



*Understanding the EU's Association Agreements
and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas
with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia*

3DCFTAs Youth Essay Competition – Prize winner

A Story of Dreamy Hope

Nadiia Dovbush



My name is Nadiia Dovbush, I am 18 years old and I am a second-year student at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University. I am studying at Department of English, where I am also a member of a Parliamentary Group. I consider myself an active person who wants to take care of my own future and the future of my country. I am convinced that my country's well-being depends on its citizens who realize their own responsibility for their actions. Moreover, I believe that the notions of “my future” and “my country's future” are deeply interconnected. All in all, I will do my best to bring my county closer to becoming a member of that friendly family which is generally referred to as the European Union.

It was a usual winter morning. Everything around was covered with a white carpet made of snow. Each window resembled a painter's picture ornamented with various patterns created by the most talented artist whose name was Frost. It was difficult to walk and not to fall down as the temperature was so low that every piece of land was deeply frozen. The icicles like precious diamonds were hanging down from the roofs of the houses. The blue cloudless sky was trying to indicate that the weather was going to be as awesome as never before. The sun was shining brightly with its rays pointing at different objects on the Earth. It was not attempting to warm the environment, but at least it was a perfect sign of God's presence. The cool breeze was lazily blowing around making people fasten their coats and wear fur hats. It looked like a real fairytale created by our Mother Nature whose imagination was inexhaustible and endless. She wanted to make up an unforgettable masterpiece and she had successfully managed to do it.

At first sight, it seemed that everything was fine, a marvelous scenery around created an involuntary impression of quiet and peaceful life of happy and contented citizens. Unfortunately, it was not even close to that. This lovely picture was ruined by dreadful reality. The streets were full of the homeless who were simply freezing because of their inability to find any shelter. They did not attempt to ask for some money or any kind of help. They were sitting around holding the charts with one short phrase, "I tried..." They were the ones who really did their best to change at least something for the better. But eventually they failed. That awful beast who was known as "Cold" occupied the flats and houses. People couldn't afford the luxury of paying for the heating in their own dwelling. They were quietly enduring the fact that their own apartments did not belong to them anymore. They became nameless creatures without any rights and liberties. Outside world only added to that miserable state. People were hustling and bustling in order to accomplish their duties and earn some money for living. All of them were fed up with the horrible situation in Ukraine, they were simply trying to survive in these harsh conditions. They did not want to put up with it any more. Unfortunately, they had no choice. What is more, they had no voice. They were speechless without any right to vote. They were suffering from various illnesses and poverty. They all held that strange violent look in their eyes with the sense of rage and revenge. They turned into wild animals thinking of nothing but how to survive in the wilderness. Neither of them was enjoying that amazing Monday morning filled with sorrow and horror. It was the start of a new unpredictable week. Nobody was sure what was going to happen. They forgot the meaning of the word "hope". They thought about it as of a pointless combination of letters. They were quietly repeating the standard curse for those who made them drown in that terrible ocean of problems.

But suddenly something has changed. Something enormous, something incredible, something unbelievable... Something that was meant to alter the course of those people's lives. It was aimed at the improvements in each sphere of that hopeless society. Its parky smell was heavily hanging in the air. The moment of dead silence has come. All people suddenly stopped and turned around. Firstly, they turned to look into their past. That past which was much better than the modern times as they felt. The past without any economic crisis, without any undeclared wars in some parts of the country, without a huge decrease in the birth rate and a total increase in the death rate, with no environmental problems and

radioactive contamination, no social problems, no language debates, no scary division of the nation into two opposing camps, none of all those innocent victims of that meaningless revolution, with no reason to blame anyone for that terrific future. Many of them thought about the times of our country's birth, about our first uncertain steps towards the cherished independence. Did we know how it would turn out? Did we know that it would not be worth those long-lasting years of struggle? Did we know that it would bring about only despair and devastation? Those times were full of hope and enthusiasm. There were a lot of people who were trying to change our life for the better. But were they really trying? Was it not an illusion? The illusion of our long-awaited melioration. Those people did not want to care about their citizens' lives. They were thinking about themselves. They did not pay much attention to the needs of the others. They were convincing us that money and power ruled the world. They did not know how wrong they were! We were strong enough to combat their unfair reign. We stood up for our freedom. We united our forces and spoke loudly about our rights. The orange colour was our sign of battle. We wanted to fight against massive corruption, voter intimidation and direct electoral fraud. It was such a pity but our demands were not satisfied, our expectations were not realized. The situation was on the verge of a new crisis.

What should we have done? Did we need anyone extraordinary to take over the country? Undoubtedly, and there was such a person. We believed him, we trusted him, we hoped that he would change everything for the better, but did we get what we wanted? The answer was obvious: we did not. We got numerous problems as his generous present to his nation. He was constantly saying that he was not afraid of anything and anybody. But was this the truth? He was scared to lose his power due to his ongoing rivalry with another person, the one who would be called 'the worst ruler' of our country some time later. But was he really "the worst"? Or did he become one more link in the corrupted chain of the careless amateurs who thought that they were able to govern the country and look after its nation? It was one more question without any answer.

But people were hardly surviving. They were looking forward to the chance to prove everyone that they were an independent nation with its own rights. And finally the moment of fate came. They received the opportunity to show their identities the whole world. They united their forces one more time and declared their own government. This time they were struggling with our national colours and symbols. Many foreigners decided to join our Ukrainian movement for freedom, for the better life. They were doing their best, but they lost. They were broken, they were devastated, they were killed. Killed! It was unbelievable! Their own entrusted figures who were supposed to do everything possible to improve their living in the country murdered them. Their hands were stained with blood of innocent civilians, the ones who trusted them. We would never forget the feat of those people who like angels were attempting to protect their compatriots from the injustice. The Heaven's Hundred Heroes' names would be engraved with golden letters in the immortal Book of Memory of the Ukrainian nation. The revolution which started in a form of a simple protest against those unfair living conditions of our citizens turned out to become the real Revolution

of Dignity and Honour. It showed our everlasting spirit and infinite hardiness. It demonstrated that we were not ready to give up yet.

Nobody knew what to do. Everyone felt powerlessness and weakness. The atmosphere was so strained that the air around looked like a gloomy grey net full of tears, sweat and desperate thoughts. Our capital resembled a cemetery of people's dreams and wishes, a bloody ghost of wonderful future was wandering around with a sword made from patriots' flesh and bones. But it was not the end yet. We still believed in something lovely, we were waiting for someone trustworthy. We were absolutely ready to accept someone's careful actions and reforms. And finally we found not only such a reliable personality, but our hope for the better future, too. Did he realize that his way to governing was covered with many people's lives? Did he pay a tribute of respect to all those victims of his victory? The answers were yet to be seen. He promised that he would make our country a united one with all its parts being unchanged on their territory. He should have stopped blood shedding in the east of our borders. All the mothers of our community were looking forward to their sons' return from that dangerous pocket of death. Our nation was ready to turn into a truly independent one without anyone to be afraid of anything. We were willing to become a small part of a new friendly family. The family that would love and support us despite of any circumstances. It would see our needs and entertain our unruly behaviour. Were all these promises his empty slogans which would never be accomplished? Time will show. It is the fairest judge whose verdict will stand as a pattern of a new life of our nation.

That was enough for our people. They did not want to look into their past any more. They did not have a desire to remember all those horrible events which led to even more horrible modern times. They did not wish to think about our present as it was over. Everything what they feared most was turned into useless rubbish. That "something" changed their lives forever. It erased their long years of pessimistic thoughts and wild surviving. It made them believe into their own bright future. Actually, it was the beginning of their totally new life without any sorrows and despair.

Icy carpet of snow was slowly melting allowing the green grass to take its turn and cover the exhausted ground. The first pure white snowdrops were the undeniable indicators of a large alteration of the course of our being. The trees were draped with colourful blossom which created an impression of some fantastic tiny creatures who had decided to have a rest on the branches. The euphonious signing of the birds, who had finally returned from the south, was heard everywhere. The sun was attempting to turn its cold rays into warmer ones making people take off their coats and fur hats. It felt like it was still winter in the shade, but at the same time, everything around resembled a real spring, All the people were admiring marvelous view of Mother Nature's awakening from its long winter sleep, a lifelong sleep of our nation.

How did it start? I do not know. Nobody knows it for sure. We simply felt it. Everything changed suddenly in one short moment. Our citizens stopped suffering from the economic crisis which had been chasing them for many years. The adults did not have to worry about

their money, all of them were provided with a deserved reward for their hard work and all the efforts which they had put into the reconstruction of our country. The pensioners finally received what they wanted: they got their chance to die peacefully without an unnecessary agitation of how to prevent their relatives from taking out loans for their funerals. The adolescents attained the opportunity to become independent members of our society by having the ability to get free education at any level and at any age. All the citizens were provided with health insurance which created a safety warranty for them in case of any emergency situation.

At the first blush, it seemed that all the reforms were fully completed and nothing more was expected. All the social groups of our society finally got the right to live to the fullest extent and happily experience each and every moment of their more fortunate life. Our citizens could not believe that someone wanted to care about their being in this country. They were so satisfied with all the things around that they even forgot that it was only the beginning. Those were the first generous presents from our new loving family. The members of that family promised us something real and achievable, they did not use any sophisticated words or long complicated sentences, they did not have the desire to lie that it would be easy, they told us that it would take a long time to alter our insufferable existence into marvelous and meaningful life. Unlike their precursors, they were honest. Their hearts were open and ready to accept our miserable state. Why could not our own Ukrainian trusted figures have done the same things before? Why could not they have tried to make our nation a more prosperous one before? But wait! After all they had done to our country and all its inhabitants, could we call them our trusted figures anymore? This time the answer was too obvious: their biggest fear came true – they lost their authority forever.

And what did they leave after them? They left only some pitiful wrecks of our nation. What was the main cause of that awful devastation? We had been looking for the answer to this question for many years. Only now we found out it lay on the surface of everything: it was the worst enemy of a fair society, it was the most frightful depredator of hopes and dreams, it was the thing which made us believe that justice did not exist in the world. It was a personage whose name was Corruption. Corruption was here, corruption was there, corruption was actually everywhere. Every sphere of our country was profoundly sunk in the dark depths of bribery. How could we combat that irresistible phenomenon? Only the members of our new family knew it. They revealed us a secret of a recovery from that deathly disease of the community. And the mystery of a conscientious citizenship was finally solved: the main key to its solution was a worthy salary for everyone. Furthermore, every member of our community was provided with a workplace according to his/her education and experience. The businesses attained the right to develop in their own way without the pressure from the state. Each private entrepreneur got the opportunity to compete with the multinational corporations. Moreover, the advances in science and technology allowed businesses to easily cross over territorial boundary lines. We stepped aside from all that old knowledge about the technological world. Now we had all the essential facilities for the efficient growth. Our non-

stop growth as an independent nation with its own distinct rights became recognized by the whole world.

Nevertheless, the transformations continued. Nothing could stop us from reaching our dream. But this time they were connected not with the people themselves, but with our biggest pride, with our most desirable economic dream – with our production. Our national products were treated fairly, the same as others, they got the ability to be exported more easily not only within the borders of our new family, but also throughout other large world families. They were of such a high quality, that even the most developed leaders of the global market admitted their competitiveness. It was one of the most effective factors which helped to conquer that evil creature known worldwide as the economic crisis.

Then the most unbelievable miracle came true. All those people who had been forced to leave our beloved country in the past, received the chance to return to their loving families. All the poor and oppressed people from the far corners of our country could come back to their Motherland to begin a new life full of joy. This whole-hearted movement of reunion of many Ukrainian families became so widespread that the population of our state increased to unprecedented number of inhabitants. Our exhausted land was finally renewed due to the ability to flourish without the necessity for the people to leave its territory. Temporary migration abroad was over forever, there simply was no need to move away as our own country was provided with all the necessary conditions for its successful development.

Our new family took care not only of our primordial problems, but also of something that forced our country to face with the phenomenon which seemed absolutely unacceptable in our modern world. It provided us with the up-to-date weapon which helped us to repulse the attack of our closest neighbour. We won, but with heavy losses. Many sons of our nation would never return back home and no one would be able to return them. Our grief and sorrow could not be described in any words. It would become a grave burden of our national memory, one more dark-black stain in the history of Ukraine. Did we blame anyone of our bereavement? No, we did not. And we would not. Justice would be served and God would chastise blood-guilties.

Many of our rivals would say that Ukraine was not worth all those efforts which had been put into its development. But would they be right? Would it be fair to judge whether someone deserved to get his or her dream come true? The answer would probably vary. But so what? Every country, every citizen has a right to be acknowledged by all the members of our world community. We are all brothers and sisters in humanity, we have to respect each other and do everything possible in order to make our home a better place for every human being.

So, was that “something” real? Or will it become a reality in the future? We truly hope so. Every day we raise our hands to the sky and pray for our better future as a member of that friendly family which is generally referred to as the European Union.