

Rethinking the European Union: From Unity in Diversity to Diversity in Unity

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Abstract: *Placing the current European Union crises (among them the Euro crisis, the Greek crisis and the economic crisis) into a long term perspective and taking into account the characteristics and consequences of the globalisation process, the author presents arguments to support the idea of a new approach regarding the very essence of the European integration model. This new approach is based on an evolutionary perspective of the European Union in which all that has already been achieved is used while the philosophy of the institutions and of the legal framework is reinterpreted by changing the accent of the European Union motto from “Unity in Diversity” to “Diversity in Unity”. The conclusion of the paper is that European Union needs to reconnect to its own realities and that, by accepting diversity in its existing unity rather than enforcing unity upon diversity, it can alleviate existing tensions, reconnect to citizens, restart innovation and creativity and find a better place in the global context.*

Keywords: *globalisation, balance of power, European Union, structural changes, redefining the Treaty on the EU and the Treaty on the functioning of the EU, integration phenomena, unity in diversity, diversity in unity, flexible unity*

JEL classification: F01, F02, F53, F60, O19

1. European Union: The objective need of a fresh restart

As a rule and with very few exceptions, if any, on any conceivable subject there are different opinions, some of them even contradictory or conflicting. Being such a large concept and at the same time reality European Union raised in time a variety of for and against positions with an infinity of shades of meaning in between.

Anyway, we appreciate that the current situation is fundamentally different because the internal tensions of the organisation exceeded a point of no return. In this context whether something is done or nothing is done the European Union is going to change

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in a profound way. The question is not if but when and how. These intrinsic structural tensions within the European Union which are manifested in the economic, political and social areas as well as the perception that a change is about to happen determine in our view the objective need for a fresh restart.

An important clarification is necessary before going any further. A restart means a continuation in a different way, adapted to the new local, regional and global circumstances. Therefore the position of this paper is not for or against the European Union, it is just for a European Union which is adapted to the new realities, efficient and competitive in an ever more integrated global economy.

The long term perspective: looking into the past

In 2007 when the European Union celebrated 50 years since the signing of the Treaty of Rome there were a lot of analyses regarding the achievements of the first 50 years and the challenges for the next 50 years. At that time I appreciated that the European Commission did not speak about the objectives for the next 50 years but about the challenges. It was a balanced and prudent approach. The first challenge mentioned (that is ***Facing Globalisation***) was the challenge resulting from the unfolding of the globalisation process². Meaning that in the mentioned globalisation process the European Union was not exactly in a favourable position.

But the declining position of the European Union in the world economy was not something specific to the 2007 anniversary of 50 years since its inception as it is not something related to the economic crisis that started in 2008 or the acute Greek crisis that manifested in 2015. The declining position of the European Union in the world economy has been a phenomenon that started long ago, before the organisation had been rebranded in 1992 with this name.

According to Business Monitor Research that processed data from the International Monetary Fund for the past 35 years (period 1980 – 2014) the share of European Union in world GDP in PPP expression has declined constantly from about 29.775 % in 1980 to about 16.939 % in 2014³. During that period of 35 years 19 countries became members of the European Union which brought about a considerable enlargement but at the same time the share of the organisation in the world GDP has declined constantly. A conclusion from this long term trend could be that the European Union is affected by a more structural and even intrinsic fact that makes it less dynamic than other regions of the world.

Assuming that the trends that manifested in the past 35 years will hold true for the next 5 years, by 2019 the share of European Union in world GDP will be of just 15 %⁴. As can be noted, an interesting fact is that if the forecast for the next 5 years is true then

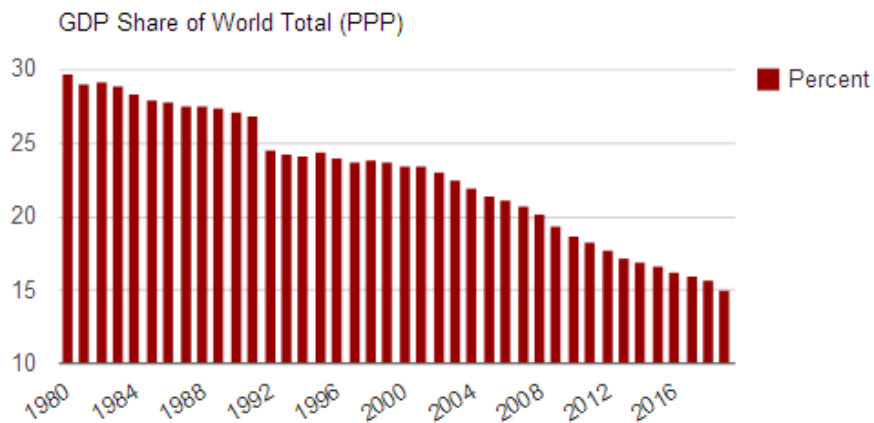
² http://europa.eu/50/future/index_en.htm

³ Business Monitor Research – Money Watch, at page http://www.economywatch.com/economic-statistics/economic-indicators/GDP_Share_of_World_Total_PPP/

⁴ Idem.

in 40 years (from 1980 till 2019) the European Union would have halved its share in the world GDP from 29.775 % (which is about 30 %) to 15 %. This long term trend is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Share of European Union in world GDP 1980 – 2019 - in %



Source: Data from International Monetary Fund computed by Business Monitor Research – Money Watch, at page [http://www.economywatch.com/economic-statistics/economic-indicators/GDP Share of World Total PPP/](http://www.economywatch.com/economic-statistics/economic-indicators/GDP%20Share%20of%20World%20Total%20PPP/)

Consistent with this long term trend in 2008 when the financial and then economic crisis affected a lot of countries, particularly the developed ones, the European Union was among the areas that suffered the most. This statement can be easily proven with International Monetary Fund and World Bank data.

In 2008 the world GDP had the only negative growth in decades, a decline of - 2.1 % while the European Union had a decline of its GDP growth of - 4.4 % and the Euro zone of - 4.5 %. These synthetic data showed that the European Union and the Euro zone were more affected by the economic crisis than the rest of the world.

This situation remained true in 2013 and 2014. In 2013 the world economy had a GDP growth rate of 2.3 % while the European Union had a growth rate of 0.1 % and the Euro zone of - 0.5 %⁵. In 2014, according to the forecasts of the World Bank, the

⁵ The data mentioned were obtained from the World Bank Data bank at page <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG/countries/1W-EU-XC?display=graph>

world economy had a growth rate of 2.6 % while the Euro zone of only 0.9 %⁶ and the European Union as a whole of 1.3 %⁷. The forecasts for 2015 are in the same trend, world economy is expected to grow at a 3.1 % growth rate, while the European Union at only 1.7 % and Euro zone at only 1.3 %⁸.

The long term perspective: looking into the future

Long term economic growth differentials determine sooner or later changes in the world hierarchies, as it happened in 2014 when China became the world's largest economy for the first time in modern history, that means during the 20th and the 21st centuries⁹. But if we speak about the long term history then we can say that China has been the largest economy of the world from the beginning of history till mid-19th century that is for 19 of the past 20 centuries¹⁰. As such, the leading position since October 2014 has not been new in an absolute way. Even if the Chinese economic leading position mentioned above refers to GDP measured in Purchasing Power Parity terms while in nominal terms China still has some years till it will overpass the United States, October 2014 marked an important change for the balance of economic power in the world economy.

In this context and based on data regarding the current world economy trends maybe we can take a better look at the comments of a Nobel prize for economics laureate, Joseph Stiglitz, who stated in January 2015: "A new global political and economic order is emerging, the result of new economic realities. We cannot change these economic realities. But if we respond to them in the wrong way, we risk a backlash that will result in either a dysfunctional global system or a global order that is distinctly not what we would have wanted"¹¹.

As a result of long term different economic growth rates, the ranking of the world economic powers is very likely to change in the next 15 to 35 years. In 2015 PriceWaterhouseCoopers included the change of ranking of the main economic powers of the world economy, together with demographic and social change, rapid urbanisation, technological breakthroughs, resource scarcity and climate change in its five long-term megatrends that are presumed to define the architecture and functioning of the world economy in the decades ahead¹². The results of PriceWaterhouseCoopers simulations are presented in Table 1.

⁶ Data from World Bank, Global Economic Prospects, June 2015, at page <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/global-economic-prospects/summary-table>

⁷ Forecast for European Union for 2014 from Eurostat, at page <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tec00115&plugin=1>

⁸ World Economic Situation and Prospects Mid-2015 Update, 19 May 2015, United Nations, New York, p. 2

⁹ Keith Fray, China's leap forward: overtaking the US as world's biggest economy, Financial Times, 8 October 2014, at page <http://blogs.ft.com/ftdata/2014/10/08/chinas-leap-forward-overtaking-the-us-as-worlds-biggest-economy/>

¹⁰ Angus Maddison, Chinese Economic Performance in the Long Run, 960–2030 AD, OECD, Paris 2007, p.43

¹¹ Joseph Stiglitz, The Chinese Century, Vanity Fair, January 2015, at page <http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2015/01/china-worlds-largest-economy>

¹² Megatrends, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, at page <http://www.pwc.co.uk/issues/megatrends/index.jhtml>

Table 1. Top 10 GDP ranking countries in 2014, 2030 and 2050

PPP rank	2014		2030		2050	
	Country	GDP at PPP (2014 US\$bn)	Country	Projected GDP at PPP (2014 US\$bn)	Country	Projected GDP at PPP (2014 US\$bn)
1	China	17,632	China	36,112	China	61,079
2	United States	17,416	United States	25,451	India	42,205
3	India	7,277	India	17,138	United States	41,384
4	Japan	4,788	Japan	6,006	Indonesia	12,210
5	Germany	3,621	Indonesia	5,486	Brazil	9,164
6	Russia	3,559	Brazil	4,996	Mexico	8,014
7	Brazil	3,073	Russia	4,854	Japan	7,914
8	France	2,587	Germany	4,590	Russia	7,575
9	Indonesia	2,554	Mexico	3,985	Nigeria	7,345
10	United Kingdom	2,435	United Kingdom	3,586	Germany	6,338

Source: The World in 2050 – Will the Shift in Global Economic Power Continue?, PwC, February 2015, page 3

Table 1 above demonstrates that the structure of economic power in the world economy is going to change a lot until 2030 and then further on until 2050. If in 2030 among the first 10 countries of the world ranked by GDP there are still 3 European countries, in 2050 among the first 10 countries ranked by GDP there are only 2 European countries.

We have to note that in both cases one of the countries from the ranking that is considered as European is the Russian Federation which from a geographical point of view can be defined as rather a Euro-Asian country even if the majority of population lives in the European area.

Another aspect that is worth mentioning is that the projections mentioned in Table 1 take into consideration the fact that the growth rates of the high growth developing countries of today will moderate in the future and that they will be more close to the best performers of the developed countries of today.

The implications of these changes on the world balance of power can be also reflected if we take into consideration the contribution to world GDP growth of different countries and groups of countries – Figure 2.

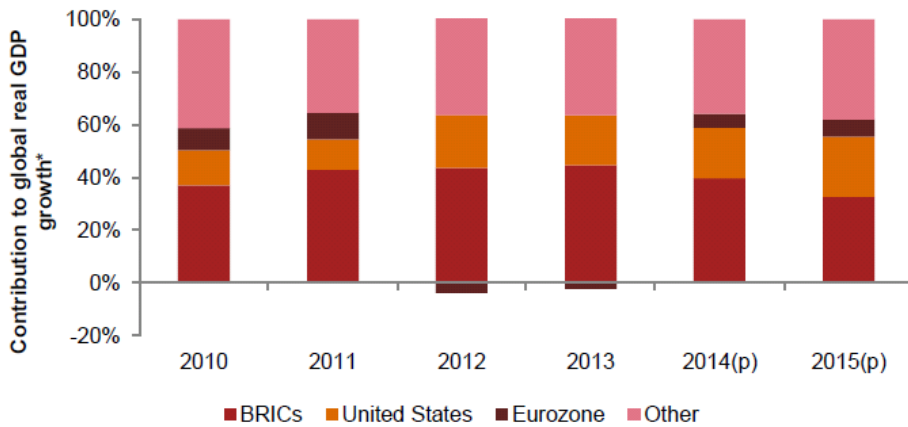


Figure 2. Contribution to world GDP growth – in %

Source: PWC, Global Economic Watch, January 2015

The very small contribution of the Euro zone is to be noted as a particular weakness in the context of globalisation. Having a diminished contribution to the world GDP growth European Union cannot but have less and less influence in the world economy.

2. The current situation of the European Union and its structural causes

As of mid-2015 when the European Union subject was mentioned the focus was almost automatically directed to Greece and then to the prospects of the Euro currency and maybe of the Euro zone. And yet for years there were people and institutions, even within the European Commission or other European Union institutions that pointed to some structural issues related to the organisation. A number of examples mentioned below can support this statement.

When the Lisbon Strategy was adopted by the European Council on 23 – 24 March 2000 and stated as an objective to transform the European Union into the “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion”, the meaning was that the European Union as a whole was not in such a desired position and attempted to be¹³. The very first paragraph of the document stated: “The European Union is confronted with a **quantum shift** resulting from globalisation and the challenges of a new knowledge-driven economy. These changes are affecting every aspect of people’s lives

¹³ Lisbon European Council 23 And 24 March 2000, Presidency Conclusions, at page http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm

and **require a radical transformation** of the European economy". For those familiar with quantum physics the quantum shift mentioned above has in view a different qualitative state, a fundamental change, not just an improvement. This aspect is even more clarified in the next phrase where it is explicitly mentioned that the changes that were needed would imply a radical transformation of the European economy. Again, radical means fundamentally different.

Despite these clear signs that the need for profound changes was understood by the European institutions and this fact was explicitly stated in public documents, both the midterm report on Lisbon Strategy coordinated by Wim Kok¹⁴ and the final conclusion of Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt¹⁵ on the Lisbon Strategy pointed to the fact that it was a failure. The Kok Report mentioned: "The problem is, however, that the Lisbon strategy has become too broad to be understood as an interconnected narrative. Lisbon is about everything and thus about nothing. Everybody is responsible and thus no one. The end result of the strategy has sometimes been lost"¹⁶. To stress the risk of failure as seen from the perspective of midterm review, Wim Kok mentioned also that serious actions were needed in order to avoid "Lisbon from becoming a synonym for missed objectives and failed promises"¹⁷.

At that time, commenting on the Kok Report and Lisbon Strategy, Romano Prodi, the tenth president of the European Commission who held the position between 1999 – 2004, mentioned that: "You can't have unanimity in all economic areas, or if you do, you must accept the failure of LisbonLisbon is a big failure"¹⁸." Seen from the perspective of the end of the period envisaged by the Lisbon Strategy, that is from June 2009, we can also quote Fredrik Reinfeldt, Prime Minister of Sweden, the country that was at that time due to take over the revolving EU presidency: "Even if progress has been made it must be said that the Lisbon Agenda, with only a year remaining before it is to be evaluated, has been a failure."¹⁹

Then the Europe 2020 Strategy again pointed that the European Union had to take actions in order to place itself better in the global context and competition. The start of the economic crisis in 2009 and the following difficulties that have confronted the European Union put anyway the Europe 2020 Strategy in a sort of background position.

A notable document for the purpose of this analysis is one produced as result of a request made by the European Council in December 2007 and published in May 2010. At the very beginning the document stated: "All our members agree on one fundamental

¹⁴ Facing the Challenge – The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment, Report from the High Level Group chaired by Wim Kok, November 2004

¹⁵ Sweden admits Lisbon Agenda 'failure', 3 June, 2009, at page <http://www.euractiv.com/priorities/sweden-admits-lisbon-agenda-fail-news-221962>

¹⁶ Facing the Challenge – The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment, Report from the High Level Group chaired by Wim Kok, November 2004, p. 16

¹⁷ Op. cit. p. 10

¹⁸ Parker, G., Barber, T., European efforts to catch US 'a failure', Financial Times, 24 October, 2004, at page <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/4896991e-25f0-11d9-81d9-00000e2511c8.html#axzz3fknzbOWi>

¹⁹ Sweden admits Lisbon Agenda 'failure', 3 June, 2009, at page <http://www.euractiv.com/priorities/sweden-admits-lisbon-agenda-fail-news-221962>

issue: Europe is currently at a turning point in its history. We will only overcome the challenges which lie ahead if all of us - politicians, citizens, employers and employees – are able to pull together **with a new common purpose defined by the needs of the current age**".²⁰ Among other things, also at the very beginning, the document stated the important role of the citizens in any attempt to redress the European Union: "Confronted by a crisis which they did not create, our citizens **will only renew their belief in the European project if their leaders are honest with them about the scale of the challenges ahead, and if they are called upon to make efforts comparable to those that brought prosperity to Europe after the Second World War**".²¹ The two quotes above contain 3 important ideas:

- The need for a new common purpose defined by the needs of the current age. New means new and that is different from the existing one, more than a simple adaptation or face-lift;
- The fact that the European citizens are in the position to think about renewing their belief in the European project, meaning they rather do not have it any more or, at least, they found themselves with a lesser belief in the European project;
- The efforts needed for implementing such a new project were supposed to be of the same magnitude as the ones made after WWII.

In 2012, under the heading of the European Commission and under the coordination of Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, it was published the report "Global Europe 2050"²². Beyond well-known subjects like aging population and climate change the report pointed out a number of aspects that are at the same time very clear and almost if not entirely absent from public discourse and current agendas. Among them: global connectivity, the fact that machines will be a dominant feature in the future, happiness beyond GDP, e-Action and the future of democracy²³.

The conclusion of this report is summarised as follows: "... incremental changes, small adjustments to the current policy framework will not do the job. In order to avoid catastrophic declines ... bold, ambitious and coordinated policy actions are required, and must be formulated in such a way that they speak directly to citizens, in order to stimulate the emergence of a fully-fledged European mind and identity"²⁴.

As it can be seen the Global Europe 2050 Report is stressing, in almost the same way as the previously mentioned documents, the fact that European Union needs a fundamental change and not incremental changes or small adjustments. The alternative to such bold actions is rather worrying as it is no less than "catastrophic decline". What is important is that this report also mentions the role of the citizens, the need for their support.

²⁰ Project Europe 2030 – Challenges and Opportunities – A Report to the European Council by the Reflection Group on the Future of EU 2030, Luxembourg, May 2010, p. 3

²¹ Idem, p. 9.

²² Global Europe 2050, European Commission - Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Brussels, 2012

²³ Op. cit. p. 13 - 15

²⁴ Op. cit. p. 142.

A more recent report of 2015, *Global Trends to 2030: Can the EU meet the challenges ahead?*²⁵, prepared as an Inter-Institutional EU Project (European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS) Task Force) points to an interesting fact regarding the structural issues that confronts the European Union. On the one hand, the report outlines 3 revolutions that are currently shaping the world economy: an economic and technological revolution; a social and democratic revolution; a geopolitical revolution. On the other hand it points out that the main risks and challenges for the European Union are “internal and turn on the need to rebuild trust in the European Union and to deliver concrete and beneficial results for its citizens”²⁶.

This non-correlation between the nature and origin of forces that shape the world economy and the nature and origin of the risks and challenges confronting the European Union is in our opinion of paramount importance. Because it shows that the structural problems of the European Union are to a large extent self-generated and therefore more difficult to solve. It is a fact of life that it is easier to react to externalities than to internalities. In order to redefine itself the European Union needs to reflect upon itself, be objective and define with a strong will and perseverance how it wants to change and what it wants to become. The great issues with the previous statement is that in its manifestation the European Union is not behaving as a coherent entity but rather as the result of a complex inter-action of interests, traditions, values and historical heritages of its member states.

3. An inquiry into the causes of European Union dysfunctionalities

In the previous part of this paper we presented a number of documents, many of them originating from entities affiliated to or belonging to the European Union, that have pointed out for quite some time the need to fundamentally rethink the very foundations of the organisation.

Reflecting on the European Union dysfunctionalities at least two questions arises:

- Was the European project flawed from the very beginning?
- Was it right at the beginning and entered into troubles because of deviations from its initial mandate?

Regarding the first question a rather long quotation from George Soros may be helpful. He said in April 2015: “The European Union was a very inspiring idea to people like me ... It was the embodiment of the idea of an open society, like minded countries getting together and sacrificing part of their sovereignty for the common good. **It was meant to be a voluntary association of equals**²⁷.”

²⁵ *Global Trends to 2030: Can the EU meet the challenges ahead?*, European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS) Task Force, Luxembourg, 2015

²⁶ *Op. cit.* p. 8

²⁷ Melin, M., *Soros Says Euro Currency Will Hold Together, Not So Sure About Greece*, April 14, 2015, at page <http://www.valuewalk.com/2015/04/soros-says-euro-currency-will-hold-together-not-so-sure-about-greece/>

At the very beginning, at least for the initial six founding member states this description was true. But particularly after the 2004 and 2007 enlargements the differences among member states became too large to be overlooked. A sort of schizophrenia developed in which two different worlds co-existed in the same body and mind of the European Union: the world of equal members embodied in the Treaties and the world of reality in which income inequality and unequal levels of development defined rather a master – servant relationship.

Referring to the mid 2015 period George Soros said: “Because of the Euro crisis the European Union has been transformed into something radically different.” Two very different classes of countries were created: creditors and debtors. “The debtors had difficulty meeting their obligations and this put the creditors in charge. The creditors set the rules and made it very difficult for the debtors to exit their inferior status. **A voluntary association of equals turned into an involuntary association of un-equals.** ²⁸”

For the purposes of this analysis we want to draw the attention not to the moral or political issue of equality or non-equality among the member states of the European Union, but rather to the issue of diversity. The European Union member states of today are diverse beyond a point of reconciliation or to formulate this differently they are homogenous as sub-sets (sub-groups) of the whole but not as a whole.

On the same subject, of divergence due to diversity, George Friedman mentioned in his book *Flashpoints* that there are in fact 4 European Unions: “There are the German states (Germany and Austria), the rest of Northern Europe, the Mediterranean states, and the states in the borderland. The latter face the retaking of their old borderlands by Russia. The Mediterranean Europeans face massive unemployment, in some cases greater than the unemployment experienced by Americans in the Great Depression. The Northern European states are doing better but none are doing as well as the Germans.

The dramatic differences in the conditions and concerns of the different parts of the European Union represent the lines along which it is fragmenting. Each region experiences reality in a different way, and the differences are irreconcilable. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how they might be reconciled. There are four Europes, and these four are fragmenting further, back to the nation-states that compose them, and back into the history they wanted to transcend²⁹.

While we may agree or not with the conclusion implied by George Friedman we can observe the fundamental nature of this diversity of the European Union member states and its historical roots. Time and again the idea is that if someone looks at the dysfunctions manifested in the European Union only through the prism of the economic crisis or the Euro crisis or the Greek crisis then they miss the point entirely. This comment is also valid as regards the effectiveness of any reunions of the European Parliament, Council or Commission as long as they are dedicated to the mentioned crises.

In fact, the more we analyse, the more we can see that at the origin of all the mentioned crises lies the imposing of unity on diversity. In 1951 when the European Community of Steel and Coal was established by the Treaty of Paris the six founding members were diverse

²⁸ Idem.

²⁹ Friedman, G., *Flashpoints – The Emerging Crisis in Europe*, Doubleday, New York, 2015, p. 248.

and yet not so diverse as to experience significantly different realities. The same remained true in 1957 when the same six countries signed the Treaty of Rome and established the European Economic Community. At that time “Unity in diversity” was an operational motto.

But in 2014 a very different situation describes the diversity in the European Union. A survey carried out by Pew Research Centre in seven countries on 7022 adults indicated the following attitude towards European Union institutions³⁰.

Figure 3. 2014 - Support for European institutions - % favourable

	European Union	European Parliament	European Commission	European Central Bank
	%	%	%	%
Poland	72	57	56	52
Germany	66	49	45	44
France	54	45	45	44
UK	52	36	34	30
Spain	50	32	30	24
Italy	46	35	34	29
Greece	34	26	22	17
MEDIAN	52	36	34	30

Source: Pew Research Center

These findings can be completed with those presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. 2014 - Percentage of those who think that European Union ...

	Does not understand the needs of its citizens	Is intrusive	Is inefficient
	%	%	%
Greece	85	86	67
Italy	77	63	57
France	69	54	50
Spain	65	68	63
UK	64	60	64
Germany	53	64	43
Poland	49	58	30
MEDIAN	65	63	57

Source: Pew Research Center

³⁰ Stokes, B. Oates, R., A Fragile Rebound for EU – EU Favorability Rises But Majorities Say Their Voice Is Not Heard In Brussels, Pew Research Center, May 12, 2014

The differences between Germany and countries like Greece but also France and Italy are even more prominent if we look from the following points of view.

Figure 5. 2014 – Differences between German attitudes and other EU countries

	EU median*	Germany	Diff
	%	%	
Economy is good	10	85	+75
Country strengthened by EU integration	32	63	+31
EU favorable	51	66	+15
Economy will improve in next 12 months	22	26	+4

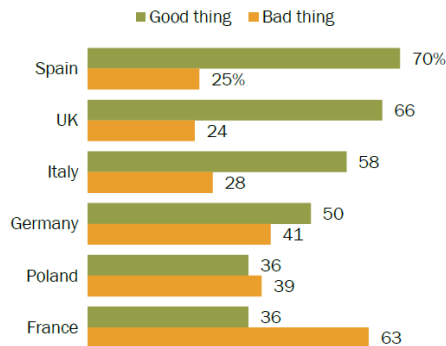
*Median does not include Germany.

Source: Pew Research Center

The topics above represent just small examples of a diversity too great to be forced into a rather tight unity not only as a concept but also as a unity of regulations, requirements and effective and efficient behaviours.

A similar research carried out by Pew Research Center in April – May 2015 in six European Union member countries on 6028 adults obtained the following result regarding Eurosceptic parties³¹.

Figure 6. 2015 – The rise of Eurosceptic/non-traditional parties is a good/bad thing for the country - in %



Note: Asked about UK Independence Party in UK, National Front in France, Alternative for Germany in Germany, Five Star Movement in Italy, Podemos in Spain and Congress of the New Right in Poland.

Source: Pew Research Center

³¹ Stokes, B., Faith in European Project Reviving – But Most Say that Rise of Eurosceptic Parties is a Good Thing, Pew Research Center, June 2, 2015

Such results which can be found in an endless variety point to the different circumstances that exist in the European Union member states and that determine in an objective way different options and priorities.

Our opinion is that European Union should be redesigned having in view the “unity” elements and values (like peace, prosperity, human rights, environment protection) as well as the “diversity” elements (inequality, different levels of development, different cultures, values, and political systems).

In our view, after the year 2000 the European Union as an entity made a number of mistakes that alienated it from the citizens of the member states. Among them we can enumerate:

- Labelling Europeans into good ones (that support European Union as it is) and bad ones (that ask for changes and adaptations);
- Trying to impose a “one size fits one” approach. According to such an approach what works for Germany will also work for France, Italy or even Greece. Reality stubbornly chose to prove otherwise;
- Coining terms such as “Eurosceptics” or even “Anti-European” for those that refer in their positions to European Union and not to Europe. To deliberately mistake one for the other is detrimental to the European Union itself. To adopt an attitude like “who is not with us is against us” is an even bigger mistake;
- Refusing the very idea of rethinking the European Union as a concept and organisation. Transforming the Treaties into dogma is definitely a sign of failure.

Accepting reality means not to give up on the European Union, but on the contrary believing in a European Union for today and for the distant future of 2050. Accepting reality means to embrace “diversity”, put the concept of diversity to the very core of the European Union and build a new organisation that allows for a flexible “unity”.

Some may fear that such a flexible unity may determine a European Union with a variable geometry. But if we analyse in an objective manner the reality we may note that the variable geometry is already there. We just have to accept happily the reality and capitalise on its characteristics.

At this point it is interesting to remember that in the proposed Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, Chapter III, Article I-44 allowed the members “to establish **enhanced cooperation** between themselves within the framework of the Union’s non-exclusive competences³²”, which was just another name for variable geometry. The proposed Treaty provided also that “such cooperation shall be open at any time to all Member States”. The possibility of enhanced cooperation was, in our opinion, a proposal for “diversity in unity” *avant la lettre*.

³² Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, Chapter III, Enhanced Cooperation, Article I-44, p. 39

Conclusions

The European Union of today is the result of a decade long historical process and its achievements are remarkable. At the same time due to a multitude of factors such as globalisation, geopolitics, technological changes, demographical changes, climate changes, to name but a few, the reality outside and inside the European Union has changed substantially.

As in many cases deepening integration meant more uniformity and rigidity in designing and implementing rules and regulations and a paradox developed: while the world economy and even the member states of the European Union have become more diverse, the rigidity of the European Union structures has increased. The result of this paradox was a growing tension within the organisation and a less optimal functionality.

In our view in order to both adapt to the new realities and alleviate the internal tensions European Union member states should openly accept that a normal and natural decision is to analyse the situation and rethink the paradigm that defines the organisation maybe as bold and visionary as Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman did it a long time ago.

By simply changing the motto from “Unity in diversity” to “Diversity in Unity” a functional foundation for the new European Union paradigm can be established. We do not see this change as a magical formula. But we think that it may offer the opening for a functional solution that allows to capitalise the existing diversity of European Union member states as an asset and not as a liability, while giving it a new competitive edge in the global economy.

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