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Noah for the European Union

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Fortunately or unfortunately, whether we speak of ourselves as individuals or countries, the world does not revolve around us. Nevertheless, the accomplishment of this simple fact does not come by itself and, unfortunately, is not assimilated by everyone. From out early age as kids we tend to think that our world is limited to our mother and father, to our house and maybe the surrounding garden. Over time, we realize that there is more than that, that the world is much bigger and full of the unknown. With age we begin to become familiar with the concept of state, patriotism; also grasping the idea that there are other nations that exist in parallel with ours. Only at the age of twelve did I hear for the first time the mysterious, at that moment, notion of the European Union, during a Civic Education class. As an excuse for myself, I can say that I was not even interested in this subject, especially since the Republic of Moldova was not and is not currently a member country of the European Community. While my peers in the EU were living that European social model once thought by as enlightened minds of the time, such as Jean Monnet, Konrad Adenauer, Robert Schuman and others, I listened to my grandmother's stories about communism, about the times when she was a pioneer, and the Romanian language has become amazingly Moldovan. No, my grandmother did not glorify those times, but as during History classesÂ she told me about the past of my little, but still beautiful and mesmerizing country. What did I know then about the EU? What did I understand? How could I have known that in 10 years the EU will become a topic so current and important to my life and country?

The idea of forming a confederation or federation of European states is not the mind product of the last century. The creation of a supranational union with strategic goals of protection and joint development of the states has been proposed and executed in antiquity and the middle Ages. From Ancient Greece and the great Roman Empire, the present territory of the EU has been an area characterized by state unifications, realized sometimes voluntary, other times by appealing to military forces. In time, the idea of consolidating the so-called "United States of Europe" has not disappeared, but, on the contrary, has taken on an increasingly tangible form. In 1849, the famous French writer Victor Hugo stated, during the Paris Peace Congress, "a day will come when we shall see two immense groups, the United States of America and the United States of Europe, stretching out their hands across the sea." Currently, the EU has not reached that level of integration that would confirm Hugo's statement, but I tend to believe that this is not only a dream or a vision, but also a goal that can be achieved.

In my view, the creation of the EU in the form we know today is due, however sad it may sound, to the largest conflagration known to humankind, namely, the Second World War. From the ashes of the war was born the awareness of the need to form a union that would ensure lasting peace, in particular, on the European continent. The European Union has become that "lifebuoy ring" for the European nations. In over 60 years of existence, the EU has managed to achieve its main purpose of maintaining peace, obtaining in this respect the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012. However, concerning other aspects, such as political, economic and social integrity of the European project, the last decade has highlighted the weaknesses of the EU. In my opinion, however, these weaknesses are not fatal, with the EU having a chance for a prosperous future, in the context of major changes.

A first cause of these problems, no matter how poetic it might sound, lays precisely in the avoidance of admitting the existence of the challenges faced by the EU community. However, we must recognize that the recent economic crisis of 2008, the problem of refugees that reached its peak in 2015, the political crisis characterized by the advancement of nationalist, populist, Eurosceptic and anti-unionist parties, in place with the Brexit phenomena, have created a state of uncertainty for European citizens. In the context of the new economic and social realities in the EU, the prospects for the continuity of the European construction are becoming more uncertain. The question that arises is how the situation can be saved and how we, the young generation, who have grown up and witnessed these challenges, can find ourselves and our roles in the European model of integration? What does that "ideal Europe" look like?

In my opinion, the EU has reached these tense times, not least because of the inability to focus on the future, to adapt to current needs. Of course, over 60 years ago the EU, in its rudimentary form, had great achievements, but the policies that were so well aligned with the *de facto* status of the six founding countries, although they were good at the time, are not effective in the current situation. The crises that have hit one after the other the European Community have shown that it is naive to believe that we will achieve different, or even better, results by using the same measures. It is not necessary to make the EU bigger again, similar to the famous slogan of the US President - it is the time and place to make the EU bigger forward. Not the return to the past is the solution, but the orientation to the future.

Yet, there is something in the past of the European project that deserves to be climbed on the EU's saving ark. These are namely the principles and values that formed the basis of the EU, but over time have faded and lost in the face of the desire of the states to promote and defend their individual interests. It is worthwhile to return to such values as human dignity, democracy, freedom and equality, to bring back to power the idea of common values and perspectives for EU states, of a common future. The freedom of the individual has been and will continue to be the most important pillar of humanity. In the absence of freedom or in the presence of barriers in the exercise of all their rights, the European citizen will not be able to live and prosper in the EU. Freedom is the natural human condition. Nor should the principles of freedom of movement of goods, services, persons and capital be left behind. These freedoms have played, and still play, a crucial role in the development and evolution of the EU. As Frederic Bastiat said, "If the goods do not cross the borders, the armies will do it". Free trade not only conditions the development and deepening of the existing commercial relations between states, but also ensures the peace that everyone wants. Such "core values" as competition and cooperation should also be loaded to "Noah's Ark". If the founding states understood the importance of cooperation, for the consolidation of a secure and peaceful future, for free and fair competition, and for economic development, today these values are in danger because of excessive regulation, corruption and national and personal interests pursued by various political leaders. We need to restore the democracy, solidarity and trust of European citizens in the EU. An important element that should not be left behind is the private property right. The European Community has been consolidated based, in particular, on the principles of the free market, namely private property is the driving force of this economic system. Limiting state intervention in areas outside of its competence and encouraging entrepreneurial initiatives is the way to reinvigorate the EU situation. Last but

not least, we should focus on tolerance and non-discrimination, communication and understanding between individuals. There are many things that should be carefully stored on "Noah's Ark" to be saved when the wave of change will slip across the EU. Nevertheless, there are many things that should be left behind. The EU cannot aspire to a prosperous future while some countries promote nationalist and anti-unionist ideas, ideas of dividing the union into centers of power. What union, based on the principles of equality, can be addressed in this context? Such a course would inevitably lead to its collapse. In this sense, namely the awareness and alignment with the common identity of the European project is the only way to face the challenges.

As the "Noah's Ark" has survived the changes, so too can the EU face its difficulties, this time, however, it is not necessary to wait for the help of superhuman forces to save the situation. Yes, the European Community needs a Noah, who would gather all the best, and leave, impartially, everything that is harmful or superfluous to the new EU. However, this Noah is not found in the figure of Macron, Juncker or Merkel. This Noah is not a country, parliament or law. Noah that we need does not have a tangible form and cannot be subjected to quantitative or qualitative measurements. The Noah that we need is an idea. Sounds too simple or banal, I understand, but this is the truth. We all need to accept and nourish in ourselves the idea that "the EU is our home and family", and ensuring its prosperous future is our duty. No matter how many times great political leaders will come out and talk about the fact that we have to do this and that for the welfare of the EU, even if their ideas are brilliant. No matter how many commercials, informative guides or training courses will be organized by the European institutions, as long as this idea does not take roots in the minds of European citizens, these actions are futile. I had read somewhere that it is pointless to teach a man to fight for his country, before teaching him to love it. The same applies to the EU. That Noah, that much-needed change, must come not from politicians and parliamentarians, who possibly fight more for their well-being than for that of the union, but from the common people, from those who were born in EU, live and love it, even with its small imperfections.

Answering my own questions, I say with certainty that the EU's salvation is in each of us, and that the younger generation, as never before, has a great responsibility to bring about change. That is, young people, as well as myself, rooted in the value system of the EU, are moving towards the future, coming up with creative suggestions and the enthusiasm necessary to bring prosperity to our beloved EU. It is quite possible that an "ideal Europe" does not exist, and if it exists then only in dreams, but this does not mean that we should not tend towards it.

The future by definition is uncertain, but at the same time, it is said that the thoughts and thus the dreams that we think can materialize. Therefore, I dream of the continuity of the European project and its prosperity. I dream of a European Union that, although, inevitably, will still be facing challenges will be able to turn these obstacles into steps towards the evolution and improvement of the union. I dream of a European Union that would represent a piece of heaven for all its citizens, a union in which every individual would truly feel at home.

As I said, my grandmother's stories were about the communist system, which fortunately I did not experience. I live with the confidence that the European Union will stand the test of time, and until I become a grandmother, my grandchildren will also live in a union that puts human dignity, democracy, freedom and equality on the first place.