

The Future of Europe. Perspectives of Contemporary Developments

International Conference Sibiu, 8 – 10 May 2019

The International Conference “**The Future of Europe. Perspectives of Contemporary Developments**”, to take place between 8^t -10^t May, 2019 at the “Lucian Blaga” University in Sibiu – ULBS, aims to advance a debate within the academic and expert world on the margins of the European Council summit to be held in Sibiu on 9th of May. The conference is under the High Patronage of the President of Romania, Mr. Klaus Iohannis, and under the auspices of the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council.

The conference is organized by the Conflict Prevention and Early Warning Center, Bucharest, a leading Romanian think tank specialised in research and training in international relations, conflict analysis and decision making in crisis, and the Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu. The partners for the conference are the German Marshall Fund Bucharest office, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the European Commission and the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest. Media partners include TVR - the Romanian public television, Radio Romania Actualități - the public Radio, Radio France Internationale, Monitorul Apărării și Securității, caleaeuropeană.ro, Evenimentul Zilei and Adevărul newspapers.

The objective of the event is to create the setting for an international debate at the level of officials, academic world and think tanks on the current developments within the EU and in the international context that have an important impact on the future of the European Union. The focus of the conference will be first and foremost on the processes that are influencing dramatically the European Union, the European countries and on the European citizens. The conference will address the main stringent topics that shape the future of Europe, with the evolution of the European Union at the core of the debate. The discussion will encourage a strategic approach to these issues, and will, involve actors interested in and with influence on this processes, especially in the security and defense of Europe.

The conference will bring together 200 participants, including EU officials, officials from the European countries, but mostly international experts,

representatives of academia and think-tanks, along with their most relevant Romanian counterparts. Furthermore, the conference will be attended by representatives from the United States of America, Great Britain and Turkey, as well as from the Western Balkans and from the Eastern Partnership countries – Ukraine, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

The President of Romania, Mr. Klaus Iohannis, has confirmed his presence and will be opening the conference, presenting the Romanian approach to the future of Europe, and its efforts towards the EU Strategic Agenda.

The substance of a strategic approach to Europe

The conference “**The Future of Europe. Perspectives of Contemporary Developments**” is touching on decisions at the strategic level, in connection with the priorities of the Romanian presidency of the EU Council: a Europe of convergence, a safer Europe, Europe - a stronger global actor, the Europe of common values.

Six panels will be tackling the main topics of debate, including the projects and scenarios or the future of the EU; the great internal challenges to the EU project, Europe and the security of European citizens; the European Security and Defense, with all the complexity of this project in relation to NATO and the US; the transatlantic relation, in all its complexity; the European values, how strong they are embed in the behaviour of the Commission, European bodies and EU member states, how flexible or strict the observance of such values has to be for the coherence of the EU; and the neighbourhood of the EU, from UK, Turkey, Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries and their future.

First panel. Projects and scenarios for the future of the EU

What is the Future for Europe?

Topics: Alternative scenarios and proposals for the future of Europe: a two-speed Europe or a multi-speed Europe. *Europe of concentric circles*. The cohesive Europe and the construction formats of the European cohesion. How to build a Europe going together, with a deeper integration. How to move forward with a renewed impetus, cohesion and attractiveness for the European project.

The panel will also touch upon the major projects proposed by EU President Juncker, France President Macron, the French-German pilot project described in Aachen, a perspective for a federal Europe, and so on.

Panel 2. Europe's great challenges. Migration as a natural phenomenon, Terrorism, technological evolution and its social impact, populism as a threat to European cohesion.

Europe's Many Challenges and Its Few Opportunities

Topics: Migration. Domestic and imported terrorism. Foreign fighters. Populism, nationalism. *Euroscepticism*. Brexit.

The panel will explore the root causes of Euroscepticism, populism and nationalism, of anti-European or anti-system movements, the difficulties of the traditional European parties as well as the perspectives of Brexit and changes inside the EU through the retreat of Great Britain from the EU. and The discussion is meant to generate ideas and optimism with the opportunities that the EU evolution is creating nowadays.

Panel 3. The Security and Defense of Europe

Europe's Security - Between Hopes, Imperatives and Promises

Topics: The international context and the pressure on the security and defense component. The European initiatives in the field. The contributions of external actors to European security and defense – Turkey, Great Britain, USA, Ukraine. The European Defense and EU's strategic posture post-Brexit.

The panel will analyse the developments of the European projects in security and defense and the concerns within the EU member states related to the future relation with NATO, complementarity and cohesion of the West as currently known.

Panel 4. Opportunities and anxieties of the transatlantic relationship.

A Neurotic Trans-Atlantic Relation

Topic: The evolution of the Euro-Atlanticism globally. The US-EU binding bilateral relationship. Multilateralism – its allies and enemies. Trans-atlanticism in the European public opinion. The agenda of bilateral stresses, challenges and neuroses: global warming, free trade agreement, competition and cooperation. The need for realism and transatlantic balance. The impact of Trumpism in Europe.

The panel will contemplate an agenda that goes beyond the defense, security and military aspects, with mutual differences and possible divergent interests, but first and foremost the communality of principles and values and the profound links between people and institutions beyond the Trump administration and Trump momentum, with its specificity, exceptionalism and originality.

Panel 5. Fundamental values – the cornerstone of Europe's cohesion and future.

Which and Whose Fundamental Values?

Topics: Liberal democracy. Populism, *illiberalism*, authoritarian anti-European conservatism. Anti-European currents, their sources and *modus operandi*. The return of rationality, responsibility and balanced, coherent, and common sense options.

The panel will promote a real debate on how much flexibility and how strong the stance should be on the respect for principles and values within the European Union, with the aspiring states from the Western Balkans, with the Eastern partnership countries and what to expect from the future in this respect. What EaP, Western Balkans and EU countries from North, South, East or West want, and what will be their choice regarding the respect for principles and values. Cohesion and coherence, credibility and legitimacy of a European project could also mean the respect for commitments, rules of the game, fellow partners in the EU.

Panel 6. The European Union – partners and vicinities

Where Does Europe End?

Proposed topic: EU Enlargement. Eastern Partnership. Relations with Russia. The Western Balkans. Relations with Turkey. Threats, challenges, risks and opportunities for the European project

A debate on the credibility of the enlargement policy for the soft power and transformative pull of the EU is to be held, considering the expectations of the countries in the neighborhood. This type of approach touches upon the debate on the borders of Europe and common values versus power politics involving the EU. And a new project to raise the attractiveness of the EU as a model and its transformative capacity of the neighborhood as well as its position as example in the global world.

The issues above and other matters influencing the future of the EU will be under the spotlight at the Sibiu conference. The organizers expect from all participants who want to have a say in the debate to send their take on the strategic issues related to the future of the EU as proposals, to be included and promoted in a publication, in parallel with a policy paper addressed to the Romanian EU Presidency and EU chiefs of state and government.

20 March 2019