The reconfiguration of global power relations is considered the most important challenge to the stability of the European Union’s member states and, equally, to the evolution of Europe as a United Europe. As a result the outcome of the US presidential election, the outcome of the referendum on Britain’s exit from the European Union, the rise of populist discourse and nationalist leaders are of major concern to the academic community, the political class and to security and defense strategists. The concrete manifestation of this sustained concern are the debates on the possible types of reform of the community bloc, the re-evaluation of the founding principles of the European Union and the examination of the alternative models of cooperation.

The National Conference “Reform of the European Union – implications in the security and public communication plan” of May 29, 2017 – the fourth edition of the debates that the Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations “Ion I. C. Brătianu” of the Romanian Academy, the Faculty of Political Sciences of “Dimitrie Cantemir” Christian University and the Commission for Defense, Public Order and National Security of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of Romania devoted to the evolutions of European public space – took as its subject these areas of debate.

The contributions reproduced in this issue are only four of those presented at the Conference, those examining the “two-speed Europe” scenario or “the new course of action” within Europe which could evolve by 2025 and which does not exclude the possibility of a change in the goal and priorities of the European Union (Gabriela Tănăsescu), Brexit as a turning point in the history of the European project that poses the question of its lack of legitimacy in 2017 (Lucian Bogdan Jora), the legitimacy of populism as a political style, strategy, discourse or ideology and its compatibility with the European Union’s values in the context of globalization (Lorena-Valeria Stuparu), information warfare, from the perspective of international relations, of interests and culture of security (Lucian Dumitrescu).
RETHINKING THE EUROPEAN PROJECT: A MULTI-SPEED EUROPE

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Abstract. The premise of this paper is that the current motivation for rethinking the European project in terms of a “profound reformation” has a character at least partially caducous, and that rethinking the European project according to the “multi-speed” dimension and in a “non-limitative” perspective represents in fact not only the intention to fasten and deepen the Union of “different paces and intensity”, and thus to deepen the existing multi-speed and multi-tier Union, but also to establish a different path for Europe than that of the United Europe.

Keywords: more integration, more Europe, two-speed Europe, multi-speed Europe.

“The new chapter of the European project” or “the new course of action” towards which Europe could evolve by 2025 and which, as specified in White Paper on the Future of Europe, does not exclude a change of the EU’s scope and priorities, is examined through the prism of the scenario “multi-speed Europe”. This article reveals (1) the constant presence of the thesis “multi-speed Europe”/“the hard core” of the European Union in the discourse of some of the more significant political leaders of European countries over recent decades; (2) the absence of this thesis from the speech of European officials in the last decade; (3) the multiple and complex implications (decisional, legal, organizational, co-operative, etc., in terms of image and especially of trust in the scope of “de facto solidarity” of the European Union) of a “staging” of the “multi-speed Europe” scenario.

The premise of this paper is (1) that the current motivation for a rethinking of the European project in terms of a “profound reformation” – due to “the crossroads” in the face of which European Union could find itself and “the challenges” that it has to face – has at least a partially caducous character and, on the other hand, (2) that a rethinking of the European project along a “multi-speed” dimension and in a “non-limitative” perspective represents the intention not only to steady

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and deepen the Union with “different speeds and intensity,” and thus deepen the existing *multi-speed* and *multi-tier* Union, but also to establish another route for Europe than that of the United Europe.

*Speeds, paces, intensities of evolution*

The rethinking of the European project is a theme brought to the forefront of reflection on the EU by the *White Paper on the Future of Europe*, a document issued to the public at the beginning of March 2017, before the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the European Economic Community and the adoption of *The Rome Declaration*, a declaration signed by leaders of the 27 member states and of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission, on 25 March 2017. The President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, considered that the document *White Paper on the Future of Europe* represents the European Commission’s contribution to “a new chapter of the European project”\(^1\) or to a foundation of a new European beginning. As such, the rethinking of the European project under the auspices of what *The Rome Declaration* identified as representing “unprecedented challenges, both global and domestic: regional conflicts, terrorism, growing migratory pressures, protectionism and social and economic inequalities”\(^2\), and the rethinking of the European Union as “unique project in which domestic priorities have been combined and sovereignty voluntarily pooled to better serve national and collective interests”\(^3\) constitutes undoubtedly a topic of greatest importance for the current theory and practice of European construction. The enumeration of more “speeds,” “paces”, “intensities” related to the evolution of the European Union – the first syntagma in *White Paper* as “*Those who want more do more*”\(^4\), the other two being in *The Rome Declaration* –, signals the specific differences in the proximal genus of the evolution patterns of the European Union. This is because “speeds” refers to the rapidity of evolution, “paces” or “rhythms” refer to the tempo, cadence, symmetric and periodic succession of evolution or of gradual movement, and the “intensities”, which are related to the quality and nature of comparison, refer to the dynamics, degrees of tension, strength, energy or value conferred by evolution. “A change of the scope and priorities” of the European Union – so as for Europe not only to “be carried by” “hard to predict and unexpected” transformations, but also to be able “to shape them”\(^5\) – implies engaging in a “race” of accelerated or high-speed development of “those who want”, of some European groups or “coalitions”, a “race” in which


\(^4\) Ibidem, p. 20.


symmetrical or near symmetrical and harmonising approaches at European level, as well as those of sustainable value evolution, not only from an economic perspective, but also from a human, social, cultural, patrimonial-historical perspective, can no longer find their place.

As such, in what follows I try to show that a possible shift from the “different paces and intensity” model of “acting together”, “moving in the same direction,” stated in the Rome Declaration, to the establishment of the scenario of a “multi-speed Europe” in a “non-limitative” perspective, namely the explicit adoption or formalization of such a model, implies not only the deepening of a Union of “different paces and intensity”, that is, of differences and discrepancies between the EU countries, and the renunciation to the “de facto solidarity” that Robert Schuman considered to be the first concrete realization of any European construction plan but also, more seriously, to establish another or other directions for action and a different course for Europe than that of a United Europe.

Unitary, binary and quintary scenarios

Undoubtedly, there is a significant difference between the way in which the European project was assessed in European officials’ speeches at the beginning of the current decade and that resulting from the documents expressing the perspective of the President of the European Commission and of the European Commission itself at the beginning of 2017.

In 2011, the European officials have pleaded for “more integration,” in response to the finding that in reality, despite “the unprecedented benefits,” “the high level of economic integration,” European participation in a process of “unprecedented global economic cooperation”7, Europe was still marked by “weaknesses” such as: “economic incompetence,” “military weakness,” “focussing on human rights,” moral relativism, excessively bureaucratic “Union” government, a lack of decisional transparency, the deficient distribution of the European funds, the discouragement of fundamental research, a “deficit of democracy” and other problems. “More integration” imposed economic and fiscal reforms intended “to unite and to consolidate the European project”8 and to respond to the experts and journalists who bet on “the end of Europe”9 and who have criticized both in terms of “abstract principles and irresponsible bureaucracies” that define “the current situation of the European project,” and in terms of universalist principles whose application determined “the tragic and contradictory experience of our time.”10

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7 See Viviane Reding, “The end of Europe? No, the beginning of a stronger, more united Europe,” Policy Seminar Helsinki, 8 September 2011, Speech/11/566, p. 2 sq.
8 Ibidem, p. 3.
9 The “end of Europe” problem has been put several years before it became recurrent, namely once with the onset of the financial and economic crisis in the US in the middle of 2007. A relevant example in this regard is the group of articles dedicated to Europe in Commentaire magazine, Volume. 28, Numéro 112, Hiver 2005-2006, pp. 804-812, which contained Laurent Cohen-Tanugi’s star-article «La fin de l’Europe?» (“The End of Europe?,” Foreign Affairs, November/December 2005, Volume 84, Number 6) in which the question considered the vulnerabilities of Europe in the advanced process of globalization.
In 2012, the European officials responded to the financial crisis triggered in the US with the plea for “more Europe,” “a strong Europe,” “a stronger Economic and Monetary Union” with “a full Political Union,” a Europe going through “a political process to strengthen the democratic legitimacy and accountability of further moves towards integration” which could prepare the “move towards a federal solution” and could demonstrate “the irreversibility and the solidity of the Euro.”

“More Europe” understood the issue of obtaining fiscal stability and of stimulating growth in terms of adopting the American model of political and fiscal union. As such, “more Europe” looked towards a process of “preserving and strengthening Europe’s position in the world,” by constructing, by 2020, “a strong European Political Federation with a Monetary, Fiscal and Banking Union, covering at least the euro zone, while being open to all EU Member States that wish to join.”

The “new thinking” and the “new direction” by which the European Commission “designed” in 2012 the European Union’s future, starting from the “new reality” of the globalized world, imposed “stronger economic policy co-ordination” through an economic and monetary union aimed at “stimulating the economic growth”; through “a banking union” that has as a stepping stone “a single European supervisory mechanism” for all “the banks in the Euro area”; and a political Union that allowed the “move towards a federation of nation states” in which, “through the sharing of sovereignty,” “each country and each citizen are better equipped to control their own destiny.”

In the same year 2012, but from the perspective of democratic accountability, the option for “more Europe” has been overtaken by the option for a “better Europe,” for a different Europe. There were officials who also showed, likewise in 2012, that in the decisional sphere, the alternative to “more Europe,” was a “more flexible Europe,” in which “some countries will be able to become more integrated and others will want to determine their own destiny.”

In 2012 there was also a great deal of interest in debating a subject that was not included in the dominant trend of the official and media discourse, namely a two-speed Europe. Jean-Claude Piris, a former important European official, devoted in his book The Future of Europe: Towards a Two-Speed EU? (2012) two chapters to the idea of a two-speed Europe: “Third option: politically progressing toward a two-speed Europe” and “Fourth option: legally building a two-speed

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12 Viviane Reding, Vice-President of the European Commission, “The time has come for a European Federation,” open letter sent to European Council summit, Brussel, 29 iunie 2012, EUCO 76/12.
14 Martin Callanan, “Statele nationale sunt încă cea mai bună căde de garanta democrația în UE” (The national states are still the best way to guarantee democracy in the EU), interview, Formula As, anul XXII, nr. 1042, octombrie 2012, p. 3. Martin Callanan was in 2012 the head of European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) Group in the European Parliament (which included 55 MEPs). He considered that awarding the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012 to the European Union was “a warning and a sign of encouraging an entity in crisis.”
Europe”. The book illustrates not only how many followers this thesis had in the senior political and academic world, but also, implicitly, how varied and thorough was the argumentation and preparation for its official launch in the public sphere. Piris has raised the problem of the consequences of the EU’s inability to “substantially amend the current EU treaties”\(^\text{15}\), of the danger of the EU “becoming condemned to slowly becoming irrelevant” and of the possibility that “a temporary two-speed would help to open another way forward.”\(^\text{16}\) Piris also drew attention that “the hostility towards a ‘two-speed Europe’ is sometimes due to a lack of precision in the vocabulary and, therefore, to the confusion between a ‘two-speed’ and a ‘two-class’ (or a ‘two-tier’) Europe.”\(^\text{17}\) Among the supporters of two-or multi-speed Europe, mentioned by Piris, there were very different personalities from the perspective of ideological and political options: Willy Brandt, a social democrat, who in a speech held after the end of his term as Chancellor mentioned the term (1974); Leo Tindemans, a christian democrat, the former Prime Minister of Belgium, who in the Report on the Future of Europe presented the possibility of having a “two-speed Europe” in terms of the possibility of providing a credible program for those Community countries with different economic and financial situations (1975); Karl Lamers and Wolfgang Schäuble, members of the CDU, who used the idea (in a document published in 1994) with reference to “hard core” of the Union; Edouard Balladur, moderate conservative, Prime Minister of France, who (also in 1994) proposed “three concentric circles”: the first, consisting of countries that have decided to move forward towards political integration; the second, consisting of the countries of the first circle and other EU countries pursuing only economic integration within the EU Treaty, but not the political one; and the third, consisting of the countries of the two circles and the European countries that wish to remain outside the integration process but which enjoy intergovernmental cooperation with the EU countries; Margaret Thatcher and John Major, conservative leaders, former Prime Ministers, who (also in 1994) supported the concept of Europe with different speeds in the form of a minimum of common policies (for example, trade policy, single market, etc.), and with participation in other policies remaining optional, on the basis of the unilateral decision of each member state. This conception had different names: “flexibility,” “differentiation,” “variable geometry,” “voluntary cooperation,” and had as an official description the syntagma “enhanced cooperation” of the subgroups, which then degenerated into “multi-speed Europe.” It is important to note that the British media and political commentators have expressed a sharp opposition to the concept of two-speed Europe, as well as a number of British politicians such as Tony Blair. The concept has been also opposed by the Irish and Portuguese

\(^{15}\) As Legal Advisor of IGC (Intergovernmental Conferences) he negotiated the Maastricht (1992), Amsterdam (1997), Nice (2001), Roma Constitutional (2004), Lisbon (2007) Treaties. Between 1988 and 2010 he has been European Council Legal Counsel, EU Council of Ministers Legal Counsel, and Director of General Legal Services.


\(^{17}\) Ibidem.
authorities and the government of Poland (2010). Among its prominent advocates were: Jacques Delors, socialist, former President of the European Commission, who (in 1999 and 2000) supported the need for a Franco-German initiative around a project that takes the form of a particular treaty, compatible with European Treaties, which will apply to certain areas and which other interested states can then join; Joschka Fischer, the Green Party, former Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor of Germany, who in his famous speech “From Confederation to Federation. Thoughts on the Finality of European Integration” (2000) launched the idea of a “center of gravity” or center of “avant-garde” countries, ready to build a federal Europe; Jacques Chirac, who mentioned in his speeches as President of France (in 2000 and 2003) “the pioneer groups” able to achieve a more efficient coordination of the economic policies, “a motor” that would enable Europe to move faster and work better. Chirac, however, showed that it is important to avoid the segregation and designation of second-tier countries. The thesis “multi-speed Europe” has been also supported (in 2001) by such leftist thinkers as Jean-Noël Jeanneney, Pascal Lamy, Henri Nallet, Dominique Strauss-Kahn. Jean-Claude Piris himself argued for the thesis in his 2012 book. It is not irrelevant that the most famous living German intellectual and one of the world’s leading philosophers, Jürgen Habermas, wrote 18 in 2003 a manifesto – also accepted by Jacques Derrida, but also by many other intellectuals as Umberto Eco, Adolf Muschg, Gianni Vattimo, Richard Rorty and Fernando Savater – entitled February 15, or What binds Europeans: A Plea for a Common Foreign Policy, Beginning in the Core of Europe, in which he opposed the “old Europe” not only to “the blunt hegemonic politics of its ally”, but also to the “new Europe”, namely those central and eastern European countries, “working hard for their admission into the EU,” supported by the United States and supporting US foreign policy, but confined to “old Europe,” France, Germany and Belgium. Habermas considered that the position of the East European countries tended to provoke a response of walling off “the avant-gardist core of Europe,” namely of France and Germany, “into a new Small Europe” 19.

In 2016 nevertheless, the official discourse was not centred on Europe’s “speeds.” On the contrary. In a lecture given by the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, on 3 March 2016 in The Hague, the European Union was re-identified with “a source of stability in a time of crisis,” actually in a time of “polykrisen” (multiple crises). “The European project” was characterized not only as a “problem,” but also as a “solution” 20, this official emphasizing the performance of the European Commission in achieving “a paradigm shift” 21, namely

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18 During the extensive demonstrations in the capitals of Europe against the invasion of Iraq.
21 Ibidem, p. 2.
the adoption of a paradigm in which it is necessary, possible and responsible that European policies and, as a result, the European Commission should approach “the really important issues facing Europe”: the chronic ones being the economic, public funding, employment, investment and sovereign debt crisis, and the acute ones being the migration phenomenon, the attempts to renegotiate the status of some countries within the EU, the threat of exit, and so on. This “virtuous triangle in European politics” was considered to be the one configured by the “consolidation of public finances, growth, and jobs and investment.” The solving of “Europe’s biggest problem” – namely “weak, very weak economic growth and scandalously high unemployment” –, by addressing the causes, presupposed “better regulation,” an Investment Plan, a European Energy Union, a digital internal market, a Banking Union and a Capital Market Union. The approach was thus unitary at the level of the European Union, Juncker referring to the need to resolve the major problems of the existence of the European Union and, at the same time, “enough Europe.”

In 2017, in White Paper on the Future of Europe: Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025, the solving of problems by addressing the causes is abandoned, as Jean-Claude Junker wanted in 2016, as is the idea of the European Union as an ongoing process, i.e. the unfinished architecture: the euro zone, the banking Union, the Schengen area, and so on. The current official approach is one that brings to the forefront two aspects:

1. “the existential crisis” of the EU – the “crossroads” facing the EU and the “challenges” that it must face – a crisis that endangers the very existence of the EU and
2. the existing “gap between promise and delivery,” a gap that challenges European unity and which, despite the significant progresses, cannot be filled by following the EU’s established agenda.

As a result, White Paper emphasizes the necessity of a reform process and the necessity to start a “new chapter of the European project,” although the first option considered is “carrying on,” “the starting point of each scenario” being that “the 27 Member States move forward together as a Union.”

Given the importance of a new beginning, it is quite amazing that this document does not include a strategy for the future of the EU, to replace the “misleading and simplistic” approach of the “binary choice between more or less Europe,” but “a range of scenarios” in which the possibilities of development vary “from the status quo, to a change of scope and priorities, to a partial or collective leap forward,” namely (1) Carrying on, (2) Nothing but the single market, (3) Those who want more do more, (4) Doing less more efficiently, (5) Doing much more together. In fact, as among the five scenarios there are many overlapping areas,

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23 Ibidem, p. 4.
26 Ibidem.
27 Ibidem, p. 15.
they are “neither mutually exclusive, nor exhaustive,” but essentially they are meant to generate reflection on the following topics:

– developing the social dimension of Europe;
– deepening the Economic and Monetary Union, on the basis of the Five Presidents’ Report of June 2015;
– harnessing globalisation;
– the future of Europe’s defence;
– the future of EU finances.28

Jean-Claude Juncker has specified in the Foreword of White Paper that only after a broad debate would “a course of action” be decided on that could be rolled out in time for the European Parliamentary elections in June 2019.

**Scenario 3: multi-speed Europe**

Beyond the fact that the five scenarios do not represent an original, creative rethinking of the whole European project, it has also been noted that the White Paper reveals an insufficient understanding of the reasons why some scenarios are possible and some are not, that it does not explore the deep societal constraints on certain options, nor areas that need to be changed in European institutions to make certain scenarios feasible.29

As the advantages and disadvantages of each of the five scenarios has been presented, the document White Paper has been “thought to claim that only one is desirable and achievable, namely the Scenario 3: Two-speed Europe or Europe of concentric circles”.30 In fact, the European leaders’ support for the scenario in which those “who want and can do more, and no longer wait for the others” has confirmed this. Positive reactions to Scenario 3 have been expressed: the head of French diplomatic service, Jean-Marc Ayrault, and the French presidential candidate, Emmanuel Macron, who said: “Waiting is the worst thing we can do; not daring to move forward because we want to stay together,”31 the head of German diplomatic service, Sigmar Gabriel, the Prime Minister of Italy, Paolo Gentiloni, the President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani, and others.

It is worth mentioning that already on February 3, 2017, at the informal Summit of the European Council in Malta, Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany, spoke about an “enhanced cooperation” and said that “European leaders may commit to a union of ‘different speeds’.”32

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32 Angela Merkel said: “We certainly learned from the history of the last years, that there will be as well a European Union with different speeds, that not all will participate every time in all steps of integration.” See “Merkel says Europe’s future could be two-speed,” The Local.de, https://www.thelocal.de/20170204/merkel-says-europes-future-could-be-two-speed
The representatives of France, Italy, Spain and Malta have, of course, promptly supported the proposal. On the other hand, the Visegrad group countries – Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary – immediately rejected Scenario 3 of *White Paper*, identifying in it the institutionalization of a formal marginalization of the states that are not within the European “hard core.” However, before the *White Paper*, similar to Angela Markel’s announcement, a work with an opposite perspective, *Europe’s Last Chance: Why the European States Must Form a More Perfect Union*, was published, attributed to Guy Verhofstadt, former Prime Minister of Belgium, leader of the ALDE for Euro group in the European Parliament and founder of the Spinelli Inter-Parliamentary Federalist Group – to illustrate the intense debate in the highest European circles on Europe’s “speeds., with the highest stakes for the future of Europe, which occurred before the publication of *White Paper*. Verhofstadt pleads in this book for the radical rebuilding of the European Union, taking the American federalism as a model.

The *White Paper* defines a *multi-speed* Europe as being constituted by “coalitions of the willing” to do more together in domains like defence, internal security, taxation and social matters and which agree on specific legal and budgetary arrangements to deepen their cooperation in the chosen domains. What the European Commission document specifies is that in this scenario, taking as a model the Schengen area or the euro zone, another clarification of the rights and responsibilities is required, under the assumption that a much closer cooperation on defence matters “includes a strong common research and industrial base,” a closer collaboration in taxation and social matters implies a “greater harmonisation of tax rules and rates,” reducing compliance costs and limiting tax evasion, and so on. In essence, it is only in the countries that “want and choose to do more” that “the gap between expectations and delivery starts to close.”

Two observations can be made on the originality of this scenario and its connection with the current situation in the EU. On one hand, as many Western analyzes and comments, and, with great attention to detail, the book by Jean-Claude Piris, have highlighted, the thesis that Europe that moves at different speeds and not always towards the same target, has a “long post-war history.” On the other hand, this long history of the idea and thesis of a “multi-speed Europe” highlights sequences in a process of public argument, mediatisation and *captatio benevolentiae* that was and is parallel to a particularly complex reality.

The 27 Member States are differentially integrated into the EU, namely:
- all are part of the single market
- 26 are part of the Banking Union
- 21 are part of the Schengen area
- 21 (different) are part of NATO
- 19 are part of the Euro zone, under the circumstances in which the European continent comprises 48 countries, some with aspirations to maintain special relations with the EU or to integrate into EU.

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33 Published in New York, Basic Books, 2016.
Indeed, the *White Paper* presents the heterogeneity of the degrees to which the EU countries are integrated into a relevant schematic representation that attests, in broad terms, that the *multi-speed* and *multi-tier* Union already exists. But its formalization would hardly deepen and multiply the current problems of differential integration.


**Implications**

Without doubt, the EU did not promise equal rights to member states in any organisational formula, but the formalization of the *multi-speed* Europe would express to a great extent:

– the intention to reconfigure the power in the integrated system of Europe in favor of the “hard core” or “small Europe;”
– the intention to change the problem-solving paradigm to the detriment of cohesive and social policy and of sustainable development policies;

– the European Commission’s preference for neoliberal and technocratic options, namely for a “stratified,” “hanseatic” Europe, a Europe whose differences will be selectively accentuated. This kind of Europe will be able to develop enough competitive potential to question the usefulness and viability of a Union.

– the intention of accepting a variety of citizens’ rights within the EU, depending on the situation of countries that are part or not of coalitions that “have chosen to do more;”

– from a decision-making perspective, the aim of abandoning an “in-depth democratization of the EU,” as a later stage of “intergovernmental democracy.” Particularly problematic would be the transparency and accountability of decision-making at different levels.

– the thought to abandon the Europe of convergent values and institutional exchanges that ensure their continuity;

– the intention of abandoning the definitization of some integration frameworks or “European institutional and operational architecture” – especially in the eurozone and the Schengen area.

For Romania and Bulgaria, the formalization of “European inter-state coalitions” would mean marginalization, the solidification of their status as “secondary partners,” complicating an already particularly disadvantageous economic and security situation.

The renunciation to the completion of the current form of institutional and operational “European architecture” – which set a common target even in conditions of different paces and intensities of integration – would actually open the entropic possibility for different groups to establish different targets and to follow different directions, namely the possibility of the disintegration of the general unional framework, as noted with concern by such personalities as the European Commissioner Pierre Moscovici and German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel. The Romanian analysts in the field rightly stressed that the formalisation of a multi-speed Union would reflect the lack of a genuine European leadership, a worthwhile European vision and the ability to formulate strategy as a great power.

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