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The Role of the EU in the World

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Purpose

The purpose of the present brief is to explore how foresight studies perceive, interpret and handle the EU's role in the world. The examination of its role can be interpreted in different ways, can include a wide range of perspectives, and can apply to various levels of reference (political, social, economic, technological, scientific etc.). We have focused on the concerns and challenges the European Commission has noted as of major importance in the coming years.

The Multi-faceted 'Role of the EU in the World'

The role of the EU in the world, in the view of the European Commission, is a multifaceted one. This is expressed in the documents *Socioeconomic Sciences and Humanities Work-programme 2007-2008* (p. 4, 23-26) and *Reforming the Budget, Changing Europe. A Public Consultation Paper in view of the 2008/2009 Budget Review* (sect. 2.1). The underlying reasoning in all of the documents analysed is that the EU has to increase its role and presence worldwide. This is considered a necessity, both to be able to protect its interests and values successfully as well as to contribute to world stability and development drawing upon its broad experience, strengths and unique characteristics.

Increasing the role of the EU is seen as imperative in response to the implications of and challenges brought by globalisation, the changing interactions between world regions and the rise of new global players. A second line of argumentation emphasizes the need to develop crosscutting policies to face global challenges that go beyond national borders like climate change and biodiversity, demographic change and migration, competitiveness, terrorism and organised crime, or sustainable energy. A third line of argumentation refers to the increasing role of the European dimension in boosting knowledge, mobility, competitiveness and innovation within a globalised environment of scientific and technological progress.

Text Analysis & Intelligent Reading

The methodology applied to identify and retrieve the information relevant to the subject matter involved 'text analysis' as well as 'intelligent reading' of relevant studies and reports.

The text analysis involved 160 studies from the EFMN database. These studies represent a variety of backgrounds, scopes, themes, horizons and scales. First, a small number of relevant studies with a title strongly related to our research topic was selected. Using the semantic data mining tool "Text analyst", the texts were then analysed to identify the most relevant keywords and semantic relations between them. This list of keywords was then used to analyse the 160 selected studies.

Thus sentences including any of the keywords were identified. These were then read in the original context. If the section in which the sentence occurred was regarded as providing new or additional information, then it was also marked as relevant. The final result was a text file containing the relevant sentences and sections from the original studies with information related to the selected topic and a reference to the original document.

The EU's role in the world being a very broad, general and international topic, we did not expect it to be treated as a core subject in relevant foresight studies. Foresight studies usually focus on more specific challenges and issues. They examine more generic challenges at the level of defining the background and setting the framework of analysis. Furthermore, most of the



foresight studies have a national or regional, rather than a European or international scope.¹ These factors limited the related information yielded by the text analysis even though a second round of text analysis was carried out including foresight studies of a trans-/international scope only. In consequence, additional documents considered relevant were also reviewed. These included EFMN publications and background documents as well as reviews of books dealing with the future of Europe.

EU as a Global Player

The role of the EU in relation to the changing interactions between world regions and the rise of new global players is examined in foresight studies from a whole range of perspectives (political, socio-economic, technological, scientific and cultural).

Towards European Democracy and Citizenship

The political aspect given to the EU's role examines the internal challenges the EU has to face to further develop the definition of European citizenship as well as the degree to which the EU's institutional architecture can be a model for new forms of governance.

In the study *Democracy and Futures* (Finnish Committee for the Future), R. Cinquegrani analyses different aspects of the concept of democracy within the context of the European Union. Several issues are addressed ranging from understanding and managing the connection between all the new and different social, economic and political positions inside the EU to defining a European democracy and citizenship or handling exclusivists' conceptions of the state and the consequent implications for minority issues.

Governance Models for the Developing World

There are diverse views on the role that the EU can play as a model for the democratisation of the developing world. In the *Democracy and Futures* study, T. Murata examines the future of democracy in India and China and the degree to which these countries can be models for democracy in the developing world. He argues that many developing states needing better governance structures are likely to find a better match in the well established Indian model rather than the existing US model or the currently developing European one. India has a long tradition of liberal representative government and has been dealing relatively effectively with large language, ethnic, religious and communal divides.

Despite its recent economic growth, India remains part of the developing world due to its large poor and agrarian population, and large, poorly integrated territory. Thus, it is likely that its solutions are more applicable to the many developing states which are the same countries often referred to as

“emerging democracies” in Africa, Central Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and Indonesia and the Philippines.

Regarding China the author asserts that the conspicuous lack of a liberal, representative democracy and the communist regime are counterbalanced to a certain point by a passionate desire for political participation in China. In addition, its historical support for anti-colonial, pro-independence struggles allows China to enjoy respect and legitimacy in many parts of the developing world. Many also see a major possibility for the Chinese people to successfully “leapfrog” into a new political future having a fair chance of incorporating current technologies to better approximate true democracy than the currently dominant representative government.

These considerations, along with the fact that many non-OECD nations consider standards of living and political systems of the First World to be unachievable, may lead the developing world to identify with and derive images of their future from major Third World powers.

The Soft (but Dominating) Power of the EU

However, the opposite view on the role of the EU as a governance model is also found in literature. M. Leonard, for example, in his book *Why Europe Will Run The 21st Century* (2005) argues that the basis for American power (the ability to wage war trans-continently and the ubiquity of American popular culture) has reached its natural limits. Against this he compares the European method of influence, which relies heavily on so-called ‘soft power’. In contrast to the previous study, he considers the European method as the more influential with the developing ‘BRIC’ nations (Brazil, Russia, India, and China).

The BRIC nations are more interested in the European model of capitalism delivering prosperity, security and greater levels of equality to its citizens. This contrasts to the US model where the winner takes all. The rising nations are encouraged by the way in which the EU has allowed tiny nations to leverage their influence. They can either join the EU or start their own regional association to overcome a ‘unipolar’ world. Eventually, the EU may be encouraged to develop a ‘Union of Unions’. It is in this way that Europe will run the 21st century.

Another example is J. Rifkin's book about *The European Dream* (2004). In examining how the world will develop in the future, Rifkin, an enthusiastic advocate of the European model, notes that the market economy and the nation state are not designed for instant global communication and the networked world, which is already rapidly developing. Thus, he anticipates that the EU will develop decentralised and polycentric models of governance giving the EU the role of a rule-maker and gatekeeper rather than a governor and enforcer. The European model is being exported to other parts of the world replacing the crucible of US soft power as the ideal to which the world aspires. The European Dream expresses global connectivity without losing the sense of cultural identity and locality, freedom in relationships with others and the pursuit of quality of life, leading to the championing of human rights and the rights of nature.

¹ From the total of 846 cases mapped in detail in the EFMN database, 62 were trans-European ones (cases involving two or more EU countries).

The Role of the EU in Facing Global Challenges

The importance of the EU in the world is not seen only in political terms. Significant weight and responsibility is placed especially on facing global challenges and threats that go beyond national borders. Many foresight exercises point out the fact that future challenges (which are mostly not limited to a specific country) cannot – or at least not only – be addressed at a national level and, moreover, the supranational dimension and, in particular, the European dimension should be taken into account.

The *FinnSight 2015* study states clearly that to implement Finland's national vision as well as the positive impacts of scientific and technological development Finland needs to actively search for European and global partners. According to the French study *Technologies-Clés 2010*, it is not only necessary to take the European dimension into consideration, moreover the importance of national industry policies decreases in the globalised context.

Foresight exercises point out the following domains for which a common European answer to future challenges is necessary: ageing population; country differences in infrastructures; spatial and rural development/ environment and agriculture; competitiveness (for instance in the domain of information and communication technology it is only possible at the European level); energy (the successful promotion of wind energy for instance is only possible at the European level); security (nongovernmental and governmental action at a national as well as the international level has to be coordinated); social issues (challenges like social cohesion).

Safeguarding Socio-economic Growth

Interestingly, people see the success of the EU model of socio-economic development as being both aspired to and threatened by the so-called global powers.

As the French *FutuRIS* study notes, the development of eastern and southern Asia will lead to major changes on the global geopolitical and economic map, which will modify the balance of power in the area of research and innovation. If Europe does not devote enough resources to this area, growth, which is already at risk of slowing down, will be compromised. This will leave Europe in a difficult position between Asia, with its dynamic growth, and the US, which is expected to continue to devote considerable resources to research and innovation. To provide a rough overview, world GERD is expected to rise from € 629 to € 1,320 billion over the next 20 years (on a constant euro basis), with the percentage claimed by the US down slightly from 36.6% to 33.0%, while Europe-15 will see its share fall from 22.3% to 17.5%. China will rise to 14.9% and industrial Asia to 24.1% (Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia).

Other studies (*Globalisation Trends*, 2006) note the rapidly rising Chinese R&D intensity as well as the rapid development in sectors like motor vehicles. They warn that the complementarities (and thus less direct competition) that the EU now enjoys with China are fading away and that future trading conditions for European companies will be more demanding. On the other hand, they argue that Europe has no need to fear global-

isation. Unlike the US and Japan, the EU has managed to maintain its dominant world market share position despite the emergence of countries such as China as major trading powers.

Referring to growth in the non-OECD economies the study *Globalisation and Macroeconomic Policy* (2007) argues that GDP growth will remain well above that in the OECD economies, reflecting higher productivity growth and more favourable demographic developments. Per capita output in the non-OECD economies is projected to rise by close to 5% per annum over the next two decades if globalisation continues at its current pace, compared with growth of 2% per annum in the OECD regions. Amongst the non-OECD countries, China and non-OECD Europe would enjoy the largest increases in per capita output.

EU to Lead International Cooperation

The scientific and technological aspect of the role of the EU is seen as of major importance for the future. Even more so international cooperation is highlighted. The *SCOPE 2015* project, covering four regions of the world (countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States [CIS] excluding Russia, Latin America excluding Brazil, Maghreb and Mashreq, and Sub-Saharan Africa excluding South Africa), seeks to demonstrate the utility of foresight to EC policy makers and others concerned with cooperation with developing countries in research, technology and innovation.

The specific purpose of the project was to produce ten-year scenarios focused upon contextualised scientific and technological developments in selected regions of developing countries with a view to drawing implications for European research, technological development and innovation cooperation policy.

The study *Emerging S+T Priorities in the Triadic Regions* identifies scientific and technological developments and research priorities where Europe could take the lead in the years to come. Several strategies are proposed to prevent a decline of the European science and technology positioning in the eventuality of the Lisbon strategy failing, which are combined with the consolidation of current trends that emphasize economic factors for supporting research and innovation.

In addition, a number of foresight studies (like *FISTERA* or *Transport and Mobility in an Enlarged Europe 2020*) focus on examining the future of specific research fields and associated sectors on a European if not international scale.

Building the European Research Area

Another aspect of the role of the EU appearing in foresight studies is linked to the Lisbon and Barcelona objectives and the development of the European Research Area (ERA). For example, in the *Ukrainian STI 2025* foresight exercise a clear orientation toward integration into the EU is deemed the best way for an effective modernization of the national science and technology system. The competitiveness imperative enshrined in the Lisbon Strategy is tackled in the exercise *Imagining Ireland – Future Scenarios for 2030*: the future of Ireland is seen as being strongly linked with the future of the EU. A common integrated European policy in the maritime sector is

the starting point of the exercise *Malta Marine 2020*. The foresight exercise *East German Cross Border Regions*, also considering cross-border regions in Poland and the Czech Republic, aims to initiate cross-border innovation strategies to further the development of the regional economy.

The analysis of the ERA dimension in the foresight exercises revealed that the Lisbon goals and raising the R&D intensity is a major concern in many foresight exercises. Due to the increasing R&D competition at the global scale, cooperation between research institutions – also beyond national borders – has become increasingly important.

Furthermore, several European scenarios have been developed as the basis for drawing up national or regional scenarios within

foresight exercises. Yet, there are quite a few cases where the foresight exercise makes no connection to the European dimension and recommendations mainly focus on the local level of implementation. This ‘myopia’ concerning the European dimension hardly comes unexpected given that national and sub-national exercises are typically framed to address local settings.

The social and cultural aspects of the EU’s role have rarely been a core feature examined in foresight studies. The social fabric of the EU states with their beliefs and needs has been of explicit concern to only a few exercises (*Imagineering Ireland – Future Scenarios for 2030*; *Futur Radar 2030*; *Aufbruch Musik – German Music 2020*). Though coming from different thematic backgrounds, they all broach the demise of traditional values, customs and beliefs and the need for developing new ones.

Conclusions

The interpretation of the challenge facing the EU in strengthening its importance worldwide includes a wide range of perspectives as expressed in the respective European Commission documents. From a first scan and analysis of relevant foresight studies it can be argued that this challenge is definitely not a core subject of discussion in foresight exercises. This is not surprising given their national, regional or local focus.

However, upon close scrutiny, it can be claimed that the foresight studies do indeed cover all the different aspects and perspectives relevant to this challenge.

Adopting a greater role worldwide is perceived as a necessity for the EU to successfully cope with the consequences associated with globalisation, the changing interactions between world regions and the rise of new global players. Accordingly, it is also seen as imperative for the EU to play a leading role in international cooperation to deal with global challenges.

Some consider the European model as a suitable model of governance for the developing world even though the success of the EU model of socio-economic development is being aspired to and at the same time threatened by the so-called new rising global powers.

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Selection of foresight studies analysed

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Austrian BMVIT Safety and Security Research 2011; Danish Teknologisk Fremsyn 2020; *East German Cross Border Regions*; *Emerging S+T Priorities in the Triadic Regions*; *Finn-Sight 2015*; *FISTERA*; *Foresight for Rural Ireland 2025*; *Futur Radar 2030*; *FutuRIS*; *German Music 2020*; *Imagineering Ireland – Future Scenarios for 2030*; *Malta Marine 2020*; *SCOPE 2015 Project*; *Technologies Clés 2010*; *Transport and Mobility in an Enlarged Europe 2020*; *Ukrainian STI 2025*.

About the EFMN: Policy Professionals dealing with RTD, Innovation and Economic Development increasingly recognize a need to base decisions on broadly based participative processes of deliberation and consultation with stakeholders. One of the most important tools they apply is FORESIGHT. The EFMN or European Foresight Monitoring Network supports policy professionals by monitoring and analyzing Foresight activities in the European Union, its neighbours and the world. The EFMN helps those involved in policy development to stay up to date on current practice in Foresight. It helps them to tap into a network of know-how and experience on issues related to the day to day design, management and execution of Foresight and Foresight related processes.