

THE EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION - RECENT CHALLENGES*

Ene Dinga

It is a great pleasure and an important opportunity for me to be able to ponder, together with all of you, upon such a complicated and challenging issue, like the future of the European construction pattern.

We are privileged to witness a situation that calls for the review of the philosophical value foundations of the European proposal on a cultural, institutional, political and social-economic construction. But this privilege comes with a huge historic responsibility, since the offer that Europe makes to the entire world from now on depends on the manner and quality of our present assessments.

Obviously, the stage we find ourselves at in the European construction is the result of some accumulations of internal processes of the European pattern, in relation with the external environment, generated by alternative patterns, opposable to the cultural and civilisation European pattern. Pending our intervention, we will focus upon the internal causative factors.

From the very beginning we will state that the stage the European pattern finds itself at is not a turning point but a modulation on. Europe is not in a crisis, but in a moment of reconsideration of its path, namely a global reconsideration, which is directed to its foundations. We find ourselves, most probably, in a situation that calls for an honest, but trustworthy reviewing of the intellectual project that has generated the great European construction.

It is obvious that the inflexion point mentioned above is a growth effect. In other words, the evolution of the European model needs a moment of self-assessment, of self-reflection. The Constitutional Treaty rejection by France and the Netherlands, as relatively sombre perspectives generated by the recent declarations concerning the viability of the European pattern as a whole or the collapse of the Euro zone, doesn't stand for nothing, but some occasions to manifest some latent, deep causes.

I would remark the divergence as one of these fundamental causes, and a pretty strong one, between the interest on the national problems and that on the European problems in general. In France, the vote against the Constitutional Treaty represents a peremptory expression for that, but as we were saying, it is only a surface phenomenon. Let's, for example, remember, that the Growth and Stability Pact was modified, in order to legitimate its non observance by the founding member states, generating a feeling of common rules instability (but this alteration was generated by the functioning elements of some national economies, as those of Germany, France or Italy).

The negative vote for the Constitutional Treaty and the discontent with the national Governments has moved towards the European issues whose ideals were rejected.

Another important cause can be

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identified in the gap created between the “eurocrats” (initiators of the systems, mechanisms and institutions at the European level) and civil society, which means between the leadership's offer and the expectations of the citizens. I would like to add that it is not an isolated incident of inefficient communication (although an inefficient communication can be interpreted as a deep cause), but a much more important problem: the problem of the promoted values, values that can shape the future direction for the European architecture in the years ahead.

Let us remember that the Constitutional Treaty was not the only strategic document of the EU, in which the liberal feature prevailed over the social values. The review of the Lisbon Agenda determined a concentration of all efforts towards development of the member states in accordance with the more liberal values.

It is arguable, of course, if such an extended, complicated, heterogeneous system, from the cultural point of view, can be sustained without a firm, general and steady support of the citizens.

It is possible that globalisation, as an inexhaustible process, will not diminish the importance of the social factor over our models of development, but, on the contrary, increase it.

Of course, the present situation will generate intense debates, some of them excessively politicised, but most of them, honest and devoted to the effective and durable relaunch of the European culture and civilization model.

It is my conviction that, besides the two causes presented above, another one should be discussed, particularly the model for economic growth that the European

Union wants to establish: the present point requires a radical change of paradigm in the field of economic growth. The wish to achieve and to overtake the American model of economic growth (presented in the initial form of the Lisbon Agenda) is unrealistic, especially in the era of globalisation and in the negative trend regarding the available assets of natural resources. The unrealistic character of the Lisbon Agenda derives from the method of achievement and not from the ambition of the established purposes: it has to waive the paradigm of growth based on optimal behaviour and it has to be accepted the paradigm based on sustainable behaviour. We should not be interested in the optimal values for the economic variables, but in the sustainable values of these variables. In this case, the objectives of economic growth should not be established in a comparative model, the exogenous way (in comparison with the American economic growth model), but in the endogenous way: the consistency with the compels of the own system on long term. I believe that the disappointment of some member states regarding the European project (and also the pessimism expressed by some analysts and politicians) is overwhelmingly caused by the unrealistic capacity of the European Union to address the economic challenges, especially at the level of the review of the Lisbon Agenda objectives: growth, productivity and occupation.

I would like to shortly discuss about the comparison between the horizontal enlargement of the European Union and the vertical enlargement (institutional enlargement). There are a lot of people who consider that after the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by a few member states, the present European model is in a crisis, following the process of potential

implosion generated by the incapacity of the institutional developments to sustain the enlargement of the European Union.

In my opinion, although the necessity of simultaneous development on the two directions that I have mentioned before must not be excluded, this is a false argument for the following reasons:

a) The horizontal enlargements are themselves, broadly speaking, institutional developments because they involve various improvements at the level of mechanisms, procedures, etc. Therefore, the development of the European Union on the two directions is not accomplished in a geometrical manner, but in an organic one.

b) The horizontal enlargements have always been preceded by the creation of institutions able to manage these enlargements (for example, the horizontal enlargement with Romania and Bulgaria it is stipulated, from a vertical point of view, in the Nice Treaty)

c) In a more general way, it is known that, within the social construction, the

targets provide themselves quite frequently their own sources. In other words, let's say that the tension created by a new horizontal enlargement is capable to generate, in a specific way, the ad-hoc institutional resources for the management of the newly created situation. For that reason, one of the most efficient concept of public management at the level of European Union is, as we all know, the one that says: "policy before resources";

d) The horizontal enlargements bring added value to the Union. This is one issue envisaged by the European Commission when new horizontal enlargements are negotiated. The fulfilment of the accession criteria by a candidate country or by a country in the process of accession (as Romania) has two expected effects: 1) achieving the minimal parameters which will prevent the shock of the accession; 2) bringing added value to the Union, at all levels of negotiation. Or, bringing added value is an element for institutional deepening.