

Do We Have or Need a Two Speed Europe?

Petre Prisecaru

Institute for World Economy, Romanian Academy, E-mail: petreprisecaru@yhoo.com

Abstract *Flexible/differentiated integration represented by two speed Europe, Europe of concentric circles and other related concepts have been used after Maastricht due to the fact that not all Member States entered monetary union and accepted social and political integration. After the Brexit these concepts were revived based on enhanced cooperation included in the Treaties despite the strong opposition of some CEE countries, led by Poland, Hungary, Romania. The hard core, the founding states and other states from Eurozone want to speed up the integration process based on some unions: monetary, financial (banking), fiscal, energy, defense and political. But they need time and much better governance at EU level and national levels.*

Key words Two speed Europe, enhanced cooperation, hard core, Brexit, governance

JEL Codes: F15, F22, F36, F45

1. Introduction

Two speed Europe

Almost 30 years ago, prior to the launch of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), which began in 1990 with the first stage, before the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty), had circulated concepts related to flexible or differentiated integration, which after Maastricht (1992) have multiplied and diversified given the potential difficulties of achieving monetary union on behalf of all Member States. Let's not forget that at Maastricht, UK and Denmark have opted out of the monetary union. In 1994 Wolfgang Schäuble and Karl Lamers (German Christian Democrats) launched Kerneuropa concept (Core Europe), which was taken over and consecrated by the former French president Jacques Chirac as the Europe with two or more speeds. Other concepts with similar meaning or content aimed to explicit flexible or differentiated integration are: Europe of concentric circles, launched by Helmut Kohl's advisers, Michael Mertes and Norbert Prill, but imposed by former French Prime Minister Eduard Balladur, Europe à la carte launched by British Prime Minister John Major, variable geometry Europe, awarded to German Christian Democrats.

There were three important moments when the concept two speed Europe was used more intense. The first one was after Maastricht Treaty due to opting out system agreed for the UK and Denmark and later for Sweden (which joined the EU in 1995) and also because of the fears of enlargement consequences of the European Community to Central and Eastern Europe and major internal challenges induced by the policy and institution reforms and by the social and political integration progress, but also by external challenges induced by the complexity and features of globalization process. The second one was after the failure of the Constitutional Treaty ratification due to the referenda results in France and Netherlands, showing that France could no longer pretend to be the promoter of accelerating European integration and that the role played by Franco-German engine was an exceeded cliché. The third one was after the strong impact caused by the Brexit, the result of British referendum representing a big surprise for European political leaders, but also a moment of deep reflection on the future of the EU.

It is interesting to note however that flexible or differentiated integration related concepts have started from the need of deepening economic integration and accelerating European integration in the social and political fields. Therefore it appeared as an instrument for carrying out these wishes the consolidated or enhanced cooperation as the third method of European governance after the Community method, based on the secondary common legislation and the classic institutional triangle (Commission, EU Council, European Parliament) and after the open method of coordination based on guidelines, benchmarks and performance indicators, the dissemination of best practices and mutual learning. Enhanced cooperation regarding the limited cooperation of a number of Member States was based on the Treaties provisions and the important role played by the EU Council as the main initiator and decision-maker.

Significant and successive enlargements of the EU from 12 Member States in 1992 to 15 MS in 1995, then to 25 MS in 2004 and to 27 MS in 2007 have complicated the EU governance, decision-making process and ensuring the economic, social, territorial cohesion. Let's recall that Jacques Delors, former president of the European Commission (three seats) defined economic union as having some major components: the single market, common rules on competition, economic and social cohesion, harmonization and coordination of macroeconomic policies. Completing the single market based on the four fundamental freedoms proved to be a lengthy process, although not very difficult, but ensuring the economic and social cohesion requires a very long time and a consistent Community financial support. Harmonization and

coordination of macroeconomic policies began with the conclusion of the Stability and Growth Pact at Amsterdam in 1997, which was reformed and supplemented after the financial and economic crisis through various mechanisms and treaties such as: the European Stability Mechanism, the European Semester, the Six-Pack, the Europlus Pact, the Fiscal Stability Treaty. Practically, the complexities and difficulties of European integration and the persistence of major disagreements on constitutional and strategic matters have divided European Community into two camps: the supporters of full integration, including social and political fields and the status quo followers based on intergovernmental cooperation. The first camp was made up of the founding states (six), which have been associated by other countries such as Austria, Finland, Spain, and in the second camp one may find the UK, Sweden and a part of the new entrants.

2. Literature review

Representatives of the main currents of thought in the analysis of European integration had different attitudes on multispeed Europe: neofunctionalists thought that a Europe with different speeds would be inevitable, intergovernmentalists have seen the process unfolding only under the auspices of national governments, while supranationalists and federalists advocating for political integration did not agree with this concept, its application would have meant delaying the cohesion process and economic and social homogenization within EU and also political unification of Europe (Prisecaru, 2006). Schengen Space, Social Protocol and Eurozone were used by the neofunctionalists as strong arguments for the existence of a multispeed Europe, starting from the fact that not all Member States were willing or prepared to proceed rapidly towards the full or complete integration. An interesting study (Working Paper) was published by European Policy Centre called *Integrating Europe, Multiple Speeds-One Direction?* In April 2004 and was made by Franklin Dehousse and Wouter Coussens referring to flexible integration and its potential applications (Dehousse *et al.*, 2004). It inspired the book *The role of enhanced cooperation in promoting the flexible integration*, which I had elaborated together with my colleagues and published in 2006. But many other analyses treating flexible/differentiated integration were published recently by different authors, think tanks, research centers, newspapers, like geopolitical analysis firm Stratfor or well-known and prestigious journal-The Economist.

3. Methodology of research

Conceptual and methodological confusions regarding flexible or differentiated integration and also its instrument of implementation, enhanced cooperation, included in the Treaty, were quite obvious despite of careful analysis of past and current achievements and the promising prospects opened by the Treaties, including the Lisbon Treaty, existing initiatives and possible projects. Giovanni Grevi from European Policy Center (EU, 2008-2013) believed that the methodological approach of flexible integration has three key aspects: the first one was that of clarity and uniform interpretation of the used terminology, because there were terms or concepts that had a different meaning for different leaders, experts, academics, requiring a uniform interpretation thereof; the second aspect concerned the more precise definition of the domains and policies involved, as it was quite vague, excepting maybe the defense policy; the third issue was the credibility of partisans or advocates of flexible integration because the most ardent supporter of the flexible integration, France, had abused of an excessive rhetoric focusing on the role played by Franco-German engine in potentiating European integration while some French politicians and even public opinion have created some obstacles and even a jamming process, as it was the referendum from 2005 which meant the death of Constitutional Treaty and also the permanent violation of the strict provisions of Stability and Growth Pact. But not the different interpretation and use of some terms and concepts concerning the flexible integration and the way the prospects and policy directions to materialize it are outlined it is the most important issue, but the quite modest concrete achievements by translating into practice the concepts in question and in the provisions of EU Treaties. Even between France and Germany there were some hard dissensions on political integration (see the French reactions to the federalist opinion and proposal of Joschka Fischer in May 2000), on the EU budget and mainly on the national contribution to Common Agricultural Policy. Basically after the financial crisis, France rallied almost completely to the proposals and initiatives for governance reform made by Germany, which shows that Germany has become due to its economic and financial force the undisputed leader of the EU.

4. Data analysis

4.1. Enhanced cooperation in EU Treaties

Enhanced cooperation as a means of governance and a tool to achieve differentiated/ flexible integration was introduced in the Treaty of European Community at Amsterdam, then the text was completed by the Treaty of Nice and later on it was better specified by the provisions of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (Lisbon Treaty). Enhanced cooperation regarding the limited cooperation of a number of Member States was based on Treaty provisions and also on the

important role played by the EU Council of Ministers as the main initiator and decision-maker. In the Treaty of European Community, enhanced cooperation was stipulated in the Article 11 (the former Article 5a) where it was stated that Member States wishing such actions would address a request to the European Commission, which may or may not submit it to the EU Council of Ministers. If such a proposal is not submitted, the Commission should motivate Member States concerned its refusal. Authorization to proceed with enhanced cooperation had to be granted in compliance with Articles 43-45 of the Treaty on European Union, the EU Council of Ministers had to act by qualified majority on a proposal received from the Commission and after consulting the European Parliament. Article 11a being added to the Treaty of European Community at Nice stated that any Member State wishing to participate in an action of enhanced cooperation established under Article 11 had to notify its intention to the Council of Ministers and to the Commission, which conveyed the Council opinion within three months of receipt of the notification. Within four months of receipt of the notification, the Commission shall decide on the request and on such specific arrangements as it may deem necessary.

Provisions on enhanced cooperation are currently mentioned in the Treaty of EU in the Title IV - Article 20 (examples: Articles 27a to 27e, 40-40 and 43-45 B TEU and ex Articles 11 and 11a TEC), where reference is made to some Articles of the Treaty on the Functioning of EU (2008-2013, articles 326-334). Any form or action of enhanced cooperation must comply with the Treaties and EU law and not undermine the internal market or economic, social and territorial cohesion, enhanced cooperation shall respect the competences, rights and obligations of non-participating MS and are open to all Member States, subject to compliance with any conditions of participation, the involved institutions are the Commission, the EU Council, High Representative for the CFSP and EP, the casting vote is detained by the EU Council containing the participating states, it is usually used the procedure of qualified majority voting and any request is granted/approved by European Commission, expenses are paid by the states participating in the actions which have to be consistent, including with other common policies.

4.2. Brexit impact on the revival of multi-speed Europe concept

Although it seemed a great surprise, Brexit had been announced long time ago by wide differences of opinion on the speed of European integration between UK on the one hand and the Franco-German tandem on the other. Do not forget that even in the days when Margaret Thatcher was prime minister (1979-1990) UK still wanted the European Community to be just a free trade zone and a free competition area and it openly opposed to the federalization and the transfer of sovereignty and in 1995 she obtained a rebate of UK annual contribution to the Community budget, which represented in 2015 around 6.2 billion euros.

In Maastricht Great Britain had not agreed to enter EMU or to adopt the Social Protocol. That is why the Western media frequently used the term of two speed Europe, avoided or even denied by the leaders of European powers, based on the opting out system agreed at Maastricht, which allowed the UK and other Member States to slow the speed of European integration process. Political assessment of this process had a negative connotation, different speeds of integration being considered by European leaders as a harmful phenomenon to the homogeneity and cohesion of the EU, represented by its main pivot- the regional development policy.

While British media criticized the acceleration of the European integration and always maintained a high degree of Euroskepticism in Britain, German media criticized the slowing down of European integration by Great Britain. The British were criticized, including by British analysts, because they didn't use their special expertise in military and security matters to support the integration progress in this area. UK joined the European Community in 1973 when the prime minister was the leader of Tory Party, Edward Heath, while in 1975 the Labor Prime Minister Harold Wilson held a referendum on maintaining UK membership within European Community and 66% of the votes were for the continuation of the European road. Tory Party subsequently proved reluctant to integration progress, while Labor Party, especially under the leadership of Tony Blair, had a more pronounced pro-European attitude. Two speed Europe concept circulated much in the European media, especially in the British media, but it was not agreed too much nor by the European institutions nor by the national leaders. We must not forget that even the former prime minister John Major, successor of Margaret Thatcher, promoted the concept of Europe à la carte, which for him it meant a degree of flexibility and differentiation, but multispeed Europe or Europe of concentric circles would have represented a major threat to EU cohesion because they would create too much differentiation between the Member States.

For Germany and France, which promoted via some ambitious politicians various concepts related to differentiated/flexible integration, two speed Europe was a palpable reality after Maastricht and even a Britain creation, as UK didn't want to join the Eurozone or to adopt EU social agenda. For Euroskeptical British the two speed Europe was welcomed because it allowed Britain to better protect national interests and not embark on the road of Europe federalization, they also relied on a failure of the monetary union project, which did not happen. British politicians often acted under the pressure from the British media and preferred to avoid sensitive issues of fiscal, social and political integration while

insisting on maintaining the free movement of goods and capital but giving no support to the free movement of persons. German politicians who had completely given up to nationalist cause were the main drivers of political integration, especially to Europe federalization, while for the French politicians the goal was to create an economic superpower comparable to the USA.

In this decade, taking advantage perhaps of the bad consequences of the financial crisis, the sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone, the pressure of Muslim immigrants and terrorist threats and attacks, David Cameron and the Tory Party won the elections because they systematically promoted a certain detachment from the EU and the idea so dear to Euroskeptics and British media that the EU, through its bureaucracy, made up of unelected people and appointed officials through hidden political arrangements, decides on the economic fate of Great Britain. After winning a second election David Cameron promised again to organize an exit referendum, especially since November 2015 he tried to renegotiate with the president of European Council, Donald Tusk, some changes in the Lisbon Treaty on issues of immigration, sovereignty, economic governance, competitiveness but without any success and this failure gave the British a new proof that the EU is not open to any reform of the policies set in Brussels, which created a new and strong feeling in favor of Brexit. Although important concessions were made afterwards by the Brussels, David Cameron opted for the referendum in the belief that the British would choose to remain in the EU, but the result was a true Brexit with the significant contribution of nationalists and populists (UKIP).

Looking at things realistically, Brexit seems a dramatic event, the first exit of a MS from EU and a start of a political fragmentation of the EU but it may also be regarded rather as a positive event, the removal of a permanent obstacle from the way of a quick advancement of European integration. Stratfor thinks that Euroskeptical European parties would consider UK a good example to follow and would try to organize similar referenda (Stratfor, 2017). If on the short-term nationalists in Western and Central Europe have gained some ground, and also Euroskeptical parties, encouraged by the hostile attitude of President Trump to the European Community, on the long-term the main effects of the British referendum will be geopolitical, because without the UK as a full member state the balance may tilt from more open liberal economies in Northern Europe to more protectionist economies from South and Eastern Europe, the latter being more prone to nationalism and reluctant to political integration and also to accelerating the integration. An EU without Britain is undoubtedly less relevant in international arena as it loses one of the few members who have a true global presence, military, diplomatic and economic.

The difficult situation through which the EU is passing after Brexit may be explained by the fact that in the last decade the benefits of EU membership and globalization have been hardly felt by most people, they were only illusory or too small to count, instead they focused more and more at the top of the pyramid, where the rich have become richer. It also increasingly appears the obvious crisis of political elites (national and European) in managing and reforming EU, in rallying and involving citizens in European governance, in promoting and reforming Social Europe, in the fight against social inequalities and fiscal evasion practices, antisocial and antiecological behaviours of large corporations, in solving major economic problems, in counteracting populist, nationalist, xenophobic, anti-immigrant, islamophobic movements, in preventing terrorist attacks and in exerting an effective control of radicalized islamic enclaves.

In a study published by the IMF in May 2016, entitled "*Neoliberalism: oversold?*" some important economists as Jonathan D. Ostry, Prakash Loungani, and Davide Furceri deem that the benefits of some policies that are an important part of the neoliberal agenda appear to have been somewhat overplayed (Ostry *et al.*, 2016). Neoliberalism, globalization and financial openness are blamed for causing not only inequality but also market instability and it is suggested that large corporations which practice shameful tax evasion and usually transfer their profits in tax havens should redistribute much more the income than hitherto in favor of labor and not in favor of capital. Worrying is that in the Western World the recent changes in the economy have not brought benefits to many people, on the contrary 70% of families in 25 developed countries have seen their incomes standing still or falling over the past decade, leading to the accumulation of a dangerous state of revolt. The way in which the revenues are distributed in the contemporary capitalist society shows an unfair division between capital and labor, particularly having perverse effects on the components of aggregate demand.

After Brexit, foreign ministers of France and Germany advanced to Visegrad Group a plan to transform the EU into a giant superstate, in which MS should give up to their own army or national bank. According to these radical proposals Member States would lose the right to have their own army, their own criminal code, their tax system and their own central bank, and these powers should be transferred to Brussels. EU states would also lose control they have over their borders, including the right to apply national procedures on the reception and resettlement of refugees. This unexpected initiative suggested the intent of the political leaders from France and Germany to profit somewhat quickly from UK exit from the EU to stimulate and accelerate the integration process. In the introduction of the document, it is mentioned that: *our countries share a common destiny and a common set of values that give rise to a stronger union between our citizens. Therefore, we strive for a political union in Europe and invite others to participate in this European*

adventure. However it is worth noting the contradiction between this bold proposal and the risky idea advanced earlier at a meeting of the EU founding states for a more flexible Europe, that is a new formula with Europe à la carte, Europe with variable geometry, with policies that MS may choose to be managed at Community level, beyond the four fundamental freedoms and Economic Europe, which could be a temporary solution to avoid collapse of the EU and other exits.

Visegrad Group responded to the proposed plan specifying the importance of a strategic policy reflection that will allow an analysis of the current state of the EU and identify major priorities for the future, considering that it is necessary to focus on two priorities: the first would be to support the principles of sincere cooperation and the institutional balance as they are detached from the Treaties, including the major role played by the European Council to provide the Union with the necessary force for development and to define directions and priorities of the general policy, and the second would be to strengthen the role of national parliaments in strict compliance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

On January 31, 2017 before the informal summit of the European Council in Malta Donald Tusk has identified three main threats endangering the stability of Europe: a) the new geopolitical situation created by China, Russia, and new US Presidency; b) the internal situation in the EU, characterized by an increasing and more xenophobic nationalist sentiment; c) the mood of pro-European elites, reflecting the loss of confidence in political integration, the influence of the populist arguments and the doubts about the fundamental values of liberal democracy.

4.3. White Paper on the future of Europe

On March 1, 2017 Jean Claude Juncker has released the White Paper on the future of Europe in front of the European Parliament. It is only a draft, which will be followed by an extensive debate at all levels of EU governance, the first conclusions will be drawn at the end of this year by the European Council and the actions will continue until the European Parliament elections in June 2019. Although it is the largest single market in the world and has the second currency in importance, Europe recorded a strong decline in its position in the world, one hundred years ago Europe had one quarter of the world's population and almost half of global GDP, now it has 6% of world population and one quarter of global GDP. There is a difficult legacy left by the recent crisis due to uneven recovery, high unemployment, especially among young people, European social model is in great danger, moreover there are large uncertainties regarding the future of free trade, multilateralism, globalization, major problems are pressing with aging of population, the sustainability of social protection, the rethinking of education and learning systems, reducing pollution, developing renewable energy sources, flows of migrants and citizens' trust in institutions (EU + national).

Juncker presented five scenarios regarding the progress of EU until 2025 (European Commission, 2017):

- Scenario 1: *Carrying on*. EU focuses on achieving its agenda of positive reforms, focusing on economic issues.
 - Scenario 2: *Nothing but the single market*. The European Union is gradually refocusing on the Single Market, with inherent differences and divergences between Member States
 - Scenario 3: *Those who want more do more (Two Speed Europe)*. European Union allows closer cooperation between Member States wishing to do more in certain areas such as defense, internal security, taxation and social issues.
 - Scenario 4: *Doing less more efficiently*. EU focuses on achieving more results and more rapidly in certain policy areas, acting less in other areas. Priority will be given to innovation, trade, security, migration, border management and defence.
 - Scenario 5: *Doing much more together*. EU decides to do much more, working in all areas of policy, priority being given to unions: European Union of Defense, fiscal union, financial union, energy union, completion of the single market.
- Jean Claude Juncker finds that there is remarkable progress registered in the last 60 years, achieved by grouping or transferring of sovereignty, but isolation, division, fragmentation may have adverse consequences, there are many opportunities and many challenges facing the EU, but it will follow intense debates and reflection papers of the Commission on matters relating to the development of Europe's social dimension, deepening economic and monetary union, based on the Report of the Five Presidents from June 2015, the opportunities of globalization, the future defense of Europe, the future of EU finances and the report on the state of the Union of Jean Claude Juncker 2017 will likely contain many valuable ideas for the future EU roadmap and for further discussions needed to establish it.

States belonging to the core or founding group of the European Community expressed their clear intention to advance quickly in the field of integration, for example on 6 March 2017 the leaders of Germany, France, Italy, Spain met in Versailles (Euronews, 2017), for a further deepening of European integration, declaring themselves in favor of the plan presented by European Commission regarding varying degrees of cooperation at EU level. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that "some countries must have the courage to go ahead even if not everyone wants to participate, and a Europe of different speeds is required, otherwise it would likely create a blockage. One must always be open to others, no one should be excluded, but everyone should not be forced to participate in any venture. If Europe remains blocked

and no longer develops then this peace project may come to be in danger faster than you might expect. We must have the courage to accept that some countries are moving faster than others, without this meaning a stop for those who have accumulated delays". This is probably the most convincing plea of an important European leader for a two speed Europe but all these statements in favor of a differentiated integration have not been translated into official texts of the EU institutions.

4.4. Europe of concentric circles

According to an analysis published recently by the Economist, the first circle would include 19 Eurozone countries that concentrate 90% of the Union's GDP, while in the second circle there are countries which have only 10% of EU's GDP, which are considered to weaken the power of this community (The Economist, 2017). EU policies would be made taking less into account the interests of the second circle which will become a peripheral area of EU. Another scenario refers to three concentric circles, the first with 11 MS from Eurozone (the hard core), the second with other members of Eurozone and Visegrad group and the third would include Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia.

The concentration of economic power in the monetary union appears as a natural result of Brexit, as UK has a significant economy of €2.660 billion, the fifth worldwide. No doubt, UK was the main opponent of a quicker and stronger integration in Europe; it was against forming a common army, drawing up a common defense policy, building a common Treasury.

Sixty years ago a single speed was quite normal for the beginning of integration process but after the introduction of the single currency and after the crises that occurred since 2008, economic integration should be deepened, especially in the fiscal domain, and also should be accompanied by social and political integration, things impossible to achieve with the presence of UK in EU. If we will have a two speed Europe or two circles within EU, another speed or circle may be added for the close partners and future aspirants to a place in the Union, like UK, Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

4.5. The Rome Declaration

Meeting in Rome on 25 March 2017 to mark 60 years since the signing of the Treaty of European Economic Community, members of the European Council adopted a declaration which speaks of building European unity as a bold project with a long term vision to rebuild the continent and that succeeded in achieving of a unique Union, a single market, common institutions and strong values, a community of peace, freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, a major economic force with unequaled levels of social protection and welfare. However the European Union is currently facing unprecedented challenges, both global and domestic: regional conflicts, terrorism, increasing pressure exerted by migration, protectionism, social and economic inequalities.

We want a more powerful and more resilient European Union by more unity and solidarity between its members and by respecting common rules, and unity of action provides the greatest opportunity to influence global dynamics and defend the common interests and values. It is shown the intention of joint action *with different rhythms and intensities where necessary, but going in the same direction, as it was done in the past in accordance with the Treaties and keeping the door open to those who wish to join later* (European Council, 2017). EU is undivided and indivisible and for the next ten years it is wanted a Union providing safety and security, one to be prosperous, competitive, sustainable and socially responsible, and to have the will and ability to play a leading role in the world and to shape globalization, where citizens may benefit from new opportunities for cultural and social development and economic growth. Union remains open to those European countries which respect its values and are committed to promote them. Members of the European Council reaffirmed their commitment to Rome Agenda and undertook to work towards the following objectives:

1. *A safe and secure Europe*, by securing borders, through an efficient, accountable and sustainable migration policy, by firmly combating terrorism and organized crime.

2. *A prosperous and sustainable Europe*, through economic growth and jobs, through a strong, connected and developing Single Market, through a single, stable and strengthened currency to support growth, cohesion, competitiveness, innovation and exchange, through sustained and sustainable growth based on investment, structural reforms and efforts to complete economic and monetary union, the convergence of economies, by providing a secure and affordable energy and a clean and safe environment.

3. *A social Europe*, based on economic and social progress, on cohesion and convergence, taking into account the diversity of national systems and the key role of social partners, equality between women and men and equal rights and opportunities for all, which combats unemployment, discrimination, social exclusion and poverty, which focuses on education and training of young people and provides jobs for them, which preserves cultural heritage and promotes cultural diversity.

4. *A stronger Europe on the global scene*, developing and expanding partnerships, promoting stability and prosperity in its immediate neighborhood, which assumes more responsibilities regarding the creation of a more competitive and an

integrated defense industry, strengthening security and defense policy, including in cooperation and complementarity with NATO, and along with the UN supports a rules-based multilateral system, promoting its values and protecting its citizens and supporting a free and fair trade and a positive global political climate.

The future of Europe depends on common institutions, the efforts of national parliaments, the interaction between the levels of European governance, the respect for the subsidiarity principle and strengthening the potential for innovation and growth in Europe, the EU's more involvement in solving major issues and less involvement in minor issues, the promotion of a democratic, efficient and transparent decision-making process and ensuring better outcomes of Community governance.

5. Results

The results of this research prove undoubtedly there was a two speed Europe after Maastricht due to opting out system accepted for Great Britain, Denmark and Sweden and due to the fact that the new MS, accepted after 2004, were not able to adopt the single currency immediately and to comply with the requirements of EMU, although half of them, small states, were able to move gradually to the euro. Before the financial and economic crisis the acceleration of European integration, especially in political field, supported by the Constitutional Treaty proved to be a resounding failure, finally overcome by the Lisbon Treaty. Despite the multiple reforms of economic governance carried on after the crisis, tensions and challenges that EU is subject have widened, and were crowned by an unexpected Brexit. The shock or impact of this exit was very high and again brought to the fore flexible integration related concepts, like two speed Europe, used mainly by the hard core of EU, led by Germany and France. Recent EU official documents support the idea of a two-speed Europe or Europe with two concentric circles without making express mentions to these concepts, but the opposition of the Central and Eastern European countries led by Poland, Hungary, Romania may block this process, limiting it only to enhanced cooperation stipulated by the Treaties.

6. Conclusions

Debating Europe presented some arguments against pro multi-speed Europe (Debating Europe, 2017).

1) *Cons:*

- a) *perpetuating divisions*, may create rival blocs and risks for new exits;
- b) *undermining solidarity*, with Germany and France making the rules of the game, marginalization of those outside the core and creating different coalitions runs the risk of dismantling the EU;
- c) *too complex*, EU's institutional architecture can lead to blockages in taking decisions, that may affect citizens trust.

2) *Pros:*

- a) *core values*, promoting easier basic European values after Brexit and making easier for EU core to accelerate economic and political integration;
- b) *recognising reality*, we have a multi-speed Europe, with at least two, the euro area and non-euro area;
- c) *one size does not fit all*, Western states have different economies, different problems, especially between North and South, between Western and Eastern Europe.

If the Rome Declaration of 25 March makes no reference to two speed Europe, it still includes a statement about the enhanced cooperation by mentioning different rhythms and intensities of integration, any attempt to amend the existing Treaty (Lisbon) is virtually impossible by the need to have unanimity for such decision. It is obvious that at Rome there were made concessions by both sides, by the supporters and the opponents of two speed Europe. Solidarity and cohesion are crucial for the future of the EU and their abandonment could create numerous risks and hazards for the next developments of this community. The call for unity and more accountable, effective, closer to citizens' demands governance is no doubt welcomed, but it is not enough. Nice words without concrete and positive actions in this regard are a kind of forms without content.

Romania's objective is to identify some compromise solutions capable of supporting the advance of future European projects because it is desirable a united and cohesive Union, in its internal and external actions, a Union that is able to play a key role globally, a Union close to the expectations of citizens and far from any extremism. In Romania, the president, the government and the main political parties, social-democrats and liberals, are rejecting the concept of multispeed Europe, are asking for an equal treatment of Romania, for a unity of action at EU level, for more solidarity between MS and for finding the best solutions for a more integrated and better governed Europe.

References

Debating Europe (2017). Arguments for and against a multi-speed Europe, Available: <http://www.debatingeurope.eu>, (20 March 2017).

- Dehousse, F., Coussens, W., Grevi, G., (2004). Flexible means to further integration, Integrating Europe, Multiple Speeds-One Direction?, *EPC Working Paper No.9*, Bruxelles, April.
- EU (2008-2013). Lisbon Treaty, Treaty on the Functioning of EU (Articles 326-334), Available: www.lisbon-treaty.org.
- European Council (2017). Rome Declaration, Available: www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2017/03/25-informal-meeting (25 March).
- European Commission (2017). White Paper on the future of Europe, Available: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/betapolitical/files/white_paper_on_the_future_of_europe_en.pdf (1 March).
- Euronews, (2017), France hosts mini EU summit in Versailles, Available: www.euronews.com/2017/03/06/live-versailles-summit-press-conference (6 March).
- Ostry, J.D, Loungani, P., Furceri, D. (2016). Neoliberalism, oversold?, *IMF FINANCE&DEVELOPMENT*, Vol.53, No.2, June;
- Prisecaru, P. (2006). Two speed Europe, The role of enhanced cooperation in promoting the flexible integration, *ERA Publishing House*, Bucharest.
- Stratfor (2017). Notes from Europe's Periphery. Both ends of the Continent's periphery are shifting away from the core. Available: <https://geopoliticalfutures.com/keywords/brexit/> (22 March).
- The Economist (2017). Europe's future is multi-speed and multi-tier, Available: <http://www.economist.com> (March 23, 2017).