

## STATE AND PROSPECTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION POLITICAL ADVANCEMENT

*The article focuses on the political dimension of the European Union through the SWOT-analysis methodology, which enables to determine the main four directions: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The overview of the key vectors for the EU political development is outlined and presented, and recommendations as for their transformation and modernization are proposed.*

**Keywords:** European Union, SWOT-analysis, global governance, international organization, integration.

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### СТАН ТА ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ РОЗВИТКУ ПОЛІТИЧНОГО ПРОСТОРУ ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКОГО СОЮЗУ

*Аналізується політичний вимір Європейського Союзу з використанням методу SWOT-аналізу, що дозволяє визначити основні чотири напрямки: сильні сторони, слабкі сторони, можливості та загрози. Визначено та представлено огляд на ключові вектори політичного виміру ЄС та запропоновано рекомендації щодо їх трансформації і модернізації.*

**Ключові слова:** Європейський Союз, SWOT-аналіз, глобальне управління, міжнародна організація, інтеграція.

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### СОСТОЯНИЕ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ РАЗВИТИЯ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОГО ПРОСТРАНСТВА ЕВРОПЕЙСКОГО СОЮЗА

*Анализируется политическое измерение Европейского Союза с использованием метода SWOT-анализа, позволяющего определить основные четыре направления: сильные стороны, слабые стороны, возможности и угрозы. Определен и представлен обзор на ключевые векторы политического измерения ЕС и предложены рекомендации по их трансформации и модернизации.*

**Ключевые слова:** Европейский Союз, SWOT-анализ, глобальное управление, международная организация, интеграция.

For many years, the European Union has been forming as a supranational system of political governing. However, the current state of institutional strengthening of the EU is characterized by anti-integrational views that are defined as «euro-scepticism» and «europessimism». In addition, it is appropriate to mention the spread of radicalism, promotion of the right and left parties with anti-integration rhetoric, reducing the political activity of citizens, political nihilism.

The research by Ukrainian (N. Vinnykova, G. Muzychenko T. Sergienko) and foreign (D. Held, H. Bellamy, C. Weston) scientists is based on the analysis of certain aspects / issues of the European Union, while not using an integrated approach. Therefore, we consider this relevant to use a comprehensive study of the political dimension of the EU based on SWOT-analysis - an innovative and effective method in modern political science.

Therefore, the aim of our research is to determine the key issues affecting the political space of the EU, based on SWOT-analysis.

The choice of SWOT-analysis as a method proved that it is used to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that appear in the project, organization or business enterprise [1]. SWOT-analysis consists of four basic parameters that determine the required characteristics inherent in the organization / product / project: Strengths – internal project properties, which give preference to other projects, Weaknesses – internal project properties that weaken it, Opportunities – external factors that give additional benefits to the project, Threats – probable external factors that affect the project and may complicate its implementation.

The strength of the European Union is a strong domestic market that integrated the economies of the Member States into the general economic and business area. In addition, the introduction of Schengen zone open borders between states, and provides opportunities for continuous circulation of capital. These actions are aimed not only at the EU but also at those European countries that are not part of it (Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein) but have close economic relations with the EU and cooperate within the European Economic Area. An important factor is also the working of EU agencies – independent, decentralized agencies, which are specialized and collaborating with leading institutions around the world. For example, these are «European Agency for Maritime Security» [2], «European Defense Agency» [3], «Europol» [4] and others.

Among weaknesses there should be noted the so-called «democratic deficit» by which we mean reducing political activity of citizens of the EU. The last elections to the European Parliament in 2014 [5] showed the lowest turnout. The average turnout across the EU was 42.61%. In Central and Eastern Europe, it was the lowest, Croatia – 25.24%, Czech Republic – 18.20%, Poland – 23.83%, Hungary – 28.97%, Slovakia – 13.05%, Slovenia – 24.55 %. In the so-called «Big Five» the results were on average about 45%, Germany – 48.10%, France – 42.43%, UK – 35.60%, Italy – 57.22%, Spain – 43.81 %. One of the main reasons for this low turnout is distrust to the national government, from which the deputies to the European Parliament are elected. As N. Vinnykova states, «Among the causes of electoral absenteeism in European elections is a major deterioration in the European Union's image in the public mind, a low level of trust to the EU institutions, and limited opportunities to participate in developed

European political decisions for citizens» [6, p. 50].

The consequence of low electoral activity is growing popularity of left and right parties, which using populist and nationalist slogans, build their own image and go to the European Parliament. Recent elections show that the share of parties with nationalist ideology increases. Thus, between 2009 and 2014 right and left parties (Europe for freedom and democracy, the European United Left / Nordic Green Left) had a total of 66 seats, while in 2014 the number of seats increased to 100 [5]. Therefore, throughout the European Union, one can observe the increasing role of nationalism in each country that in the framework of the crisis, migration, military conflicts near the boundaries of the EU, terrorist acts is popularizing the parties of left and right direction.

An important problem in the inner space of the EU is the dominance of the intergovernmental approach in making decisions over-functional. The last word in decision-making rests with the leaders of the EU member states that are considered representative of the citizens of the country at the supranational level. In addition, an important role is played by the geopolitical status of a particular state, which does not want to give it up. Accordingly, the decision may go against the wishes of the public, but will not do any damage to the image of the country. By intergovernmental approach, a system of specific "rules" that must comply with all of its players builds up. In addition, an extensive bureaucracy creates persistent barriers to rapid response and flexibility of the EU institutions.

However, there are possibilities of solving problems through systemic transformation of the EU political space and the introduction of a new model of cooperation between member states. After all, the problems of bureaucracy system, policy making and maintaining a uniform policy that satisfies all members of the European Union threaten to delegitimize the political system.

It is also necessary to examine the integration component. Indeed, the rapid expansion of the EU in 2004 led to the destructuralization of the internal market and the EU was conditionally divided into two parts: the economically strong countries (South-Western and Central Europe) and economically weak (Southeast Europe). So the issue of introducing a new concept of integration into the EU, among which we should set a model called «flexible Europe is becoming relevant». This concept is based on a differentiated

approach to the development and decision-making tendencies opposed federalization of the European Union.

The main threats should first include the increase in distrust among the citizens of the European Union and its institutions. For example, as for 2015 40% of EU citizens trust the European Parliament while 45% express distrust. Among the arguments for distrust citizens outlined the following: the remoteness of the European Parliament from European citizens (39%), distrust to MPs (21%), the negative impact of decisions taken by Parliament on the economic growth of the member state (17%) [7, p. 66]. Another study on the importance of the voice of the citizen in the EU shows the following: 40% of respondents agree that «their voice is important», while 53% say that «their voice is ignored» and, therefore, is not important [8, p. 9].

An example of such distrust is the recent referendum in Britain regarding leaving the European Union, which was named «Brexit». It launched a «domino effect» that would entail other countries are not satisfied with the general policy of the EU. The result of such actions could be the destabilization of the internal market, which will affect the economic and business sphere. In addition, it would mean a de facto division of Europe in the South-West and North-Central led by France and Germany respectively. These trends may reflect the concept of «core Europe», which addresses the allocation of spheres of influence in Europe for a tandem led by France and Germany, which in the future should have a positive impact on decision-making, political stability and the formation of common EU policies.

Another threat is the rise of populism, which is a toolkit for the parties of right and left wing for the passage of both to national parliaments and the European Parliament. Using populist parties create their own image, gradually filling the political arena with ideas of right and left direction, such as the National Front (France), Movement for a better Hungary (Hungary), the Party of Freedom (the Netherlands), SYRIZA (Greece).

Also it is worth noting that a gradual process of reducing confidence in the European Union and its institutions, shifting the ideological trajectory of voters, increasing nationalism in EU countries, expanding the bureaucracy and the further course of integration help to delegitimize the political system.

Among the strengths of the foreign policy vector, we should note the extensive network

system of the EU in the world. In order to remain an important actor of geopolitical processes in the world, have an impact and opportunities for cooperation directly (without intermediaries), the European Union creates its own offices worldwide [9]. Currently, the EU is represented in 99 countries and 6 international organizations. In particular, there is a representative in Ukraine [10]. It is also important that member states that do not have national representation in any country may be represented by an agency of the European Union, which is in this country.

Using the principle of multilateralism is another strong point of the EU. Indeed, this approach to external economic space allows each subject of the relations to have privileges in relation to other subjects and use them. Thus, each interested party will maximize the use of resources and opportunities for further expansion of cooperation and interaction. The next strength is the internal system of collective security that allows the European Union to avoid military conflict within its own borders. Military intervention in the EU «Yugoslavian conflict» was the last, and then in the European Union there were no military confrontation. This stability takes place, on the one hand, through the EU rapid reaction forces, on the other – due to the ability to solve urgent problems by the principle of «soft power».

Weaknesses are shown as follows. Firstly, this is a migration crisis and the failure to address it. After all, military conflicts in the Middle East in 2015 created a migration issue for the European Union. According to the European Parliament, only in 2014 it received more than 600,000 applications for asylum [11], in addition comes a huge number of illegal migrants. The reaction to these developments was the introduction of special EU quota system under which each member state must take a certain number of workers. The idea of quotas has become another problem, because it is a mandatory procedure that is not used in Central and Eastern Europe and popular protests are taking place and popularity of far-right forces is increasing. According to research by the American agency «PewResearchCenter» 59% of respondents (EU citizens) associate terrorism with migration of recent years [12].

Secondly, this is a failure of «neighborhood policy». The institutions of the European Union are not cooperating with individual countries and with the cooperation of the countries that are united in their own vectors of cooperation. For example, these are the «Eastern Partnership», «Northern Dimension», and

«Mediterranean Union». The problem is that cooperation on a regional dimension with several countries makes it difficult to interact in both institutional framework and political, economic and cultural one

Thirdly, this is a failure of investment and credit policy of the EU towards the developing countries, including the countries of the «Eastern Partnership» and «Mediterranean Union». Much of the investment provided by the European Central Bank [13] and the European Investment Bank [14], is for economic assistance to the countries neighboring the EU, however, problematic development of the economies of these countries are unstable GDP, high inflation, low investment attractiveness do not clearly guarantee to repay loans. That European banks finance export abroad, but do not always get them back instead to develop a clear policy of credit with saving the investment fund for the domestic market.

Fourthly, this is the US factor, which plays a role as an economic and geopolitical one. Almost all the EU member states are members of NATO [15] (the alliance) – an organization that was created on the initiative of the United States. Also, the United States is one of the main investors in the IMF and World Bank, which have the largest share of the vote – more than 16% [16; 17] So the dominance allows them to influence the economic situation in the European Union, after all, the World Bank and the IMF are investors of the Member States of the European Union.

Fifthly, this is the security dimension on the borders of the EU. For the 50-year history of the European Union, they did not manage to create common armed forces – the European army. This is due to the dominance of NATO in Europe, the presence of some armed forces in each EU member state, the creation of rapid reaction forces, comprising nearly 10 thousand people. For rapid reaction, forces for each member state some teams and technique are allocated and they are subject to European Union Military Staff. However, the presence of small amount of strength and differentiated approach to decision-making creates the inability to adequately confront the threats that exist on the borders (the war in eastern Ukraine, the civil war in Syria, a military coup in Turkey, the constant provocation of the Russian Federation).

However, in addition to the strengths and weaknesses in the outer space, there are possibilities, among which we outline the principle of flexible integration. It is a

differentiated approach to decision-making and the development of common policies between the EU Member States. Flexible integration is not reducing to a sample of rights and opportunities of each state but recognition of its national responsibilities and rights that help to better focus on problems and solutions, which are worked out in the way that every interested party remains satisfied.

Another possibility comes from the previous – making horizontal format of decisions. The existence of an intergovernmental approach to decision creates controversy not only at the supranational level of government, but also nationally. More and more EU citizens are dissatisfied with the policy pursued by European institutions. Disgruntled are also national governments of the leading EU countries. Thus, according to statistics of the «PewResearchCenter» on average 45% of EU citizens (UK – 65%, the Netherlands – 44%, Germany – 43%, Hungary – 40%, Italy – 39%, Franc – 39%, Poland – 38% ) talk about increasing the powers of national offices in European institutions, increasing the role and significance of national governments in policy decisions and the reduction of the dynamics of integration [18].

The next opportunity is associated with the neighborhood policy conducted by the EU. A necessary component of it should be the institutional connection of each country to design and decision-making. It usually is possessed by every neighborhood policy – it is a strategy of cooperation between the EU and neighboring countries, where the latter should accept the proposed terms and integrate them into its own legal framework, economic, cultural, political sphere. However, the construction of the original dialogue and bilateral cooperation on working out strategies of cooperation provides additional benefits of further integration and creating conditions of trust and mutual respect.

However, there are still threats in the foreign policy area of the European Union. Firstly, this is the continued strengthening of influence in Europe the United States. One of the latest initiatives of the United States was the transatlantic creation of a free trade zone with the EU. This idea is still in development and design, however, there are already held discussions on whether such integration is required for the economies. According to the authoritative agency «Reuters», 58% of Americans are positive about the establishment of free trade among European countries: Italians – 75%, British – 65%, French – 58%, Germans

- 57% [19]. If a Transatlantic Free Trade Area is established it will strengthen the US presence not only in the military sense, but also economically and politically.

Secondly, this is migration policy, which is the «Achilles heel» creating confrontation between the Member States. This results in disagreement introduction of quotas for the reception of migrants for each country, the failure to develop a common policy to address migration issues, growth of nationalist forces, the continued use of the intergovernmental approach to decision-making, rather than functional, and so on.

Thirdly, this is the political crisis in Turkey, a military coup, the beginning of instability and «aggressive» behavior in the foreign space. Turkey has been a candidate for EU membership for more than 50 years, but recent developments have shaken its position in the eyes of European politicians. Moreover, Turkey is located between the Middle East and the European Union and has long held back the flow of migrants to Europe. Thus, according to studies, every year Turkey hinders more than 500,000 illegal immigrants who try to enter the EU [20]. The persistence of the «Turkish question» strained relations and active diplomatic policy of the Turkish authorities of the Russian Federation poses a serious threat to the EU in the southeast Mediterranean direction.

Fourthly, this is the information space. Using modern technologies enables interaction of citizens and authorities. However, despite the Eurostat results, we can say that there are two main problems. The first one is a small percentage of using the Internet for interaction with public authorities (on the average, this figure varies within 25-40% [21, pp. 179-185]). The second problem is the unprotected internal information space of the EU. Because of this, the problem of public awareness of the EU in political decisions vectors of development, domestic and foreign policies arises. Moreover, in Europe the information resources of the United States and Russia are well represented.

**Conclusions.** The European Union is a supranational system of political governance that in recent years faced with problems of internal and external origin. The EU is characterized by strengths (internal market, the principle of decentralization of the world, multilateralism) and weaknesses (dominance of intergovernmental approach to decision-making, reduce of political activity, failure of neighborhood policy, migration issues, the impact of the US). However, there are

opportunities to optimize the political system, increasing influence in the region, and to resolve internal political problems in the internal space and external.

Firstly, this is refusal of the intergovernmental approach to decision-making and the transition to a functional approach using horizontal model. Each member state should be a self-governing and autonomous structural unit of the EU and its powers, rights and opportunities. The decision will be made taking into account the interests of each country, not a separate group of states that have their own geopolitical tastes and economic strength. In addition, it is important to use a differentiated approach in designing and making decisions that will help to focus on national issues, increase the role of national governments and to listen to the public.

Secondly, this is developing a common immigration policy to different applicable horizontal model of decision-making. Each member state should present their ideas to address migration issues. Indeed, the use of quotas, forcing to receive refugees will only delegitimize EU institutions and accordingly increase distrust to the national governments.

Thirdly, this is rejection of the concentration of power in the EU institutions, further integration and increased bureaucracy. Instead, it is necessary to focus on the transformation of modern institutional framework of the European Union. Examples of such changes can serve as models introducing «flexible Europe», which advocates the preservation of independent rights and powers of each member state and implements differentiated approach to decision making.

Fourthly, this is changing the strategy of cooperation with neighboring countries. It is necessary to involve each state most institutionally and to work with it directly, without combining with other countries and propose a European strategy for cooperation.

Finally, we outline that the transformation of political space EU needs further research and attention in order to implement complex methods. Therefore, it is relevant to analyze not only political space of the European Union, but also economic, cultural and social ones. These comprehensive studies will make it possible to more clearly understand the challenges that the EU faces today.

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