



Erasmus+

Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence

St. Petersburg State University, Russia



Saint-Petersburg 2016

Research Brief No 13

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Changes in the EU as a Factor of its Relations with Russia:

Russian-language Studies

One of the important stages in the evolution of the study of EU-Russian relations in Russian is the unification of two types of research. The first one is the analysis of integration (economic regulation, flows of goods and services, capital and labour, redistribution of powers between national and supranational levels, powers of institutions and bodies). The second one is the study of relations between Russia and the European Union as such. For a long time these two currents existed in parallel. This parallelism has been methodologically preserved to this day (rarely the methodology used to study integration processes is used to study the relations between Moscow and Brussels).

At the same time, this rapprochement took place on a thematic basis, in particular when considering how the transformation of the European Union (the specificity of the transfer of competences from national to supranational level, deepening economic integration, various crises) determine relations between Russia and the EU. This turn to the link between internal and external also took place in non-Russian language research (but there attention was paid not only to the changes in the EU but also to those in Russia). In Russian-language studies, the topic of Russia's internal transformations increasingly went to the background, the integration romanticism of the early 1990s handed over positions to the consideration of the interaction of Russia and the EU in a purely realistic and international perspective.

Russian researchers were particularly interested in two types of transformation of the European Union. The first one is the revision of its fundamental acts (the signing and entry into force of the Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon treaties, as well as the failure of the Constitutional Treaty). Russian scholars were also interested in economic transformations: the way the EU's external trade policy was changing. It was investigated how the introduction of the single currency, as well as the strengthening of its institutional machine, would affect Russia and its relations with the EU. Legal studies scrupulously examined all innovations in EU acts, however, as a rule they were placed in the studies of the EU, and their influence on the relations between Russia and the EU was considered lightly.

The second type of transformation, which attracted the attention of researchers are current changes. Among the political ones, one should note the leadership crisis, the growth of internal diversity in the EU with the inability of member states to agree on a common position, the growing criticism of the EU at the national level, the growing popularity of the extreme right parties under the pressure of immigration (and more recently, terrorist) threats. This, by the way, opened up opportunities for speculation about Russia's interference in the EU's affairs (including supporting movements that challenge integration). Economic transformations were also noted. Much attention was paid to the chain of economic crises, which began in 2007.

Most assessments of Russian experts were critical and negative (de facto reflecting the gap between their expectations from the EU and reality). The difficulties in the EU were conceptualized as the prerequisites that Brussels would become a more difficult partner for Russia because, on the one hand, it would concentrate on internal stabilization, and, on the other hand, it would try to externalize its problems. There were also fears that political and economic destabilization in the EU would lead to Russia's economic losses because Brussels remains Moscow's most important economic partner, and all the difficulties of the EU's internal integration directly affect official relations but also commercial ties and the dialogue of civil societies.