THE PARADOX OF RESILIENCE: EUROPEAN UNION A QUINTESSENTIAL SURVIVOR OR A STRUCTURE DAMAGED BY 21ST CENTURY POPULISM

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Abstract

European Union is still mitigating the risks caused by the consequences of financial crisis of 2007-08 together with a sudden wave of refugees as well as the rise of Euroscepticism, and yet organizational resilience provides an opportunity for recovery. Central and Eastern Members of the European Union are to play an active role in mechanism of resilience. However, the emergence of rhetoric of anti-liberalism in Hungary (Viktor Orbán) and other countries of the region give a seemingly unconventional example to follow. This paper analyses the philosophical framework of resilience through an organizational prism of the European Union with a regional focus on Central and Eastern Europe.

Keywords: EU, Resilience, Refugee Crisis, Populism, Financial Crisis

Introduction

The ability of European Union as a unifying structure to retaliate and recover from three concurrent crises is under an intense debate. The consequences of financial crisis which are felt especially in Eastern Europe paved way for populist politicians to gain grounds and rule the countries. In their actions aimed at attacking democratic institutions, the likes of Viktor Orbán and Igor Dodon created a precedent for increased concern. In addition, refugee crisis came into play and became a pawn and an additional factor and an easy target for scapegoating in the region. Resilience is articulated as a discourse that can offer answers to recovery issues of European Union.

Generally, resilience refers to an ability to overcome hardships, that ranging from psychological to physical realm (Coutu, 2002). Literature suggests that resilience is a part of psychological and genetic setting (Coutu, 2002) for individuals dealing with trauma and loss (Bonanno, 2004), survivors of

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concentration camps, The Olympic winners, or cancer patient survivors (Coutu, 2002).

The trait signifying robust character and ability to bounce back has become heavily articulated in organizational studies and economic setting overall. One reason for that might be the belief that economic and political environment has become more turbulent and unpredictable (Drucker, 1999). Literature suggests that organizations have to operate in a different business environment than that of 1980's and early 1990's Western corporate culture (Kunda and Maanen, 1999). Organizations either face 'survival' issues on a much more 'shorter-apart' periods or have to accept the fact that they will always operate in 'unpredictable' market driven environment (Maravelias, 2007). In any case, abandoning the idea to achieve long-term *status quo* is at the core of the debate. Resilience finds its way as an answer to organizational problematic associated with crises. On one hand, resilience is seen as a solution in overcoming hard times, with hope to return to 'original' state (Lengnick-Hall *et al.*, 2011). Yet at the same time is seen as a necessary strategic capital to make sense and adapt to neoliberal organizational culture, where unpredictability of markets just has to be accustomed to and used as an opportunity. (Boin and McConnell, 2007; Maravelias, 2007; Lengnick-Hall *et al.*, 2011).

1. Methodology

The work concentrates on quantitative analysis of EUROSTAT data (Eurobarometer surveys 2007-2016) as well as various case studies with regional emphasis on Central and Eastern European of European Union[1]. Particular examples are being retrieved from Hungary as a representative of the region as well as the Republic of Moldova as one of the countries of the Eastern Partnership program. The study takes into account political discourses, party programs and legislation analysis of the above-mentioned countries.

Examination of resilience discourse takes its empirical data to be texts and academic literature. The latter is narrowed down to psychology, social science and organizational studies. Literature considers books, and academic journal articles for the reason to examine both theoreticians' and practitioners' notions of resilience. Secondary empirical data to presentation of literature is our readings and interpretations of these texts. It has to be noted that texts on resilience were chosen and prioritized by their potential cohesion to subject of organizational studies, since the primary subject of the research was European Union as an organization.

Given the framework of the work and focus on three aspects of crises - financial, refugee, and populism - the implications and results of the research is

[1] This paper uses visual analytics as aiding and complimentary analysis process. The data is of secondary nature and was not gathered by the authors. Instead, it was extracted and processed from EUROSTAT databases.

considered and analysed only within the set framework. However, in an attempt to provide interdisciplinary research on the subject, the work provides a 'broader' account of literature on resilience. The general notion that resilience discourse provides opportunities for recovery rhetoric's for European Union is not contested. Yet, in the spirit of interdisciplinary methods of research, the work attempts to argue for inclusion of multiple perspectives. Finally, in the context of potency of recovery of European Union, the work defines *resilience as a mechanism to maintain and recover financial, bureaucratic, political, social, and democratic institutions of the union to their initial state.*

2. Resilience

Both, organisations and individuals are always facing survival and coping issues due to unpredictable natural disaster threats (Boin and McConnell, 2007; Rose, 2007), terrorist attack threats (Rose, 2007), and ever changing, and turbulent markets (Lengnick-Hall *et al.,* 2011; Starr *et al.*, 2003, Rose, 2007). Following such thought, research and literature offers resilience on individual and organizational levels as an answer to how to make sense of the contemporary narrative of turbulent, and crises 'rich' environment.

2.1. Traditional Resilience

Resilience most often pertains to *an individual* as literature on the subject seems to suggest (Bonanno, 2004 Coutu, 2002; Evans and Reid, 2014), mostly because the discourse attempts answering the question 'What is resilience?' in the framework of 'what are constituting characteristics of resilient subject?' or 'How resilient subject is different from any other subjects and individuals?". Even though, organizational resilience for one has become part of the discourse, literature in support of the discourse cannot avoid the discussion of resilient subject, be it individual or a firm (Lengnick-Hall *et al.,* 2011).

Generally, then, resilience has become commonly referred to as the ability to overcome hostile environments, which can range from psychological to physical realm. In her article *How Resilience Works* appearing in *Harvard Business Review* journal Diane Coutu writes about how we assert resilience in the framework, namely associating such notions as *staunch survivor, superior will power,* and *ultra-persistence to resilience* (2002). Diane Coutu summarizes that resilient subject must have three distinct characters of personality: *a staunch acceptance of reality (i), a deep belief that life is meaningful (ii) and uncanny ability to improvise (iii)* (2002, pg. 5). These allow the subject to rise above challenges and come out as a 'winner' and 'successful' of any hardship (Coutu, 2002). Not only that, resilience also moulds characters who now not only can and do survive holocaust or cancer, but individuals who win the Olympics, and are good in bed (Coutu, 2002). When success overall is more and more associated with hardship and scarcity resilience

emerges as prescription to success. The three characteristics of personality as suggested by Coutu (2002) do not necessarily set the universal standard of the discourse and can be challenged. Yet the article itself, in its framework, outline important notions of resilience, namely, that resilience denotes characteristics of a subject, it is synonymous with persistence and survival, and it is essential characteristics of the 'successful', in a wider sense of a word.

As already shown, resilience is heavily associated with characteristics of individual subject. This is especially true in a psychological discourse on resilience. George Bonanno study *Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience* (2004) denotes that resilience is the characteristic that allows children to overcome psychological hardship caused by loss or trauma (2004). Bonanno challenges the thesis that resilience is either pathological state or feature of only extremely healthy, and thus, rare individuals (2004). Resilience, according to Bonanno, is more common than asserted before and pertains "the ability to maintain a stable equilibrium [...]; to maintain a relatively stable, healthy levels of psychological and physical functioning" (2004, p. 20). Additionally, to there being a one-dimensional or narrow understanding of resilience, Bonanno suggests, that resilience as such can be found in multiple discourses that deal with coping mechanisms in psychology, ranging from stress-coping to hardiness associated with loss or trauma. In that sense, resilience presents itself as broad phenomena and can be found in texts writing on positive emotions in stressful situations, self-enhancement, and hardiness [(Kobasa *et al.*, 1982) as found in Bonanno, 2004]. The latter has three dimensions to it: commitment to perceive meaningful purpose in life, belief that one has ability to influence outside world and one's actions, and belief that there is a learning curve in both positive and negative life experiences (Bonanno, 2004, pg. 25). Overall, resilience is a signifier of a coping mechanism that allows individuals to both cope with hardiness after the crises, as well as maintains stability of character during the periods of high stress, and shock (Bonanno, 2004).

2.2. Organizational Resilience

Resilience is not only necessary as a first reaction-coping mechanism, but also becomes central ability that enables exploitation and opportunism for organization. Resilience becomes a strategic approach of further success in the market. Lengnick-Hall *et al*. (2011) focus on how resilience can be developed within organisation, especially how collection of individuals enables organisational resilience. Author's view is that individual resilience is a subsystem of organisational resilience (Lengnick-Hall *et al*., 2011). The authors do not claim that individual's actions are added to make the whole composition of organisational resilience. Rather, the claim is that social networks, constituted by individuals, influence organisational resilience in many important ways. Organisational activities, practices, and processes define capacity for organisational resilience (Lengnick-Hall *et al*., 2011). Authors build an argument, that in turn, organisational

practices, processes and capabilities are constituted via "combination of individual level knowledge, skills, abilities and other attributes" (Lengnick-Hall *et al*., 2011, p. 245).

Similar to the argumentation of organisational resilience Boin and McConnell (2007) also offer a twofold perspective on resilience. Boin and McConnell define resilience as "the ability to 'bounce back' after suffering a damaging blow" (Boin and McConnell, 2007, p. 54). Boin and McConnell (2007) similar to Lengnick-Hall *et al*. (2011) have two conceptions of resilience: an individual resilience and strategic leadership resilience. The two are explained in the context of occurrence of natural disasters. According to the author's, effective responsive actions come first from resilient citizens and immediately affected citizens (Boin and McConnell, 2007, p. 54). Therefore, strategic and governmental action follows with a lag effect, since crucial infrastructures such as information communication; roads, etc. have to be in place for strategic actions to take place. Thus, authors argue for a bottom-up approach of strategic resilience, where individuals act as frontier responders, who by default are then responsible for establishing order in a chaotic environment.

2.3. Critique of Resilience

Evans and Reid (2014) bring discussion on resilience into the terms of neoliberal philosophy and perception of security. They argue that neoliberal discourse on resilience embodies the abandonment of individual strive to security, while substituting it with perception of reality as turbulent and unpredictable.

As authors themselves put it: "To be resilient, the subject must disavow any belief in the possibility to secure itself from the insecure sediment of existence, accepting instead an understanding of life as a permanent process of continual adaptation to threats and dangers which appear outside its control" (Evans & Reid, 2014, pg. 68). Resilient individual is one who is able to systematically and repeatedly adapt to hazardous environment while at the same time learning and developing (Evans and Reid, 2014). Authors note that resilience draws similarities to entrepreneurial characters in a neoliberal discourse. As resilient subject has the capacity to bounce back, signalling individual's character strength and high tolerance to failure. Finally, the authors criticize the prevailing discourse on resilience[2]. Central to their critiques is the idea of societal compliance, as contemporary resilient subject is an embodiment of individual's ability to adapt to prevailing *status quo* with no restrictions. Authors raise rhetorical question whether resilient individual should mean and symbolise a subject who is able to reflect and act upon, in a constructive manner, a prevailing social system. In a sense, resilient subject could also be understood as one who is qualified to 'critique' status quo rather than comply with it.

[2] see section 2.1 for 'prevailing discourse'.

Similarly, to the point of Evan and Reid (2014), Burnell and Calvert in their book *The resilience of democracy: persistent practice, durable idea (1999)* encourage us to consider resilience as a part of the trinity of factors in evaluating the success or failure of democracy, alongside durability and persistence. Here resilience becomes not a goal, but a tool to evaluation and metrics for judgment. Burnell and Calvert (1999) emphasize the role of institutionalization the strength of institutions, the importance of economic and socio-economic factors within the process of modernization as a part of the nation-building. In addition, the ability to recover from shocks, the importance of socially cohesive societies as well as the responsible behaviour of ruling elites is also a part of resilience in democracy, according to the authors.

3. EU crises

This section will analyse and introduce three main crises that the European Union is experiencing at the moment.

3.1. Financial crisis

European Union is currently under a strain of the dealing with the consequences of at least three main crises. First, the after effects of the global financial crisis of 2007-2008 which started with the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers and the financial sector in the United States of America are still not fully remediated. The consequences are still felt by the majority of the population of the European Union. Marek Dabrowski and Jacek Rostowski in their collection of articles *The Eastern Enlargement of the Eurozone* (2006) which was written before the financial crisis, argue that new member states of the European Union would be better off if they joined the monetary union in due time. Despite describing some disadvantages, the authors claimed that joining the European Monetary Union would develop additional internal trade links with the old members, synchronize business cycle and increase factor mobility (p.221, 2006). More importantly, the authors claimed that the citizens of the new member states would experience real convergence of wages and GDP per capita with their Western compatriots. However, although stabilizing the Eurozone economy as a whole, the global financial crisis seems to have ruined the promises of prosperity outlined by the authors.

The global financial crisis had a direct short-time impact on the economic well-being of citizens of the new member states and especially those who live in the post-Socialist countries. While the average time to regain the GDP per capita values throughout the European Union (28 countries) took a bit over two years (26,100 - 2008; 26,100 - 2011) for some countries like Czech Republic, Estonia and Lithuania it took three years to recover (Appendix A). Other countries took even longer Poland - three years, Latvia and Romania - five years. Hungary and

Slovenia struggled to get the GDP per capita aggregates back to pre-crisis levels for eight years while Croatia has still to fully recover. The consequences of such a delay in finding solutions to economic crises are devastating on micro-level. Moreover, it means that households have to cut on their expenses, spend their savings on everyday expenses or migrate in search for more profitable opportunities. Such inability to cope with the crisis certainly creates dissatisfaction with the current status quo among the population and is directed towards the establishment associated with the political decisions which led to the economic hardships. In addition, they simply ruin plans for households and leave the most fragile strata of the population in disarray.

Another evidence of the delayed process of recovering from crisis is found in EUROSTAT data on the percentage of total population which make ends meet with great difficulty. According to the official description of the variable, it refers to "the percentage of persons in the total population who are in the state of enforced inability to make ends meet, based on the following groups of the subjective non-monetary indicator defining the ability to make ends meet" (EU-SILC Methodology, 2017). In addition, it classifies the population into six categories of being able to make ends meet GD (great difficulty), D (difficulty), SD (some difficulty), FE (fairly easily), E (easily) and VE (very easily).

The percentage of population of the European Union which belongs to the GD (great difficulty) group increased by more than 2 percent in the aftermath of the crisis and hit the Euro area countries even harder (from 7.7 % in 2007 to 11.3 in 2013) (Figure 2). As seen from the table below, the households from the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) were affected the most with all the cases still not being able to recover to the pre-crisis years and peaking at 25.4% in Latvia in 2013. A disastrous situation is seen in Hungary, where the number of those who were making ends meet with great difficulty almost doubled from the pre-crisis year of 13.8 to 26.8% in 2012. Such developments have crucial implication for the policy makers as well as for intra-societal developments and political preferences. Countries like Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania might have always been dealing with the phenomenon that almost one out of every fifth its citizen is hardly making ends meet. However, the global financial crisis worsened the situation even further. In the situation when social benefits for the unemployed or socially vulnerable are minimal for those affected by the crisis, resilience of the EU become crucial. They are the ones for whom the ability of the Union to bounce back truly matters.

Of course, there have been other factors besides the global financial crisis as well which might have led to the worsening of the economic situation of the households, however, a sharp decline in the indicators across the region point to the obvious trend in the immediate aftermath of the crisis. The data might also have flaws in the nature of the survey or does not reflect the unofficial employment; however, it presents the best data available on the subject.

Figure 1. Households making ends meet with great difficulty (percentage of total population)

GEO/TIME	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
European Union (27)	9.2	9.8	10.4	10.5	10.1	11.0	12.0	11.3	9.9	:
Euro area (19)	7.7	8.9	9.7	9.7	9.2	10.1	11.3	10.8	9.6	:
Bulgaria	33.3	31.1	27.8	29.0	27.8	32.8	32.9	31.7	30.6	:
Czech Republic	7.4	7.8	7.9	8.4	8.7	9.3	9.1	9.3	7.8	7.0
Estonia	3.4	3.1	7.9	8.5	8.5	8.5	7.5	6.5	4.9	4.9
Croatia	:	:	:	18.3	19.7	22.1	26.3	25.2	22.6	20.5
Latvia	12.9	13.5	17.7	23.5	24.0	21.8	25.4	18.6	15.4	12.4
Lithuania	4.6	6.3	11.0	12.0	11.5	12.9	9.6	8.2	6.8	:
Hungary	13.8	16.7	23.8	25.3	26.5	26.8	27.4	22.8	19.1	17.1
Poland	17.0	14.4	14.4	14.1	12.4	13.3	12.7	10.7	10.2	:
Romania	24.2	18.6	19.2	21.1	21.2	23.3	23.8	21.7	20.2	18.1
Slovenia	5.1	8.2	7.1	8.9	9.3	8.9	11.2	9.8	9.1	7.7
Slovakia	10.7	11.6	11.1	11.5	10.7	11.6	13.3	12.6	11.7	:

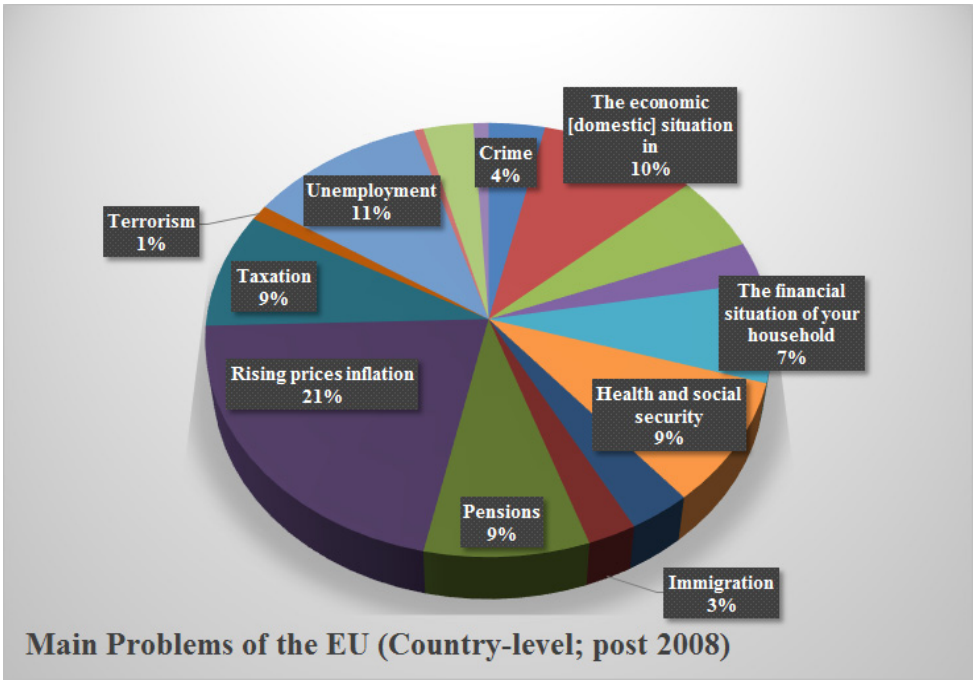
Source: Own calculations based on EUROSTAT data (2017)

These very consequences of the global financial crisis are clearly seen now in the results of the Eurobarometer surveys on public opinion in European Union and beyond its borders. When looking at the average results of Eurobarometer data of the post-crisis years, the data shows that the main issues faced by the population of the European Union are directly related to the economic situation of their household. While answering the question "what are the two most important issues you are facing at the moment?" respondents highlighted rising prices/inflation (21%), the economic situation in the country (10%), pensions (9%) as well as health and social security (9%) as the most acute issues at the moment (Figure 2). Questions on the threat of terrorism, immigration or crime rose above the 5% mark only in recent years and predominantly in Western European countries of Belgium and France despite the mainstream rhetoric's of populist parties.

When analysing the same data based on classification of ten post-Socialist European Union member states, the survey data reflects similar results. However, answers highlighting rising prices and inflation (24%), pensions (10%), the economic situation in the country (10%) as well as the financial situation of the household (9%) have all gained in popularity in comparison with the average data on the European Union level (Figure 3). Interestingly, when looking at the same data on country-by-country basis, Lithuania is one of the examples where more than 60% of respondent's point to rising prices and inflation in the post-crisis years as the main problem. The same situation is seen in Romania, where around 45% of all respondents answer with the same question of the main problems in their

country with healthcare and social security gaining popularity as the strong second (around 20% overall in the post-crisis timeframe) (Eurobarometer, 2017).

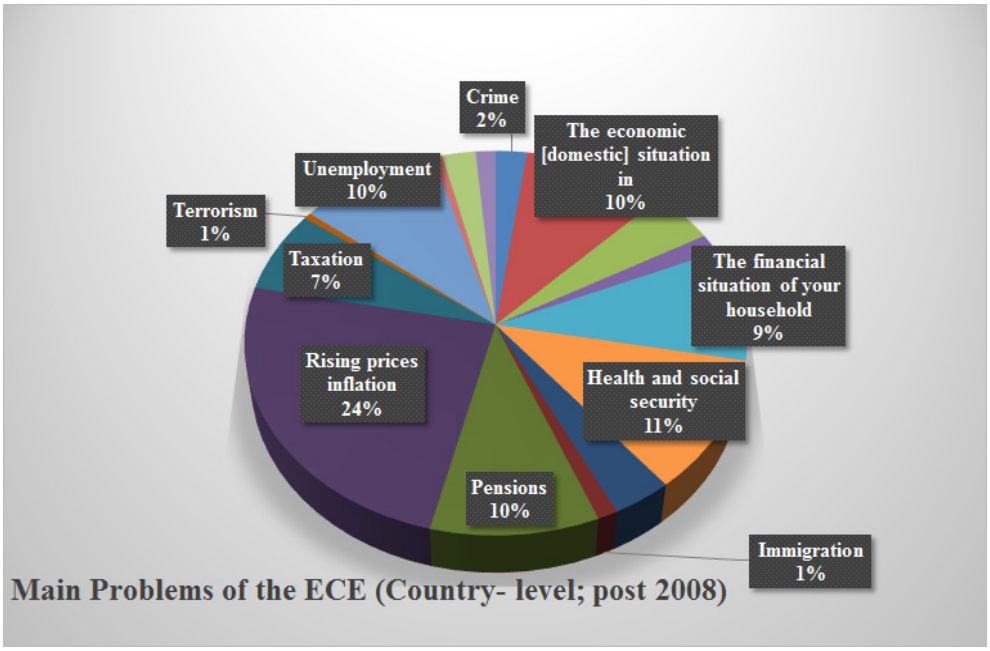
Figure 2. Survey data on main domestic (within own country) problems.



Source: own calculations, based on average data based on twelve Eurobarometer surveys conducted for the period 2009-2016. (Full graphic representation in Appendix B)

In our assessment, the dissatisfaction of citizens on the country-level in the Eastern Central European region has a long-term and direct impact on the prospects of the successes of future initiatives on the enlargement eastwards and on the speed of recovery from the crises. Jean Pisani-Ferry, a renowned French economist and the former Director of Bruegel (the Brussels-based economic think tank) in his book: T*he Euro Crisis and Its Aftermath* (2011) made an observation that "the only protagonists in the euro crisis are not markets and governments anymore - if they ever were. Long-silent citizens have become players in the game, and they are deeply dissatisfied" (p.173). The book was written in the early aftermath of the financial crisis and, in his words, as politics lags behind economics, political upheaval as a consequence of the crisis would be sufficient to reignite doubts over the future of the euro area (p.174).

Figure 3. Survey data on main domestic (within own country) problems. ECE region.



Source: own calculations, based on average data based on twelve Eurobarometer surveys conducted for the period 2009-2016. (ECE region includes: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) (Full graphic representation in Appendix C).

3.2. Refugee crisis

The second crisis that the European Union is being challenged by today is an unprecedented wave of refugees from the Middle East which started in 2015 as the result of war and overall state of political and economic situation in the region. Although unprecedented, such an influx of war refugees was not the first time Europe had to accommodate over a million of people. According to the data provided by EUROSTAT (2017), the number of asylum seekers in 2015 exceed 1.2 million first time applicants, while in 2016 it slightly dropped (over 25% originating from Syria). However, in the aftermath of the Yugoslav Wars fought on the territory of the Western Balkans over the period from 1991 to 2001, Germany alone received over 350,000 refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina (EUROSTAT, 2017; Martinovic, 2016). Although in the following ten years one million of the 2.2 million people displaced by the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina returned home or migrated elsewhere (United States of America as one of the examples), the wave

of war refugees went through roughly the same route as the current 'Balkan Way' going through Turkey, Greece, Macedonia and Serbia in search of safety (Mayne, 2015). In contrast to the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina which has been curated by the international community, UN and UNHCR, there is no clarity on the future of the current refugee population from the Middle East, as the conflict in their countries of origin remains unresolved. In addition, the international community is not united on the matters of solution of the conflict.

Moreover, significant cultural and religious differences as well as belongingness of the refugees from the Middle East to a visual minority makes them an easy target for 'scapegoating' by opportunist politicians from the Central Eastern Europe. This point brings us to the discussion of the third crisis of the European Union, which is the rise of the populism and euroscepticism.

3.3. The Rise of Populism and Euroscepticism

Although it is difficult to define what populism in modern politics actually is, one is able to point to its main problems. Jan-Werner Müller in his recent book *What is Populism?* (2017) offers thought on populism. Summarizing the main points of the book, he defines populism as a permanent shadow of representative democracy and points out that populists are a real danger to democratic institutions and do not represent 'the people' through criticizing the elites and the political establishment of the time.

German sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf once said "if populism is simple democracy is complex" (Dülffer, 2007). Giving seemingly easy answers to complicated problems of the modern world and the realities of Central Eastern Europe is the main problem of populism. In addition, throughout the region, populist rhetoric is used in conjunction with nationalism and pure opportunism aimed at political gains.

In 2006 Samantha Besson theorized that as various countries of the European Union become increasingly more integrated on macro and micro levels, the idea of *demos* within the context of the European Union slowly turned into the concept of *demoi* or - many nationalities. In turn, it modified the emphasis of political discourses from the territory-bound concept to a larger audience. There have been practical implications of the idea of *demoi*-cracy in the past, however, the present-day politics in the region of Central and Eastern Europe deny it in favour of homogeneity and mono-ethnic policies.

Viktor Orbán, has been a pioneer in such a shift from *demoi* to *demos* and introducing the conceptual framework of "*Hungarianness*" as a monocentric homogenic block and the return to the nationalism of some sort. Instead of giving a straight answer of what being Hungarian means, he seems to depict and play off what Hungary definitely should not represent. Such a tendency is clearly seen in his anti-refugee rhetoric which gained popularity throughout the region in other Visegrad countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland). In his discourses and

speeches, he blurs the line between the notions of economic migrants and refugees and portraying the inflow of war-zone refugees as "profiteering pseudo-victims, plus actual lawbreakers, plus potential terrorists, and otherwise tools invited to Hungary by multinational capital and the left-wingers of the world to ruin this unique nation through liberalism and multiculturalism" (Haraszti, 2015). In addition, Fidesz party positions itself as a force behind "defending European Christianity". Orbán continues by blocking the transit of migrants in Keleti train station in Budapest in 2015, installing banners with writings in Hungarian language addressed to confused migrants who by-pass Hungary to get to welfare states of Western and Northern Europe. He bases his discourse on pure utilitarian calculations and contrasting his attempt on creating an illiberal alternative to the current state as opposed to Western, liberal-style multiculturalism. The truth of the matter is that the majority of Hungarian voters who live in the country as well as in neighbouring states have never been accustomed by a possibility of an idea of living alongside insignificant number of Muslims in their homogenic homeland. Controversially, by blaming refugee crisis as well as economic concerns of general population on the West, Orbán provides an answer and a path towards resilience in distancing Hungary from neo-liberals in both economic and political forms.

Surprisingly, besides similar rhetoric's of blaming the refugees within the countries of the Visegrad 4, the rhetoric found resonance in relatively distant places from the region, such as Lithuania. On April, 20th, 2016, during the process of preparing for Parliamentary elections of the same year, Labour Party of Lithuania, which was in the ruling coalition during the 2012-16, circulated a video on main TV stations as well as online stigmatizing refugees while using the terms of "refugee invasion" and crisis to Lithuanian values (Labour Party of Lithuania YouTube Channel, 2016). The video accumulated more than 20,000 views and created a wave of negative responses from civil society and other political parties. Posing itself as a centrist party, such an anti-refugee rhetoric did not tackle the most acute problems of the country such as emigration, unemployment and social problems. Instead, it aimed at distracting the society and profiteering by stigmatizing the ones - refugees - which did even plan to settle in the country in first place.

Orbán's rhetoric on blaming refugees was also adopted in the countries of the Eastern Partnership as well. One of the most vivid examples is the developments come from the Republic of Moldova. The Association of Independent Press (API-Romanian) detected a case of manipulation with information ahead of the presidential elections in 2016. One of presidential candidates the country - Maia Sandu has been bombarded by an informational attack from various media platforms with a 'fake news' story that she signed a deal with the Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel on accepting 30,000 Syrian refugees into the country in exchange of political support (Zaharia, 2016). Without holding an official role neither in the government nor in the parliament of the country, Ms Sandu would not be able to sign any kind of document of such sort,

neither there are conditions for the intake of a high number of refugees in Moldova. In addition, such a claim is an obviously false claim inspired by the success of such policies in Hungary. Regretfully the 'fake news' story was also combined with personal attacks and discreditation of Maia Sandu (including accusations of her not sharing Christian values and belonging to the LGBTQ community) arguably helped the populist candidate of the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova get elected to become the president of the country with a small margin - 52.11% to 47.89% (Central Electoral Commission, 2016). Certainly, blaming minority groups for various mishaps is not new; however, the current developments represent an impediment for resilience of European Union facing three major crises.

4. Discussion

The answer to the question whether European Union is a survivor, or if it has potential to persist over the accumulation of crises, has been tackled widely in literature. The answer to whether EU will survive most often finds its answer in mathematical metrics of past and present, and the comparison of the two. Our argument is, however, that it is not anymore the case of being or not being resilient. That is, asking a question, does EU as a subject posse's characteristics of a resilient subject. In that approach, studies most often outline the key characteristics and attempt to contrast them to the most reliable and realistic data pertaining to the union. We, on the other hand, employ a more interdisciplinary approach, and examine phenomena of resilience in hope that sociological and philosophical discussion on the subject my open up a wider discourse on resilience of EU.

4.1. What sort of survivor are we talking about?

For one, we perceive that the discourse on resilience passed the point of research on whether we are resilient or not, or whether we can be resilient, or when we are resilient or for how long we can be resilient (Coutu, 2002; Bonanno, 2004). The prevailing neoliberal discourse dictates the notion of market economy, which brings with it the understanding that the environment we find ourselves in, socially and economically, is always turbulent and without hope for longer crises-free periods (Evans and Reid, 2014). In that sense, organizations and individuals are expected to possess the characteristics of adaptiveness, ability to maintain focus in crises, and seek future potentials in chaos (Kunda and Maanen, 1999; Maravelias, 2007). Resilience becomes a default characteristic once one opts into neoliberalism. Thus, the question of resilience is not one that answers to 'Does EU have what it takes?', meaning predetermined character[3]. Stating briefly, has the EU organization been built or constructed as machinery that is able to adapt and

[3] This seems to us is the prevailing questions, as the answer is mostly formulated in potency of bureaucracy of EU.

change? More importantly, given that resilience has become a default option, available and expected of the general public, the question that arises is: "Is the European Union willing to opt into neoliberal, market economy philosophy?". In this formulation of the problem, lies deeper problematic of resilience of the region. Especially so, in our case, concerning qualitative problematic (rising populism and refugee crisis). Excluding the opportunism to seize governance, crises of refugees and rising populism is not a rhetoric of possibilities, as seen from cases in Hungary and Moldova, but rhetoric of threat and fear.

4.2. Subjectivity of resilience

Additionally, our work points to the fact of twofold conception of resilience. The first conception is the one of an ability to return to *equilibrium* or *status quo*. This resilience, let us call it *bounce-back* resilience is, in our reading of it, more associated to bureaucratic resilience. *Bounce-back* resilience is a trait that stresses the importance of maintaining *sanity and hope* for short periods of time while presented with crises, in a sense 'waiting out the crises'. On the other hand, with neoliberalism came conceptualization of resilience, which is now heavily articulated in organizational studies, as a realisation of living in constant and all prevailing crises. These two are different; however, they seem to be used interchangeably within the literature in organizational discourse. This *interchangeability* of two-different conceptualizations of resilience creates confusion.

Returning to the point before, it can be observed that in Central and Eastern European countries rhetoric's on resilience most often signifies the *bounce-back* notion. One example is the statistical data found in Figures 3 & 4, where countries perceive crises as threats and fear factors. This is turn, creates additional tension in the regions, since stronger players in the EU do attempt and have resources to conceive crises as 'undercover' possibilities[4].

This also uncovers problematic of 'expectations', by which we mean what sort of a priori expectation drive the unification of the region. Smaller players expect the union to help them achieve and maintain desirable *status quo* during crises, that being financial stability of a country, standards of living, security in the region etc. These regions perceive EU as a 'big brother', and 'parental' figure which comes to help once in trouble, signifying notions of 'waiting out crises' in form of 'parental' help. Although the more Western, stronger allies expectations of the smaller players is that the new allies will opt into neoliberal philosophy as soon as possible, so as to enhance the EU region, by the way of bigger network and solid infrastructure, potency to 'capture' possibilities hidden in market economy driven

[4] I.e. Sweden's official public rhetoric's in migrant crises in 2016 was rather positive, asserting that Sweden can actually use migrants as a solution to decreasing work force in the country

philosophy. While overall, it can be argued that EU is seen as an 'antidote' for crises survival and failure of the geographical European region, however, the exact perception of how this 'antidote' takes effect and 'fights' crises is fractured within the union. The case in point, of such problematic of 'expectations', is the Eastern Partnership Program.

4.3. Failure of the Eastern Partnership Program of the EU

Developments in Moldova are in line with a closer collaboration with the European Union through the framework of the Eastern Partnership cooperation and the European Neighbourhood Policy. Although initially created in May at the Prague Summit in 2009 as a project by Poland and Sweden with an aim to bring the countries of the post-Soviet region closer. It was soon reshaped as the EU's main policy initiative in the region. Initially it included six post-Soviet countries – Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus and began in the aftermath of the Russian-Georgian conflict. According to the official website of the program, it "is based on a commitment to the principles of international law and fundamental values - democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms. It also encompasses support for a market economy, sustainable development and good governance" (European Union External Action, 2017). Moreover, EU's initiative provided concrete framework for inter-state cooperation through the Association Agreement (AA) and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA).

However, some experts evaluate these initiatives of the European Union critically. Valiyeva (2016) pointed to the fact that most of the targeted reforms have been inadequately tailored to meet specifics of each country, which effectively did not lead in terms of democratization and ensuring the rule of law in the post-Soviet area. It seems that by willing to impose Kantian view of world order of values and idealisms, the EU seeks to disguise the inefficiency of its foreign policy instruments and inability to generate a coherent and decisive response to potential threats (Valiyeva, 2016).

The evidence for this claim comes that out of six countries of the program only three are in more or less successful relationship with the EU. First, Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine have now all signed the Association Agreement (AA) and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) and benefit from free trade with the European Union. However, the progress of its implementation has been moderate. Since the entry into force of the Association Agreement, back in September 2014, only 13% of activities from the Action Plan 2014 - 2015 have been partially implemented (Progress Report on the Implementation of of the Association Agenda the Republic of Moldova, 2016). The full assessment of the impact of the agreements on Georgia and war-torn Ukraine is still pending.

Second, Moldova is currently the only country of the six initial members of the program which is fully enjoying the benefits of the visa-free regime within the

Schengen area (the European Commission has recommended introduction of the visa free regime for Georgia and Ukraine).

Third, all countries receive funding of the EU programs through the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) which reaches 3.2 billion EUR in funding (European Union External Action, 2017). Although crucially beneficial when directed towards the civil society initiatives, it lacks focus when is simply given unconditionally to authorities for infrastructure projects with high risk of hoarding, asset-stripping or simply stealing through fraudulent schemes. One of the examples of such a development is the new gas pipeline Iasi-Ungheni-Chisinau which had to diversify Moldovan sources of energy and decrease its dependency on Gazprom in fulfilling its internal needs with natural gas. However, since the finishing the Iasi-Ungheni part of the project in 2014, and until the current day there has not been a single square meter of Romanian gas pumped through the pipes. The second part of the project Ungheni- Chisinau extension is still up for public tenders and is the works are promised to start this year. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) as well as other EU institutions are considering a loan of EUR 41 million to the Government of Moldova for financing of the project (EBRD, 2017). Based on the previous experience, there is no guarantee that all the invested resources will result in a cheaper gas for the primary consumer, nor there is a guarantee of honest implementation of the project with a high quality and in scheduled time.

Finally, Ukraine, being the biggest country of the program, although anticipated to sign the Association Agreement it failed to do so during the 3rd Eastern Partnership Summit got involved into a devastating conflict and is dealing with the consequences at the moment. The inability of the European Union countries with a close proximity to Ukraine to take an active role in resolving the conflict or alleviate the consequences of it is perplexing.

All in all, European Union's Eastern Partnership Program seems to be failing. Current crises question the limits of the EU's transformative power capacity in its neighbourhood, since the situation in the region has become increasingly unstable (Ukraine and Moldova) and authoritarian regimes have gained more strength (Azerbaijan and Belarus) (Valiyeva, 2016).

Conclusions

Resilience presents itself as a nearly perfect discourse for subjects that find themselves in crisis, because conventionally it is asserted as an antidote for surviving and bearing through hard time. Yet, conventionality aside, resilience as a discourse, is many folded which in turn also influences how we approach, form, and solve problematic of sustainability and persistence of the EU. While trying to cope with the three crises concurrently - financial crisis, refugee crisis and the rise of populism - the European Union is under significant strain. In addition, its Eastern Partnership Program, which is the main tool in spreading its system of

values to the East seems to be failing as well and provides a perfect example of weaknesses of the system. Populist politicians such as Viktor Orbán of Hungary and Igor Dodon of Moldova use and learn from each other stigmatization of the few (refugees) and other tactics of political profiteering.

However, it is not anymore the case of being or not being resilient, as the main question remains not whether the bureaucratic system would be able to persist in its initial state, but whether the European Union is willing to opt into neoliberal, market economy philosophy and consolidate on all levels. Although not being able to conclude with a high level of certainty, it is up to an interdisciplinary approach to examine phenomena of resilience in hope that sociological and philosophical discussion on the subject my open up a wider discourse on resilience of EU. In this formulation of the problem lies a deeper problematic of resilience of the region. The argument posed in this work is that discourse of conceptualization of resilience opens up or shifts focus linked to problematic of sustainability. Primarily showing that, in the first place, there is an internal confusion within the union, as a single body, conceptualizing resilience. In turn this has direct influence in aligning expectation of all union members, which we argue is fragmented.

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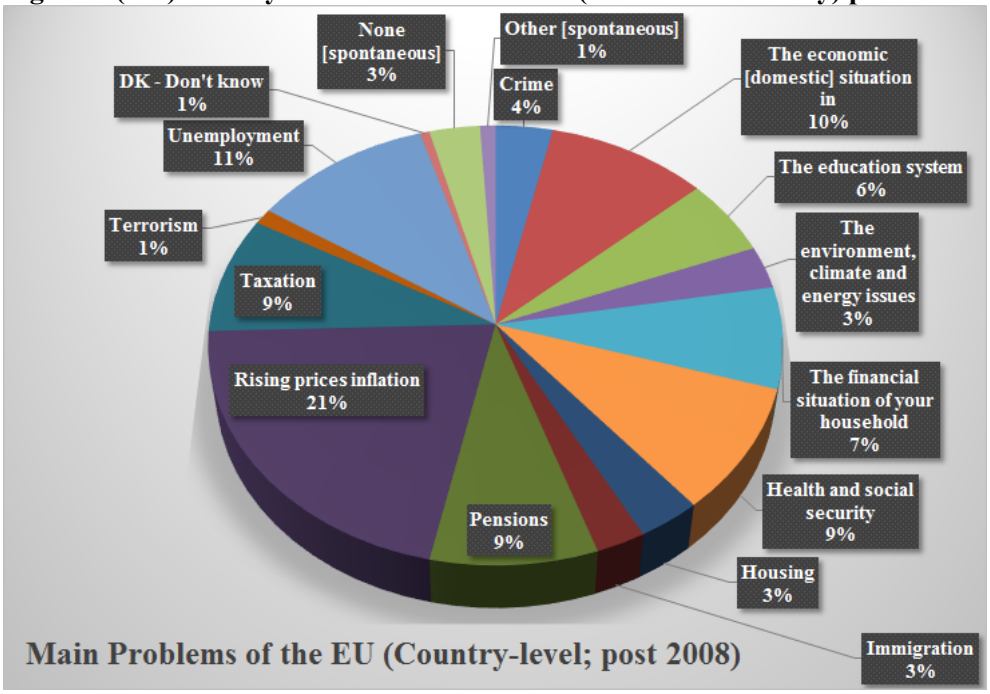
Appendix

Appendix A
Main GDP aggregates per capita. (Current prices, euro per capita)

GEO/TIME	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EU (28)	26,000	26,100	24,500	25,500	26,100	26,600	26,700	27,600	28,900	29,000
Euro area (19)	28,400	28,900	27,800	28,500	29,200	29,200	29,500	30,000	30,900	31,600
Bulgaria	4,300	5,000	5,000	5,200	5,600	5,700	5,800	5,900	6,300	6,600
Czech Republic	13,400	15,400	14,100	14,900	15,600	15,400	15,000	14,900	15,800	16,500
Estonia	12,100	12,300	10,600	11,000	12,500	13,500	14,300	15,000	15,400	15,900
Croatia	10,200	11,200	10,500	10,500	10,400	10,300	10,200	10,100	10,400	10,900
Latvia	10,300	11,200	8,800	8,500	9,800	10,800	11,300	11,800	12,300	12,800
Lithuania	9,000	10,200	8,500	9,000	10,300	11,200	11,800	12,500	12,900	13,500
Hungary	10,100	10,700	9,400	9,800	10,100	10,000	10,300	10,600	11,100	11,500
Poland	8,200	9,600	8,300	9,400	9,900	10,100	10,300	10,700	11,200	11,000
Romania	6,000	6,900	5,900	6,300	6,600	6,700	7,200	7,600	8,100	8,600
Slovenia	17,400	18,800	17,700	17,700	18,000	17,500	17,400	18,100	18,700	19,300
Slovakia	10,400	12,200	11,800	12,400	13,100	13,400	13,700	14,000	14,500	14,900

Source: Own calculations based on EUROSTAT data (2017)

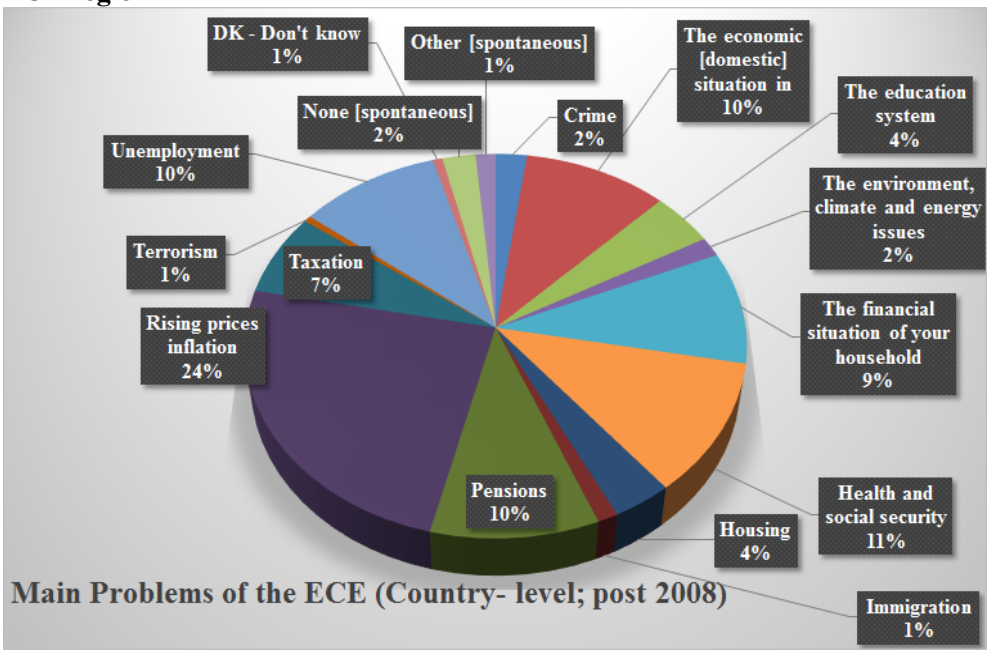
Appendix B
Figure 2 (full). Survey data on main domestic (within own country) problems.



Source: own calculations, based on average data based on twelve Eurobarometer surveys conducted for the period 2009-2016.

Appendix C

Figure 3 (full). Survey data on main domestic (within own country) problems. ECE region



Source: own calculations, based on average data based on twelve Eurobarometer surveys conducted for the period 2009-2016. (ECE region includes: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia).