



PAST IED EVENTS:
Autumn 2016



RESEARCH PAPER:
Situation in Ukraine



NEXT IED EVENTS:
Spring 2017

GETTING TO KNOW OUR WORK

NEWSLETTER January 2017



EDITORIAL

So far the most difficult year in the history of the European Union came to its end. The year 2016 witnessed an unprecedented rise of the anti-European populist politicians, the British vote for Brexit, the ongoing migration wave to Europe, the political earthquake after the outcome of the Italian referendum and, very importantly, the election of Donald Trump for a new president of the United States.

The activities of our Institute reflected upon all these crucial happenings. Throughout 2016 we organized several successful conferences and seminars which discussed the implications of Brexit, the rise of political extremism in Europe as well as the migration impasse and the future of Schengen area. We also focused on the long-term problems such as the youth unemployment, issues concerning the Energy union and the functionality of democratic state and its institutions. We also continued with our launched initiative within the Smart Cities platform and even moved behind the borders of the EU in order to discuss the current issues and

challenges of the EU Neighbourhood Policy in one of the countries concerned, in Moldova. We welcomed the new members to our Scientific Committee, published numerous publications and granted twenty research grants to talented young researchers in order to support them in the work through which they contribute to entire community.

More than ever before, Europe needs to be strong, united and faithful to its democratic principles. As a consequence, in 2017 the greatest challenge of our Institute will be to contribute to building a stronger unity within Europe and prevent populist politicians to destroy the values and pillars the European project has been built upon. Together with our partners and scientific fellows, the Institute of European Democrats will continue to analyse the roots of the current problems and propose the solutions how to return the EU back to its feet. The EU is simply the only option for our future and therefore we need to defend it no matter the cost.

A current debate –

The Rise of Nationalisms in Europe: Causes and Concerns.



[Click here to access the Programme of the event](#)

The IED in collaboration with the *Fundacja Samorządność I Demokracja* (Poland) organized the international conference [“The Rise of Nationalisms in Europe: Causes and Concerns”](#) on Friday **28 October 2016** in Łowicka Cultural Centre in **Warsaw, Poland**. Polish politicians, political activists and the experts on

nationalism from Poland, Ukraine and Russia discussed **the most serious aspects of the current nationalist and right-wing politics in Europe**. The conference was opened by the Coordinator of the IED *Flaminia Baffigo* who highlighted **the interest of IED to continue contributing to a better understanding of the dangers of extreme nationalism and political populism**. The Project Manager of the IED *Adriana Ciefova* further explained the historical implications of nationalism and **the reasons why the European right-wing and national populist parties** – which have managed to establish themselves as the relevant political players in almost every European country – **directly endanger the European Union and the future of our continent**. The President of Stronnictwo Demokratyczne *Pawel Piskorski* opened the first panel titled **“Revival of nationalist vision of history in Poland”** by the explanation that **nationalism always occurs when the society is lacking something**, whether it is money, security or social reassurance. He also reminded that nationalism led to the rise of fascism and nazism in the first half of the 20. century and nowadays Europeans seems to be forgetting on this crucial legacy. *Jacek Rakowiecki*, Journalist of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, followed up by the explanation of how the Polish governmental party Law and Justice (PiS) abuses the Polish history for its political aims. He pinpointed that **history in the hands of nationalists is not history any longer** because it is not allowed to present different interpretations. The great problem also lies in the education because **young people often do not know the basics of the European modern history**. *“Nationalism is not a pill which will cure the illness of Europe but rather opposite,”* he highlighted. The Member of the Polish Parliament *Michal Kaminski* talked about the economic and religious aspects of nationalism and how **economic issues and catholicism can be abused for strengthening nationalist sentiments** as it has been the case in Poland.



The aspects of the right-wing politics in the EU in the light of East-West relationships, with the special focus on the relationship among the EU, Russia and Ukraine, were explained and debated at the second panel titled **“Right-wing politics in the EU in the light of the East-West relationships”**. The Leader of “Society for Free Russia” *Masza Makarowa* explained the main features and tools for the development of **Russian nationalism and expansionism** and criticized the lack of awareness and information about the EU inside Russia. *Natalia Panczenko* from Euromaidan Warszawa warned that the current wave of nationalism is a new phenomenon which is not based on anything real but aggression and hatred. She believes that **dialogue and conversation represent the ways how to prove the danger of nationalism to all people**. *Roman Korbut* from Euromaidan Warszawa talked about the differences between Polish nationalism and Ukrainian patriotism vis-à-vis Russians and about **the importance of education in the fight against extreme nationalism**.

The final panel **“Where do the fears come from – Russia, Turkey, Middle East?”** was dedicated to the discussion on the current complicated political situation in Turkey and Middle East and its impact on the rise of nationalism in Europe. The Vice-president of Stronnictwo Demokratyczne and PDE-EDP **Andrzej Potocki** highlighted that currently we have access to too much information but **many people do not critically assess and filter the information they read on the internet**. Journalist and former member of Polish Solidarity **Kazimierz Woycicki** talked about **the abuse of internet by professional trolls** who use internet for the propagandistic purposes and mobilisation of continually higher number of people. He further explained how **internet propaganda and trolling** work and how few clicks can redirect us to the trolls websites and absurd information – when more and more people click on it, absurdity becomes more relevant and that is extremely dangerous. The Reporter for Radio RMF **Thomas Orchowski** discussed the current political situation in Turkey and **the complicated relations of Turkish President Erdogan with the EU**. The Professor from the University of Warsaw **Artur Wroblewski** touched the problematic situation in the Middle East and the controversial attitude of Erdogan’s government to Kurdish minority. He believes that **without the settlement of the dispute between Turks and Kurds there cannot be real stability and peace in the Middle East region**.

The conference brought very challenging insights on why the nationalist politicians are on their rise in virtually every European country and what steps the politicians, political activists, NGOs and public should take in order to tackle and defeat extreme nationalism. **The right-wing and national populist parties currently present one of the main challenges to the European Union, its values and the future of its integration and it is our obligation to respond to them effectively and decisively, promoting and defending the values of democracy, solidarity, freedom and liberal rights** which Europe stands on and which are the highest principles of the European civilization.

[Check the Leaflet on Nationalisms in Europe!](#)

Heated topic in Europe –

Brexit, Scotland and the Constitutional Future of Europe.

[Click here to access the Programme of the event](#)

[Click here to access the Biographies of speakers](#)

The seminar titled **“Brexit, Scotland and the Constitutional Future of Europe”** was organized by the IED in collaboration with the **Sabino Arana Fundazioa** (Basque Country).

It took place on Wednesday **9 November 2016** in **Bilbao, Basque Country**. The event welcomed three significant speakers who all specialize in the current European international affairs and who discussed **the most important aspects of Britain’s exit from the European Union**. The speakers outlined the possible options for the EU-UK negotiations, when and how the Brexit would take place, whether there would be a “hard” or “soft” Brexit and what impact Britain’s leave would have on the European Union and its people. The seminar was opened by the



President of the Sabino Arana Fundazioa **Juan Maria Atutxa** and the Coordinator of the IED **Flaminia Baffigo**. They both responded to the victory of Donald Trump in the US presidential elections announced just few hours before the start of the seminar and the impact of this victory on the EU. Mr Atutxa emphasized that despite there are many challenges the EU has to face such as the British vote for Brexit, migration crisis and populism, **it is important that Europeans remain united and adhered to the principles the EU has been built upon**. Mr Baffigo expressed that day's "American Brexit" should give Europe more strength to proceed to "an ever closer union" and return confidence of Europeans into the European project.

The first speaker was **Antonios A. Nestoras**, adjunct Professor of international affairs at the Vesalius College and researcher at the Institute for European Studies of Vrije Universiteit Brussel, who is the author of a very recent working paper "[The EU beyond Brexit: towards a new democratic foundation](#)" which was published by the IED. According to Mr Nestoras, **Brexit is unavoidable and the question is not whether Brexit will happen, but how it will happen**. In his view, the so-called "hard Brexit" is the most plausible option which will bring fundamental changes for the EU – **Brexit does not necessarily mean that the EU is going to collapse but it needs to and will change**. Regardless of the Brexit negotiations, the EU needs to start thinking about its own future and reform in a meaningful way.



On the other hand, the Professor of International Relations at the University Complutense of Madrid **Francisco Aldecoa Luzarraga** argued that the result of British referendum does not necessarily mean that Brexit will really take place because **the process of Brexit is still highly uncertain**. Despite these concerns, he believes that **27 EU member states should use the British referendum as not only the opportunity but the obligation to improve functioning of the EU and move Europe towards deeper integration**. "EU is not the destination but the journey," Mr Aldecoa highlighted.

The Professor of Politics at the University of Aberdeen and the University of Edinburgh **Michael Keating** focused on **the possible alternatives which lie ahead for Scotland** which population voted to stay in the EU by 62% in the June's referendum. He highlighted that Brexit did influence not only



the external relations between the EU and Britain but also **the internal relations among the parts of the United Kingdom**. He argued that for Scotland it is impossible to remain in both the EU and the UK and the steps that Scotland will undertake depends on the actual Brexit process and Brexit negotiations. Mr Keating outlined three possible options for Scotland – either it will accept Brexit *or* it will create the new constitutional doctrine which will allow Scotland to consider the result of

the referendum as not binding for them *or* Scotland will organize other referendum on independence from the UK. The seminar was moderated by **Jokin Bildarratz Sorron**, the Senator of the Basque Country in the State Parliament in Madrid. The session brought the general conclusion that **Brexit is a symptom of the crisis that is going on in Europe and this crisis has to be removed by reforming the EU**, by solving the internal problems the EU is facing currently, by creating new relations and rules, otherwise extremist political forces will change the face of Europe profoundly.

Focus on the European Neighbourhood Policy – Moldova between East and West.

[Click here to access the Programme of the event](#)

[Click here to access the Biographies of speakers](#)

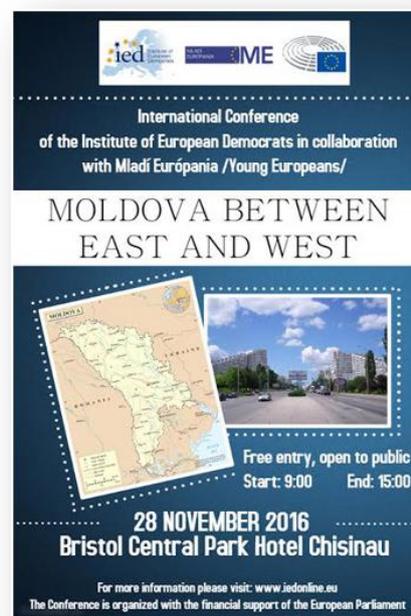
[Click here to access the Photos from the event](#)

The IED in collaboration with the *Mladí Európania* (Young Europeans, ME, Slovakia) organized the international conference titled “[Moldova between East and West](#)” which took place on Monday **28 November 2016** in **Chisinau, Moldova**. This event aspired to reflect upon intensifying relations between the EU and Moldova after the EU-Moldovan Association Agreement entered into force on 1 July 2016. The conference analyzed **the relationship between Moldova and the EU from three perspectives – international, domestic and from the view of youth.**

Accordingly, the first panel titled “**Moldova between East and West from international perspective: European Union, Russia and the future of Moldova’s geopolitical orientation**“ was devoted to the evaluation of the country’s political and foreign policy direction in the view of the experts from the EU. The event was opened by the Director of the IED *Luca Bader* and the Honorary Consul of Moldova in Slovakia *Antonio Parziale*. They both praised the positive steps and the recent reforms which have been commenced with the support of the EU and which are gradually decreasing the level of political corruption, strengthening the rule of law, boosting economic development and business climate in Moldova. However, as Mr Bader emphasized in regards to the winning of a pro-Russian candidate in the 2016 Moldovan presidential elections, **Moldova is still at the crossroad between West and East and only Moldovans and nobody else can decide about the scope of the reform and future geopolitical orientation of their country.**



The experts from the countries which entered the EU in the last enlargement rounds in 2004, 2007 and 2013 (Slovakia, Romania, Croatia respectively) then explained their perspectives of the current situation in Moldova. *Robert Kirnag*, the Ambassador of Slovakia to Moldova, **compared the example and practices of Slovakia from its transition period** during which it applied for and became the member of the EU. He explained the main problems and challenges Slovakia faced during the implementation of the reforms and the main positives which Slovakia has gained since it entered the European project. *Monika Begovic*, the Project Manager for the Center for International Studies of Croatia, emphasized that although Moldova is a small country it has a significant strategic importance – among others the country is a transit point for the movement of oil and natural gas from Russia into Europe and Turkey. This creates the situation in which both, the EU and Russia, compete for the influence in Moldova; however, **Moldova must continue to balance between its Eastern and Western neighbors, continue to carry out reforms and decide about its future on its own without foreign influences.** The expert



on the European politics of the European Institute of Romania *Mihai Sebe* followed up by the explanation of the Romanian position regarding the European Neighbourhood Policy in general and the geopolitical situation of Moldova in particular. In his view, the EU and its member states should involve itself in social policies that will increase the quality of life for the citizens from the countries of the Eastern Partnership in order to decrease the fragmentation levels that are present in Moldova. However, first of all **the end of the illusions is the first step toward the healing process** because neither the EU, nor the USA or Russia would risk antagonizing each other on the topic of Moldova nor they would massively invest in the support of the regime in place – **Moldova has to reform on its own, the EU can only support it.**



The second panel titled “**Moldova between East and West from domestic perspective: Political, social and economic challenges of Moldova**” presented the opinions of domestic politicians and experts. The Associate Professor at the Free International University of Moldova

Veaceslav Ionita introduced the experience from his term in the Moldovan Parliament and his vision of what steps should be further undertaken in order to bring more democracy and transparency into the

Moldovan governmental and state bodies.

The Mayor of the city of Chisinau *Dorin Chirtoaca* evaluated the major economic, political and social challenges Moldova is facing now and the state of relations between Moldova and the EU on the one hand and Moldova and Russia on the other. He expressed his belief that **Moldova is a country with a great potential and talented people, however, much work is ahead** in order to improve the quality of lives of ordinary



Moldovans. *Serghei Ostaf*, the Director of the Resource Center for Human Rights of Moldova, concentrated on evaluation of the compliance with laws in Moldova and highlighted that **political corruption and selective justice are still one of the most serious problems of the country** and very serious obstacles towards the implementation of the rule of law and democratic institutions in Moldova. The Mayor of the city of Comrat *Serghei Anastasov* concluded the panel by the explanation of the status-quo situation in Transnistria and the presentation of good economic and political initiatives which have been commenced in Moldova recently and which need to serve as the examples for the future proceedings.

The third panel “**Youth in Moldova and Europe**” concentrated on youth perception of the future of the EU-Moldovan relations.

Natalia Stercul, the Lecturer at the Faculty of International Relations at the Moldova State University, explained **the impact the intensified relations between the EU and Moldova has on young Moldovans.**

In Mrs Stercul’s opinion, there should be the consolidation of the social partnership with youth associations, encouragement of the dialogue between Moldovan and the EU youth organizations and the improvement of international cooperation on youth problems. Two



representatives from the European youth organizations *Miroslava Calegari* from Young Democrats for Europe (YDE) and *Veronika Okata* from Mladi Europania (Young Europeans, ME), shared their personal practices on **how the youth can be influential on the European and national levels**. They also presented **the greatest advantages and disadvantages of being in the EU** and advised young Moldovans how to be active in the Moldova's public affairs so they can also influence the future orientation of their country.



The event was moderated by *Slavomír Rudenko*, the Director for International Affairs of the Pan-European University in Slovakia and the Member of the Board of Directors of the IED. The conference was attended by a high number of students from the Moldova State University, representatives of NGOs, Embassies and several Moldovan national TV and radio stations.

[Click here to access the Full Presentation of Speakers!](#)

[Click here to access the Summary of the EU-Moldovan relations!](#)

Contribution for a didactics on the Exhibition –

“Rising from Destruction. Elba, Nimrud, Palmyra.”

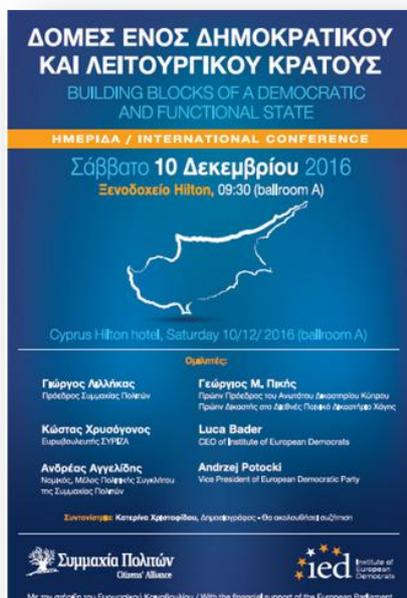
The IED in collaboration with the *Priorità Cultura* (Italy) supported the Educational Day for the students of secondary high schools which took place on Wednesday **7 December 2016** in **Rome, Italy**.

The exhibition [“Rising from Destruction. Elba, Nimrud, Palmyra”](#) has been set up inside the Colosseum, a unique monument witnessing a great empire. Now it became also a symbol of a country capable of welcoming, incorporating and storytelling. Culture produces dialogue, dialogue leads to civil confrontation, the civil confrontation to conciliatory policies and thus to peace between peoples. The video on Palmyra Busts reconstruction was presented to the students who were welcomed by the Syrian researcher *Ahmed Kzzo* and the writer *Luca Attanasio*, the author of *Il Bagaglio*.



[Check the video on Palmyra Busts reconstruction!](#)

Spotlight on a Cyprus settlement – Building Blocks of a Democratic and Functional State.



[Click here to access the Programme of the event](#)

[Click here to access the Biographies of speakers](#)

On Friday **10 December 2016**, symbolically on the *International Human Rights Day*, in **Nicosia, Cyprus**, the IED in cooperation with the *Citizens' Alliance* of Cyprus organized the conference titled "[Building Blocks of a Democratic and Functional State](#)". The speakers discussed *inter alia* **the current situation of compliance with human rights and democratic freedoms in the Republic of Cyprus** and asserted that these principles which constitute core values for the EU, should be incorporated in an unambiguous, unequivocal, clearly prescribed and binding manner in any proposed solution which will aim to resolve **the ongoing Cyprus problem** – a problem of invasion, ongoing occupation, mass population transfer, illegal settlement, continuous human rights violations by Turkey since 1974, **a problem affecting the division and continuing occupation of the territory of a member state of the EU, affecting its effective control and exercise of**

sovereign rights and powers throughout the whole of its territory.

The speakers attempted to set out the minimum parameters and framework which any acceptable solution should include. They highlighted the requirements and need for certainty, the incorporation of procedural safeguards and adoption of characteristics necessary so as to achieve a functioning, democratic state within the EU. It was argued that **the solution so as to ensure it would not collapse, should be fair, effective, workable and functional on an executive, legislative and judicial level, while simultaneously it would reaffirm and protect the rights for each citizen, without any form of discrimination** which would be based upon the ethnic origin of each person. **This equality and non-discrimination principle would thus guarantee the stability, fairness and workability of the solution.** Moreover, it was supported that **the solution as a condition sine qua non must adhere and be compatible without derogations, with the acquis, rule of law and the protection of human rights.** The people of Cyprus should enjoy the same rights as any other European citizen without any exceptions and they should not be rendered 2nd category EU citizens within the EU.



The conference was opened by the President of Citizens' Alliance **Yiorgos Lillikas**, Former Foreign Minister and currently MP, who expressed his belief that **the state has to be governed by the principles of democracy and human rights as this constitutes a precondition to establish workable, effective, fair and based on the rule of law and good governance state, equally attractive and beneficial for all its citizens without any discrimination.** In his view, **functionality, democracy and equality will strengthen the trust of citizens in the state and its bodies and he**

stressed that only a functional state may be viable option which will truly provide stability and prosperity to all its citizens be they of Greek Cypriot or Turkish Cypriot origin. He also expressed the point of view that the geopolitical developments in the broader area, the finding of great quantities of natural gas in the EEZ of the Republic of Cyprus are all parameters which should also taken into consideration so as to create a convergence of interests with other countries.

The Member of the European Parliament and Professor of Constitutional Law *Kostas Chrysogonos* highlighted that **the law of the EU and international law continues to be systematically violated and breached due to the illegal occupation of the northern part of Cyprus**. According to the Professor, **the evolution of the Republic of Cyprus for all Cypriots needs to take place under the direction of the representatives of both communities**; a constitutional debate should be initiated and should define in a clear and unambiguous manner the legal process to be followed. He suggested that **the details and parameters of the solution should be clearly defined within the spectrum of legality, international law, human rights and EU core values and principles**.



Andreas Angelides, Constitutional and Human Rights Lawyer and former Speaker in Parliament, emphasized that the lack of the

rule of law in any potential settlement will lead to corruption, constant friction between the two communities, distrust, violation of human rights and illegal actions and thus proposed that **any solution should unite the people of Cyprus rather than distinguishing, dividing and discriminating them and attributing rights and obligations according to their ethnic background**. He suggested that this notion of ethnic segregation is anachronistic and in violation of the principles of democracy and non discrimination and to this extend mentioned the very recent case of the ECtHR *Pilav v. Bosnia Herzegovina* application 41939/07 issued September 2016. Moreover he asserted that **Cypriots have been deprived in an ongoing and collective manner their basic, fundamental rights since the commencement of the occupation** because the occupied by Turkey territories of the Republic of Cyprus do not apply the rule of law and the *Acquis*. People of Cyprus, **both Greek and Turkish Cypriots should be allowed to determine and decide their own future freely without the interference of Turkey in a way that will negate any and all form of discrimination and will restore democracy and human rights and will allow refugees to return to their homes and property**.

A very prominent public figure, former Judge of the International Criminal Court in Hague and Former President of the Supreme Court of Cyprus, *George M. Piki*s concentrated on the contemporary history of Cyprus from the legal point of view. He argued that over centuries, due to its geopolitical position, Cyprus has been conquered and the rights of the people of Cyprus have been violated, whether it was under the Arab, Venetian, Turkish or British rule. In his opinion, **the Turkish invasion, occupation and illegal settlement of the north part of Cyprus has resulted in crimes against humanity**, war crimes, missing persons, rapes, indiscriminate killings, pillaging and has rendered hundreds of thousands of Cypriots refugees in violation of international humanitarian law and international law. Mr Piki insisted that **justice must and should prevail and that any solution which will not be just will not survive in time because anything that is unjust is unfair and thus unworkable and unviable**. According to *François Pauli*, the Member of the Board



of Directors of IED, the ongoing situation in Cyprus is not acceptable any longer and **the independence of entire Cyprus must be guaranteed by the EU and the international community.** *Andrzej Potocki*, the Vice-President of PDE-EDP and Stronnictwo Demokratyczne, highlighted that the Turkish President Erdogan will continue strengthening his authoritative rule in Turkey which can subsequently lead to the increase of a number of Turkish troops in the Northern part of Cyprus and may lead to the declaration of some form of Turkish protectorate and annexation with Turkey. **“As a result, we need to act and manage the settlement of Cyprus now,”** Mr Potocki concluded. The event was moderated by a Cypriot journalist *Katerina Christofides*. The conference was attended by numerous Ambassadors, NGOs, academics, judges, members of the public and several TV and radio stations and newspapers.

Focus on medicine and health –

Endocrine Disruptors: a Challenge for Europe.

[Click here to access the Programme and Biographies of speakers](#)

[Click here to access the Photos from the event](#)

On Wednesday **21 December 2016** in Palais du Luxembourg in **Paris, France**, the IED in collaboration with the *Mouvement Démocrate* (France) organized the seminar titled **“Endocrine Disruptors: a Challenge for Europe”**. The scientific seminar was dedicated to the subject of endocrine disruptors, which are chemicals that, at certain doses, may interfere with endocrine or hormone systems and may cause cancerous tumours, birth defects, and other developmental disorders. Today, the science explains that multiple chemical substances have the capacity of hacking our hormonal system, even at very low doses. **If this phenomenon affects particularly sensitive organisms such as the young child or the foetus, then serious pathologies can develop later in their lives.** The international scientific society “The Endocrine Society” figures the costs of these pathologies linked to endocrine disruptors at more than 150 billion a year for the European Union. **We**



are therefore faced with a major health and economic threat, in which the role of European leaders is to react with determination. The seminar welcomed three significant specialists in the field – *Leila Aïchi*, the Member of the French Senate and Vice President of the Committee on Foreign affairs, Defence and Armed Forces, *Olivier Kah*, the Professor at the National Ocean University of Taiwan, Neurobiologist and Emeritus Research Director at CNRS and *François Veillerette*, the Director of the Association Generations Futures and President of the European Network of NGOs “Pesticide Action Network Europe”. They all

explained the complexities and challenges of the issue of endocrine disruptors and **the legislative issues that are currently being debated on this subject in the European Institutions.**

[Check the publication “Endocrine Disruptors: a Challenge for Europe” !](#) (in French)

IED Research Papers: Democracy and Stability in Ukraine.

The research paper written by *Mathieu Baudier*, an engineer, pro-European activist, member of the MoDem and a researcher on peace and stability of Europe and Western Asia, takes take a **broader look on Ukraine and the challenges this country faces.**

The situation in Ukraine was a major concern for the European Democrats during the last European parliamentary elections of spring 2014. Over the previous months, **the negotiations over an association agreement with the EU had derailed, a massive movement of protests was met with increasingly lethal state violence, the government got toppled and Russia invaded Crimea.** A wave of subversion then shook a number of cities in the east and south of the country, which coalesced into a full-fledged war in Donbas.



On the one hand, it was heartening to watch people raising and struggling for freedom and democracy, with the European values clearly among their references. On the other hand, one could not escape the feeling that **the EU had mismanaged this crisis**, precisely because of the shortcomings denounced by the European Democrats: too technocratic and overreaching when diplomacy and political responsibility would have been required, while too weak, disunited and lacking appropriate instruments to effectively prevent the escalation into war. Moreover, at a deeper level, **the events of early 2014 in Kiev and in Crimea, as well as the disinformation around them, challenge our conceptions of democracy and the legitimacy of State power. The following years have shown the urgency of clarifying our vision of citizens participation, based on responsibility, dignity and rules, against the cynicism and relativism of the demagogues.** Three years on, the dust has settled, and the main dynamics which have been set in motion during the acute phase of the crisis can now be better identified. But **the international context in which Ukraine evolves has become more unstable.** Turkey, a major trading partner, is in crisis. The EU has been destabilised by the refugees crisis. It is unclear whether Russia's success in Syria will make it more or less aggressive, and, most importantly, whether Donald Trump's election will radically impact U.S. policy towards Ukraine. It is therefore an appropriate time to take a broad look at this country and the challenges it faces, in order to be able to watch closely the most important issues, as the situation will continue to evolve in unpredictable ways.

The main goal of this essay is to help consider Ukraine as such, rather than through the sense of its significance or insignificance for other international actors. This is **a sizable country, with the potential to be prosperous and to contribute to the stability of Europe.** Its diversity, its geographical situation and its level of industrialisation make it unavoidable that its internal dynamics impact its complex interactions with broader international systems. The intrinsic relevance of Ukraine is too often overlooked, intentionally or not, in favour of a "buffer" model, where it would simply be an undefined zone of transition between Russia and Central Europe. If the past three years have proven something to many, it is that such views are simplistic and error-prone. However, relevance doesn't mean coherence. **A sense of belonging to Ukraine exists, which is softer, more widespread, more comfortable and more independent from the mother tongue or the region, that extremists care to admit. But whether and how it can give a purpose to a modern and decent State is a question that has not yet been answered.**

[Read the full Research Paper!](#)

What's next?

THE TOPICS WE WILL CONCENTRATE ON – SPRING 2017

THE FUTURE OF THE EU

- EU and Brexit: what kind of relations there will be between the EU and the UK after Brexit?
- The role of the Visegrad Group: reorientation of the European project or turn back to confederalism?
- The role of the Eurozone: necessity of a budget for the Eurozone based on its own resources.
- The new challenges for Europe: internal security and defence.

MIGRATION TO EUROPE AND DRAWBACKS ON DOMESTIC POLITICS

- The impact of migration on the rise of populist political parties across the EU – how to tackle political extremism? How it will affect national elections that will take place in 2017?
- Migration to Europe and the EU-Turkey relations – Turkey as a partner in managing the migration flow to the EU?
- The Mediterranean route and the New Migration Partnership Framework.

EU REGIONAL GAP

- Unemployment, economic and social policy – how to reduce the disparities in living standards, social conditions and unemployment levels among the EU member states?
- Young people and unemployment – how to tackle the youth unemployment?
- Equality and gender issues.

SAFEGUARD OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ENVIRONMENT

- Environment and climate change – a new era in tackling climate change at global level?
- Safeguard of Cultural Heritage – steps the EU must take to identify, protect and preserve cultural and natural heritage in the EU member states and within the Mediterranean area. The challenge of the terrorist and Daesh destructions.

These topics will be tackled partly through **conferences, seminars and roundtable discussions** organised in the EU Member states and/or other European countries and partly through **research activities**.



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