brussels and the new government is already working on this. Schengen is still a delicate issue, and negotiations continue, but the abolition of restrictions on Romanian labour market (later this year) in European countries that were blocked before will be a great achievement.

As for Romanians abroad, I'm glad our suggestions from Brussels catch the USL coalition, now that Romanian institutions propose to involve the diaspora more for more efficient management of problems of the Romanian communities abroad. I publicly advocated since 2008 to have a minister responsible for diaspora. With the present composition of the new Cabinet, Prime Minister Victor Ponta mentions the establishment of a post of Minister for Romanian communities abroad. It is clear that Ponta wants to engage the diaspora in development. It is important, however, to be pragmatic, a ministry for diaspora is good, but even more important is the efficiency of this new structure. Minister Cristian David has recently

come to Brussels, where he presented several ideas, and I think that those can make the link between the country and those from abroad.

Accountability and the EU (II)

12 January 2013

“Accountability” has several meanings, depending on the situation it is used in. In his article *“Analysing and Assessing Public Accountability, A Conceptual Framework”*, Mark Bovens claims that accountability for the European Commission for example is not only synonym for “clarity”, “transparency”, and maybe most importantly: “responsibility”, but that it includes concepts like “involvement” and “participation” as well.

How can concepts like involvement and participation be implied by the European Commission as part of accountability, when the leaders of the Commission, notably the president and the commissioners, are not even elected by popular vote?

Moreover, as they are not elected by popular vote: who will hold the president and the commissioners accountable when a (political) mistake is made? Who will be held responsible? Growing interest in these questions comes from the lack of transparency and accountability of the system. This might therefore be a deficit that runs parallel to the democratic deficit.

A solution could be to make the Commission leaders accountable to the European political parties. Realistically however, a solution might never be found. Therefore, a better use of “infopolitik” is imperative. Infopolitik “...implicitly acknowledges both that the EU institutions should take pro-active communication seriously, and that the nature of that communication should be grounded in accurate and impartial information” (according to de Gouveia and Plumridge in *European Infopolitik: Developing EU Public Diplomacy Strategy*).

1) Participation versus Consultation

When talking about participation - to involve and to engage citizens in the decision-making process on a European level - there is confusion about terminology. A policy brief by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) puts forwards clear definitions in *Engaging Citizens in Policy-Making: Information, Consultation and Public Participation (2011)*.

People consider asking interested citizens what they prefer as active public participation. It is not however, because “asking the interested citizen” falls under consultation. Consultation is seen as

a two-way process by the OECD brief - it is a top-down professional or bureaucrat-led process around a limited framework, asking for feedback from the citizens. At best, consultation produces choices from which the selected consultants can choose. Worst case scenario would be that community preferences are ignored, because they do not fit a preconceived model of "what the public needs", designed in the minds of bureaucrats, politicians and professionals.

Participation on the other hand is a process of setting up structures, within which professionals or bureaucrats become facilitators of a broad-based deliberative process. It is a process of actively engaging the citizens in the decision-making process. Participation is more difficult and time-consuming than consultation. It requires the leaders of the process to have the commitment to public participation and at the same time also to have the techniques to enact it. It requires skills in working with groups, but also skills in keeping the lobby group representatives or vociferous individuals to dominate and unduly influence proceedings.

2) Communication and European leaders

Touching upon the aforementioned infopolitik, we say that the communication strategy of the EU institutions

needs to be re-evaluated and adapted. People are keen to receive information, but will focus on issues that are most important to them personally. In general however, debates on European issues tend to revolve around technicalities and legal issues, which do not have an impact nor do they inspire involvement from the people. Therefore communication should not be focussed on technical details which will disconnect the citizens.

The EU faces a need for more effective mechanisms to improve the deficits they face, in order for the citizens to become more involved. At the same time, there is a need for development of the inter-institutional communication strategies and of the current political discourse, as these elements contribute to the disconnected image of the EU institutions and their representatives to the citizen.

US presidents (past and current) are more known to European citizens than their own European leaders. Moreover, in any period leading up to a US presidential election the primaries are closely followed by people in Europe, to see which candidates will enter the presidential elections on behalf of their party. European elections do not generate the same amount of interest, involvement and participation. This is for a small part due to a lack of infopolitik, but largely

because European leaders are chosen by default, and not directly by the citizen.

To have an election mechanism like in the US, where the leaders are directly elected by the citizens, will benefit the citizens and the leaders in the EU. It directly addresses the issue of democratic deficit and accountability, and would increase participation and the involvement of citizens as well.

3) European public sphere

In addition to the need for the EU to address the deficits they face, the EU cannot continue its integration process without appealing to the consensus of its citizens. This consensus could be born via the “public sphere”. The public sphere is a social area in which private citizens come together to discuss matters of common concern. In the public sphere a public opinion will eventually be formed. As the public sphere is a precondition for realising popular sovereignty, this mechanism can be used in working towards better European elections.

For example, at the moment we can see that the national political parties in Europe have candidates for the European Parliament and most of them have manifestos – very good, very clever, and full

of excellent ideas. However, there are not too many European faces, or personalities, who can promote these manifestos to the European voters. In addition, the European political parties cannot be considered as political parties, because the European Parliament elections are done at the national level, with little help from their Brussels-based secretariat.

Europe needs a strong political project. Citizens require such a project in order to protect them from dealing with an abstract, complex and technical system. There is certain discrepancy between how “participation” is seen at the European level, and how it is defined by others (for example by the OECD, as showed earlier). This clearly shows that the EU needs to work on getting the citizens involved, on diminishing the deficits they face.

A lot has already changed with the Lisbon Treaty, in which the mandate for the European Parliament especially increased. However, the EU needs a more invasive change – one that puts the role of the leaders of the political parties in the European Parliament at its centre.

We propose an innovative system where candidates for the European Commission presidency are chosen through primary elections, like in the US. Practically,

each European political party will compose their candidate lists internally, and will have a final “champion” candidate for the European Commission presidency after the primaries. The “champion” candidate of the winning party of the European elections will then be appointed the next leader of the European Commission. This will firstly give a face to the European parties and its politicians, and secondly increase citizens’ involvement in the European project.

We also suggest that the winner of the aforementioned primaries officially appoints who will be head of each national list (for the European Parliament elections) of the party belonging to the overarching European Party.

What is the future of political parties in the EU?

16 March 2013

It is important to discuss the fragility of the current European institutional system. There must be institutional changes that respect Member States' moral objectives for the EU, while accepting "shared sovereignty".

Even if the financial crisis leaves little room for debate about the future of the European institutions, some observations are useful - as Étienne Davignon recently said: "The 2014 Meeting" to be prepared by the European institutions in 2013 will most likely be held after the next European Commission is installed.

Every time European integration has moved forward, there was a clear target. Now, the process is more about something general, like "support for integration". Because of this, the political factor has a greater advantage than in previous projects (e.g. single market, the euro).

At EU level we need more debate, more confrontation between the "great European ideas". It is expected

that European political parties will be the catalyst for the next phase of European evolution. I agree with these statements, but I do have some reservations. I think politicians play a big role in deciding the future of European integration, without neglecting the contribution of the business sector, and civil society in the process. But we have a problem: given the current context of political forces there is a communication gap between the politicians in Brussels and the national politicians.

Maybe it's a good opportunity to assess how the decision mechanism and the coordination work between the national political parties and the European political parties. But it is difficult to decide if and how to delegate more "sovereignty" to the European party structure, even if we (paradoxically) have European elections. It is good that there are primary elections in Europe (although they could be more open), but there are still great strides to be made towards cross-border coordination. If primaries were held in 27 (28 with Croatia) European countries, and a candidate of the (let's say) Left is proposed for the position President of the Commission, then it is he/she who will lead the team of European Left in the European elections. I would additionally propose that the elected leader of one of the European parties is given the mandate to appoint the "head of list" for

each national or regional list that will be put before voters for the European Parliament Elections in May 2014.

National parties will not disappear, but their role will change in the future - the future is one of transnational parties. It's the same concept that shows that nation states do not disappear into the EU, as predicted post-modernists, even though their roles have changed.

EP elections 2014: an ugly scenario?

5 April 2013

Although the European elections will only take place in more than a year's time, in May 2014, the subject already deserves attention now. Today's exercise aims to present a possible but undesirable scenario.

The financial crises we've lived with for the last 5 years have an impact on our European construction too. It appears that the pressure the crisis presents does not lead to deeper integration, but to isolation of countries. Polls clearly show that support for the EU from its citizens is declining. But important to note is that they do not criticize the idea of the European Union – they criticize the European system which has been created in recent years.

In Italy, the Left retained a majority in the Senate after the election. However, the results show the obvious uncertainty of the Italian citizens in choosing their leader. The phenomenon is not different in other cases - Europeans generally show reluctance to politicians and how to manage austerity measures, pushed by a long period of crisis.

Greece was “struck” in recent years, and the anti-European feeling was accentuated. And it was not just the European structure that was criticized, but also - as a first – there was a strong message against certain influential national leaders in Europe, such as the German Chancellor.

The situation in which the Cypriot population is living these days is like “Russian roulette”. Cypriot retirees, who deposited their savings at the Cypriot banks, now see their earnings disappear in a difficult to understand “banking black hole”.

Unemployment reached alarming proportions. Spain, Italy, Ireland and Portugal cannot find an antidote to offer the basics to their citizens -opportunities to work and have a normal life. Integrating young people seems hopeless as they are shocked by the current situation.

There are countries lucky to have managed the crisis better. For example, at the moment in Germany there aren't problems with public support for the European project, but this can change in a heartbeat.

Simplifying a bit, the picture of EU 2013 looks pretty distorted. Governments and politicians in power, sail through an endless nebula with too few solutions.

Opposition parties in member states try to propose solutions, but the credibility of the political message decreases every day.

Over the last couple of years we have seen new leaders, new moves, new proposals and that's not bad. The problem is that most of them build their public discourse on radicalization of the anti-system message, including anti-EU connotations. What is even worse is that proposals with those ideals get credit nationally. However, the tangible result is that these parties only manage to clash with the political system without any concrete action that helps their constituency.

How can European citizens understand all that surrounds them? What does one of the 500 million Europeans think? Who put can they trust to provide a pragmatic solution?

If we continue the current trend, the anti-system parties will benefit enormously from the European elections next year. In a disaster scenario there could be up to 25% of the European Parliament dominated by MEPs who are against the EU after the elections next year, who want to return to national matrices, with no chance of maintaining the European system.

There is still time to change the outcome of the European elections. It's time for new politicians to come forward. It's time for national parties to discuss the European project transnationally. A European project needs transparency, practical political sense and ambition of leaders to advance the potential.

We should not have double messages. What is said in the European Parliament, please reflect the same story at home on national television. We do not need phrases like "Well, Brussels decided", when you are an MEP or a European Commissioner.

There are issues that are politically dangerous, nevertheless they should be discussed. The stakes are huge - it's practically a bet on whether or not to continue the European project. We need to show that the EU is the structure that solves citizens' problems - it's the structure built by those who truly believe in improving the quality of life of EU citizens.

“Future of Europe”- view from US

18 April 2013

Recently the New York Times published an interesting editorial, which touched upon the future of Europe—one of the priority topics for debate in the coming years. Even though the article was prompted by the Cypriot bailout, the author takes a step back and puts the current situation in a wider picture.

Current problems can be tracked back to the 1950s and '60s when the EU was established as a loose union of sovereign states. That hasn't been a problem until now - the EU enlargement cycles and the introduction of the Euro weaken the loose and decentralised structure that the EU is built on:

“Instead of preserving sovereignty and nurturing democracy, it has created a situation where paymaster nations like Germany seek to impose the policy preferences of German voters on other states without regard to economic circumstances. ... A better governed EU would put more emphasis on reviving growth in the south and stimulating consumer demand in the north.”

Moreover, the article emphasises that “there is not much European vision among today’s top national leaders. No Helmut Kohl or François Mitterrand sits among them to bring fellow leaders to their senses before local political motives lead them into continent wide blunders. ... There are plenty of smart politicians attending EU summit meetings and plenty of capable European commissioners keeping the Brussels bureaucracy whirring. But there [is nobody] pushing for the interests of Europe as a whole, not just the interests of Germany, France, Finland, the Netherlands or Cyprus — even as ambitious projects like the euro have increased the need for coherent and consistent rules and policies.”

Although the article is clearly written from a US point of view, the article touches upon one of the core issues for the years to come: the EU needs a clear vision, as well as pragmatic changes to its structure while at the same time preserving the sovereignty of its member states.

The European socialist's candidate

5 May 2013

Vital in any campaign, a political party cannot exist without its activists. It is necessary that the majority of the party members (the activists) understand the importance of each campaign – whether the elections are local, regional, national or European. They want to and need to be involved, as well as to be treated with respect. Backroom politics are important, however political competition in open elections are the salt and pepper to any debate.

I remember the launch of the candidates for the European elections in 2009, when most of the activists were hardly able to set-up events for 2-3 months, the period before the election date of June 7, 2009. First, one must understand the importance of European confrontations by activists, which could convince others that involvement in such matters is relevant to them.

The fact that during the campaign there was no candidate for the presidency of the European Commission from European Left discouraged voters who were already inclined to stay home on Election

Day even more! We need stronger European leaders (both politically and morally) to (re-)build credibility and coherence.

After the June elections in 2009 it was clear that the European Union needed to adapt the electoral system for the European Parliament. Inspired by the American model, in which a party supports their main candidate kind for 2-3 years, we suggested a similar mechanism to establish a new and improved selection and promotion procedure for leaders at European level through national campaigns, about 3 years before the European Parliament elections.

Together with colleagues from PSD Brussels, we launched a series of bilateral meetings with the Socialists and Democrats in Brussels from July 2009. I listened to the opinions and information vis-à-vis colleagues given from their (national) view and saw that existing potential European leaders were beginning to understand the power of such a mechanism for the European Left.

“Manifesto 2014 for a United European Left” was proposed by PSD Brussels for Europe’s citizens. The document comprised the results of the analyses and debates, which were line with discussions conducted during the whole period after the European elections

in June 2009 by the leading progressive political organizations in Brussels. The manifesto was first presented on 10 September 2009.

In the autumn of that year, the idea has been presented to Martin Schulz, at that time Chairman of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament. At the end of the meeting he highlighted that “the European Union is more than the simple sum of the 27 Member States and national leaders must understand this.”

In 2010 we proposed a possible “primary election” calendar, and by the end of the year European socialists already decided to implement the proposed primary elections in order to nominate their candidate for the presidency of the European Commission in 2014.

In September 2012 Martin Schulz gave a successful speech at the plenary of the Congress of European Socialists. Even if Martin still has quite some months in office as president of the European Parliament, he is considered the candidate to win the “European primaries” for the socialists and would then be proposed as president of the European Commission in 2014. But only if the socialists win the most MEP seats during the European elections.



EU communication

EU communication and European leaders

28 january 2012

The communication strategy of the EU institutions needs to be constructed and adapted in order to really connect with the citizens. People want to know what is going on, but they will focus on issues that are most important to them personally. It is therefore imperative to not annoy anyone with technical and irrelevant details, which will disconnect them. People need to be informed: correct and complete, without any manipulating tendencies.

The EU faces a need for more effective mechanisms to improve the democratic deficit and to involve and select leaders. There is a need for development of the inter-institutional strategies and of the current political discourse, as these elements contribute to the disconnected image of the EU institutions and their representatives to the citizen.

It is striking that the current US president (and even his predecessors) are more known to European citizens than our European leaders. Moreover, these days leading up to the 2012 US presidential elections, a lot of people are interested in and following the

2012 Republican presidential primaries, to see which representative of the Republican Party will enter the presidential elections on behalf of the Party. EU elections do not generate the same amount of interest and involvement and this is largely because the European leaders are chosen by default, and not directly by the citizen.

I do not deny that we don't have good and competent leaders in Brussels, but the election mechanism is not good. The leadership will not connect to the citizen in the current system. Moreover, to have a mechanism like in the US, where the leaders are directly elected by the citizens, will only benefit the leaders. They will be more connected to the people.

What will happen in the coming years? From a real communication point of view we need something new; maybe not a complete revolution of the system, but certainly an adaptation of the communication strategy of the EU institutions. I hope and believe that evolution of the EU in terms of communication with the citizens is feasible. But in the current system, with its structures and its leaders, few things can happen. In general, the debate is brought back to a level of technicalities and legal issues, which do not impact nor do they inspire involvement from the people.

Europe needs a strong political project. Citizens require a strong and open European political project in order to protect them from dealing with a very abstract system, a system with very low results.

Branding in EU affairs

17 February 2012

Due to the complexity of the EU institutions and its mechanisms, visibility and branding are a priority for EU federations. I already touched upon EU federations more generally in an earlier post, but now I will go more in-depth into their situation.

EU federations need more than their brand to communicate in Brussels. It is imperative for them to have good relations with other key stakeholders in their field of expertise in order to position themselves. This investment is necessary to support lobbying, and the federations are well aware of that. How to explain the trend of evolution with some of the Brussels EU affairs brands? To give a couple of examples of changed brands you might recognise:

- BusinessEurope. Formerly known as Union des Industries de la Communauté Européenne (UNICE), they changed their name five years ago (2007);
- FoodDrinkEurope: they used to be known as Confédération des Industries Agro-Alimentaires (CIAA), until they changed to FoodDrinkEurope in June 2011;

- Brewers of Europe changed their name from Confédération des Brasseurs du Marché Commun (CBMC) in 2005;
- And the most recent example: COLIPA changed their name to Cosmetics Europe last month (January 2012).

The transition of French acronyms to an English brand name (not another acronym) makes it easier to understand what sector the federation represents – thus making it easier to position itself.

Moreover, I am convinced that federations active in Brussels on a European level, which represent the same or similar sectors, will merge in order to favour brand consistency in the market. A good example of this is found in the glass industry, which is represented in Brussels by Glass for Europe, grouping the four main corporations in the sector, but also by the Comité Permanent des Industries du Verre Européennes (CPIV), FEVE – the European Container Glass Federation and by Glassfiber Europe. This makes it confusing for journalists, politicians, etc. to know where to go for what and who to listen to.

Communication budgets of Brussels' EU affairs stakeholders

25 february 2012

There are many entities in Brussels, including the EU institutions and the private sector, and they make the market unstructured and chaotic. How does communication fit into the market?

In 2009 EurActiv, Kellen Europe and a consortium of main associations of consultancy agencies (SEAP, EPACA, and ECPA) conducted a research. One of the research topics was the communication budget of some 3,000 EU affairs interest groups - the total is estimated at 158 million euro per year.

A similar study was done by EurActiv in 2009 on the communication budget of 400 corporations with an EU affairs office in Brussels – they arrived at an estimate of 71 million euro in total per year. An interesting conclusion is that 49% of the participating companies have an annual budget of over 300,000 euro per year.

Communication in EU affairs is not standard or traditional, with a focus on the brand. It is a complex, arduous and long road of interaction with all kinds

of stakeholders for better positioning of themselves within the EU legislation battles. The PR and communication representatives in Brussels have as a main object to support the lobby actions and business people know that this is a necessary investment.

Promoting the EU via the works of Dan Brown?

13 May 2012

It's very interesting from a communication point of view, to analyse the books written by Dan Brown. The impact of *The Da Vinci Code* was huge, and the controversies born from it exceed the scope of the traditional literature circles and critics. Brown managed to create a discussion about Da Vinci's oeuvre that could not have been imagined. From *Angels and Demons* I learned a lot about the Vatican and the papal system – a real lecture of history taught in the 21st century. Nowadays there are even tourist agencies in Rome that in addition to the Classical Rome, Imperial Rome and Religious Rome tours now also offer Angels & Demons tours as a touristic attraction. *Deception Point* takes us backstage at NASA, while *The Lost Symbol* introduces us to the political scene of Washington and its workings.

I would really like to read a book that takes the reader backstage at the EU institutions, full of mystery and suspense. Maybe a recent association of Herman van Rompuy, president of the European Council, with the Bilderberg Group can inspire political fiction literature

about the EU community structure.

I suppose a book like that would make the EU and its mechanisms more famous than any of the institutional communication strategies can do. And this without financial support, for I am sure that Dan Brown will not apply for any institutional money to finance his book in order to promote European citizenship.



Romania in EU

EU funds change economic structures of member states

26 July 2012

Some years ago I was involved in arranging a debate in the European Parliament about the transformation of national administrations in order to maximize the absorption of EU funds. It generated a very interesting discussion and I give you are some quotes from the panel:

“The prosperity of the EU project needs to be explained to the citizens”

(MEP Miguel Angel MARTÍNEZ, vice-president European Parliament)

“It’s very important that each of the regions develop a strategy for the next 10-15 years”

(MEP Constanze KREHL, member of the Regional Development Committee)

“The Spanish who work abroad help the development of their country”

“The TGV changed the economic structure of Spain”

“We had the same government in Spain for 14 years: 4 years to prepare the accession into the EU, and 10

years to take advantage of the membership”

“To ensure good coordination, we appointed in Spain “super-minister” already before the accession, responsible for concrete projects for the development of the country. Immediately after accession they went to Brussels with plans for these projects they needed to do”

(MEP Inés AYALA SENDER, Spanish Socialist)

“Before you start to structurally change the administration of a country, it is necessary to do assess the philosophy of that state. The culture and political traditions of each state are important. It’s also important to take into consideration the external conditions, like the opportunities of EU funds”

“In order to have a strong regional development, you need to have strong regions”

(MEP Jan OLBRYCHT, Polish Christian Democrat)

“We need to launch a serious reform in Romania and to go towards a strategic model, a model that transcends the electoral cycles in order to have a better absorption of EU funds”

(MEP Victor BOȘTINARU, Member of the Regional Development Committee)

Adapting Romania to the European political thinking

28 September 2012

An intriguing recent post of the president of the European Commission on the State of the Union: Barroso stated that "Europe needs a new direction, it cannot be based on old ideas - Europe needs new thinking. Let's not be afraid of the words: we will need to move towards a federation of nation states". The main idea is greater European integration. In addition it also covers the concept of a banking union, a fiscal union and a political union.

Interesting as well are the ideas presented by Commissioner Reding a few months ago: "We will maintain cultural and linguistic diversity, but we need a strong European government and a European Parliament with a different structure - possibly a bicameral one. Maybe it would be good to have a Parliament elected by referendum and a Chamber of Countries in which each state is represented equally. The European head of government would be directly elected by the people's representatives. This would be the parliamentary democracy we need in Europe".

Compared with the U.S. federal system, European leaders are chosen mostly “behind closed doors”. There should be a greater concern for what kind of leadership the EU needs? What kind of mechanism gets them elected? In a similar line of thought Barroso added: “We must recognize that debates take place primarily between the national parties, but we must enhance the role of European parties to strengthen pan-European debate”. A reaction from European Socialist leader Sergey Stanishev came quickly: “We wonder what Mr. Barroso’s Party, the EPP, does in this respect? Only the Party of European Socialists has a real debate and a timetable for choosing the left candidate for the presidency of the European Commission”.

Brussels is a complicated environment and Romania does not do anything to make this picture clearer. I think that the constitution will need to be amended, whether we want it or not, in order to solve all the problems of ambiguity with which we met during these years. For example, who participates in the European Council? Is European policy competence considered domestic or foreign policy? Only after the national Romanian elections in December 2012 and then 2013 is the best time to evoke a debate and to revise the constitution.

To be honest, Romania lacks a management of the EU policies. Romania needs to “melt” with what is happening in the EU, as there are certain values developed European philosophy to which Romania must comply.

European funds are closely linked to the performance of Romania in EU. For connecting the country to the EU we need about 5,000 Romanians in Brussels and 25,000 people in Romania actually involved in the community mechanism. It needs a new program, such as “Expert for a European Romania”. It is clear that time does not lead to solving the current systemic inertia that Romania has with the European Union. We must intervene quickly and deeply to correct the current trends.

Romanians in Brussels on the evolution of Romania

2 November 2012

According to Romanian experts involved in various activities in Euro - Brussels, nearly six years after Romania joined the EU, Romania has evolved, but there are still many inefficiencies and abnormalities.

With great pleasure, I recently had the opportunity to host (on the "House of Europe" blog) the thoughts of several Romanian friends in Brussels, who are experts in European affairs, about the evolution of Romania's EU membership and its European potential.

Like I have mentioned on other occasions, Romania must go beyond simply being a member state: it needs to defend and to exercise its rights, and to uphold national interests in the European decision making process.

To do this, in the words of Raul Rădoi, coordinator of GrupRomânia, there must first be awareness of the policies, legislation and processes that the European capital exists of, as well as the public and private sector involvement. In addition, there needs to be

an awareness of Romania's involvement in shaping regulations and directives in accordance with its interests, all in an evolutionary manner.

Romania needs many more measures in order to develop the country's image, but lobbying still has negative connotations, which is totally wrong. As 75% of national law is established in Brussels, there is insufficient presence of Romanian companies in Brussels, stated by Stefan Morcov, Vice President SIVECO Romania.

If regions and cities in Romania would be much better represented in Brussels, people could find "live news" on possible partnerships, about available European funds, as well as crucial effects on legislative procedures, as suggested by Andreea Per. As regards to private companies in Romania, they need to know about the new regulations that may affect their work, before being transposed into national law. Not only because they then have a chance to actively participate in creating the law, but also because the companies can anticipate and plan their medium and long term strategies.

As suggested by Raluca Anghel, who works for a multinational corporation in Brussels, another potential growth for Romania is investing in research

and innovation, with results that have direct impact on productivity and competitiveness in strategic areas.

With the experience gained as press correspondent in Brussels, Magdalena Moreh points out that there are very many areas of interest, most of them covering small issues, which either do not count at all or are subjects that we are not able to bring forward.

Even though some readers believe that Romania is at the very edge of a precipice, Raluca Anghel believes that in the future, a person searching for information about Romania might find the following result: "A democratic parliamentary republic located in Eastern Europe, characterized by: innovation and technological advancement, economic prosperity, high employment, an education system that works effectively, competitive private sector, strong international trade and diplomacy, and a major player in the European Union".

Romanian leaders in Brussels

10 November 2012

Recently I explained that there are about 100,000 people working in Euro-Brussels and only 50% of them are working in the European institutions. I also presented European organizations in Brussels, who are “players” in EU sectorial policies.

Industrial interest groups in Brussels are represented by about 3,000 legal entities. Each structure is coordinated by a secretary general, director general or head of office. These people are very influential in the European legislation mechanism, and the qualities and knowledge they offer are often decisive for industries they represent.

To take an example of an industry very fashionable during the crisis: the European car industry. This industry is represented in Brussels by ACEA, the European Automobile Manufacturers’ Association, who has members like BMW, Renault, Fiat and other well-known brands. The secretary general coordinates a secretariat of about 20 people, fighting for the interests of the European automotive industry in European legislative dynamics.

The wages of these people are excellent, corresponding to the responsibility they have - reaching from EUR 5,000 to EUR 10,000 per month, depending on the industry they represent.

The lack of Romanian specialists in European sectorial policies leads to a lack of integrated Romanian presence in European federations and no Romanian is on a leading position in Euro-Brussels.

Cluj's strategy in the European Union

7 December 2012

A debate on "How Cluj can be perceived in Brussels" is very justified, not because we are talking about Cluj-Napoca – we could just as well discuss cities such as Zalău, Timișoara or a sector of Bucharest. It is primarily an attempt to involve local citizens in thinking and discussing about the substance of European policies and what their impact is on their personal and community life. This is how Vasile Pușcaș began his speech during an event held recently in Cluj, organised by "House of Europe" ("Casa Europei" Cluj-Napoca), in which the focus was the contemporary positioning of Cluj in the European Union, almost 6 years after accession to the EU.

Faculty of European Studies from Cluj gave a signal to Europe with its first real academic programme since 1994. In 1995 the European Students Association (AEGEE) organized a debate with MEPs in Cluj; the ministers that led the accession process of Romania into the European Union came from Cluj; and now a Cluj faculty graduate is European Commissioner. Successes from the "Babeș-Bolyai" University and Technical University in Cluj are incredible. And that's

no exaggeration! Their graduates are now working as professionals in the European Parliament, the European Commission or even NATO.

“Cluj is a serious centre where things are done properly. It is not by accident that Romanians are good – the educational structure fits and amplifies their skills,” said the president of the Romanian Academy Ionel Haiduc (from Cluj), present at the event. Professor Emil Burzo, president of the local branch of the Romanian Academy, stated that nationally Cluj has the highest rate of people with higher education in Romania according to statistics from the European Commission.

However, as stated at the event by the former chief negotiator of Romania, Pușcaș, “Cluj is likely to be a centre of excellence in universities – in education as well as non-formal education”. Nicolae Păun, dean of the Faculty of European Studies in Cluj, stated: “Cluj’s stature has strong position in Romania. It is a window of opportunity for Romania from the perspective of Brussels, as 60 graduates of our faculty work in the EU institutions in the capital of Europe”.

But looking to the future, there are still things on the 2020 agenda for Cluj! Waiting for a highway linking Budapest to Bucharest, passing by Cluj! Airport

modernization and expansion must continue! And finally research and innovation should be encouraged greatly given the strength of a city of over 300,000 inhabitants in which a third of the inhabitants are student, teacher, or professor.

Following application submitted in March this year, Cluj was appointed the "European Youth Capital 2015", thanks to strong documentation showing supporting investment in youth for responsible and sustainable urban development.

Coming from Cluj, I am incredibly proud of this!

This award is one more step on the way to obtain the title of European Capital of Culture in 2020.

Results 2012: from a European and a Romanian perspective

19 December 2012

There are only a few days left in 2012 – a year that proved, as anticipated, a year of changes, both in the context of the financial crisis and political events. As usual, it is nice to take stock at the end of the year. Not so much in order to account for past events, but rather to be able to determine future priorities as accurately as possible.

European perspective

The European Parliament elected a new leader in January: German Social-Democrat MEP Martin Schulz.

Presidential elections in spring 2012 meant a change for France. Moreover, Hollande's election meant a change in high level European debates, and it broke the famous couple "Merkozy".

Victory for socialists during elections in 2012 is not unique – the European left increasingly gained credit from citizens who showed a tendency to shift, their discontent was exacerbated by the financial crisis

that persisted this year.

The debate on the euro and the eurozone rescue has developed - leading to discussions not only about a fiscal union in Europe, but even political union. Creating the United States of Europe has begun to be more than a mere utopia.

The aforementioned crisis and the following debate exposed that major European powers still feel nationalistic, making it hard to make decisions with major implications for the future of the EU. In this context, the United Kingdom retains its "island attitude".

At the end of this year, writing history, the European Union was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. However, organising the event revealed the dilemma of who should receive the prize - who leads the EU?

Romanian perspective

2012: a year of many important political events on the national level. After a motion of censure was approved this spring, Victor Ponta became head of the Romanian Government. The unquestionable victory on December 9 of the ruling coalition in Romania, USL, strengthens the European Left.

Discussions on EU funds and Schengen accession in 2012 occupied important places in the national agenda, leaving too few resources to deal with the “small topics”.

Moving towards regional elections in Romania?

1 February 2013

The Romanian government has called issues of regional elections and decentralization in Romania into question, especially the issue of better absorption of EU funds. Let's remember that a few years ago, when discussing options on how to choose the MEPs in Romania, Vasile Pușcaș even proposed regional constituencies elections.

Views of politicians and experts are divided on decentralization in Romania. The subject is not easy - this new approach entails a series of changes that would require time for complete and correct implementation.

The theoretical understanding of the terms used here is important to consider. Regionalization, according to the dictionary, means a "division into regions or administrative districts". Regionalization is often confused with regionalism and is considered by some as a threat to national status. Regionalization is not a threat to the territorial unit of Romania. "Advocates for decentralization do not want to disintegrate the

country or the state, but aim to improve overall economic performance by multi-level governance,” said Grațian Mihăilescu in a recent article, while also outlining the significance of decentralization of the federation: “Decentralization is nothing but a guarantee of stability of a functioning democracy. Romania is a member of the EU and the European principle of subsidiarity is a basic term. Europe works with a structure of local decentralization, enabling collaboration and faster development of regions and local communities”.

“The structure keeps close ties with the national government on the one hand, and on the other hand it is a tool for better planning and policy coordination at the regional level, especially necessary to promote large investment projects, mainly funded with European money”, said Corina Crețu recently.

If the Romanian government intends to apply such an administrative redistribution, this would require a referendum. In order to pass the referendum, it is imperative to obtain more than “50% plus 1” of the votes of citizens.

“Regionalization will not be made along ethnic lines, but on the basis of economic development. The main objective of the administrative organization is the

establishment of administrative regions which reduce development gaps,” said Deputy PM Dragnea, Minister of Regional Development and Public Administration, a few days ago. Which leads us to the question: who will lead the region? Each region will be headed by a president elected directly by the citizens. This will not happen in 2013 or 2014, but only after the draft becomes law. In the first phase, an interim president will be elected by the Regional Council and local county councillors. But as of 2016, when local elections are scheduled, a regional president will be elected by direct vote of the citizens. By direct election of the “President of the region”, the current heads of county councils will act as vice-presidents of the region.

However, “the county council chairmen will not be subordinates of the regional president. The region has duties different from the counties,” said Marian Opreșan. Nicușor Constantinescu, President of Constanța County Council, complements that: “I will be subordinate to the President of the region, but the region cannot give orders. If districts cannot agree on a European project, the region decides what the solution is. Regions will co-exist with counties”.

Another regional driving force will be the Council, a local mini-parliament. According to the USL project, each region will have a president and a local parliament,

which will include mayors of county seats and the county council president. These regional councillors are to be elected by the citizens as of 2016. Each county will provide a different number of regional councillors depending on population.

"The Regional President and Regional Council will lead the region de facto. Regional budgets will be a mix of local budgets, European and cohesion funds," explains Gândul Newspaper.

The same material addresses the new status of the prefect, a new form after redistribution, but it also explains how to choose the "capital" of the region.

There is a second possible option: "indirect elections, i.e. the Regional Council and the President of the Regional Council will be elected by the county mayors and councillors in the region".

Prime Minister Ponta insists on regionalization the country in 2013, but is still debating if it is possible for the date for elections can coincide with the regional elections for the European Parliament in 2014 – can this be done so soon, or does it remain a draft until 2016. Romania would have eight regions, which would eliminate historical names. We'll talk probably four or five counties grouped in regions: south, southwest,

centre, northwest, etc...

There are conflicting views, including the number of regions – many of the eight regions as they are now planned are from my point of view are too big. "Take Moldova in the northeast for example: four million people. Clearly it would be best to split that into two. You must keep in mind of certain cultural and historical ties between counties. But the most important are the competences", said Liberal Democrat leader Vasile Blaga.

Debates on this regionalization project and the regional elections in Romania exist already for a long time. Horea Uioreanu considers it premature to discuss regional elections, as long as there is no trace of the new regions. Late last year he said: "It is clear that Cluj is a regional centre, this cannot be otherwise questioned. I appreciate the desire of Bihor, but we cannot go back 100 years back in time. You cannot compare Cluj to Bihor, neither in economic potential, nor academic."

Regional elections are held in other EU countries such as Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland, and Portugal. "Before any administrative change, the state philosophy requires a diagnosis – the political culture and traditions of each state are critical. It is important

to consider both as well as external conditions, such as financial opportunities”, stated Jan Olbrycht few years ago at an event in Brussels.

Today in Brussels, representatives of Member State regions (i.e. all Italian provinces, the German Länder region, the Slovak regions) are engaged in intense lobbying, dealing equally with European project management and external communication. One of the most successful regional offices in Brussels belongs to the Valencian Community. Representing a heavily populated area in Spain (about 5 million people - 10% of Spain’s total population, and Valencia is the third largest city in Spain) this area has experienced fast economic growth, and is one with the fastest economic growth in the European Union. This was one of the reasons for opening a branch in Brussels to represent the interests of the area in the capital of Europe.

The Central Region Representation in Romania is visible in the capital of Europe, and also Romanian counties are represented in Brussels by the National Union of County Councils of Romania. Regionalization and regional elections would change this by default and outlines a regional representation strategy in Brussels.

Romania and the future of European institutions

7 February 2013

Nowadays Europe sees quite a dynamic development and it is very important to follow this evolution of the Community in real-time. With the urgency of the financial crisis passing, attention turns (again) to European integration. European countries, whether they are "eurozone", "non-eurozone", or "non-EU", are re-assessing their relationship with the EU.

Over the next three years we will witness an intense debate about the future of the EU; about the possibility of an intergovernmental conference; about whether to sign a new EU treaty; and about the position of member states in this debate. What is the key role for Romania in this process of transformation, what can we gain and what can we lose?

In order to find an answer to these questions, a consortium is formed, involving Brussels, Bucharest, and Cluj, as well as civil society organizations and academics interested in the subject. The following atypical project partners, trying to sustain the current debate, are based Romania: Faculty of European

Studies Cluj, Institute for European Research Cluj, SNSPA Bucharest, GrupRomânia Brussels, Club "Romania-EU" Brussels, "House of Europe" Cluj, with support of EurActiv Romania as well.

We plan to have 3 events: one in Cluj (February), one in Brussels (May) and one in Bucharest (October). The main objective is to launch a discussion about Romania's view on the European construction, involving Romanians from Romania and Brussels. The project aims to present a final document in October 2013: "Romania's opinion about the future of the EU."

I have the honour to moderate the first debate on "Romania and the future of the European institutions", which will take place Friday 15 February 2013 at 10:00 in Cluj, at the Faculty of European Studies.

Confirmed panellists for the debate are: Nicolae Păun, dean of the Faculty of European Studies Cluj-Napoca; Diana Iancu, dean of the Faculty of Public Administration of the SNSPA; and Vasile Pușcaș, coordinator of the European Research Institute Cluj-Napoca.

A study: Romania and the future of the European institutions (Cluj event)

26 February 2013

Romania is one of the 25 EU member states that decided to sign the Fiscal Treaty. But where is Romania placed in the debate about the future of the European institutions and the European Union in general? What will it mean for Romania, as an EU member state, when a new EU treaty is negotiated?

We try to find answers to these questions during meetings with a consortium of people from Brussels, Bucharest, and Cluj, involving both civil society organizations and academics interested in the subject. The partners involved in this project, which is centred on keeping Romania anchored in the current debate, are: the Faculty of European Studies Cluj, SNSPA Bucharest, the European Research Institute from Cluj, GrupRomânia Brussels, Club "Romania-EU" Brussels and "House of Europe" Cluj. EurActiv Romania is media partner.

The first public debate was held on February 15, 2013, in Cluj, within the Faculty of European Studies, and I had the honour to moderate it.

The message of Titus Corlăţean, Romanian Foreign Minister, was very well received: "This kind of public exercise of reflection can be a valuable source of ideas in the context of institutional dialogue at EU level".

Nicolae Păun, dean of the Faculty of European Studies in Cluj, mentioned in his opening statement that "academics should provide ideas that enable politicians to trigger strategies".

"Questions like "How do we see Romania in the EU?", "How does Romania perform in the EU?", "What is the rule of law?", "How to interpret subsidiarity?", "How to respect pluralism?" - provide answers for a proactive involvement of Romania", stated Diana Iancu, dean at SNSPA (National School of Political Studies and Public Administration) Bucharest.

While most panellists were positive about the future of the European Union, Vasile Puşcaş, former Chief Negotiator of Romania to the EU, brought forth a strong warning: "It was precisely because of aberrant policies at the European level that the crisis has persisted. An apology that the crisis cannot change things is not relevant. The actual problem is that there were necessary changes were not made before the crisis, so that it could have been avoided".

Romanian institutions need content and support to enter a complex project like that of resettlement of the European institutions. We are glad that the signal we give with this initiative, coming from civil society and academia, is received with great attention from the Romanian government.

The main conclusions of the debate in Cluj:

- The European Union needs an administrative reform to regulate the distribution of powers, including an exact explanation of questions such as who does what?
- Unfortunately, the EU has remained a regional organization, because of its leaders. To change this it would take a strong Commission. The European Court of Justice has come to the rescue: without its intervention businessmen would leave the EU.
- The role of the European Commission is to focus on the global reach of its policies, not only on initiating and monitoring.
- The beliefs of the Member States towards European integration provide indications towards the development of a “multi-speed” Europe.
- The EU should consider a federation-like structure in which relations are horizontal, like in the German or Austrian federation.

- We should not forget about “the markets”, further influencing leaders’ decisions.
- Different forms of scepticism which have developed recently in Europe have an impact on a reform of European institutions.
- In Romania, a new EU treaty would be another chance for domestic europeanization.
- Romania’s voice must be observed by dialogue partners. Romania must be an active state in the process of reforming the EU institutions.
- Romania has defined opportunities, grounded in reality, which aims not for only national but also European development.
- It is imperative to connect the debate about Romania and its regions, or any other internal debate, to the current debate about the future of European institutions.
- From the perspective of the years to come, universities must play a bigger role in future negotiations, to give up the convenience of interior walls, to be open to the community.

Romania, the "energetic player"

8 March 2013

According to a publication, recently released by the European Commission, Romania ranks 3 on the list of energy independent countries among the 27 states, after Denmark and Estonia.

This performance was achieved as the country only imports 21% of the energy it consumes, while the EU average reaches somewhere around 53%.

"From a strategic perspective, the degree of energy independence is one of the most important indicators, an indicator that outlines a possible international profile and role for the country, being in the same category as strategic indicators showing the importance of equipment and combat capability of the armed forces or measuring the degree of population aging", as Răzvan Nicolescu well observed.

Besides gas and oil, readily available to Romania, we also have to remember that developing renewable energy in the country is not bad.

In this context, Romania should play a strong role in the energy policy on a European level, but perhaps on a global level as well.

Romania - “mature positioning” after 2014?

24 March 2013

Over the next three years we will witness an intense debate about the future of the EU, which could probably result in an Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) in 2015, in preparation for a new EU treaty. How Member States position themselves is crucial to this debate. 2013 is a year of thinking in terms of how European institutions will prepare for the meeting in 2014, which will take place most likely after we install the next European Commission.

For Romania, a new EU treaty would be another chance to further develop domestic europeanization. Romania must be an active state in the process of reforming the EU institutions. When Romania defines its opportunities they should be anchored in reality - they are not only national objectives, but also European ones.

To connect the country to the EU we need about 5,000 Romanians in Brussels, and 25,000 in Romania actually, involved in the Community mechanism. We currently only have about 2,500 Romanians in Brussels and maximum 10,000 in Romania

(especially in the public sector).

Brussels will follow the September 2013 elections in Germany with great interest. It is very interesting to see if Angela Merkel wins a third term as chancellor. Without exaggerating, I think that what is currently happening in Berlin has great relevance to the entire European Union. Romania should take a serious look at its relationship with Germany, which I consider crucial for Romanian links with the EU.

If Romania wants to play a bigger role in the European Union, I think first of all one has to analyse the options and geopolitical opportunities. The Latin connections should be used, especially because Spain and Italy now host millions of Romanians.

I recently wrote about the variety of ways in which Romania could play an important role at the European level and hence on bilateral partnerships that can benefit if there is symmetry of interest. Particularly evident would be a bilateral partnership with Poland, a country with which we have a lot in common, and which manages to demarcate and to be noticed in Europe.

Romania has to mature and find a realistic positioning in EU matters, which will be crucial in the coming

years for the relationship with the “Brussels fortress”, but also for the bilateral relationships with Germany, Italy, Spain and Poland.

Brussels memorandum: Romania

29 April 2013

For more than 20 years already Romania has adopted the European way – there is no doubt about that. The declaration signed on June 21 1995 at Snagov by representatives of all political parties at that time in Romania, clearly expressed its intention to support European integration. It was a huge step on the road to EU accession. 10 years after that, Romania concluded its negotiations with the EU for membership, concluded before the current crisis.

Over six years after entry into the EU - in an EU torn by financial crises and subsequent political crises – it is hard in Romania to fully comprehend what EU membership actually means. Romanian citizens are confused about the current puzzle that Europe represents, far from their daily reality. The aim of this message is to outline some concrete steps to develop a European Romania.

To connect a country of over 20 million people to the European Union is a very complex and difficult achievement. A particular person, a political party or even state institutions, no one in particular can be

blamed for failing to reach this goal. Paradoxically, the “macro procedure” of the national-European relationship is mostly a technical algorithm, requiring multiple expertises in specific sectors (legal, social, business, communications, etc.). The political will is important, but it must be supported by a strong technical procedure.

No doubt there is a problem with the Romanian human resources allocated to this system of “fine tuning to link Romania to the EU”. It is clear that systemic inertia does not lead to solving current problems that Romania has with the European Union. There must be a quick, organic intervention, because current trends are not stopped and corrected. The proposed solution is to launch a (Romanian) government program building European expertise on two levels (national and local).

The persistence of the “top-down” administrative culture in Romania stems from historical reasons and is still anchored in the collective mind set. This culture is integrated in people’s characters – decision making is done in the advisory offices in different ministries, without refining them by consulting the stakeholders. The risk is that they are not shared and be challenged by those whom they are addressed to. Moreover, the lack of consultation makes it difficult to have

European legislation implemented by the beneficiaries whose expertise and interests have been ignored. It is especially difficult since the decision was taken in Brussels, where national interests in various policies are so varied. In conclusion, formulating national positions with stakeholders (beneficiaries) proves to be necessary, taking into account the skills, technical knowledge and legitimate sectorial interests on which to express them before the political decision is taken.

Over 100,000 people are involved in the dynamics of European affairs in Brussels, supported by another 700,000 - especially in capital cities of the member states. There are over 100 events per day in Brussels focusing on topics such as the future European Union. As an EU member state you cannot afford to lose track of any of these debates. At each meeting one can set up initiatives, build upon the interest of participants, eventually resulting in new rules and procedures, new alliances and ultimately - legislation.

Romania is currently “playing” in the European arena, but its playing field is uneven, unpredictable and unsustainable. We might not want it, but over 75% of the legislation in Romania has its origins in Brussels, in EU law. This legislation does not necessarily cover the national security, foreign policy or defence policies. It is mainly about consumers and markets,

air quality, water management and transport. It deserves attention; this Europe of the “small” topics, as decisions in these policies addresses citizens’ daily life. In some cases the position of Romania is well founded, while in others our country positioning is at best circumstantial, if not carrying out a policy reminiscent of the “empty chair”.

I find it hard not to point out that to develop and sustain the country’s EU connection we need about 5,000 Romanian representatives in Brussels and 25,000 people in Romania actually involved in the Community mechanism. We currently have only about 2,500 in Brussels and 10,000 in Bucharest (especially in the public sector).

Where can Romania find help to do better in the EU? What additional training should a national expert in European affairs have? It is a paradox, but Romania has about 25 European Studies Masters and 95% of graduates do not find a job related to their studies. Is it enough to study at such faculties in order to have the perfect resume as EU expert? Even though it is important to understand the Community institutional system, there are many other qualities that you must have as well.

What do we Romanians lack in order to do better at

the European level? Romania is in the EU but we feel that is not enough - it seems something is missing and the "picture" does not come out perfectly. We are competitive, but it takes a more pragmatic approach, both individually and in the structure of the Romanian education. We lack the practical side. I want to underline the importance of non-formal education in this context. Romanian formal education is currently not sufficient in the sphere of European competitiveness.

Someone recently suggested that it might not be bad to think about introducing the subject "European culture and civilization" to the curriculum of high schools. Something very practical - not content dry and full of statistics. Teaching courses on what European citizenship means, and what rights and obligations the European citizen has what opportunities we have as Romanian in Europe. And the exercise of europeanization and internationalization should be continued also in higher education. Foreign teachers must become normality in all universities and masters could possibly take place in international languages to accustom young Romanians to globalization.

Romanian civil society has a fantastic potential, certainly within the EU, but there must be a coherent structure, articulated, which may propose projects

with huge impact. It is strategic to have as many such networks in Romania as possible and not only in the country's capital. There should be structural support to the activities of the non-governmental sector in Romania.

I cannot draw attention to those who represent Romania in the European policy making process, especially MEPs. You first called to integrate Romania into the European Union, and not with a message often heard from populist or anti-European oriented politicians. Romania and the EU are not two systems, rather they form one: a European Romania. You are the missionaries educating the Romanian people to engage in European affairs and possibly to have an opinion on technical details. You are asked to debate in the European forum. You can double the debates on the same issues by organising public hearings, like those in the European Parliament, involving Romanian stakeholders. These debates should be held in Romanian, in multiple Romanian cities, involving local experts from all sectors. Bring Europe to the "Romanian streets" and then the press, so beloved of politicians, will certainly look for interviews with you for the front page.

Romanian state institutions and structures should be helped by complementary mechanisms. About 100

representatives at the Permanent Representation of Romania to the EU cannot do miracles with the mountains of technical documents from the European system. “Powerful filters” are built, involving hundreds of Romanian officials from the European Commission, who arrived there because their country’s EU membership, and representing the Union now. It can strengthen the association of Brussels European Romansians, making it more functional, with the support of at least one Romanian think tank located in the European capital.

I do not think that political polarization, artificial segmentation or certain barriers between Romania and the Romanians abroad help the macro project that became reality with the entry of Romania into the EU.

But I do believe in the ability of the Romanian people to think and act European!

Romania wants to be European!

EU: the Romanian-Polish partnership

11 May 2013

In the last three years I have visited Warsaw regularly. It is interesting to follow the evolution of this country and its connection to the mechanism of the European Union.

In Poland, the leaders of the institutions, corporations, unions, media, NGOs and think-tanks are concerned and discuss topics such as the euro in 2016, the impact of the EU budget to the cohesion policy 2014-2020, and renewable energy. One of the main topics of debate is climate change in the context of energy, especially since the United Nations will host a conference on the topic in Poland this November (2013).

Poland positions itself perfectly as a regional leader - pro-European. The country is connected to the European debate, wanting to confirm its status as a "great EU country", joining Britain, France, Germany, Spain and Italy.

Perhaps the chance to hold the "EU Presidency" motivated Poland as a state to gather the best

Polish policymakers. The Polish mandate highlighted the potential of the country, and now, in the post-EU Presidency period, the Poles are happy to take their credit that their current position in the EU is so favourable.

For Poland image matters – even the national political atmosphere takes place in perfect calm, reminding people of the Nordic countries. Added to this is the seriousness with which the Polish politicians treat the impact of European legislation on their lives.

Poland was noticeable in recent years, as they managed to “dodge” the crisis and avoid recession.

Correlating this with what happened in Romania over the last years, I cannot help but to insist on the development of the Romanian-Polish partnership, based on substantive similarities between the two countries. Today, Poland is the sixth state by population in the European Union, and Romania is in seventh place.

Most issues that Poland put on the EU agenda are of great interest to us too. We have symmetry of interests with Poland - our concern for the Baltic and Eastern neighbourhood, the need for stability in the Black Sea region.

I insist that we must expand our cooperation on "small topics". Chemical, food, building materials, manufacturing of light metal packaging, transport, tourism, energy are just some of the focus areas that we can associate to an effective lobby in Brussels, given the figures on economic cooperation between the two countries. Renowned Polish companies have made significant investments in Romania. However, in terms of Romanian involvement in the Polish economy, the balance is not favourable.

This spring, the Romanian Minister of Transport was seen with the Ambassador of Poland in Bucharest, during the visit they discussed the possible cooperation between Romania and Poland for the development of rail corridors. At the same meeting they reiterated the positions of mutual support which the two countries expressed to the European Commission.

Regarding the future of its position in the EU, Poland does not want to be at the "periphery of European integration" but at its heart, Piotr Serafin, Secretary of State for European Affairs, said recently, showing that Polish leaders are interested in collaboration with European institutions.

In 2013 we celebrate the 20th anniversary of signing the "Treaty on friendly relations and cooperation

between Romania and the Republic of Poland.” The event organized for this occasion underlined the “common interests of our countries, both in Europe and internationally. Moreover, we accelerated bilateral cooperation based on the fact that we have a similar geographical situation and are part of the external border of the EU and NATO in Eastern Europe. We have many common interests that require a more intensive political dialogue and we must do everything to achieve the objectives we have set. We need to better coordinate EU (...), we must have a position with regard to EU enlargement, and we have common interests related to the concept of energy security.”

If Romania wants to play a bigger role in the European Union, first of all you have to properly analyse your options and capitalize on opportunities. Poland played a “jolly joker” role in the European arena: it’s a Visegrad group member, relying on Central Europe, but is also in league with large countries. Basically, Warsaw wants to show Europe that it is a big country, and it is indeed the sixth country in the Union.

So I would like to see that Romania reaches the same level as Poland in a few years, as Romanian’s Prime Minister Ponta wishes as well!

EU: the Romanian-Italian partnership

20 May 2013

For the development of Romania's capacity to participate in the European debate and to influence policy at EU level it is necessary to associate itself with similar countries in terms of interest on certain sectors.

In this regard the Latin connection should be exploited, in particular the relation with Italy, one of the founders of the European Union. I've observed, after a visit to Rome in the spring of 2011 that many companies, even multinational businesses, complained about the Italian environment – that it is difficult to understand and especially hard to predict. Involvement in European affairs, left to the experts, has been abandoned on the Peninsula. The hundreds of employees affected by the European phenomenon are attempting to understand the importance of the Community mechanism and its implications for Italy, but Italy did not feel the intensity of the European debate.

A year later, however, Monti took the seat of Prime Minister, luckily for many Italians as "Italy started to

play a role again at Community level". The new Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti has restored safety to the lives of citizens.

After the recent elections, Enrico Letta, the new head of the Italian government, wants to introduce drastic reduction measures and to give support to the citizens in creating a "Europe that would help, providing welfare and development opportunities."

But let's return to the relations between Italy and Romania. Firstly, Italy is the "foster home" for over a million Romanian immigrants, almost a quarter of all the country's minorities.

In the words of former Secretary of State for European Affairs, Luminița Odobescu it is good that the bilateral relations between the two countries "are better" with concern for "increased presence of Italian investors in the Romanian economy, with a focus on energy, infrastructure and agriculture".

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, Romanian-Italian relations are conducted through the Enhanced Strategic Partnership signed in 2008. "The presence of a huge Romanian community in Italy and a big Italian business community in Romania provides a socio-economic dimension of this relationship which

is extremely important. Also bilateral political relations are characterized by frequent and varied contacts."

"Italy is ranked in the top two commercial partners of Romania, accounting for 12.18% of the total foreign trade of our country."

From a cultural standpoint, there is the "Accademia di Romania" in Rome and Venice, and the Romanian Institute for Culture and Humanistic Research. In addition to the six existing Italian studies in Romania - Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Constanța, Craiova, Iași, Timișoara and the 6 Romanian study centres in Italy - Padua, Milan, Pisa, Rome, Turin, Cosenza -, Italian is also taught at Oradea, Suceava and other centres and Romanian at Reggio Calabria, Catania, Florence, Milan, Naples, Pisa, Turin and Udine. In Romania there are 4 high schools with bilingual Romanian - Italian ("Dante Alighieri" and "Ion Neculce" in Bucharest, "George Barițiu" in Cluj-Napoca and School Group "Transylvania" in Deva). "In Italy there are 73 Romanian associations which include many churches belonging to religious denominations."

"For many years there are teaching projects for Romanian language, culture and civilization in Italian schools. In the school year 2012-2013, this project was extended. 215 teachers were allocated to groups

of students in 153 schools in nine regions of Italy (Piedmont, Veneto, Lazio, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Umbria, Lombardy, Puglia, Tuscany, and Sicily)".

According to data released by the embassies of the two countries, trade between the two countries reached a record in 2011. The volume of import in the areas of gastronomy, textile, agricultural products and machinery and steel products demonstrated the importance of cooperation and diplomatic "efforts of network production in both countries in a period where there is continued European economic crisis", highlighted the Italian embassy.

European business experts expect a repositioning of Italy in the European Union, and the Italian EU Presidency in the second half of 2014 is a good time to put influential Italy on the European map. Italy, the third largest economic power in the Eurozone and one of the states supporting integration plays a role in determining the future of the EU, as the ambassador recently highlighted on the Peninsula.

EU: the Romanian-German partnership

28 May 2013

In 2011, Mr. Lazăr Comănescu, the current ambassador of Romania to Berlin, explained to me the importance of an active Romanian representation in Germany with strong rebound of joint activity into the European Union.

The conclusion of the intense debate on the future of European institutions, held on multiple levels, was that Germany needs the European Union. Therefore, many important decisions are taken in Berlin, the capital which is the engine that is currently pushing EU policy. Germany's election campaign for the 2014 EP elections already seems different from the 2009 elections. One can now speak of leaders who will personalize the election process.

The private sector in Germany follows the developments in EU legislation with great interest, trying to intervene by carrying out powerful lobby strategies. German members of European industrial federations in Brussels have a loud voice.

Favourable positioning of the country in a European

level is supported by thoughtful policy making. The first lesson we can draw from Germany's dual education system. It goes beyond general educational as it focusses on vocational practice and employers as well. Big companies such as Mercedes-Benz have up to 2,000 annual apprenticeships, of which most continue to work for the company. Performing good in the field of technology, and excelling in reliability, Germany offers another lesson - do not jump into risky transactions.

In Brussels, I teach courses to German students on how to "decode" European affairs. Although the faculty only focuses on journalism and business, those who have completed the first year of their academic curricula realize the importance of European affairs. Therefore, second year students spend a month in Brussels, where they study the community mechanism intensively.

Let's turn our focus to the relationship between Germany and Romania - one of the most developed and complex relations between Romania and any EU member state. In the context of Romanian-German economic relations, German companies have stressed the importance of investments in the Romanian economy. Germany has strengthened its position among the top economic partners of Romania from

year to year.

On the other hand, the growth rate of Romanian exports to the German market was at the highest among all EU member states in 2011.

The German government has liberalized the labour market from 1 January 2012 for certain categories of workers from Romania. In Germany there are currently 142,880 Romanian citizens, according to the Federal Office for Statistics (only those who hold Romanian citizenship are included in those statistics, not Romanians with other nationalities).

The potential of Germany is appreciated, including on the national level. A recent survey from INSCOP highlighted that 77% of Romanians interviewed, have positive feelings towards Germany. Germany is by far the top country compared to attitudes towards neighbouring countries: Bulgaria (37%), Ukraine (32%) and Hungary (31%).

Germany is not as affected by the European crisis as other member states, so for the moment there aren't any have problems with public support for the European project, but surprises can happen in the near future.

The Romanian debate in Brussels: “Future of the European institutions”

5 June 2013

Earlier this year I launched a series of Romanian debates about the future of the EU. Where does Romania stand in the debate about the future of European institutions; what will a new possible new EU treaty mean for Romania as a member state? The first public debate was held on 15 February 2013, in Cluj, in the Faculty of European Studies and a few days ago we met again for the second debate of the series - this time at the European Parliament in Brussels.

I want to thank those who added value to the debate on 27 May 2013, for making it a meaningful discussion, for trying to find answers to questions like: why Romania should have an opinion about the future of the European institutions; political will is necessary, but should it be a substitute for the technical component; how do we start a real debate in Romania about the country's capacity to influence European policy?

Thanks to Ciprian Tănăsescu, MEP; to the rector

of SNSPA, Alina Bârgăoanu; to Diana Iancu, Dean at SNSPA; to the Dean of the Faculty of European Studies in Cluj, Nicolae Păun; to Radu Rădoi from GrupRomânia Brussels; and to Dana Popp from Club "Romania - EU" Brussels, who all made my mission to moderate the debate very easy.

The main conclusions of the debate in Brussels:

History has taught us that any structure begins to self-destruct when it becomes useless, and such structures become useless when you cannot tackle new problems. Sooner or later the EU and its institutions will come up with answers to today's problems, which in turn will generate new questions.

Romania's profile must be highlighted and advocated in the EU, like it has already been done in NATO. Consistency and predictability is what Romania needs regarding to the work in the EU. To achieve these objectives academic input is needed; it's time to involve Romanian stakeholders, both those in the country and those in the capital of Europe.

There are two contemporary dynamics: on an EU level, people talk more about the future of the European institutions, while Romania launched a debate on regionalization of the country. It is important to

synchronize the debate on regionalization of Romania with the debate on European institutional reform.

The institutional system is too complicated, incomprehensible even for citizens of good faith. Management of a “European symphony” becomes more complex in an equation that does not identify where the Union leadership is. In this context, the principle of subsidiarity must be a core concern of Romania. Is it a nationalized version of the EU or a Europeanized Member State? Today the main challenge is in the political arena.

It is crucial for Romania to establish their bottom lines (minimum and maximum) in the debate about the future of the European institutions. There is a risk that a political hesitation or reluctance will lead to Romania’s self-exclusion from the debate. Romania must take its role seriously!

With the economic crisis, beginning in 2008, the European Commission has come up with measures to resolve the crisis, to respond to the need that EU citizens feel, but unfortunately the main measures only revolve around austerity. From an institutional perspective the EU is facing a challenge, and the future depends on decisions that the European institutions take on behalf of the citizens.

At this meeting in Brussels, I mentioned the importance of Romania's involvement in debating the European future, especially with the European elections coming up in one year. I floated the idea of expanding "Romanian Consortium for a debate about the future of the European institutions" (Faculty of European Studies Cluj, European Research Institute Cluj, SNSPA Bucharest, GrupRomânia Brussels, Club "Romania-EU" Brussels, "House of Europe" Cluj) to the Romanian Government. The purpose of this working group is to prepare a conference in October 2013 in Bucharest, where the country's Prime Minister is invited to present the "Romanian opinion about the future of EU's institutions".



Management & business

Work flexibility

16 April 2012

Globalisation, technological and management style developments add flexibility to people's way of working.

Now, in two clicks, the person in the office is in contact with his business contacts, acquaintances and friends (via email, Skype, Facebook, etc.); read their favourite newspaper without problem, as most are online; book flight tickets (e-commerce is more and more important); and listen to their favourite radio station (headphones are already normal in the office). There are also cases where one doesn't even need to come to the office and can work from home.

The vision of the manager is important as well, how much "freedom" he allows his employees, and how he behaves in relation with people reporting to him. The old mentality of working – when it was still an "obligation" or "punishment" to actually work – needs to be drastically reviewed by both employer and employee. However, there is a bit of a global crisis of ideas regarding this topic.

It's still the case that you work 8 hours a day, and that the boss sees you in front of the computer. This approach is inefficient and frustrating when work focuses on project-based work – which can allow much more flexibility to the individual to for example decide to do some training alongside your job, or to have kids, etc. These things are just very difficult to do in a fixed 9-to-5 environment.

It is imperative to leave these people to go on Wikipedia, Facebook, YouTube, and Skype and to let them read whatever newspaper they find relevant. They know their deadlines and will finish their tasks on time – just leave them their space.

Plus, this kind of method will give the possibility of people becoming “intrapreneurs”, people who take initiatives inside an established structure. They are therefore not really part of the fixed structure.

I'm not a person who likes a lot of internal and/or coordination meetings per day to replace the bad management, or to ultra-coordinate and control my employees. I say: give them the flexibility that exists. After all, you hire them to bring added value to the company, so give them the mandate to do that.

At the same time: of course you don't need to have

the manager to be out of the picture, and see his team only a few times per month. He/she needs to find a balance, because without any involvement of the manager, a team moves into the "danger"-zone, and in business this would be a disaster.

From idea to project management

29 June 2013

Over the last years, internet facilitated a platform where people launch lots of ideas. However, even though some are really good, the majority slowly gets lost because of a lack of strategy behind the ideas. Maybe there are too many ideas and leaders, and too few people that are willing to be part of a team to execute those ideas.

This made me think of an interesting solution for this problem. The idea I want to present is an "idea project manager". With anything, it's very important to have a clear structure of what one wants to do. There are four pillars that need to guide your strategy: content, administration, communication and budget.

Practically spoken, when you have an idea (content): how do you manage to realize it? What kind of team do we need to manage the project? In no-time the expression "I will need 2-3 people to come and work 10 for about hours in the office" will pop-up. Of course this inevitably brings us to point 4, the budget: who will pay for the people and the office? Fundraising is about 90% of the work in a project and you will need

to keep this in mind throughout the process. One idea can be a genius, but it will not be sold by default and any superficiality and arrogance will not help to collect the necessary funds.

I already touched lightly upon the third part: (external) communication, not something to take lightly. To communicate about a project is necessary from the first steps to the finish of the project and don't forget that the media should be a friend if you want to succeed.

For all of this you need a project manager, a person that is responsible and ensures that the project is executed. Not only someone who launches ideas without proper follow-up.

If all looks wonderful, fluent and the project starts to provide results, it is because someone is taking care of it. Things don't just happen because they happen or because you have a brilliant idea – things happen because people take care.

How to make money in EU affairs in Brussels?

6 September 2012

Brussels is an incredible place, full of opportunities, but each sector is also saturated with competition. Spending more than 15 years in the capital of Europe, I sought to guide those who are interested in tackling the atypical market of EU affairs.

For more than 5 years I teach students about Euro-Brussels, and last year I launched a training programme about finding a job around the Schuman square.

Some days ago I launched a new offer, in cooperation with Maria Laptev – especially aimed for those people who want to set up their business in Brussels. Symbolically titled “How to make money in EU affairs in Brussels?” the training tries to teach the entrepreneurs, as well as the intrapreneurs, how to choose the best way to succeed. Maria knows Brussels and the private sector of EU affairs better than most experts and it’s not by chance that she’s now the Executive Director of the European Centre for Public Affairs (ECPA). I still remember with pleasure working

together 4 years ago, giving lectures to MBA students of the United Business Institutes (UBI), and I hope to succeed in this new project.

I hope that this new initiative – a training about EU actors and the consultancy services they need - will be welcomed by the public. We are looking forward to the first training on 25 October 2012.

Business in Brussels: formal or informal

19 September 2012

A recent article published in the journal *Cariere*, mentioned that “the correlation between formal education and your actual career path is almost zero”. The article also explains why: “whatever you have accumulated in your years of formal education will not help if what you learn year after year is not worth putting in practice”. This is very well when young university graduates with a Master’s degree, or even doctorates, fail to find a job with the diploma(s) obtained.

In this context, the author of the article identifies three characteristics of professionals who were successful in entirely different areas than they were educated:

1. The fact that they understand their strengths, their natural abilities, and they choose a professional field that makes the best use of their qualities.
2. The ability to learn on their own and from their own initiatives: from books, articles, training programmes, from others or their own practical experience.

3. The fact that they understand that it is one thing to have a degree, but it is another thing entirely to produce real results, and therefore they focus to learn how to get these results – not on gaining awards.

Personally, I don't think you should skip formal education, but the secret is to find the right balance that blends formal training with non-formal and informal training.

I'm coaching now for more than one year on these topics with my company DL International. I give one day trainings on "How to find a job in Brussels" and in parallel I give half day trainings on "Realizing your own business in Europe's capital".

The secret to finding a job in Brussels

24 October 2012

Whatever you have accumulated in your years of formal education will not help if what you learn year after year is not worth putting in practice. I give one day trainings on “How to find a job in Brussels” and in parallel I give half day trainings on “Realizing your own business in Europe’s capital”.

The success of the training in educating those who want a job in European affairs leads me to continue doing so. Thus, on November 17, 2012, we scheduled another meeting for people interested in the requirements of a complete CV, in order to find employment.

My guest Anneli PROHASKA, an HR expert with experience in many organizations, NGOs and European federations, has agreed to provide the “secret” to positively influence the selection process: improving the CV and motivation letter, as well as how you should present yourself at a job interview in Euro-Brussels.

Launching “products” in Euro-Brussels

18 November 2012

For more than 15 years I live in the particular cultural mix that is Euro-Brussels. I’m interested in decrypting the secrets of this a-typical market, and proposing various products useful for the community. Already for 12 years I contribute to developing the “EurActiv product” (an information portal about the dynamics in EU legislation), with the purpose to bring about transparency of the EU decision-making system. For two years I am honoured to coordinate EurActiv’s offices in 15 European capitals.

Before taking over as Director for Europe at EurActiv, I interacted with industry federations, consulting firms, regions represented in Brussels or NGOs on a daily basis for more than 10 years. I realized that it is a niche market and in 2010 I launched a new product: the EU Federation Knowledge Programme. The programme includes speakers from the main PR/PA agencies in Brussels, who present topics such as “new interest group”, “lobbying technique”, “dynamics of European media”, and “digitization in European affair”. It is nice to see that after the success of the past two years, the program continues in 2013.

It is clear that one needs a real map of the Brussels European Community, in order to understand the atypical structures. Journalists in Brussels are trying to monitor this complex system of institutional and non-institutional information, but the fear of propaganda is certainly big. Moreover, the press is quickly bored of large quantities of technical, specialist information - let alone the general public. I focussed on these concepts when I developed and launched EurActiv's Press Release Service. The journalists can directly identify the community's press releases issued by European institutions as well as industry federations, NGOs. And if we think that there are approximately 15,000 EU related press releases per year, divided by subject, organization or issue date, this is an impressive product.

For the last 5 years I am directly or indirectly involved in guiding people to find their way in Brussels. It is a fascinating place full of opportunities and competition in each sector. This is not meant to discourage you, but at the same time it is good to have a tailored approach to the current reality. With numerous courses teaching students everything related to discovering the EU and Euro-Brussels, it is surprising to see the knowledge gap most students have. I cannot imagine that most faculties dealing with courses regarding the EU community, and there are hundreds now all across

Europe, do not give any importance to explain the "European business market." Motivated by this "niche", I started my consulting company – DL International - that coordinates since 2011 a special training about the "50,000 private sector jobs in European affairs." I have already held seven sessions, and reactions of the participants included: "But nobody told us of this," "Why is this market not explained at university", "I did not succeed in the EPSO competitions for two years, but I did not realize that I can find a job in an industry federation".

Prospecting the market, I noticed that there is an underappreciated segment in Brussels: the entrepreneurs, and more specific the intrapreneurs. As Richard Branson recently said on the intrapreneur: the employee "who is offered freedom and financial support needed to create new products, services and systems that do not need to undergo the company's usual routines or protocols". Together with Maria Laptev we launched a new offer, especially for those who want to conduct business in Brussels. Symbolically entitled "How to Make Money in European affairs in Brussels?", we try to guide those interested in choosing the best path to success. Maria knows Brussels and the EU private sector business better than any expert and it's no coincidence that she now is CEO of ECPA (European Centre for Public Affairs). Again, there are

over a million contracts carried out in the capital of Europe. The amounts allocated to communication in Brussels by multinationals are huge. A study evaluating stated that the communication budget of about 400 corporations in Brussels (only European business offices) is about 71 million annually. And this figure is only related to the private sector, we can easily add about another 50 million per year that is available to consultants of the European institutions. The new initiative, the training on “Brussels actors” and the consulting services they can offer, had a fantastic inaugural public on October 25, 2012. The next presentation, with great interest, will be in March 2013.

My thoughts are still on Romania, even after 15 years living in the capital of Europe. In 2003 I founded the “Romanian-EU” Club in Brussels, a platform for Romanians in Euro-Brussels. A study conducted in 2006 about the “Footprint of Romania in Brussels” was a project that showed Romania has given a signal that it wants a structured relationship with the European Union.

The part-time “shadow” managing director

30 November 2012

The issue of the career-woman who has children and does not know how to choose between the career and the family is well known. Nowadays, there are certain trends that are well worth mentioning in this respect. One is an innovative employment strategy, which comes to meet a specific request in Belgium.

At the same time there is a new type of company - relatively young, about 10-15 years, with fairly young management of up to 40 years. These SMEs, with 30 to 40 people, have grown successfully, especially due to globalization and the presence of founders in daily management.

Before I explain about the synergy between the “career-woman with children” and “flexible companies”, a bit more background is appropriate: in Belgium elementary education starts at 8:30 and ends around 15:30 on every day except Wednesday, when the educational program is from 8:30 to 12:00. So, do you want to employ a highly educated mother who has young children? Her ideal job is from 9:00 to 15:00, four days a week. Like this, she can bring

children to school or kindergarten, but also to take over at the end of their program in order to supervise homework or extracurricular activities that all children in Belgium do (swimming, athletics, music classes, etc.). Wednesday is the day for administrative work.

How are things in the company? There is a clear tendency to “disturb” the CEO, often with little - but important - things for the performance of the business. Things he or she does because it is faster and better to deal with them oneself, rather than to delegate them to others. Companies try to have an extra person like a personal assistant, or a student / trainee who wants to learn, but this fails most of the time due to a lack of experience. It is thus more appealing to have a person with experience, but who is “quiet” in terms of getting “higher up” in their careers - at least for a few years.

This is why the Belgian market has so-called jobs of part time “shadow” managing director. Theoretically a 24/7 job, practically working hours are from 9:00 to 15:00, 4 days a week. Both sides, the career mom and the company management, are pleased with the arrangement.

Effective communication through ethos, pathos and logos

12 February 2013

Experts recommend that solutions and problem solving of any kind related to “communication” - in daily life, professional life, or in issues of national or international diplomacy - they all need “effective communication”. The process is difficult as the system is complex.

Scott Edinger, founder of a consulting firm, identifies three necessary elements of a good communicator (highlighted thousand years ago already by Aristotle): the ethos, the pathos and the logos.

“Ethos is essentially your credibility – the reason why people should believe in what you say”, he said.

“Pathos means to establish an emotional connection, which is essentially why people believe the things you say - why what you say will matter to them. At the end of the day, pathos has the greatest influence on the perception of the people on the efficiency of their leader’s communication,” explains a specialist according to the material presented in Cariere.

“Logos is how you call to the rational sense of other people - hence the term “logic”. Today’s leaders use and develop their strengths in the areas of strategic thinking; problem solving; and analytical thinking. They also evaluate the way they express logical ideas, if they are presented sufficiently clear and are therefore convincing to influence the results we obtain by communication”, this essentially “quantifies” the quality of the process of communication.

Competition as a form involvement in projects

22 February 2013

I like the idea of competition, and rewarding the winners. Many times I managed to motivate young people to participate in projects via competitions.

In the fall of 2004, "House of Europe" Cluj-Napoca decided to deepen the study published in 2003 on "The impact of EU enlargement on Cluj" with a comprehensive analysis, aimed to present situation of the Cluj from a European perspective. In addition to traditional research methods, we launched an essay contest addressed to the citizens of Cluj, carefully designed to gather innovative ideas to help the city become more visible from a European perspective. The project received a total of 22 essays, and the jury was composed of personalities from Brussels, Bucharest and Cluj, the European Parliament, Committee of the Regions, Mission of Romania to the EU (Brussels), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education and Research, Regional Council Cluj, Cluj-Napoca City Hall, the private sector, academia, NGOs and the media.

The submitted essays were the mainly about the

"State of the Union: Cluj-Brussels", giving voice to civil society. Third place was won by Emil Pop, Project Secretary at the University "Babes-Bolyai" Cluj-Napoca; the second place was occupied by Adina Ungur, a student at the Faculty of Humanities of the University "Babeş-Bolyai" Cluj-Napoca, and editor of the magazine "Atheneum", published for the Romanian Community in Canada. The first prize was awarded to George Cârstocea, a then 17-year-old, high school student at "George Şincai" in Cluj-Napoca.

And to show where ambition and involvement can take you, I recently discovered that George is currently studying in California. When contacted, he told us what the competition meant to him: "I wrote about Cluj explicitly as a product sold to tourists. In high school, I still thought I might have a career in PR or advertising, and the essay I wrote from the same point of view was rather naïve, but enthusiastic. The essay gave me the chance to play a bit with the idea of writing for a specific audience, and it seems that my intuition at that time was right".

For about five years I teach courses on European Union policy mechanisms, focusing on the private sector and the "connection" to the Community institutions. Besides addressing general topics, such as: public sphere and the EU; European identity and values;

EU communication policy; business interest groups in Europe; “global structures” in Europe; and EU media landscape, it was a pleasant surprise to interact with students at “Babeş-Bolyai” University in Cluj-Napoca (especially with those from the Faculty of European Studies) during the presentation I gave on the theme “How to find a job in Brussels?”.

On this occasion we launched an essay contest, challenging participants to jointly identify development opportunities for EU-Romania relations. The prize money reached a total of 300 euros for the winning essays; however does it really interest the student whether the reward is big or small? I say that this is not necessarily the case, because in addition to receiving this monetary reward, they acquire work experience, which will be a valuable asset on any young resume. The winning essay, sent by Ana Vlad, was published on the blog “House of Europe”, as part of a series on the same subject from several specialists in Brussels.

But what does such a competition mean for young participants? Ana Vlad wrote: “The reason I decided to participate in the contest was the opportunity to express my opinion without having to cite sources, and without the stress linked to the search for synonyms to express an idea as academic. Persons with extensive experience with how things work in

Brussels were interested to know my opinion about the evolution of EU-Romania relations. The competition was an excellent opportunity to practice my ability in stringing ideas together on this subject”.

The difference between a manager and a leader

29 March 2013

The two words that best translate the difference between management and leadership are complexity and change. A manager is somebody who deals with managing the administrative complexity, while a leader creates and generates new things or changes to existing things.

Indeed, the leader must be able to captivate his people and to motivate them to actually implement ideas. However, the worst thing that could happen is that the people develop a dependence on him and thus advance their inability to build their own capabilities. One of the basic roles of a leader is to support but not overtake the game, so that it can continue after his departure.



EU education

Where is the innovation in EU education?

15 January 2012

The European Union can encourage and facilitate cooperation between member states in order to develop quality education, however unlike in other policy areas the EU cannot harmonise any law or regulation of the member states. The content and organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic particularities are fully in the hands of the member states.

There is therefore very little what EU institutions can do in terms of education policy. They can however encourage and facilitate voluntary cooperation between member states. This is why the EU institutions carry out the strategy of setting-up programs, instead of doing the impossible: imposing legislation.

They encourage and facilitate cooperation between member states by dangling a very attractive carrot in front of the national competent authorities. Probably the most famous example is the Erasmus program, already active since the 1980's. The European Commission states: "ERASMUS has become a driver in the modernisation of higher education institutions

and systems in Europe”.

This program, based on voluntary participation, requires higher education institutions to adopt an Erasmus University Charter in order to be part of the program. With a budget of more than 450 million euro, and over 2.2 million participating students since the start of the program, Erasmus is a very successful “carrot on a stick”.

There are other, similar, but small, developments in EU education programs, like Leonardo da Vinci (for vocational training), Grundvig (for adult education). However, based on the Erasmus principle, these developments are not remarkable.

The European Council and the European Parliament are now reviewing and discussing the 2014–2020 program proposed by Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, Mrs Androulla Vassiliou. The program is called: “Erasmus for all”, and it would bring together seven existing programs into one.

But this program does not have too many new elements; rather it is bringing existing elements together for a more efficient use of resources and easier access for participants. My question is why?

Where is the innovation in the EU education policy area?

For my PhD thesis, which I finished 5 years ago, I did research to find new programs in the EU education area: today's education does not sufficiently reflect a European dimension. The practical part of my research was done by an NGO – a project under the name Eureka. EURECA was conceived as a Campaign for European Education focusing on five main aims:

- Raising awareness for the importance of education for the future integration of Europe and its citizens;
- Establishing a dialogue and an open exchange of ideas (horizontal - among students of all disciplines - and vertical - between students and decision -makers);
- Underlining the role that the European Union is playing in influencing European education;
- Paying special attention to the role that media can play in this issue;
- Elaborating a proposal for a new education program.

Main conclusions of the research:

- In the contemporary world students treat their summer break as a vital period for personal development and learning. We believe that

setting up framework for accessible short courses, up to 2 months, would bring out better cultural understanding and academic enrichment for one's studies. Such action will involve new technologies and offer opportunities for students who fall out of current mobility scheme;

- Open to the youth in general, not only to students (age: 18 – 26);
- Implementation via European and regional structures, not involving the national structures;
- The “mobility” should be only co-financed by an EU program (50%), the rest is supported by the regional and local authorities and private sector.

I proposed a “Summer Erasmus” program, a supplement to the Erasmus program, which would complement it by enabling students to develop themselves through a “summer university”. An example of an association already that is experienced in carrying out summer university programs is AEGEE. In 2011 they had 77 participating universities, which accounted for over 2200 places. Their reach seems a bit limited, but the structures in place make a good and strong example for a “Summer Erasmus” program.

This proposal has already been presented to the two EU Commissioners responsible for Education (Viviane Reding in 2003 and Jan Figel in 2006), but without success for the 2007-2013 programs.

In my view, Europe is in need of innovation, continuous development and opportunities in the field of education. Taking the 2014-2020 “Erasmus for all” proposal into consideration: yes, this might make the existing structures and programs more accessible and efficient, but I would like to put this forward again: where is the development to further integrate the EU Member States more in the field of education? And ultimately: where is the innovation in the European education policy area?

The Academy of European Studies

25 May 2012

After I obtained my PhD in International Relations and European Studies, with a specialty in EU Communication, I developed a course called “EU Communication Techniques”, which I teach at universities in Brussels, to MA Students in Gorizia (Italy) and recently also at Romanian universities.

It’s a pleasure to meet students who are passionate about EU studies, most of them without even being in Brussels (yet). An idea for the European leaders would be to launch a new education programme, in which they provide funds to universities which offer EU studies to bring the students of those programmes to Brussels for (at least) one week of intensive seminar. The agenda of these visits should not only include EU institutions, but also contact with EU actors in the private sector – to get a feeling of the complete community of EU actors.

I also notice the trends of double specialisations in the higher education. It’s time that the “academics of EU affairs” is combined with other specialties.

The offer of Gorizia which Communications and EU affairs, UBI - business administration with EU advocacy, are in line with this trend.

Adapting your career to contemporary reality

18 January 2013

Education in the 21st century could be characterized in three words: technology, practicality, and international mobility.

The “technological revolution” leaves an enormous mark on the field of education. Access to information and therefore education have transformed in the recent years - young people nowadays use laptops, tablets, smartphones or e-Readers for studying, and are permanently connected to the internet browsing online publications, virtual encyclopaedias and blogs full of new information.

The classic textbook is used less and less. For example, South Korea aims to dispense with printed school material already by 2015. Digital information outweighs the preference to other information sources; hence the topic of eLearning is increasingly discussed. There are new proposals regarding the topic, although doing a simple quantitative analysis we can already see that eLearning programs are specifically designed for training of professionals and coaching within companies, but are much less

suitable for education for now.

Teachers understand the importance of adapting the current profile of their students to the practical requirements of the labour market. Classically in education students are examined, however there is a trend to increasingly record their activities on the Web, especially on platforms where their contributions are carefully considered by their teacher.

Technology and “globalization of the labour market” increasingly emphasizes the importance of practical training. The educational model practiced in Germany is a great example for other European countries. It is a model with emphasis on getting practical experience next to education at big corporations such as Mercedes-Benz. Mercedes-Benz for example takes up to 2,000 apprentices annually, of which the majority is taken on to work in the company after the apprenticeship.

Radu Gologan, coach of the Romanian Olympic National mathematics, recently mentioned the American orientation to “decode” knowledge exposed young people – meaning that those with a more practical education, based on less information, have a better basis. “This has got to be the aim for excellence, especially for a sufficient skills base for

functioning in this society.”

Large international companies, or corporations, also have an important role in education. “The private sector must be involved. Is a social responsibility,” Viviane Reding emphasizes since 2002, when she was the Commissioner of Education. With a new initiative, the EU aims to develop non-European dimension of education anticipating many graduates within the framework of global economic growth.

An important initiative taken by the EU was the “Bologna Process”, an attempt to harmonize national education systems by allowing mobility. It was therefore necessary to involve the EU institutions, also financially, in order to launch mobility programs for students and teachers. This increased mobility has enabled new guidelines on which the institutions propose variations, like “Erasmus for all”, “Social Erasmus”, “Erasmus Plus”, etc. Although the Erasmus budget was increased, the requests for funding still exceed it.

One of the main objectives of the Lisbon Strategy was “lifelong learning” in order to achieve growth and jobs. This involves improving the skill sets of young graduates, both at work and through programs, so that they manage to accumulate enough experience

that is required and necessary in everyday work. In this context, Summer Universities are another form of training that provided a suitable option for many students in recent years.

Theory gained from years of academic training must be completed by engaging in “extra-curricular” activities, including volunteering and internships, to develop “soft-skills”. There are many young people who understand that student organizations, NGOs, political parties and trade unions are ways for them to develop and consolidate knowledge in their advantage.

Recent years have introduced new terms in human resources, like “e-skills” or “light technical skills”. These are requirements that cannot be missing from almost any CV nowadays. From the doorman to the CEO, all employees come across systems with software, which is becoming “smarter” every day. As new technologies have changed the privacy of everyone, the impact on any professional environmental is undeniable.

An element currently required by many employers is multitasking, which means that one has to be able to rapidly change their focus between numerous activities. In a dynamic world you

cannot exist unless you show flexibility, even when it comes to career guidance.



Technology & media

Future of the media

21 January 2012

We notice that more and more people read their “newspaper” online. Technological developments are facilitating this, and consequently checking the news online vs. buying a print paper is something that happens more frequent. It is also more time efficient and it saves money. This trend has a significant and growing impact on peoples’ way of living.

Nowadays news comes to us through digital means first (e.g. through mobile alerts), before it reaches us in print. Then, if you are interested, there are blogs available with more information, background and arguments, going more deeply into a certain topic - again online. You could say that news is “born” online, and it “die” online.

Print publications will not cease to exist, but I argue that they will transform into a weekly or weekend magazine, instead of a daily. These magazines will aim at including more in-depth articles, opinion pieces and analyses: as an addition to the breaking news now so readily available online.

However, print publications will also need to incorporate new technology in order to connect to the online community. Not only to inform, but also to entertain and/or communicate with the reader, as they need to compete with the online media who are strongly linked to frequently used social media.

As for journalists: they will need to adapt and reinvent themselves. They will need to learn how to write articles online (faster and shorter), how to integrate social media and writing blogs, etc. in their professional role as a journalist.

What about the content? I argue that in time we will see new companies, companies that produce content for others (so not publishing themselves): "content providers". Like the current Press Agencies, but then with more tailor-made, client oriented, customized content ready upon request. Content would be produced at a "service company" and the publication (the client) then just has to package and publish the content for their readers. Also, since more and more VIPs from the political-economic world are keen on having personal visibility, it will be easier to have them contribute to a publication for free.

The future content of media will be 3-fold in my view:

1. Tailor-made content coming from a so-

called “content provider”, described earlier;

2. Voluntary contributions from VIPs (mainly from the political and economic arena);

3. Journalists who package the requested content from the “content provider”, conform editorial guidelines – transforming them more into an editor, taking more care of editing incoming content and publishing less themselves. Leading the journalists/editors is an Editor-in-Chief who imposes the editorial line by e.g. writing a column.

What will the future of media look like? The future of media is clearly online, a “one-stop shop” that combines all technological developments to cater all possible needs of the reader:

1. Stories will be max. 2 screens long;
2. They will have video’s embedded (max 2 min.);
3. It will include 2-3 links to pertinent bloggers;
4. Automated RSS from other media which report on the same topic will also be included.

Ideally, to me, these developments will then be available on an A4-size tablet, light and easy to use. This tablet would be bigger than is available now, but as light or even lighter: a device that will compete with the PC.

To institutionalise email addresses?

21 April 2012

Electronic signatures: the solution if you do not manage to be at a certain place in order to sign official documents. This is only one example of how present technology resolves security and authenticity problems for documents signed in electronic format.

Looking forward, we should not be surprised when in the future people will be assigned an official email address by the authorities, much like the social security numbers now. It would be an email address with a special access code, recognized by the authorities. Already in the banking system we have this method where we receive a pin number, with which we can do transactions from wherever we want – even from home.

In this era of digitalisation and globalisation it's crucial to have an evolution, especially when we think of processes like e-government, e-health, e-commerce, etc. Taking the argument even further, maybe we should all link to online clouds and all have an individual, but official space.

Presidents using Web 2.0?

Let's be serious!

5 October 2012

I recently read a study about elections – specifically about the US elections 2008 (Obama) and the French elections in 2012 (Hollande), and how candidates are using social media. The question struck me then: do the candidates still maintain their lines of communication with the citizens after a victory in the elections?

Let's take a realistic look at the issue. During the campaign the party leader or candidate is quite accessible: he/she is for example very active on Facebook, everyone can contact him/her via their personal email (yahoo, gmail, etc), call on their mobile phone at every hour of every day, each event is "accompanied" by twitter, comments are directly written by the candidate, etc.

Can you imagine that it is possible for the president or prime-minister to maintain such a pace? Is it really realistic to believe that they reply to their emails that same day? Can we even ask them to write non-stop on Facebook? Is it possible for them to answer every

call on their mobile phone?

It's a big dilemma and I remember what happened the night Obama got elected as president of the world's most powerful state. He sent messages using social media to those people who believed in him, who fought side by side with him on a daily basis during the campaign, who helped fundraising – resulting in 750 million dollars. But Obama was quickly warned by the presidential security team that things don't work that way. "You are the President now, and we must think of your safety. We need to control all equipment and messages with codes, therefore allowing you to be safe, etc."

And now I wonder how Web 2.0 can really be used by a president or prime-minister. Please do not mix personal messages, responses and comments with phrases like "my team is dealing with this", or "a consultancy firm is doing everything". I mean, how realistic is it to ask the president, not his team or his system, to be on Web 2.0?



Instead of a final conclusion

A European integrated Romania

Although this is a book about the European Union, the final message I want to give, is one to Romania. Over 7 years after EU accession, in an EU torn by financial crises and subsequent political crises, it is hard for Romania to fully comprehend what EU membership actually means. Romanian citizens are confused about the current puzzle that Europe represents, far from their daily reality.

Paradoxically, the “macro procedure” of the national-European relationship is mostly a technical algorithm, requiring specific expertise in multiple sectors (legal, social, business, communication, etc.). Political will is important, but it must be supported by a strong technical procedure.

Over 100,000 people are involved in the dynamics of European affairs in Brussels, supported by another 700,000 people - especially in capital cities of the member states. There are over 100 events per day in Brussels focusing on topics such as the future European Union. As an EU member state you cannot afford to lose track of any of these debates. At each meeting one can set up initiatives, build upon the

interest of participants, eventually resulting in new rules and procedures, new alliances and ultimately - legislation.

I find it hard not to point out that to develop and sustain the country's EU connection we need about 5,000 Romanian representatives in Brussels and 25,000 people in Romania actually involved in the Community mechanism. We currently have only about 2,500 in Brussels and 10,000 in Bucharest (especially in the public sector).

I cannot draw enough attention to those who represent Romania in the European policy making process, especially MEPs: you first called to integrate Romania into the European Union, and not with a message often heard from populist or anti-European oriented politicians. Romania and the EU are not two systems, rather it is only one: a European Romania. You are the missionaries educating the Romanian people to engage in European affairs and possibly to have an opinion on technical details. You are asked to debate in the European forum. You can double the debates on the same issues by organising public hearings, like those in the European Parliament, involving Romanian stakeholders. These debates should be held in Romanian, in multiple Romanian cities, involving local experts from all sectors.

Romanian state institutions and structures should be helped by complementary mechanisms. About 100 representatives at the Permanent Representation of Romania to the EU cannot do miracles with the mountains of technical documents from the European system. "Powerful filters" are built, involving hundreds of Romanian officials from the European Commission, who arrived there because their country's EU membership, and representing the Union now. It can strengthen the association of Brussels European Romans, making it more functional, with the support of at least one Romanian think tank located in the European capital.

Romania needs a pragmatic debate about implications regarding the European project, like about the development of Romania's capacity to influence European policy.

Personally, I will continue to further develop structure for debate in order to find solutions for a better calibrated Romania in the EU community structure. The effects of this mechanism: strengthening Romania as the 7th European political power; better absorption of EU funds; better development of Romania and thus ensuring a better quality of life for Romanians. In the past 20 years I have been involved in projects with Romania, especially in the nongovernmental,

business and academic sectors. I hope that the future gives me the plenty opportunities to provide activities within the Romanian or in the EU political-administrative system.

Dan LUCA
Brussels, 30 August 2013

