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# ***The European Union's Discourse on Energy Relations with Russia<sup>1</sup>***

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## **Abstract**

This paper explores the energy relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation. The focus is, however, not on the technical and institutional aspects of the relationship, but rather on the discursive formations that determine the prevailing interpretation of the relationship by both parties. Building on a discourse analysis of 126 textual units produced by EU leaders and institutions, the paper discovers the three most salient discursive formations, which respectively centre around three concepts: a) integration, b) liberalization, and c) diversification. The text goes on to assess the main features of these formations, their possible overlaps and their influence upon EU-Russian energy ties. At the theoretical level, the paper builds upon social constructivism, which in relation to discourse analysis, as the basic methodology used in the text, reflects a number of theoretical assumptions. Methodologically, the paper is based on discourse analysis. The corpus of documents in the text covers the period of the so-called first Barroso Commission from 2004 to 2009, during which time a number of crucial events occurred that significantly affected energy relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation.

## **1. Introduction**

While ten years ago, energy security was still seen as a strange term which remained largely unknown to the general public, it has quickly moved to the limelight of European politics. In particular, a series of energy crises in the relations between the EU, Russia and the transit countries in 2006, 2007, and 2009 has significantly contributed to the politicization and, indeed, the securitization of the energy problematique. Although Russia might have been perceived as a relatively stable supplier of energy resources to the EU at the turn of the century, today, in some EU quarters, the discussions about the need of diversification are centred on the allegedly too strong dependence of the European Union on Russia.

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However, the EU-Russian energy relations are based on the mutual dependence – interdependence (Proedrou, 2007, 2010; Paillard, 2010; Kaveshnikov, 2010). On the one hand, energy interdependence between Russia and the EU can be described as asymmetrical as Russia is more dependent on the EU energy market than the EU is on Russian energy supplies. While the EU, due to interruption of import of crude oil or natural gas from Russia, would be relatively less, because EU can replace the energy consumption different energy sources (nuclear, renewables, LNG) or other suppliers (increased import of Norwegian and North African gas or increased import of Saudi oil). Russia would have been far more affected. Russia is dependent on the EU energy market as a substantial part of Russia's energy exports go to the EU at high prices, which constitutes a large part of state revenues and forms an essential part of the Russian budget and share of exports. At the same time, Russia does not have a great alternative of diversification of natural gas or oil in the short and medium term (Binhack and Tichý, 2012, p. 61).

The information stated above is particularly valid for the old EU member states. On the other hand, though, Russia has a rather favourable position vis-à-vis most of the new EU member states. These are, in the long run, dependent on the supply of energy resources from Russia (this is particularly true for gas). There is an asymmetrical interdependence to the detriment of the new EU member states as these countries would suffer catastrophic consequences in the case of a complete interruption of Russian energy supplies (Proedrou, 2010; Binhack and Tichý, 2012).

The effort to ensure energy security and reduce dependence on imported energy resources lies at the very core of the EU energy policy, which is divided into an internal and an external dimension. One of the main goals of the internal dimension of the EU energy policy is to create a fully liberalized and interconnected internal market in electricity and gas. The most important aim of the external dimension of the EU energy policy is to ensure its energy security by diversifying its natural gas and oil supply.

Simultaneously, these objectives together with the EU energy policy belong, according to the Lisbon Treaty, to shared competence between the EU and the member states. In these matters (for example energy security, fully liberalized internal energy market, interconnection of energy networks etc.) member states are losing option, due to the Lisbon Treaty, wholly to control this strategic area (Termini, 2009; Braun, 2011). Last, but not least, in early September 2011, the European Commission invited member states to a

consistent and coherent performance in energy issues and a stronger mandate for the negotiation and enforcement of objectives of the EU energy policy in relation to Russia, Turkey and the countries of Central Asia and North Africa<sup>1</sup> (European Commission, 2011).

This rising importance of energy as a key factor of EU-Russian relations is also reflected in the growing number of academic studies on this topic. Many of them explore the overall nature of the mutual energy relations between the EU and Russia (Baghad, 2006; Stern, 2006; Monaghan, 2006, 2007; Sánchez Andrés, 2007; Proedrou, 2007, 2010; Milov, 2008; Le Coq-Paltseva, 2009; Romanova, 2009; Liuhto, ed., 2009; Kirchner and Berk, 2010). Others focus on the EU's side of the equation only (for instance, Aalto, ed., 2008; Johnson and Robinson, 2008). However, while these studies are empirically rich, thus undoubtedly pushing forward our understanding of the issue, all of them focus almost exclusively on the material conditions of the mutual relations and the institutional structures that underpin them. None of them has dedicated enough attention to the analysis of political discourses which largely determine the relationship's future (for more on this see the theoretical section below). In addition, none of these texts has tried to develop a more consistent categorization of the approaches of the two sides.<sup>2</sup>

The main goal of this paper is, therefore, to define and categorize the main approaches of the EU towards its energy ties with Russia as they are reflected in the Union's discourse on the issue. To reach this goal, we will ask a series of interrelated questions:

- 1) What are the main approaches to the EU energy discourse in relations to Russia?
- 2) What are the main topics in these EU energy discourses?
- 3) How is Russia seen in them?

## **2. The theoretical background and the methodology of the article**

The main theoretical claim of this paper is that an energy policy between any two actors should be analysed on three interrelated levels: the material, institutional and ideational level (for the general argument about the relevance of these three elements for the analysis of international relations see Cox, 1981). Hence, in this case one can start from a basic analysis of the amount of available energy resources in Russia, its mining capabilities, the existing and planned transportation routes, etc. In the second step, one can assess the institutional set-up in the mutual relations that reflects and objectifies these material conditions in the form of rules and procedures that regulate the energy relations between the two entities, thus producing a specific international regime.

The analysis would not, however, make sense without understanding the ideational framework(s) through which both the EU and Russia attach meaning to their mutual ties, interpret their mutual dependence as beneficial/threatening and, in the end, decide about the concrete political steps that can either boost the energy ties or, alternatively, try to reduce the dependence to a minimum. Obviously, while the material conditions and the institutional structures are quite easy to explore empirically, the ideational structures and cognitive frameworks are much more difficult to grasp since they manifest themselves exclusively in the communication of the two parties, i.e. in the political discourses about their mutual energy ties.

This basic difference between the relative simplicity of studying the material and institutional conditions, on the one hand, and the difficulty connected to the exploration of the discursive complexes through which these are interpreted, on the other, also explains why so much attention has been dedicated to the former so far, while the latter has been largely neglected (Tichý, 2011; Binhack and Tichý, 2012; Böhme, 2011). For this reason, we have decided to focus precisely on the second element, the discursive formations surrounding the EU-Russian energy ties.

In our understanding, political discourses should not be interpreted as mere reflections of material reality or the institutionalized structures. Although an actor's rhetoric can at times deviate from his/her actions (cf. the theory of speech acts: Searle, 1979; Kubálková et al., 1998), political discourses do play an important role in social analysis since they always mirror the actor's fundamental ideational framework and his/her cognitive processes. Hence, political discourses always reveal the basic principles on which the actor's approach is based and through which he/she interprets political reality.

This article employs discourse analysis as its main methodological tool (Milliken, 1999; Wodak and Chilton, 2005), whereby we explore a set of textual units produced by both the European Union and Russia. Our sample contains altogether 126 units. The research was divided into the following steps: first, we created the corpus of documents to explore, covering the period of the so-called first Barroso Commission from 2004 to 2009, during which time a number of crucial events occurred that significantly affected the EU-Russian energy relations. We limited the documents to the most relevant political representatives of the European Union: the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso, the European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the European

Commissioner for Energy Andris Piebalgs, the EU Trade Commissioner (Peter Mendelson from 2004 to 2008, and Catherine Ashton, from October 2008 to November 2009), and the Head of the EC Delegation to Russia Marc Franco. To avoid excessive focus on the European Commission, we also included speeches and interviews of Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

We selected only those documents in which the keyword "Russia" or "Russian" was found in connection with "energy". In this way, we obtained 115 unabridged documents (official and unofficial speeches and interviews). We also obtained a substantial part (99) of all the interviews and statements we used from the official website of the European Commission. In contrast, we found only 16 of the interviews and speeches we used, especially those of the Head of EC Delegation, on the websites of other institutions and organizations or mass media. The distribution of the selected statements and interviews by author and date of publication is summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1: Speeches and interviews of EU representatives**

Year	Number of texts						Total
	A. Piebalgs	B. Ferrero-Waldner	J. M. Barroso	P. Mendelson/C. Ashton	J. Solana	M. Franco	
2004	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
2005	2	1	0	3	1	0	7
2006	5	4	5	4	1	3	22
2007	6	3	4	4	4	5	26
2008	6	6	2	2/1	5	7	29
2009	5	3	9	1	3	8	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>115</b>

Source: the authors

In addition to the speeches and interviews, we also included the key documents dealing with Russia and energy published by various EU institutions, notably the European Commission, the Council of the EU and the European Council. Nine of these documents were of a legislative nature (mostly communications from the Commission, but also a green paper and an action plan). Two texts in the corpus that were not legislative texts were a working document of the European Commission (European Commission, 2008b) and a document of the Council (Council of the European Union, 2006). The distribution of documents across the different EU institutions and their dates of publication are shown in the following table (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Documents of the individual EU institutions**

Year	Number of documents selected EU institutions			
	European Commission	Council of the European Union	European Council	Total
2004	1	0	0	1
2005	0	0	0	0
2006	3	1	0	4
2007	1	0	1	2
2008	3	0	0	3
2009	1	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>

Source: The authors

Overall, we gathered 115 official and unofficial speeches and interviews of the key EU representatives and 11 official (legislative and non-legislative) EU documents - altogether 126 textual units.

### 3. The basic approaches to EU-Russian energy relations

The preliminary analysis of the chosen documents showed that there are three major discursive complexes that dominate the official documents and speeches produced by both sides. They can be labelled as 1) the discourse of integration, 2) the discourse of liberalization, and 3) the discourse of diversification.

#### 3.1. Integration Discourse

The integration discourse is the most positive out of the three. It stresses the mutual benefits in the EU-Russian relations, underlining the complementarity of both parties. There are, however, some differences between how this discourse is understood on the Russian side and how it is understood on the EU side. The EU sees itself as the more advanced partner, who is simultaneously more prosperous and democratic. At the same time, since the EU is also more advanced in terms of integration experience and the promotion of market integration, it is Russia that has to accommodate to the EU's rules. Russia should, therefore, gradually adopt the EU's *acquis communautaire*, which will make Russia a more suitable partner for the EU, thus also contributing to Russia's internal economic, social and political development.

Unlike the proponents of the discourse of liberalization, the proponents of the integrationist discourse accentuate the special relationship between the EU and Russia and reject the option of seeing them as mere trade partners with a typical trade partner relationship. These special ties also explain the need for regular rounds of the EU-Russian energy

dialogue and for the establishment of tailor-made institutions that would regulate the bilateral ties between Russia and the Union.

On a more abstract level, the discourse of integration stems from those notions which stress the privileged position of the EU as a specific kind of actor, the “normative power” (Manners, 2002) which serves as a role model for the other international actors. Interestingly, the discourse of integration is, as far as energy relations are concerned, of a purely economic nature. Russia’s integration with the EU is understood in the sense of Russia taking over those norms that tackle competition policy, economic transparency and the investment climate in Russia. The more politically oriented questions related to the liberal democratic character of the Union or even the sensitive issues of civic freedoms and human rights are entirely excluded from the integrationist discourse.

The second theoretical notion to which the integrationist discourse is linked is mutual interdependence. Thus, this discourse reiterates the key insight of complex interdependence theory (for the original formulation thereof see Keohane and Nye, 1973) that exactly due to this unavoidable interdependence both sides are encouraged to overcome conflictual situations and look for long-term mutually beneficial solutions.

Like the discourse of integration, the liberalization discourse also refers mainly to the economic aspects of EU-Russian relations and not the political or security aspects. Unlike the integration discourse, however, it does not see the relationship between the EU and Russia as asymmetrical. While the discourse of integration typically accentuates the economic primacy of the EU and the ensuing need for Russia’s Europeanization (or, rather, EU-ization), the liberalization discourse adopts the view that the relations are basically equal, whereby this equality is again defined exclusively in economic terms. The basic tenet of the discourse of liberalization is that economic ties between the actors in world politics have to be liberalized as much as possible and freed from oppressive state interventions.

### *3.2. Liberalization Discourse*

In any case, the discourse of liberalization does not advocate a rapprochement between any two actors, but rather common efforts aimed at the greatest possible measure of transparency and effective functioning of the shared economic space. Political involvement is, therefore, seen either as irrelevant or outright harmful, and all political activities are thus interpreted as a toolbox directed at a better functioning of the international market.

There are, however, substantial differences between how liberalization is interpreted in the EU and how it is interpreted in Russia. While the EU focuses on the critique of Russia's refusal to open its energy market to Western investors, the Russian discourse underlines the limited access of Russian energy companies to the EU's internal energy market. While both actors believe that their own liberalization levels are sufficient, they are dissatisfied with the supposedly low openness of their partner. Another difference pertains to the influence of politics on the mutual energy ties. For the EU, the full liberalization is prevented solely by the Kremlin's efforts to keep monopoly control over the most valuable Russian energy resources.

All these points can be nicely demonstrated on the different interpretation of the Energy Charter Treaty, which – as both partners acknowledge – would lead to a greater level of liberalization. However, while the European Union is convinced that the ECT distributes the liberalization burden fairly among the partners, Russia claims that the ECT is one-sidedly disadvantageous for its own energy market (for a detailed analysis thereof see below).

Theoretically speaking, the discourse of liberalization is supported by arguments similar to neoliberal theories of international relations. A cooperation based on comparative advantages and on the maximization of economic profit motivates actors to overcome their mistrust, which stems from the existence of international anarchy (Keohane, 1989; Baldwin, 1993). A decrease in mistrust and an increase in transparency and predictability will, according to the neoliberals, lead to a general reduction of conflict levels in the international system.

### *3.3. Diversification Discourse*

The third discourse, that of diversification, deviates very strongly from the previous two. While the discourses of integration and liberalization are in many ways related, hence making possible a dual usage of both by the same speaker at the same time, the diversification discourse points in an entirely different direction. First of all, while the two previous discourses underline the primacy of economic ties, the diversification discourse is more concerned about the political and, in particular, the security implications of the Union's dependence on Russia. This is also why the discourse of diversification aims at a shift towards greater securitization of the energy ties with Russia (for a complex formulation of securitization see Waever, 1995).

The mutual dependence is not perceived as a positive contribution to the stabilization of the EU-Russian ties, but instead as a harmful factor whose influence is to be minimized. Even though in principle the relationship is symmetrical, this does not preclude the two from seeing each other as a rival who understands the mutual relations as a zero-sum game. If the EU strives for a maximum transparency of Russia's energy sector, Russia is bound to work against such a request; if the EU member states wanted to protect their distribution networks from Russian investments, Russia would probably encourage their takeover by its own companies; if the Union calls for a greater diversity of producer countries from which the European Union would buy the resources, it has to be Russia's goal to prevent such a development, etc.

In the terms of international relations theory, such views correspond with political realism (Gilpin, 1984; Morgenthau and Thompson, 1985). Both actors find themselves in the classical competition for rare resources, and Russia's ownership of these resources will be inevitably used by the Russian elites to increase their own political power and influence over the EU. To answer the question whether the energy cooperation is advantageous means not only to explore the economic benefits derived from it, but mainly to look into the political interests of both parties. As a consequence, it has to be the main goal of the Union's policies to diminish its excessive dependence on the Russian Federation, gain new suppliers, construct alternative transportation corridors, and thus increase its negotiating power vis-à-vis Russia. The main features of the three discourses are summarized in the following Table 3.

**Table 3: The political discourses in EU-Russian energy relations**

<b>Discourse of</b>	<b>Relations defined as</b>	<b>Symmetry/Asymmetry</b>	<b>Dominant focus</b>	<b>Theoretical background</b>
Integration	Pupil-teacher	Asymmetry	Economics	Normative power Europe, complex interdependence
Liberalization	Business partners	Symmetry	Economics	Comparative advantages, neoliberalism
Diversification	Rivals, potential enemies	Symmetry	Security	Zero-sum game, neorealism

Source: The authors

In practical terms, we were searching for concrete terms which were related to the three energy discourses in the analysed documents. Table 4 presents an overview of all of these terms.

**Table 4: Key terms related to the three discourses and the ECT**

Discourse of	Terms
<b>Integration</b>	Integration Cooperation Partnership Interdependence Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA)
<b>Liberalization</b>	Market access, market reforms, and market rules Liberalization and investments Transparency Effectiveness Energy Charter Treaty (ECT)
<b>Diversification</b>	Energy security Diversification Alternative routes, sources, and projects Energy infrastructure interconnections outside Russia Energy cooperation with third countries

Source: The authors

#### 4. Overview of the EU energy discourses on Russia

In the previous section, we identified the basic approaches and attributes of the EU energy discourse that became the default framework for the subsequent detailed analysis of the integration, liberalization and diversification discourses. In this section, in each of the three cases, we will explore the basic issues and content, and the position of the EU in relation to Russia. At the same time, we will focus on the common as well as the different features and processes of these three discourses.

##### 4.1. *Integration Discourse*

Despite the widespread use of the term "energy security" in the media and the fact that this term is associated with the diversification discourse, the integration discourse clearly dominates in the analysed documents. The integration discourse is characterized by a considerable ambivalence. On the one hand, the integration discourse shares with the liberalization discourse an emphasis on mutual benefits with the ultimate aim of achieving the "...integration of the EU and Russian energy markets in a mutually beneficial, reciprocal, transparent and non-discriminatory manner" (European Commission, 2006a, p. 3). This would indicate a symmetrical understanding of their mutual relations. This emphasis is also evident in the frequent use of the term "partnership", which also underlines the equivalent nature of the two actors. Therefore, the European Commission's Green Paper: A European Strategy for Sustainable, Competitive and Secure Energy claims that "a true (energy) partnership would offer security and predictability for both sides,

paving the way for the necessary long-term investments in new capacity” (European Commission, 2006b, p. 15).

The symmetry between the two partners is often interpreted in a utilitarian sense, i.e. that although the two partners are not in an identical situation (due to the fact that Russia owns the resources that the EU needs), their relationship can provide the same benefits to both of them since “Russia is more than just a supplier of oil, it is an economic partner” (Franco, 2006a). Therefore, “the EU and Russia should see mutual long term benefits from a new energy partnership, which would seek a balance between expectations and interests of both sides” (European Commission, 2006a, p. 3).

However, it is characteristic for the integration discourse that the symmetry of the benefits of the partnership is associated with a considerable asymmetry of the degree of the adaptation of each of the partners (this is where the integration discourse differs from the liberalization discourse). This asymmetry is related to the fact that the integration discourse is based on the premise that the EU member states are already integrated, and effective energy relations with Russia can be achieved through the integration of the Russian Federation, i.e. by adopting the European Union standards related to energy and international trade.

The reasons for this unilateral adjustment are sometimes expressed in a surprisingly frank manner in the analysed documents. For example, the European Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, argues that “the member states will not want to re-negotiate everything” just because of Russia (Ferrero-Waldner, 2009a). Similarly, she also states that “... you have to think that there’re 27 member-countries for whom we negotiate with one country – a big one – but still there’s one country together with 27 [others that are] of course combined and negotiated with by the European [C]ommission, by me and by us” (Ferrero-Waldner, 2009a).

The second difference between the integration and the liberalization discourse that we have identified is that an important condition for a successful cooperation is not just the liberalization of markets as such, but also a clear institutional framework that regulates the relations between both actors. The term "cooperation" often occurs in connection with the challenges inherent to the creation of a regulatory and legal framework for the energy relations between the EU and Russia, or even the creation of “a new model of cooperation between Russia and Europe as a whole” (Franco, 2006b, 2009a; likewise Ashton, 2008).

At the same time, the European Commission argues that “it is essential to have a common understanding on the proposed approach on the principles for a future energy partnership with Russia” (European Commission, 2006c, p. 4).

These principles are usually connected to the demands of creating a reliable early-warning mechanism to be employed in case of an interruption of energy supply (e.g. Solana 2007; Ferrero-Waldner, 2007a; Solana, 2009a; Ferrero-Waldner, 2009a) and of holding regular consultations, either in the framework of the "Energy Dialogue" or outside of it (Ferrero-Waldner, 2007b, p. 5; Ferrero-Waldner, 2007b, p. 2; Piebalgs, 2007a). It is interesting that although the call for an early-warning mechanism and other similar measures originates in the negative experiences from the past, the adoption of such measures has a strictly positive connotation in the integration discourse.

These demands of the European Union vis-à-vis the Russian Federation reflect a certain degree of Europeanization. This is further demonstrated in the recommendations of the European Commission's 2004 Communication, according to which, for example, “the Community acquis could become a reference framework for a reform of the energy sector to be implemented in Russia” (European Commission, 2004, p. 14). The same European Commission document also states on a different page that “the principles of the internal energy market, such as energy efficiency, reform of internal industrial structures, reform in the electricity sector and unbundling, could provide part of the reference framework for the restructuring of Russia’s energy sector” (European Commission, 2004, p. 11).

The interdependence between the two actors is defined very specifically as well. First of all, all the relevant texts - despite the usual media image - agree that the relation is not a unilateral EU dependence on Russia, but rather an interdependence between the two actors: “Russia seeks ways to secure [the] energy demand presented by the EU market. The EU needs Russian resources for its energy security. There is a clear interdependence” (European Commission, 2006b, p. 4; likewise, Ferrero-Waldner, 2009b, p. 2, or Piebalgs, 2006a, 2007a, 2008a). Sometimes this argument is reinforced by making the assertion that “our mutual dependence is very strong” (Solana, 2008a; Piebalgs, 2007a) or emphasized by the pleonasm “mutual interdependence” (Solana, 2007; likewise Solana 2008b: 2; Solana, 2009b; Barroso, 2006a). The notion of interdependence is abandoned only by the Head of the Delegation of the EC to Russia, Marc Franco, according to whom Russia is rather dependent on the EU (Franco, 2006c).

This interdependence – according to most texts – is not only going to persist into the future (cf. Piebalgs, 2006a; Solana, 2007), but its future continuation is not even perceived as something problematic in itself. On the contrary, for example, European Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner stated that the aim of EU policy is not to eliminate this dependence, but rather to "direct it". She also stressed that “we do not want to supplant Russia...” (Ferrero-Waldner, 2009b, p. 2) because “our interdependence allows for a win-win situation to be created; with improved access possibilities upstream in Russia and downstream in the EU” (Ferrero-Waldner, 2008a). Similarly expressed EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mendelson, under which “Energy dependence on Russia is an inescapable part of the EU's short and probably longer term future – we have to accept that” (Mendelson, 2007a) and “We will continue to be hugely dependent on Russian energy supply, as Russia’s growing surplus is dependent on our demand” (Mendelson, 2007b, p. 4).

Our analysis, however, revealed that some of the texts use – in a non-problematic way – both arguments and concepts of the integration discourse and arguments and concepts of the liberalization discourse next to each other. In many instances, EU representatives imply that the liberalization and the integration of Russia with the EU are connected vessels, or even almost identical processes. Andris Piebalgs summarizes this connection most aptly when he says, “...we must therefore ensure that we continuously develop closer relations, based on openness, transparency and mutual respect for our legitimate interests” (Piebalgs, 2007a). Similarly, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana mentions the need for a European framework for energy based on the rule of law and reciprocity (Solana, 2008a: 2 but also Piebalgs, 2006a, 2007a), whereby he means a framework based on the EU position.

On the one hand, this argumentation represents a unilateral approach to the energy relations between the EU and Russia (which is in principle based on the assumption that Russia should approximate the EU), while on the other hand, this interpretation refers to the liberal economic approach. This is reflected in the detailed arguments used in this matter: i.e. sometimes one paragraph or a single sentence simultaneously mentions the early warning mechanism and liberalization (Ferrero-Waldner, 2007a, p. 2), sometimes it mentions both the mechanism and a "positive investment climate" in Russia (Solana, 2007; Piebalgs, 2006a, 2006b), and sometimes it mentions the need for a new agreement between the EU and Russia<sup>3</sup> in parallel with transparency (Ferrero-Waldner, 2008ba, p. 3; Piebalgs, 2008b).

#### *4.2. Liberalization Discourse*

The integration discourse emphasizes in particular the need for an institutional framework in the energy cooperation and the need to foster partnerships between the EU and Russia by a gradual integration. The liberalization discourse is based on the assumption that a fully functioning and interconnected internal energy market within the EU in parallel with extending the rules of the liberalized energy market beyond the EU will help to secure stable energy supplies, increase competitiveness and improve the predictability of the energy relations<sup>4</sup> (Barroso, 2006b, 2007a; European Commission, 2006c; Solana, 2006). According to the European Commission, “the ongoing liberalization of the EU energy market and the development of a common external dimension of EU energy policy also have an impact on the EU-Russia bilateral energy cooperation” (European Commission, 2008a, p. 7; Piebalgs, 2007a; likewise Ferrero-Waldner, 2008a; Barroso, 2006a).

The presence of the liberalization discourse in the analysed documents and speeches is very often associated with the integration discourse, with which – despite the above mentioned differences – it shares many common aspects. The liberalization discourse, like the integration discourse, mainly favours the economic dimension of the EU-Russia relations and the mutual importance of both actors in their energy-related interaction. “The Russian Federation is the EU’s most important single supplier of energy products ... The EU is the most important market for Russia energy exports and generates a significant part of its export revenues” (European Commission, 2008a, p. 7; Piebalgs, 2006b; Council of the European Union, 2006). The liberalization discourse clearly emphasizes symmetry rather than asymmetry in the EU-Russia relations.

Both discourses also agree on the benefits of the bilateral energy cooperation of the EU and Russia based on market principles and the content of the new agreement. The priority of the foreign policy of the EU in its energy relations with Russia, according to the Commission document, is “enhancing relations with Russia through the negotiation of a new robust, comprehensive framework agreement, including a fully-fledged energy partnership benefiting both sides” (European Commission, 2007, p. 23; Solana, 2008c; Mendelson, 2006a, 2006b). The importance of the new agreement and the resulting economic benefits are highlighted in one of the speeches of Benita Ferrero-Waldner: “... there is great interest on both sides in negotiating arrangements that [would] allow for an expansion of a Russian and [an] EU-presence in each other’s markets” (Ferrero-Waldner, 2008a).

The key concepts of the liberalization discourse are the market for energy products and the reciprocal access to energy markets in Russia and the EU, which should help to reinforce and increase the efficiency of the mutual cooperation. This idea is very clearly pointed out by Andris Piebalgs: “there is also a need for a level playing field in terms of market access and access to infrastructure, including non-discriminatory third party access to pipelines in both Russia and the EU” (Piebalgs, 2006a). It is also very clearly pointed out by Benita Ferrero-Waldner: “what we need is reciprocity, transparency and a truly level playing field, covering market opening and market access, fair competition, environmental protection and safety” (Ferrero-Waldner, 2006a). The aim of this would be “...to increase stability and predictability in our energy relations” (Barroso, 2006a, 2007a; Franco, 2007; Solana, 2008b).

The efforts of Russia to have a stronger presence on the EU internal energy market are very often subjected to the same demand by the EU, which “wants non-discriminatory treatment from Russia in their energy relationship, in terms of supply from Russia and in terms of access to the Russian market for EU investors” (European Commission, 2006c, p. 4). Similarly, Ferrero-Waldner stated, “...our common objective should be to create a predictability and reciprocity in terms of ... market opening and fair access to transport networks...” (Ferrero-Waldner, 2006b, 2007a). In the same vein is the following quote from Barroso: “we agreed that Russia needs predictability from Europe, just as Europe needs predictability from Russia” (Barroso, 2006b). The means by which this objective is to be achieved play an important role here.

First and foremost, the selected documents and speeches deal with a successful liberalization in the sense of opening the Russian energy market. According to the European Commission, the liberalization of the Russian energy market is one of the main preconditions of an effective and mutually beneficial partnership: “negotiations could in this way facilitate the reform and liberalization of the energy market in Russia ..., provide stability and predictability of demand for Russian gas, and clarify the conditions under which Russian companies may invest downstream in the EU” (European Commission, 2008b, p. 8; Piebalgs, 2006a, 2008a). However, there are different interests when “The EU wants – broadly speaking - competitive markets with strong rules, genuine rights of transit and the separation of energy production from distribution. Russia prefers state ownership, exclusive rights, vertical integration and limited transit rights” (Mendelson, 2007a).

Liberalization is seen as a prerequisite for improving and increasing the needed investment in the energy sector. This was confirmed by Andris Piebalgs, for example, when he positively assessed the situation on the Russian electricity market, which “is liberalized and attracted significant investment from European firms” (Piebalgs, 2007a). But on the contrary, inadequate investments constitute a potential risk. This example can be seen as a negative change from the previous assessment of Russia. For instance, one of the documents of the European Commission expressed the concern that Russia may not be able to adequately meet the growing demand abroad as a result of inadequate investment in the Russian energy sector: “inadequate investment in the energy sector, expanding domestic demand and low energy efficiency in Russia ... present potential risks to future energy supply in Russia itself as well as in consumer countries” (European Commission, 2008a, p. 7; Piebalgs, 2008a; Ferrero-Waldner, 2006a).

Another requirement of the EU is transparency as “the EU aims to establish a true level playing field (i.e. transparency, non-discrimination, reciprocity of market access, ...) in the face of continued difficulties that foreign investors experience in accessing the Russian upstream sector” (European Commission, 2008a, p. 7). Each of these improvements would contribute to making Europe's sources and Russia's supply more diversified and reliable because it is the “lack of transparency and information that undermine[s] mutual trust” (European Commission, 2008b, p. 8; European Commission, 2006b, p. 3; Piebalgs, 2008b). Similarly according to Peter Mendelson: “... Europe’s growing market and values of openness will remain a powerful incentive for continued change in Russia so long as we preserve them” (Mendelson, 2006a).

A very specific topic, which is located on the borderline between the integration and the liberalization discourse, is the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT)<sup>5</sup> and its Additional Transit Protocol. The ECT belongs to the integration discourse primarily as a legislative framework on the basis of which there “is need to build a genuine energy partnership with Russia” (Ferrero-Waldner, 2008b; Barroso, 2006a). For Russia, however, the Energy Charter Treaty and its Transit Protocol represent a very controversial subject, and Russia refuses to be bound by these documents. However, in its energy relations with Russia the EU often exerted pressure on Russia “to ratify the ECT” or to “accelerate the ratification of the ECT” (European Commission, 2008a; Franco, 2009b, 2009c). On the other hand, with its demand for an open, transparent and competitive energy market, the ECT belongs to the liberalization discourse (Barroso, 2006a; Piebalgs, 2006a; Ferrero-Waldner, 2007a, 2008a).

#### *4.2. Diversification Discourse*

The third discourse analysed in this section is the diversification discourse. Unlike the official EU approach to ensuring energy security through a combination of both internal and external measures, the diversification discourse focuses exclusively on the external aspects of energy policy. It is characterized by a strong rhetoric about the European Union's vulnerability stemming from the need to increase energy imports and by a call for a reduction of the EU's dependence on its major energy suppliers, considering that "the recent gas dispute between Russia and the Ukraine demonstrated the vulnerability of the EU in gas security. To reduce the risk of future gas disruptions, we need greater diversity in our gas supplies..." (Piebalgs, 2009a; Barroso, 2009a). In the context of this discourse, energy security is understood not simply as a requirement of a certain legal environment for energy market operators, but rather as an objective in itself, implying that the EU should have a strategy for external energy relations (Khasson, 2009, p. 13).

The diversification discourse differs in several respects from the previous two discourses. While the liberalization and the integration discourse emphasize in particular the economic aspects of the mutual cooperation, the focus of the diversification discourse is on the political impact and the security implications of the EU's energy dependence on Russia. According to one of the documents of the European Commission "...the EU will need to import an increasing share of its energy resources ... from Russia" and thus "the EU's dependence on Russia as a supplier will remain strong and might be a source of concern" (European Commission, 2008a, p. 7). Similarly, Javier Solana also expressed the view that the "gas crisis between Russia and Ukraine this winter had serious consequences for customers in the EU" (Solana, 2008b; likewise Piebalgs, 2009c).

Therefore, the diversification discourse is very often referred to as a "securitization" discourse. This is reflected by the shift of the employed arguments towards understanding energy relations with Russia as a security issue as well as by a strong demand for ensuring energy security in the form of reliable and uninterrupted energy supplies. Therefore, Andris Piebalgs, for instance, claimed that the "threat of disruption of supply of natural gas was one of the main reasons for increased interest in the EU's energy security" (Piebalgs, 2009a or Ferrero-Waldner, 2008b), and hence "the second driver of energy security is diversity. That means diversity in energy source[s]... and that also means diversity in energy transport, distribution and import routes..." (Piebalgs, 2008c; Franco, 2009d, 2009e; Solana, 2006; Mendelson, 2008).

Another difference between the diversification discourse, on one side, and the liberalization and the integration discourse, on the other, is in the perception of the Russian Federation's energy relations with the European Union. While the integration and liberalization discourses regard the Russian Federation – with certain exceptions – as a reliable energy supplier, the diversification discourse is much more ambiguous about this. This was demonstrated by Andris Piebalgs' answer to the question whether the gas crisis had undermined the credibility of both countries: “It is very difficult to say yes or no. I would say that trust has been undermined, because we can be cut off anytime” (Piebalgs, 2009b).

Although we have not found any depictions of Russia as a "threat" or an "enemy" in the examined documents (though such depictions are otherwise widely used), a certain change can be detected in the perception of Russia by the EU representatives. This change was predominantly caused by several previous disputes between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on gas pricing because “it was utterly unacceptable that European gas consumers were held hostage to this dispute between Russia and Ukraine” (Barroso, 2009a). The change in perception of Russia is evident if we compare two European Commission documents that were issued in 2004 and 2008.

The first document (2004) regarded Russia not just as one of the leading suppliers of fossil fuels but rather as the future hope for Europe's energy supply: "it could also to a certain extent play a moderating role in international markets, being in some ways the most promising - and geographically the closest – alternative to the Middle East as energy supplier to Europe" (European Commission, 2004, p. 2). In contrast, the European Commission document from the year 2008 highlights concerns about the possible instability of the Russian energy supplies to the EU: “while Russia has been a reliable supplier of energy products to the EU for decades, disputes with transit states as well as insufficient upstream investment and ageing pipeline infrastructure raise concerns about future supply” (European Commission, 2008a, p. 7). Similarly, Andris Piebalgs stated that “we want to diversify not only because they are afraid of Russia, but also because diversification is generally good ...” (Piebalgs, 2009b, as well as Barroso, 2006b, 2007b, 2009a).

The diversification discourse differs from the two previous discourses also on the question of the status of the EU and Russia in their energy relations. Compared to the integration

and liberalization discourses, which define the relations between the EU and Russia as a partnership, the diversification discourse sees both actors primarily as rivals. This was indirectly confirmed, for example, by President of the European Commission Barroso: “Russia is an important partner for the EU in energy. But it is not, and should not be, the EU's only partner. That is why the EU has started to develop energy agreements with several of our partners” (Barroso, 2006b; likewise Mendelson, 2007c).

The acquisition of new alternative suppliers of natural gas in addition to Russia was stressed by European Commissioner for Energy Andris Piebalgs as well: “it would be a mistake expecting that all gas will only come from Russia” (Piebalgs, 2005). In Piebalgs' view, there are other sources of gas whose supplies “can be compared with the volume of gas that we get from Russia” (Piebalgs, 2009a). Piebalgs also suggested the source areas that should supply the EU with natural gas: “it is true that the biggest single country reserves are in Russia. But the largest reserves in absolute terms are at the end of the Nabucco pipe, in the Middle East/Caspian region” (Piebalgs, 2007a). Likewise he said, “We are also developing new initiatives with alternative suppliers, in the Caspian Basin, Central Asia, North Africa ...” (Piebalgs, 2007b, but also European Council, 2007; Solana, 2009b).

The diversification discourse pays attention to a number of particular projects on which the European Union should focus. According to Barroso, “projects to diversify sources and routes of gas supply also deserve our support. I am thinking of strategic projects in the Southern corridor<sup>6</sup>, such as Nabucco, to bring gas from the Caspian region; and projects such as Nord Stream, to link Germany and its neighbours to new gas sources in northern Russia” (Barroso, 2009b, likewise European Commission, 2007, p. 10; Piebalgs, 2007b; Franco, 2009c, 2009d).

On the other hand, the diversification in the relations between the European Union and the Russian Federation is not presented as a process of running away from or terminating the energy interactions. Representatives of the EU clearly point out themselves that “it will be necessary to have more pipelines, more possibilities... and even more resources. However, Russia will remain, also in the future, our biggest supplier. That is clear” (Ferrero-Waldner, 2009a). At the same time, Marc Franco states that it is normal that “Russia attempts to diversify the number of its clients” and therefore “it is also normal for the European Union to diversify its sources” (Franco, 2006a, 2007).

For a better understanding of the meaning and content of the EU individual energy discourses, see Table 5, which compares the differences and overlaps between the three European Union energy discourses.

**Table 5: Overlaps and differences in the three EU energy discourses**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Integration Discourse</b>	<b>Liberalization Discourse</b>	<b>Diversification Discourse</b>
<b>Overlaps</b>	With the liberalization discourse shares an emphasis on mutual benefits in the EU-Russian energy relations and symmetrical understanding of their mutual relations.	With the integration discourse favours the economic dimension of the EU-Russia relations and the mutual importance of both actors in their energy-related interaction.	Not overlaps with integrations and liberalization discourse.
<b>Differences</b>	Unlike the liberalization discourse, an important condition for a successful cooperation is not just the liberalization of markets as such, but also a clear institutional framework. The discourse of integration typically accentuates the economic primacy of the EU and the ensuing need for Russia's Europeanization.	Unlike the integration discourse, does not advocate a rapprochement between the European Union and the Russian Federation; the liberalization discourse adopts the view that the relations are basically equal, whereby this equality is again defined exclusively in economic terms.	The focus of the diversification discourse is on the political impact and the security implications of the EU's energy dependence on Russia. While the integration and liberalization discourses regard Russia as a reliable energy supplier, the diversification discourse is much more ambiguous about this. The diversification discourse sees both actors primarily as rivals.

Source: The authors

## 5. Conclusion

The energy relations of the European Union and the Russian Federation have been a hotly debated subject for quite some time now, both in the EU and in Russia. The topic became the subject of a large number of academic papers and expert articles. A predominant part of these studies and publications focuses on the analysis of the current state of affairs, or alternatively on the theoretical models of cooperation or the root causes of the conflicts in the energy relations. So far, just a few studies have dealt with the energy discourses in the European Union.

The main aim of the presented paper was to define the possible approaches to the EU energy discourses dealing with their mutual energy relations and to analyze and interpret the various discourses. The discourses have been identified and interpreted on the basis of an analysis of key documents of selected EU institutions and speeches by and interviews with selected representatives of the European Union between the years 2004 - 2009.

The analysis has revealed the existence of three energy discourses: 1) the integration discourse, 2) the liberalization discourse and 3) the diversification discourse. These discourses exist within the EU as well as within Russia. In our analysis of these discourses, we focused on a) the common and the differing aspects of the individual discourses, b) their major topics and c) the mutual perception.

The predominant energy discourse in the EU is the integration discourse, which emphasizes the mutual benefits derived from the energy cooperation between the EU and Russia based on the interdependence of the two actors. The integration discourse is closely linked to the liberalization discourse, which also stresses the economic and market dimensions of the relationship. Both discourses also agree on the mutual benefits stemming from a cooperation based on a new treaty and the mutual access of the EU and Russia to their energy markets. The third separate discourse is the diversification discourse, which is the most specific discourse, especially in times of the so-called energy crises. The diversification discourse – sometimes also termed the "securitization discourse" – is marked by its focus on the political aspects and the security implications of the energy cooperation and thereby it sets itself apart from the two preceding discourses.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> On 12 September 2011, the Ministers for European Affairs and Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the member states approved the mandate given to the European Commission to negotiate an agreement for the legal framework with Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan for a Trans-Caspian gas pipeline system.

<sup>2</sup> For the single major exception to this statement, see Khasson, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> The basic legal framework for cooperation between the European Union and the Russian Federation is the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which was signed in June 1994 and entered into force on December 1, 1997, for a period of 10 years. The current PCA officially expired in December 2007. But according to Article 106 of the PCA, its validity is automatically extended each year unless one of the parties revokes it. Currently, the PCA is the subject of renegotiation, while there are fundamentally different views and approaches from both sides on the content of the new PCA.

<sup>4</sup> The goal of the liberalization of the internal market of the EU is most often connected to the so-called "liberalization packages". The last EU initiative in this matter so far has been the so-called third liberalization package of September 2007. Its goal was to lay the legal foundation for further liberalization of the EU gas and electricity market. The third package entered into force in September 2009.

<sup>5</sup> The Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) was signed in December 1994 in Lisbon and it entered into force in April 1998. The main aim of the ECT is to support the long-term cooperation in the area of energy on the basis of complementarity and mutual benefits. Although Russia signed the Treaty in 1994, it has steadily resisted its ratification. In October 2009, Russia unilaterally withdrew from the ECT.

<sup>6</sup> The EU plans to create a number of new gas pipelines as a part of the so-called "fourth" or "southern" energy corridor. These pipelines should supply the EU with gas from the Middle East, the Caucasus, and the Central Asian Region. A number of projects are included in this energy corridor: the Trans-Adriatic gas pipeline (TAP), a pipeline connecting Turkey, Greece and Italy (ITGI), a pipeline connecting Azerbaijan, Georgia and Romania (AGRI), the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline and a recently unveiled project – the South-Eastern European Pipeline (SEEP). However, the flag-ship project of the southern corridor remains the Nabucco pipeline, which should supply Central Europe with 31 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas annually without crossing Russian territory. Presently, the materialization of this pipeline is very often being questioned and experts are of the opinion that a shorter version of Nabucco, the so-called "Nabucco-West" (transporting gas from the border of Turkey and Bulgaria to Baumgarten in Austria), is more likely to be constructed. Currently the most promising project is the TANAP pipeline (Trans-Anatolia Gas Pipeline). This pipeline would begin at the border of Georgia and Turkey and deliver the gas to the border of Turkey and Bulgaria. From there, the "short Nabucco" could then transport the gas to Central Europe.