Research Article

Łukasz D. Wróblewski*

The European Union After the Rome Declaration: A New Opening or a New Euro-pessimism?

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Abstract: The European Union has been a rare feat achieved by the continent’s societies. Today, almost 15 years since its biggest enlargement and 10 years since the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon, Europe is facing unprecedented challenges, both globally and internally. It long seemed that the way to take on the challenges of the changing world was through united diversity—a stance that is no longer a given. Adopted on the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, the Rome Declaration was supposed to address the greatest challenges lying ahead of the EU and its member states.

Based on an analysis of the Rome Declaration in the light of the Treaty of Lisbon, this paper outlines the biggest threats and possible scenarios of the European integration process. The ruminations below indicate that the declaration signed by the leaders of the 27 member states by and large successfully determined the key problems of European integration. However, contrary to the appearances, it fails to address them in substance. The overriding research method adopted in this study was a critical analysis of the subject literature, as well as EU studies and documents.

Keywords: Rome Declaration; Treaty of Lisbon; European Union.

1 Introduction

On March 25, 2017 in Rome, on the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, the leaders of the 27 EU member states signed the Rome Declaration. Today, almost 15 years since its biggest enlargement and 10 years since the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon, Europe is facing unprecedented challenges, both globally and internally, including regional conflicts, terrorism, rising migration pressures, protectionism, and social and economic inequalities.

In accordance to the declaration, it is only through united diversity that Europe may address the challenges of our rapidly changing world. The document stipulates that the EU strives for a dynamic growth of all member states, conducive to economic, social, and cultural inclusion of all member state societies, combined with the EU’s competitive edge in the global economy. Particular attention was paid to universal values, such as liberty and human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

The Rome Declaration consists of three parts. The first one is the preamble that refers to the idea of European integration and lists the premises for the signing of the document. The second part presents four strategic objectives of the EU, referring to broadly defined welfare, sustainability, social, economic and territorial cohesion of the EU, as well as its international position. The document concludes with a declaration of close-knit cooperation between the member states and the EU institutions in order to implement its premises. Therefore, it appears legitimate to pose the following research question: Does the Rome Declaration constitute a new opening in the European integration process?

Thus, the goal of the article is to indicate, based on an analysis of the Rome Declaration in the light of the Treaty of Lisbon, the biggest threats and the possible scenarios of the European integration process. The overriding research method adopted in this study was a critical analysis of the subject literature on broadly-defined european studies, as well as EU studies and documents.

*Corresponding author: Łukasz D. Wróblewski, Department of European Studies, Institute of International Business and Economics, Poznań University of Economics and Business, al. Niepodległości 10, 61-875 Poznań, Poland; E-mail: lukasz.wroblewski@ue.poznan.pl; ORCID: 0000-0003-3677-043X.
2 The Rome Declaration in the Light of the Treaty of Lisbon

The Rome Declaration establishes that by 2027 the EU member states in collaboration with the European Council (EC) and other EU institutions, will have implemented four strategic objectives: a safe and secure Europe; a prosperous and sustainable Europe; a social Europe; a stronger Europe on the global scene. These objectives are a direct reverberation of 2015-2019 priorities of the EC1 (constituting their near verbatim repetition), as well as the Europe 2020 strategy, i.e. the European program for employment and economic growth, countering climate change, energy efficiency, and research and development2. Thus, the Declaration is an expression of the political will of the EU member states to implement the adopted Europe 2020 strategy.

In the years 2008 – 2016, the EU member states have made great strides in the strategy, in particular with regard to climate change, energy, and education, as demonstrated by the changes in the emissions factor, the share of renewable energy in general energy consumption, as well as energy efficiency, education dropouts, and the percentage of 30-34 year-olds with higher education, although the intended goals were met only with respect to CO₂ reductions. Compared with 2008, the remaining factors in 2016 (i.e. poverty and social exclusion, employment rate, R&D expenditure) did not change significantly, amounting to values largely divergent from the projected goals (figure 1). It is, therefore, crucial for the EU member states to take further steps to implement the objectives, in particular with regard to the job market and social exclusions, as emphasized in the Declaration. However, these areas mostly depend on the competences of the respective member states, and EU initiatives only play a supportive, coordinative, and supplementary role. This means that the majority of actions in this regard ought to be implemented directly by the member states.

As part of the safe and secure Europe agenda, the EU strives to conduct an effective, responsible and sustainable migration policy in accordance with international norms. It also aims to combat terrorism and organized crime. Such initiatives are to ensure a sense of safety among EU citizens and facilitate the free movement of people. This goal directly refers to the institution of EU citizenship, specified in art. 20 of the TFEU, which among others guarantees the citizens of EU member states the right to move to, and stay in, the territories of other member states; it also invokes the desire to guarantee the EU citizens an area of freedom, security, and justice without internal borders3. Such an area, which prior to the Treaty of Lisbon referred chiefly to the third pillar of the EU, is essentially based on intergovernmental collaboration on the one hand, and an enhanced role of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and national parliaments on the other. Thus, the Rome Declaration is merely an expression of the political will of the member states to deliver on their treaty obligations.

The second goal, i.e. a prosperous and sustainable Europe, projects five priority areas which refer to as many as half of the EC priorities for 2015-2019. The declaration forecasts an enhanced and developing common market, including a common digital market; intensified integration of currency and economic union by strengthening its structures; an increase in the affordability of energy for end-users and a promotion of renewable energy and environmental protection; a lasting and sustainable social and economic development through investments and new jobs; developments in innovation and competitiveness of SMEs; intensified social, economic, and territorial cohesion. This goal also refers to the assumptions behind the Europe 2020 strategy, in particular regarding bringing down emissions, increasing the share of renewable energy in general energy consumption, improving energetic efficiency, and boosting R&D expenditure. As has been indicated, in 2008-2016, the EU member states have made hardly any progress with regard to R&D. Thus, underscoring the role of R&D expenditure in shaping the innovation and competitiveness of the EU within the Declaration ought to be noted. However, the implementation of the adopted strategy in this regard rests solely with individual member states. It is so due to the fact that budgetary expenses in the fields of higher education and R&D

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1 Jobs, growth and investment; Digital single market; Energy union and climate; Internal market; A deeper and fairer economic and monetary union; A balanced and progressive trade policy to harness globalisation; Justice and fundamental rights; Migration; A stronger global actor; Democratic change.

2 The Europe 2020 strategy projects that by 2020 greenhouse emissions in the EU will have been curbed by 20% compared with the 1990 levels, combined with a 20% increase in the share of sustainable energy in general energy consumption, and a 20% increase in energetic efficiency, increase in the R&D expenditure (projected at 3% of the EU GDP), a 20 mln decrease in the number of people living in poverty, affected by social exclusion or at risk of such conditions, an increase in the employment of individuals aged 20-64 up to the level of 75%, a decrease of the percentage of education dropouts to below 10%, as well as an increase (up to at least 60%) in the number of individuals aged 30-34 with higher education degrees.

3 As per art. 3 section 2, art. 6 TEU and art. 8, art. 15 section 3, art. 16, articles 18-25 and 67-89 TFEU.
The third goal expressed in the Declaration is the **social Europe**. Similar to the preceding objectives, this goal is also clearly correlated with the EC priorities and Europe 2020 strategy in the fields of social exclusion, employment and education, internal market and fundamental rights, reinforced by the Treaty of Lisbon. This is particularly significant since the EU has not taken great strides in these departments. According to the Declaration, the EU should be based on a lasting social and economic growth, supporting progress and social cohesion and sustaining the integrality of its internal market. Key to these processes should be countering any discrimination on the job market, above all gender discrimination. Also stressed in the Declaration is the leading role of the EU in countering and curbing unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion, combined with improvements in the access to quality education, as well as the protection and promotion of cultural heritage. At the same time, the signatories underscore the necessity to consider the diversity of national systems and the key role of social partners in the process. However, parallel to the previous objectives, actions in the field of social security are delegated to the member states, with the EU reduced to a supporting agent. Furthermore, this objective largely reiterates the assumptions made in the second objective of the Declaration.

Within the **stronger Europe on the global scene** objective, the EU intends to develop (and create new) partnerships with third countries in its nearest Eastern and Southern vicinity, in the Middle East, Africa, and globally. The Declaration also articulates the readiness of the member states to assume the obligation to support and facilitate a more competitive and integrated defense industry, along with the pledge to cooperate closely with the NATO and the UN on security and defense matters, an assurance that has no doubt been rendered easier by the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon, which transformed the EU into a coherent international organization, granting it a legal personality. This section of the Rome Declaration also invokes EU values, the well-being of EU citizens, the idea of free and just trade and a global policy on climate. These objectives are to be pursued in the spirit of solidarity, trust, and loyal cooperation between member states, as well as the participation and support of the EU institutions, in particular the EC, in accordance with the subsidiarity principle.

Originally laid down pursuant to the Single European Act on environmental policy, the subsidiarity principle currently constitutes the fundamental principle of the EU. It specifies the scope of, and conditions for, the performance
of competences of the respective institutions and member states. As per article 5 section 3 of the TEU, the EU undertakes actions only to the extent within which the realization of proposed actions is limited at the level of a member state, or when the effects of the undertaken actions are projected to be more efficient at the EU level (Wróblewski 2018c, 2018e; Sapała 2015a, 2015b; Kokocińska 2018; Barcz (eds.) 2011). If such actions are not indispensable, the EU and its institutions should abstain from taking any steps. Furthermore, the principle extends over the emanation of a state. In other words, the actions of a member state are those taken by all institutions and authorities and levels of power.

The assumptions of the Declaration also refer to the activities of regional and local authorities. It has not been specified, however, how to integrate these units in the process of its implementation. Within the decision-making process, regional and local authorities are represented solely by the regions Committee, whose competences are limited to issuing opinions on matters specified in the treaties, which essentially do not include the scope of the Declaration.

It should also be noted that the subsidiarity principle stresses the sovereignty and competences of the member states, in particular in the fields that belong to the domain of the shared competences and the domain of the supporting, coordinative and supplementary competences, sometimes making it difficult to meet the objectives set by the EU. This, in turn, leads to a number of inconsistencies and a domination of national interests. The contradiction between the subsidiarity principle and the principle of loyal cooperation is particularly noticeable in climate policy. As per art. 191 of the TFEU, the intention behind the EU environmental policy is, among others, to carefully and rationally use natural resources, and promote measures on the international stage that would streamline the resolution of regional or global environmental issues, in particular climate change. This goal is reflected in the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. Still, each member state is entitled to specify the conditions for using its energy resources, choose from among the available sources of energy and a general structure of energy supply (art. 194 TFEU), which allows certain member states to consistently support the coal-mining industry. What is more, in line with the high level of protection principle, all of the EU environmental initiatives should account for diverse conditions in different EU regions (art. 191 section 2 of the TFEU). Consequently, EU climate policy initiatives often tend to be ineffective. Climate change should not be based on selfish national interests but should rather consider the EU’s best interest as a whole, in the spirit of solidarity among its member states. In this context, the Rome Declaration does not constitute a new opening for the integration process, instead stressing the post-Lisbon state of affairs that frequently hampers the efficiency of the EU and gives rise to numerous contradictions, as best exemplified by the climate policy that is a vital part of the Declaration.

A special role in the Declaration was reserved for the national parliaments. The signatories pledged to establish a close-knit cooperation between the EU and the parliaments of its member states. It ought to be stressed, though, that such collaboration may only take place under specific conditions. The role of national parliaments in EU decision-making is specified in arts. 10 and 12 of the TEU, introduced upon signing of the Treaty of Lisbon (Grzeszczak 2015). Pursuant to art. 10, the national parliaments are responsible for checking their state leaders and prime ministers, including with regard to EU policies. Art. 12, on the other hand, stipulates that the national parliaments actively contribute to the proper functioning of the EU by:

- Receiving feedback and legislation drafts from the EU institutions
- Overseeing the respect of the subsidiarity and proportionality principles
- Participating, within the area of freedom, security, and justice, in the mechanisms assessing the implementation of the EU policies in this regard, concurrently with the political control of Europol and Eurojust

The catalogue of the UE competences was systematized in the Treaty of Lisbon. It includes exclusive competences (art. 3 TFEU), shared competences (art. 4 TFEU), as well as supporting, coordinative and supplementary competences (art. 6 TFEU), supplanting the three-pillar structure of the EU adopted in the TEU. The exclusive competences span those areas of EU functioning in which the community may act unaidedly. This section of the catalogue is relatively narrow and refers to the functioning of the Euro Zone, including monetary policy, customs union, and shared trading and competition policies, as well as biodiversity protection. The shared competences refer to the areas in which the EU shares its competences with the member states. These include, among others, environmental policy, energy policy, transportation policy, cohesion policy, and the internal market. The shared competences are subdivided into exclusive and non-exclusive. Taking action within the shared competences by the EU, i.e. the adoption of specific regulations results in the restriction of member state liberties in the understanding of domestic legislation regulating a field in a way that may potentially cause conflict with the EU legislation (exclusive shared competences). If a given issue is not regulated by the EU legislation, the member states have complete liberty with respect to domestic legislation (non-exclusive shared competences) until proper EU legislation in this regard is passed (art. 2 TFEU). This is intended to harmonize the EU legislation with the member states’ legislations. The supporting, coordinative, and supplementary competences, on the other hand, refer solely to the exclusive competences of the member states, where the EU acts in a limited, supporting capacity.
Contributing to changes in the Treaties and receiving updates on EU accession applications
- Participating in inter-parliamentary cooperation between national parliaments and the European Parliament (EP).

One particularly important facet of the Declaration in the light of the Treaty of Lisbon is enabling national parliaments to assess the compatibility of the legislative process with the subsidiarity principle, i.e. the **subsidiarity control mechanism** *(ex-ante ‘early warning’ mechanism)*, coupled with inter-parliamentary cooperation (Grzeszczyk 2009, 2015). The remaining fields specified in art. 12 of the TEU concern matters not directly related to the subject matter of the Declaration.

The subsidiarity control mechanism may ensue solely within the so-called ordinary decision-making procedure, which entitles the national parliaments to submit, within eight weeks from the date of issuing a legislative draft by the EC and before its first reading at the EP, an opinion on the compatibility of the legislative draft with the subsidiarity principle. The procedure itself, however, has an ambiguous character, and its assessment seems politicized (Grzeszczyk 2009, 2015). The mechanism is furthermore restricted solely to legislative acts. Thus, delegated and executive acts of the EC, as well as international agreements concluded by the EU and the legal acts adopted as part of the joint international and security policy are excluded from the mechanism (Grzeszczyk 2009, 2015). So far, the procedure has been initiated in three instances, with regard to:
- the exercise of the right to take collective action within the context of the freedom of establishment and the freedom to provide services, aka Monti II Regulation (2012)
- the establishment of the European Prosecutor (2013)
- the Posting of Workers Directive (2016)

In referring to the role of the national parliaments in the decision-making process, the Declaration strove above all to stress the role of the subsidiarity principle in checking the EU institutions’ prerogatives. The Declaration underscores the significance of the respective member states’ competences and the essence of nation states.

The Declaration also emphasizes the need to make the integration process more flexible. It expresses the will of the member states to have the EU act efficiently in key issues, while also limiting its activities in other aspects of integration, i.e. to make the EU “big on big issues and small on small ones,” leaving its member states the “room for manoeuvre.” Such an assumption, though, seems highly imprecise. None of the treaties specifies which areas of the EU functioning are to be considered important, and which not. Moreover, the Treaty of Lisbon explicitly specifies the scope and division of competences between the respective EU institutions and member states. The subsidiarity principle and the competency principle are not to be overlooked, too. The former stipulates that EU activities should be limited to what is necessary to meet the established objectives. Hence, they should have a proper, necessary, and sufficient character. The latter, on the other hand, means that all competences and activities of the EU and its institutions are confined to primary law and should become specified in secondary legislation. This is to say that no EU institution or its division may take actions outside of the competences specified in the treaties (Wróblewski 2018c, 2018e; Sapała 2015a, 2015b; Kokocińska 2018; Barcz (eds.) 2011). Therefore, the anxiety expressed in the Declaration regarding excessive EU actions, i.e. those outside of its treaty-based competences, seems unwarranted. Moreover, the preamble of the Declaration openly invokes the concept of diversified integration, for it is assumed that the integration process may take place at a different speed and different intensity across different member states.

The freedom to choose the means of integration may ensue as part of the so-called flexibility clause (increased cooperation), introduced following the Treaty of Amsterdam. In general, the clause enables the member states to intensify their mutual collaboration provided that they wish to do so, even without the participation of other member states in the process. An exquisite example for the differentiation of integration can be found in the TEU opt-out clause, but also in the more recent proposal of a separate Euro Zone budget. This principle was reinforced after the Treaty of Lisbon by introducing institutional clauses, i.e. the passerelle clauses, brake clauses and accelerator clauses; ordering

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5 In the majority of the member states, the national parliaments also played an important role in the ratification and implementation of the so-called fiscal pact.

6 The passerelle clause enables the ordinary decision-making procedure in those fields of integration that have traditionally used the special procedure; it also allows for changes in the voting system in the CEU from unanimous vote to qualified majority vote. The brake clause stipulates that, in very specific fields, the ordinary decision-making procedure may be halted when at least one member state deems the legal
the catalogue of secondary law sources; improving the decision-making system as a result of an ordinary and special
decision-making procedure; introducing a so-called double majority in the Council of the European Union (CEU) and
expanding the scope of matters adopted by qualified majority; making the primary law-amending procedure more
flexible (Wróblewski 2018c, 2018e; Sapała 2015a, 2015b; Barcz (eds.) 2011).

Still, the flexibility principle essentially enables both the tightening and loosening of integration, depending on
the will of the member states, as well as the scope of the integration process. On the one hand, it limits the possibility
of bringing the process as a whole to a halt, e.g. due to divergent social and economic development of the member states,
but rather makes it more flexible through the notion of a Europe of different speeds, as exemplified by the process of
substitution of national currencies for the common euro currency, in which macroeconomic and legal factors were
considered (nominal and legal convergence criteria); on the other hand, such an approach may lead to the realization
of the Europe of two (or more) speeds (variable geometry concept), and a rift between the so-called integration core (the
Euro Zone) and peripheral states (other member states, integrated through internal market only)7 (Wróblewski 2018b; Idczak 2015).

Furthermore, leaving the member states room for an arbitrary selection of integration measures and policies may
result in the intensification of integration in some areas, while simultaneously reducing or rejecting other fields. This,
in turn, facilitates the domination of national interests over community interests, which is somewhat contradictory
to the idea of European integration. Therefore, against all appearances, the Declaration confirms the capacity of the
member states to apply mechanisms that diversify the integration process and may lead to its slowdown, along with the
domination of the Europe of Homelands over the Europe of Regions, and perhaps even a disintegration of the EU as a
result of the post-Lisbon procedure specified in art. 50 of the TEU by subsequent member states (after the UK).

In this regard, the role of the EC cannot be understated. Its special part in the implementation of the Declaration
was stressed by the signatories themselves. Pursuant to art. 15, section 1 of the TEU, the EC provides the EU with
impulses required for its development, while also specifying general directions and political priorities. The EC is also
responsible for solving problems which prove intractable at the level of intergovernmental cooperation. The EC is also
supreme to the EU institutions, and as such operates above any control. Its decisions are binding to all member states
and EU institutions, without the possibility to appeal (including at the ECJ). However, the EC does not have legislative
prerogatives, and its decisions translate into EU legislation via ordinary decision-making procedures (or special
legislative procedures) (Wróblewski 2018c, 2018e; Sapała 2015a, 2015b; Kokocińska 2018; Baldwin and Wyplosz 2015;
El-Agraa A.M. (ed.) 2011). Thus, if the EC deems any area of EU functioning vital and obliges the member states (or the
EU as a whole) to perform specific actions, e.g. to relocate refugees, then such a decision is non-appealable and ought
to be performed by its addressees (see the ECJ ruling on combined cases C-643/15 and C-647/15 Slovakia and Hungary
vs. the EC). Individual institutions cannot breach (i.e. act outside of) the competences specified in the treaties. On this
basis, the EC has the right to determine particular priorities for the EU and its member states, the so-called “big issues,”
which should not, however, imply a marginalization of the remaining areas of EU functioning, i.e. a statement that a
given area requires sustainable action (“room for manœuvre”). From the point of view of primary legislation, all areas of
EU functioning are equally important, mutually pervasive and complementary to one another. Hence, it seems that the
will to diversify the functioning of the EU expressed in the Declaration is a manifestation of the drive of some member
states towards gaining greater freedom in their operations, not only in Europe, but even more so domestically – in other
words, the tendency to restrict the EC and EP in some areas, e.g. with regard to the values specified in art. 2 of the TEU.

Similar concerns were the reason for the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by some member states and the
subsequent problems with the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon. As a result, provisions unacceptable to nation states
and their societies were struck out of the Treaty of Lisbon, even though the Treaty was a vital response to the need to
reform the EU following the Treaty of Nice, expressed in the declaration on the future of the EU dated 15 December 2001.
The “community” designation was substituted for the word “union,” along with the transition from “constitution” to
“amending Treaty,” from the “EU Foreign Minister” to the “High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and
Security Policy;” on top of that, secondary legislation in the form of directives and regulations were adopted instead
draft under discussion to break the fundamental principles of social security or justice system. The accelerator clause, on the other hand,
facilitates the launching of the enhanced cooperation procedure (Wróblewski 2018a, 2018c, 2018e; Sapała 2015a, 2015b; Kokocińska 2018).

7 In particular given the fact that not all member states have been fully integrated in the internal market due to transition periods (Wróblewski 2017, 2018d).
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of the European Act and the European Framework Law, and a number of entries were struck out that determined the primacy of EU legislation over domestic legislation; furthermore, the entries regarding the EU symbols were also removed from the Treaty (Wróblewski 2018a).

The majority of changes, though, had a semantic character, and the gist of the Treaty of Lisbon largely corresponded to the provisions of the Constitutional Treaty, resulting from the fear of certain member states that the integration process may eventually lead to the establishment of the European federal state.

However, these fears are unsubstantiated. In reality, European integration will likely never lead to the realization of the idea of the United States of Europe or the Europe of Regions unless the member states themselves approve of it. For, after all, the member states’ competences constitute the rule, while the EU competences—an exception to this rule (Wróblewski 2018c, 2018e; Sapala 2015a, 2015b; Kokocińska 2018; Barcz (eds.) 2011). The EU is an international and transnational organization, and it is up to its member states how the actual integration process will proceed. It is the member states that provide stimuli for development and decide about primary and secondary legislation, in accordance with the negotiation-based concept of the legal system (Grzeszczak 2015; Czech and Krakowiak-Drzewiecka 2019; Schimmelfennig 2018a, 2018b). In line with the federal integration concept, the EU comprises of members states “united in diversity”, in the spirit of “unity rather than uniformity” (“unity, but not homogeneity”), or the so-called “autonomy enriched by co-governance” (Wróblewski 2018a, 2018b; Cini (eds.) 2007).

For these same reasons, the EU will likely be transformed into a Europe of Homelands in the spirit of the confederation concept, which would be a manifestation of the domination of national interests over community interests (“concert of sovereignty”) (Cini (eds.) 2007; Schimmelfennig 2018a, 2018b; Baldwin and Wyplosz 2015), which goes against the grain of European integration. As aptly expressed by Donald Tusk, the President of the EC, on 25 March 2017 in Rome on the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, “Europe as a political entity will either be united, or will not be at all.” These words clearly resonate with the idea of integration initiated by R. Schuman and J. Monnet, and express the need to reject national egoisms by the member states in the vein of Monnet’s bon mot, we are “[…] building Union among people not cooperation between states.”

In reality, the institutional and decision-making system of the EU is a hybrid: a combination of the federation- and confederation-based integration concepts. As part of this system, and despite their various competences (specified in the Treaties or secondary legislation), the EU institutions represent the interests of different entities (transnational and trans-governmental models) (Grzeszczak 2015; Czech and Krakowiak-Drzewiecka 2019; Schimmelfennig 2018a, 2018b; Baldwin and Wyplosz 2015; El-Agraa A.M. (ed.) 2011), and mutually influence, balance, and supplement one another. This process may go in a different direction and proceed with different intensity, and yet it is ultimately shaped by the member states themselves.

The declaration also mentions the support and promotion of the democratic decision-making process in the EU. In reality, this system seems far more transparent than its equivalents in the respective member states. No EU member state has incorporated in its decision-making process a system of instruments akin to those applied as part of the qualified majority in the CEU, or the so-called blocking minority or the Ioannina compromise; a system that would function in accordance to the general principles of the EU, i.e. the subsidiarity principle, the principle of conferred powers, or the flexibility clause, each of which not only aids the EU in efficient resolution of its problems but also guarantees its proper functioning.

3 Conclusion

The Rome Declaration underscores the necessity of close-knit cooperation between the EU member states and institutions in order to realize the assumed objectives. It does not, however, provide new rules for such a cooperation, but rather refers to the principles that have already been stipulated in the treaties and remain in operation. Similarly, the objectives put forward by the declaration reflect the objectives adopted by the EU or its institutions. The Declaration is thus more of an expression of the political will of the member states than an actual delineation of the new direction in the functioning of the EU, as was the case among others in the Laeken Declaration of 2001, which resulted in the appointment of the European Convention and the submission of a draft of the Treaty establishing the Constitution
for Europe, followed by the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon on 13 December 2007 (Wróblewski 2018a; Rostetska and Naumkina 2019).

One may venture a statement that the question posed in this paper cannot be answered unequivocally. The Rome Declaration does not constitute a new opening in the European integration process—as has been the case in the past—nor is it expressive of the new Euro-pessimism akin to that of 1973-86, initiated by the deGaulleian empty chair policy. The Declaration directly invokes the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon. However, in emphasizing the competences and autonomies of the EU member states, the document may bring about a domination of national interests at the expense of the EU interests, and thus enable the vision of a Europe of not merely two, but perhaps many more speeds (multi-speed Europe or two-speed Europe), which is a scenario undesirable to either the EU or its member states.

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