

## SOCIAL FRACTURES IN EU THROUGH PANDEMIC -ENERGY-WAR TRIANGLE<sup>1</sup>

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Although its negative effects are observed all over the world, it can be seen that the EU has been dragged into a much deeper social anxiety and fear climate since the pandemic period.

During the pandemic process, risk faced by the (ageing) population potential, harsh sanctions that restrict freedoms, increasing unrest and street demonstrations against these sanctions and the economic contraction have already caused serious social concerns. In addition, in all these difficult processes, while the member countries (as always) primarily took care of their own national interests, their approaches that put the joint decision-making mechanisms into trouble also blocked the way of taking effective holistic measures.

The complacency in the energy field due to the decrease in demand resulted in the radical green transformation rhetoric of EU countries and the directing of many common social funds to this field. The energy crisis that followed, on the other hand, left the EU countries alone with black spots on the hasty pink transformation tables they had constructed.

The energy crisis that started after the pandemic and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war that followed brought the situation to a much more fragile point in the social sense.

Natural gas and electricity prices, which were almost 10 times higher than what they should have been in the spot markets, had a serious negative impact on the EU citizens, especially for the low-income segment. High-energy prices led to a slowdown or even a stagnation in many sectors. In sectors with high-energy intensity, entrepreneurs decided to move their facilities to countries such as the USA, where energy costs are lower. As a result, unemployment increased. Growth has slowed. Inflation rose and recession concerns threatened almost all EU member states.

Populist (and not quite sincere) pro-Ukrainianism gradually gave way to anxiety. The management of millions of immigrants from Ukraine has become very difficult.

The break in the value chains, the shrinkage in the insurance and logistics processes and the liberalized EU systematics, which was placed on the basis of globalization in an environment that was even more tense with new sanctions, began to shake its foundations.

Inconsistent and harsh rhetoric by politicians, which would put many investors in harm's way, caused the prices to rise and to waste many large investments.

Although financially strong states tried to manage the process with economic aid packages for the people, the weak ones were insufficient in this context and the problem grew more and more.

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The related economic bottleneck and social disintegration continue to a degree that may cause the overthrow of the existing powers in many EU countries and even increase the unrest within the EU.

EU citizens, who have been accustomed to comfort for nearly 70 years, continue to remain in a state of deep anxiety and panic-attack approaches in the face of the real war at their doorstep.

So, how do EU leaders manage the situation when such a deep crisis is wearing down the EU?

How does it solve the energy crisis?

Just as the markets are starting to settle down, the environment is getting tense with new harsh rhetoric and Russia's counter moves make energy management even more difficult.

Support and financial aid are not enough.

Unrest is increasing in many member states, which operate on a completely free market model and where the social state principle is weak compared to its place.

Even in countries with nuclear resources such as France, ideas begin to draw attention with the departure from the union, similar to BREXIT.

EU leaders, who are unable to manage the energy crisis and put forward a reasonably manageable action package against Russia, and have weakness in making joint decisions, find the solution is to reduce the supply of more expensive LNG and consumption by 15 percent.

Despite this entire bad picture, the intensified sanction processes against Russia, especially with the suggestions of the USA, both make risk management more difficult and fall short in practice.

Since the problem will not be solved with more LNG supply, EU leaders advised to their citizens to reduce energy consumption:

- Don't take a bath every day. Make the bathroom together with a partner.
- Don't wear a tie.
- Do not heat your house.
- Dim the lights.
- Do not heat the public buildings after to 19°C and do not illuminate at night.
- Re-arrange the working hours of shopping malls and entertainment venues.
- Condon the use of coal.
- Turn a blind eye to situations such as cutting trees with the intention of burning.

So, how do you think this situation affects EU citizens socially?

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This picture, which even the politicians themselves do not comply with, puts the member states in serious sociological difficulties in terms of both the national and the common EU vision.

Social trust erodes as the suggestions offered as solutions, which are not satisfactory. The majority, especially those with low and middle-income levels, are crushed under the markets, which are even more impasse with the harsh/populist and inconsistent discourses of the politicians.

After the risk of refugees from the Middle East (which they have been trying to close their eyes with for years with inhumane policies) it is a matter of curiosity how the EU, which does not know how to manage the people who come from Ukraine, will take steps in such an intensified energy crisis.

Refugee management processes are making EU societies even more uneasy in this difficult period, when unemployment is increasing due to the economic contraction and the effects of the cost of living are felt deeply.

This is the first time that the European Union is experiencing such disturbing social breaks in this pandemic-energy-war triangle!

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