



TEPSA

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FOREWORD



JIM CLOOS

TEPSA Secretary General

Following the May European Council, we invited reactions from our network about the key issues the leaders discussed. You will find below the input we have received at this stage, it being understood that the June European Council will certainly come back to most of these issues, which are all revolving around the Ukraine crisis in one way or the other. In the conclusions we will provide some additional questions for further work.

On sanctions against Russia, in light of the adoption of the 6th package, Krševan Antun Dujmović, from the Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO) Zagreb, presents his take on the efficiency of sanctions and what is required to increase it. He also refers to the issue of circumvention of sanctions, specifically mentioning Serbia. He provides information on the issue of Ukrainian citizens moving or being moved to Russia because of the war.

There are no other contributions on sanctions now since this issue has been debated very largely in the run up to the meeting. We have however an interesting contribution: one from Hrvoje Butković, Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO) Zagreb, on reactions to the sanctions in Croatia. It would be useful to see whether comparable reactions have been registered elsewhere.

Concerning security and defence, Mihaela-Adriana Pădureanu from the European Institute of Romania looks at the various strands of work in this area. She highlights the new stimulus given to joint procurement, which could be a game-changer. The EU now shows more drive and ambition in developing the Compass framework. She points out that public support for this is high. Simon J. Smith, Associate Professor of Security and International Relations, International Studies and History, School of Justice, Security and Sustainability, Staffordshire University, emphasizes the need to situate Russia's invasion of Ukraine in a wider framework, particularly as regards relations with China. He sees growing cooperation between the EU and NATO in this context, while at the same time opening up a perspective of higher European strategic autonomy or responsibility. He ends with a call for strengthening resilience in the face of the growing challenges.

On Food Security, Mihaela-Adriana Pădureanu provides detailed information on the concept of solidarity lanes launched by the Commission to allow the export of Ukrainian cereals. This is important for Ukraine, Europe and the many countries in Africa and elsewhere that depend on Ukrainian (and Russian) exports. It is a sad incident in this context that the acting Chair of the African Union, President Macky Sall of Senegal, wrongly accused the EU of blocking Russian exports of cereals after his visit to Moscow.

Several contributions look at the link between democracy promotion and enlargement, democratic resilience in the Associate countries and more generally.

Mykhailo Pashkov and Oleksiy Melnyk, Co-directors of Foreign Relations and International Security Programmes of the Razumkov Centre (Ukraine) explain why accession to the EU is such a key objective of Ukraine. They see the June EUCO as a “moment of truth” for EU-UA relations.

Hrvoje Butković from the Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO) Zagreb, highlights the importance of insisting on judicial reforms and fundamental rights during the pre-accession phase so as to avoid difficulties later, when a country is part of the EU.

Andrew Duff from the Federal Trust (UK) sees a need to come back to the old debate about deepening and widening and to re-examine the whole enlargement strategy. He alludes to President Macron’s ideas about a wider Europe approach. He concludes with the intriguing idea of an EU-NATO based European Security Council, which merits further elaboration.

Frank Schimmelfennig from ETH Zurich sees a credible conditional membership perspective as the strongest instrument of the EU to support democratic consolidation in neighbouring countries. Credibility means being serious both about the threat of withholding membership if democracy is not respected (geopolitical considerations cannot override the defence of democratic values), and of offering membership if the conditions are fulfilled. He sees merit in offering intermediate rewards in the accession process.

Iulian Oneaşcă from the European Institute of Romania presents a thoughtful analysis of steps to be taken to strengthen democratic resilience in the Associate countries and more generally.

Krševan Antun Dujmović from the Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO) Zagreb, creates a link between assistance to Ukraine and the enlargement process.

TOPICS

SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA

SECURITY AND DEFENCE

FOOD SECURITY

DEMOCRACY AND THE
ASSOCIATION TRIO

All the opinions expressed in this publication are the sole view of the authors, and do not represent the position of their Institutes nor of the Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA).

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SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA

What are the reactions of the population in your country on the sanctions?



HRVOJE BUTKOVIĆ

Senior Research Fellow

Institute for Development and International Relations
(IRMO, Croatia)

During its summit meeting in Brussels on Monday 30 May 2022, the EU agreed on a new set of sanctions whereby seaborne oil imports from Russia would be immediately banned. The Croatian Government supported this move and noted that it played a key role in agreeing the compromise (exemptions) with Hungary. The PM Andrej Plenković said that Croatia needs up to 60 days to increase the capacity of its Adria Oil Pipeline for about 30% which will enable bringing non-Russian crude to a landlocked Hungary. However, the Hungarian oil refineries will have to be updated because Russian oil is of different quality than the Adriatic pipeline oil.¹

Not all political actors in the country support the oil sanctions. President of the Republic Zoran Milanović said that the European sanctions against Russia "are not working" since Moscow could sell oil to others. He noted that because of these sanctions neither has the rouble depreciated nor is Russia feeling the financial effects.² The renowned Croatian energy expert Davor Štern in a TV interview commented that the oil sanctions are incoherent. In his view as a consequence of this decision the prices of oil products will rise, there will be higher inflation and the economy will slow down even more. ³ It follows that the views of Croatian actors regarding the embargo on Russian oil are divided.

Are the sanctions already imposed working? There is a reference in par. 4 about circumvention of sanctions. Serbia appears to be a major hub in this respect. Do we know more about that?



KRŠEVAN ANTUN DUJMOVIĆ

Senior Associate
Institute for Development and International Relations
(IRMO, Croatia)

Sanctions are working, but not to the full extent to stop the Russian war machine.

Further strengthening of sanctions is needed to target the energy sector, military industry and all types of high-tech required by the Russian military complex. Prior to the sixth EU package of sanctions, due to the inefficient scale of sanctions and the soaring prices of oil and gas, Russia was raking in around one billion euro daily from energy exports. Significant effects of the sanctions can be seen when looking at the sanctions targeting the Russian political elite as well as Russian oligarchs. It is estimated that beyond the Russian state's 700 billion dollars reserve frozen by the West, the sanctions have been able to freeze more than 1 trillion dollars in assets owned by the Russian oligarchs. These sanctions are thus extremely painful for the Russian business elite which is closely linked to the Kremlin, and is considered to be the only force within Russia that could influence the Russian president and his closest associates.

Serbia seems to act as an "open window" to circumvent sanctions but the scale of the sanction's circumvention is not significant on the global level since Serbia cannot serve as a hub for other countries to circumvent the Russian sanctions on a large scale. It has to be mentioned here that the Russian minister of foreign affairs, Sergey Lavrov, was not able to visit Serbia in early June as the air space of all neighbouring countries was locked for his plane. It is hard to see that Serbia will join EU sanctions though any time soon, as this would be a deeply unpopular move in Serbia. Moreover, Serbia introduced sanctions against Belarus and this information was not even published in the government-controlled media. It can be concluded that the sanctions should have a wider range, and that the pace of their introduction has been too slow.



KRŠEVAN ANTUN DUJMOVIĆ

Senior Associate
Institute for Development and International Relations
(IRMO, Croatia)

The estimated number of people forcibly removed from Ukraine to Russia is currently around 1.5 million people, but this figure includes the territories under the Russian control prior to the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022, and the territories occupied afterwards.

With the standstill or slow pace of progress of Russian troops since late March, and with the new Russian tactic which does not include encircling big portions of Ukrainian territory, it is less likely that this figure of forcible removals will dramatically increase.

Considering the forcible removals of citizens, the following also needs to be taken into consideration:

Firstly, a portion within the group of people, whom Ukrainian authorities consider as forcibly removed, is arguably not including “forcibly removed” but rather voluntarily moved. Many people from the occupied territories are either ethnic Russians or either at least Russian speaking and their departure from the occupied territories and moving to Russia was voluntary, not forcible. However, this portion within the group of people who were removed to Russia is hard to established as the Ukrainian side considers them all to be forcibly removed, while the Russian authorities claim that the citizens of Ukraine all moved voluntarily to Russia. However, the extremely fast pace of Russian troops advancing in southern Ukraine stretching from Kherson to Mariupol indicates that big parts of local population support the Russian occupiers, with some of them infiltrating the Ukrainian intelligence and the military – allowing the Russians to capture this part of Ukraine swiftly.

Secondly, Russia has indicated in a number of occasions prior to the invasion that its goal was to reach the size and population of around 200 million people, almost 50 million more than the official population of the Russian Federation. This Russian populating project was part of the plan to make Russia self-sufficient– in terms of its demographic potential, energy supply, raw material and food production – and it was published as early as in 2014 and it included capturing or depopulating east Ukraine. This plan again is in line with ideas of the Russian president and statements of many Russian experts who all claim that the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was the biggest catastrophe of the 20th century and that Russia needs to reclaim control, or at least strong influence, in all or most of the post-Soviet republics.

SECURITY & DEFENCE

How do these conclusions take further the work already planned under the Compass and initiatives like CARD, PESCO? Any thoughts about the idea of joint procurement? (par.24) Has this ever been done before in this area (for instance in smaller groupings)?



**MIHAELA-ADRIANA
PADUREANU**

Researcher
European Institute of Romania

The conclusions of the European Council special meeting underlined the need to deepen the cooperation in the area of defence and called for potential joint procurement to replenish stocks of the member states that have helped supply the Ukrainian army. The European Joint Procurement Agreement (JPA) has been used in the health sector as a useful tool for providing vaccines and medications, but now there is the possibility for it to be used for defence projects. Just as JPA can be considered a tool that helps build a European Health Union, it can also be seen as a useful instrument for a more active Union in the area of defence. The actions in this sector will be guided by the 2009 directives on defence procurement (2009/81) and intra-EU transfers (2009/43) – the so-called ‘Defence Package’. Nevertheless, more action and progress are needed in order to open up the internal market for defence and integrate the defence sector into the internal market.

There are multiple initiatives in the defence sector: the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the European Defence Fund (EDF, with a future stronger budget), the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP), the future Defence Joint Procurement Task Force. All of these point to the fact that the EU’s defence policy becomes more coherent in a very turbulent strategic environment. This perspective is also shared by the EU citizens who want a more unified defence policy as noted in the final report of the Conference on the future of Europe. Future meaningful discussions will help add more potential and more solution to this topic.



SIMON J. SMITH

Associate Professor, Staffordshire University, Senior
Research Fellow, Scotland Institute & Editor in Chief of
Defence Studies

When NATO members agree on a new Strategic Concept at their Summit in Madrid, Russia's invasion of Ukraine will dominate the discussion. But with this existential crisis rightfully taking centre stage, other threats have not gone away. The challenge for NATO is thus to situate Russia's invasion in a wider strategic context, addressing other key issues before they create new existential crises in the future.

What does this mean in practice? We contend that despite the current centrality of the Russo-Ukrainian war, Sino-American rivalry is likely to drive US approaches to international security in the coming decades. NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept will need to acknowledge and address this reality. Among the many challenges in Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific, Chinese designs on Taiwan figure most prominently, and China is certainly watching the Russo-Ukrainian war closely, seeking to draw strategic lessons. This dynamic need not be catastrophic for European and Transatlantic security. It creates opportunities for EU/NATO cooperation and greater European strategic autonomy (or strategic responsibility) in the context of an enduring transatlantic bond. Europe and Asia are increasingly linked as two theatres in a global system hinging on the United States and anchored on its allies in both regions. The Strategic Concept should thus lay out a vision for how NATO can simultaneously compete with both China and Russia.

There are also several specific threats and challenges that the Strategic Concept should address. First, allies should tackle the effects of emerging and emerged disruptive technologies on strategic, defence, and force planning. Second, adversaries are increasingly using high- and low-tech approaches short of armed conflict to disrupt national politics and daily life in Western democracies. Enhancing national resilience and coordinating resiliency across the alliance should be a requirement for the Strategic Concept. Third, money remains the sinew of war. Whether it is investment in national or common funded capabilities, or transfers to partners like Ukraine, ample and efficient investment in capabilities is a requirement for successful strategy. Fourth, NATO must continue to grapple with the distinct but related challenges of terrorism and irregular warfare.

While it seems clear that Russian aggression has mitigated some centrifugal tendencies in the alliance, NATO will remain more like an orchestra requiring a conductor to avoid strategic cacophony, rather than a self-organizing jazz band. The Strategic Concept represents an opportunity to better bring the members of the alliance and EU-NATO relations into harmony. To do so, it should address the dual challenge posed by Russia and China while better balancing NATO's core commitments with a diverse set of new and growing threats.

FOOD SECURITY

Do we have information on how Solidarity Lanes could function (par. 19)?



**MIHAELA-ADRIANA
PADUREANU**

Researcher
European Institute of Romania

More than three months after the war in Ukraine has begun, its effects on the global level are becoming more and more visible. Even before 24 February, food security has been directly impacted by different factors such as: the COVID-19 pandemic, pests and climate change. Although food insecurity has been rising even before 2020, the conflict in Ukraine has only added a more worrying layer to this situation, and may force even more vulnerable people around the world to go hungry. At the same time, the latest evolutions are threatening the progress made in the last decade to fight global hunger.

Both Ukraine and the Russian Federation are some of the largest exporters of wheat (together they account for almost 30% of global exports), maize and sunflower oil. Additionally, the Ukrainian Black Sea ports have been blocked by warships, leading to the impossibility of the last year's production to leave the war zone. The tremendous disruptions into the food supply chains have forced the rethinking of almost all the logistic elements involved in this process. It is estimated that 20 million tonnes of grains must leave Ukraine by the end of July due to economic and food security reasons and the fact that the pressure is mounting to free storage capacity for the coming harvest. One of the biggest problems is that Ukraine uses differing rail gauge widths than those in the EU. This means that the train's chassis are changed before entering the EU, which is a time-consuming process.

A solution for transporting all this quantity of grains to the EU from Ukraine, on land and not by sea, was provided by the European Commission, DG MOVE through a document titled *An action plan for EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes to facilitate Ukraine's agricultural export and bilateral trade with the EU*. The initiative offers some important guidelines for the EU operators and Ukrainian grain-sellers for enhancing their cooperation, in order to increase and facilitate as much as possible the movement of goods.

The proposed EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes' goals are: to find new routes between Ukraine and the EU ports in order to facilitate the movement of stored crops, and also to help '*bilateral trade in goods and access of Ukraine to international markets and global supply chains*', which includes humanitarian aid. The member states and the EU market players should work together to implement the much needed measures to advance these goals. They are called upon to provide '*necessary equipment, rolling stock, vehicles, barges and vessels*', thus with all the relevant transport modes. Representing the EU, the EU Advisory Mission Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine) and the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) are named as potential actors involved in facilitating the implementation of the Solidarity Lanes.

However, due to the fact that this implies multiple dimensions, EUBAM has mentioned as potential partners in this the process the Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, the International Organization for Migration and other potential partners, and, in this regard, it is currently preparing to deliver a 'EU – UA Solidarity Lanes Concept Note'.

As a complementary measure, the Council's decision for temporary trade liberalisation between the EU and Ukraine will support Ukraine's economy and facilitate the flow of goods.

At this moment, the member states are the main actors that can help smooth this process and they must be committed to implement this action plan. Until 24 May, most member countries have identified dedicated Solidarity Lanes contact points or are in the process to do so, which will provide support for implementing many of the actions proposed by the Commission. It is worth mentioning that the first Plenary meeting already took place, bringing together more than 250 participants involved in these actions, such as national Solidarity Lanes contact points, the Ukrainian authorities and the EU and Ukrainian market players.

Nonetheless, the process of reorienting the transport routes is ongoing and sustained actions should continue in a coordinated and rapid manner, in order to adequately respond to this crisis.

DEMOCRACY AND THE ASSOCIATION TRIO

How can democracy be best fostered in the Association Trio countries (Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova) in the coming years? What difference, if any, would the EU enlargement framework make for further democratic development of the Trio?



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Russia's aggression against Ukraine is both a symptom and a catalyst of the global trend towards hazardous confrontation between the civilised democracies and the agglomeration of authoritarian state-centric regimes.

As stated in the Batumi summit declaration, “The relations between the Associated Partners and the European Union are founded on the common values on which the EU is built – democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law.”¹ The significance of the Association Trio should in this context be taken into account by the European Council at its June summit when considering Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova as candidates for EU membership.

For Ukraine in particular, the future decision on the candidate status has a significant impact on security aspects and will demonstrate a political will and determination of the EU leaders to share not only common values, but also common risks. Putin's aggression against Ukraine is part of the Kremlin's ambitions to reshape the European political and security space.

For Ukraine, the European Council's decision is of paramount importance and weight. First, the candidate status will put an end to uncertainty in the relations between Kyiv and Brussels, it will institutionalise Ukraine's European integration course, and it will essentially doom the Kremlin's “forced reincarnation” plans for the post-Soviet space. Second, this will be an important impulse for continuing internal transformations and a powerful moral and political incentive for Ukrainians who defend their European future. And third, Ukraine's candidate status will be crucial, as a tool for ensuring and adhering to democracy, human rights, transparency and efficiency of state institutions and civil society structures in the long martial law, which has been extended until 23 August 2022. It will also strengthen the fundamental democratic foundations of Ukraine's reconstruction in the post-war period.

Without any pathos and exaggeration, the June European Council meeting will be a “**moment of truth**” in relations between Kyiv and Brussels, an opportunity for the EU to prove solidarity with a country currently fighting for its European choice at the most difficult period of the war.



ANDREW DUFF

Former Director of the Federal Trust (UK) and Member
of the European Parliament

The European Council took note of the state of preparation of the Commission's Opinions on the membership bids of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova which must be delivered in time for its next meeting on 23-24 June. In truth, as both the Commission and the Council are divided about how to react to the three unexpected and uncalled for accession applications there was not more to say. The upcoming meeting, however, will be very different — and very difficult. Some members want widening without deepening, some deepening without widening, and others neither of the two.

The Commission should use the Opinions to spell out what the accession process is and why it matters. It might also remind everyone how far away all three countries were before Russia's invasion from meeting the Copenhagen criteria for eligibility as accession states. While there were recent positive developments towards fulfilling the potential of the 2014 association agreements in terms of the rule of law, more progress was still necessary.

The EU should give a warm emotional response to President Zelensky's initiative but use it as a pretext to re-examine the whole of its enlargement strategy. There is a strong case for President Macron's suggestion to install a new form of partial EU membership as a framework for closer political ties and economic convergence. Affiliation on that basis could be for Ukraine an interim stage from which it will later launch a bid for full membership. For the UK, EU affiliate status could be a satisfactory permanent solution. Hungary might be tempted to accept relegation to affiliate membership. In all cases, membership of a European security council embracing EU and NATO could provide much stronger security guarantees than exist at the moment.

It's time for new architecture for the wider European neighbourhood. As the European Parliament will confront the European Council with proposals for revising the Treaties at the same meeting, the leaders may choose to appoint an expert reflection group to prepare independently options for the inevitable constitutional Convention. This also should be welcomed. I write more about this in my new book *Constitutional Change in the European Union*, to be published shortly by Palgrave Pivot.



FRANK SCHIMMELFENNIG

Professor of European Politics
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There is solid research evidence that a credible conditional membership perspective is the strongest instrument of the EU to support democratic consolidation in neighbouring countries. In the absence of offering membership, the EU has not had a systematic effect on democracy in non-member states. Trade, partnership and cooperation agreements do not have that effect; association is only effective if it comes with an explicit membership perspective. The offer of membership is not sufficient, however, if governments perceive the costs of democratic reform to exceed the benefits of membership. Authoritarian and autocratic governments typically reject democratic conditionality.

In addition, the conditional offer of membership needs to be credible. Credibility refers to both the credibility of the EU's threat to withhold membership if democratic conditions are not met and the credibility of the EU's promise to admit a country that fulfils the democratic conditions. Credibility is highest if democratic consolidation is the only or the strongest reason for the EU to admit new member states and if the candidates do not have attractive alternative options besides EU membership. In this vein, the Russian aggression in Ukraine has severely increased the attractiveness or necessity of further European integration for the Association Trio. At the same time, EU enlargement for geopolitical reasons risks undermining the credibility of democratic conditionality if it implies turning a blind eye on democracy and the rule of law for strategic reasons. Moreover, high credibility requires EU coherence and consistency. The more the EU speaks with one voice, and consistently rewards compliance over time and across candidate countries, the more credible its threats and promises are. If enlargement is highly contested among the member states and becomes subject to double standards, bilateral disputes between member and candidate countries, or referendums in the member states, the credibility of the accession promise diminishes – and so does the willingness of candidate countries to comply with EU democratic conditions. Finally, the compliance pull weakens with the duration of the accession process.

In sum, offering conditional membership is the best way for the EU to advance democratic reforms. It is not sufficient, however. When the EU decides to offer candidate status to the Association Trio, it needs to pay strong attention to credibility. It must ensure that geopolitical considerations do not sideline democracy and the Association Trio does not get special, fast-track treatment. Because the Association Trio starts with partly severe democracy and rule of law problems, the accession process is bound to be long and difficult. It is therefore important that the EU offers intermediate rewards beyond the existing association treaties to preserve momentum.

Further readings:

- Tanja A. Börzel & Frank Schimmelfennig (2017) Coming together or drifting apart? The EU's political integration capacity in Eastern Europe, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 24:2, 278-296, DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2016.1265574
- Frank Schimmelfennig & Ulrich Sedelmeier (2020) The Europeanization of Eastern Europe: the external incentives model revisited, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27:6, 814-833, DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2019.1617333



IULIAN ONEAȘCĂ

Researcher

European Institute of Romania

Recent events and high-intensity shocks—such as the backsliding of Poland and Hungary on democratic standards in the EU, the war for Ukraine in Europe, and the US democracy crisis—marked a return of resilience to the forefront of public discourse, both at European as well as the global level. Consequently, a sizeable need arises for supporting the democratic resilience of actors and institutions, especially in the associated countries of the Eastern Partnership – Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

A further democratic development of the trio must be considered as part of a larger endeavour, aiming to support the economy of effort in all European countries. It is an ethical prerequisite for limiting losses in improving the efficiency of each society and its livelihood. The collective actors and public goods games, mass mobilization strategies and social media, are key in improving the European fabric of values.

Keeping Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine closer to the EU provides them with leverage against authoritarian actions. EU enlargement promotes needed reforms, against a background of positive examples, good practices and needed resources. Furthermore, peer pressure opportunities are essential in guiding a democratic construction of the common European future.

These countries share a common Soviet legacy and a turbulent transition process since the 1990s, struggling to redefine their identity and learn to act autonomously. Their fragile path, full of ups and downs, must be considered as normal under the given conditions.

Positive personalities acting as national influencers may play an important role in fostering democracy in Georgia, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine. As horizontal association was severely discouraged, if not annihilated, during the communist era, it is important that legitimate civil society organisations grow faster and learn to work out the agenda for political progress.

The best way to strengthen democratic resilience—and make economy of effort—is to change how people think and the way they act. The process involves strategic thinking, sharing a vision and acting together. Accordingly, the EU could reconsider and consolidate relatively new resilience policies, such as the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy or the Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action, as well as frameworks for EU Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy.

How pre-accession could best be designed to leverage democratization?



HRVOJE BUTKOVIĆ

Senior Research Fellow
Institute for Development and International Relations
(IRMO, Croatia)

Much more emphasis must be placed on judiciary and fundamental rights chapters during the accession negotiations. After Croatia's EU accession, the EU's conditionality lost much of its weight, as reflected by the setbacks in Croatia's anticorruption efforts. Furthermore, almost ten years after the EU accession the legal framework for preventing corruption is still arguably inadequate. The European Commission's 2021 Rule of Law Report on Croatia noted that the country needs to strengthen its legal framework on the prevention of conflicts of interest and that it has to adopt a code of ethics for members of the government and parliament.

The situation in Croatia's judiciary is equally if not even more problematic. The 2021 Eurobarometer on the perceived independence of the national justice systems in the EU shows that since 2016 there has been a continued downward trend in Croatia's perceived judicial independence. In 2021, only 17% of the Croatian citizens surveyed believed that their judicial system was independent - the lowest rating in the EU - with the EU average being 54%. The main reason cited by the public for what they considered to be a lack of judicial independence was the perception of political interference or pressure. Therefore, in order to leverage democratization during the pre-accession period the EU conditionality in the area of judiciary and fundamental rights must be strengthened.

Do we have a good understanding of what exactly the EU has provided in terms of assistance to UA since 24 February (economic assistance, liquidity support, humanitarian aid, military aid...)? What is the Ukrainian reconstruction platform mentioned in par. 12 meant to be?



KRŠEVAN ANTUN DUJMOVIĆ

Senior Associate
Institute for Development and International Relations
(IRMO, Croatia)

After 24 February, Ukraine has a budget gap of about 7 to 8 billion euros.

To support the defence of the country and guarantee the normal functioning of the state, Ukraine needs 5 to 6 billion euro per month, with Ukrainian domestic revenue covering just 30% of that requirement. Therefore, Ukraine is now urgently expecting the 9 billion euros financial package from the EU. Ukrainians believe that with their successful defence of Ukraine they are not only defending their own country but also the neighbouring EU countries, and that for this reason the EU should not just provide assistance in the military provisions, but also to enable Ukraine's economy to function, and social life to exist during the war with Russia.

From June 4, the EU has temporarily suspended all duties on goods coming to the EU from Ukraine, the new rules will be valid for one year, which is a move welcomed by Ukraine. Considering the 400 billion euros reconstruction platform for Ukraine that the EU is working on, this should be coordinated with the accession process, meaning its realisation should have a "money for reforms" mechanism included

CONCLUDING REMARKS



JIM CLOOS
TEPSA Secretary General

Most of the questions mentioned above will be on the agenda of the June EUCO and beyond.

As the Russian aggression against Ukraine continues unabated, assistance to Ukraine, including by providing weapons, remains a short-term necessity. It would be interesting to get a comprehensive overview of the various assistance measures taken by the EU since 24 February and a better understanding of the proposed Ukrainian Reconstruction Platform.

Investigations by international justice into the Russian behaviour in Ukraine will no doubt be further stepped up. In this context it would be good to have more information about the forcible removal of Ukrainian citizens to Russia.

The sanctions have reached new levels, but the debate about a 7th package will come for sure. It would be useful to have more insights into the public attitudes over the coming days and weeks. To ensure sustainability of support, the EU must be able to prove that sanctions work (what exactly goes on in the Russian economy, is the strengthening of the rouble an artificial and short-term phenomenon or not?), and that the effects on the European economy are manageable (here the development of a new energy strategy will be absolutely key, and any information from the network on this would be most welcome). The May EUCO conclusions raise the issue of enforcement. It would help to get more information about the role of certain third countries like Serbia in avoiding EU sanctions.

Clearly the nexus democracy and enlargement will loom large in the run-up to the June EUCO. There is a lot of food for thought in the contributions we have received here. Further debate will be necessary on the key questions raised. What should and what will the EUCO decide on candidate status now? Would a pre-accession process give a boost to democracy promotion, and if yes, how? How to ensure the double credibility requirement mentioned in Frank Schimmelfennig's text? Is there merit in President Macron's ideas on the larger Europe debate? How could it be made to work without closing doors? Is there a possibility of developing a new method of staged accession? This will be an ongoing debate for some time to come, and TEPSA could further contribute expert advice on these vital issues for the future of Europe.