

Description for the general public in English:

### **“Determinants and Dynamics of Differentiated Integration in Post-Brexit Europe”**

The overarching research objective of the proposed project aims at analyzing the determinants and dynamics of differentiated integration in Europe from the interdisciplinary point of view. The existing theories of international integration are fragmented and trapped into the disciplinary camps without much dialog between and among them. The starting assumption is captured in the hypothetical statement that the level and scope of differentiation will differ from country to country in various policy areas in line with the time factor as well as a will be determined by a group of factors of socio-political, economic and institutional nature. Against this background, this study derives a number of hypotheses addressing the inter-disciplinary nature of the differentiation in Europe (e.g. “Differentiation increases in polities with proportional more Euro-skeptic citizenry than Euro-friendly population”, “More intra-EU trade (of goods and services) as well as capital and migration flows will result in more pro-integrative attitudes and less differentiation, whereas the less intense economic traffic within the block will result in more differentiation” or “Policy areas with higher integration-related costs will represent greater differentiation, whereas less differentiation will occur in sectors where less costs and risks are anticipated”).

The research methodology of the proposed project is going to be subordinated to the aimed objectives, questions and hypotheses. The methods used will derive from the scholarly tradition present in similar studies. At the same time it will be strongly integrated with the theoretical approaches to be applied. The integrity of the research methodology with the stated goals, specific research questions, related hypothesis (and their theoretical underpinnings) as well as ways of verifying them will be carefully taken into account throughout the research process. The research process is going to incorporate a diversity of methods, including a thorough combination of qualitative and quantitative ones. The majority of the analyzed determinants are operationalized in the form of parameterized variables that allow for a multi-factor analysis measuring the strength and importance of the determinants in question (descriptive statistics – linear regression). This is complimented with the qualitative analysis (in-depth semi-structured interviews and framing analysis) which enriches the quantitative results and provides a clear picture of the dynamic phenomenon of differentiated integration in Europe.

The proposed research project aims to contribute to the state of research on differentiated integration in Europe, as well as to integrate various perspectives (economic, political, social) on it while explaining the dynamics and determinants of the growing differentiation in Europe. This multi-factor analysis will address a number of important questions, like: What drives and determines the differentiation inside the EU and on its peripheries? What is the dynamics of this differentiation? How has it evolved so far? What is its current trajectory? Where is it heading? How (and why) do the various countries, EU member states and non-members, integrate differently? How does the differentiation change in relation to the field of integration? Is time (in a larger or shorter horizon) an explanatory variable and how does it matter? What are the old and new forms and types of differentiation? Has the differentiation reached a point in which it carries the potential for disintegration? What does it mean for the supra-national institutional architecture? What is the specific EU member states strategy in relation to the growing differentiation?

Answering these questions will contribute to the enhancement of scientific inquiry in a field that is proportionally underdeveloped and at the same time represents critical importance. Never before has the differentiated integration in Europe gained so much attention due to its saliency and dynamism. The new evolving situation (new system of differentiation) requires intense scientific investigation that will enhance our knowledge about its determinants and dynamics. By integrating interdisciplinary approach the proposed research project not only responds to the nature of the problem, it also answers the deficit observed in various streams of EU studies, that is the lack of communication, exchange of ideas and dialog between and among disciplines both on theoretical and empirical level.