

***The Future  
of EU Enlargement:  
On Track or Derailed?***

***Debates in New Member States,  
Candidates and Neighbours***

***2007***

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## Preface

Enlargement is widely recognized as the most successful policy tool of the European Union. Yet, enlargement was one of the few topics causing heated discussion among EU leaders working on the Berlin declaration marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1957 Treaty of Rome establishing the European Community, the predecessor of the European Union. EU leaders agreed that the accession of 12 countries in 2004 and 2007 was a triumph of democracy over dictatorship. However, many were evasive about mentioning future enlargement in the declaration, with Member States divided in two categories: pro-enlargement states and enlargement-weary countries.

Many politicians seem to be afraid of standing up for the success of the EU enlargement explaining why further expansion of the European block is beneficial both for the EU and the acceding states. This cautiousness – creating a standstill in the agenda of further enlargement – is a reaction to the public opinion, most notably in France and the Netherlands, but also elsewhere – that the big-bang enlargement of 12 countries has been too quick; that neither the so-called old, nor the new Europe was ready for these immense changes.

There is a danger that the anticlimax following the big-bang enlargement, the lukewarm reception of Bulgaria and Romania and virtual halt to the progress of Turkish accession talks will result in the indefinite postponement of any further enlargement. This would be particularly unfortunate since the three directions in which the Union could expand – Eastern Europe, Turkey and the Balkans – comprise countries that are in urgent need of anchoring to the EU, given the variety of challenges that they face, ranging from a fragile geopolitical position to questions of internal cohesion and regional stability. It is already clear that the EU has a large part to play in the adjacent areas, and that enlargement has so far been the only effective instrument for stabilizing and transforming the neighbouring regions of the EU. Both the success of the accession of 12 countries and the strategic choice facing the EU as it proceeds to define its limits indicates that the future of enlargement is of strategic significance to the current members as well.

Until now the arguments of the enlargement-weary countries have tended to dominate the public space, while the positions of the newcomers were rarely heard despite the fact that attitudes towards further EU expansion in EU-15 and EU-12 are quite different.

This lack of attention to the views of the newcomers and EU hopefuls is inadequate on four counts. Firstly, Western Europeans' concerns with the effects of the 2004 enlargement are contrasted with the general satisfaction of the societies of the new Member States. Secondly, the impression that "enlargement fatigue" is an EU-wide

phenomenon is counterbalanced by the new members' optimism about the prospects of further expansion. Thirdly, the support for integration in the societies of acceding states is crucial for maintaining the momentum for necessary reforms both prior to and after the accession. Finally, stirring public interest in the new Member States in the transformation of the EU's neighbourhood is essential for the establishment of people-to-people contacts across the EU's external boundary and for bridging the divide between the new members and their neighbours.

This collection of papers is an outcome of a project aiming at mapping and debating the attitudes towards enlargement in three new Member States (Latvia, Poland and the Czech Republic) and in three EU hopefuls (Macedonia, Turkey and Ukraine). The authors – experts from respective countries – discuss not only general attitudes towards EU enlargement, but also focus on countries whose EU membership perspective has been relatively less prominent in the respective national debates: Turkey for Latvia, Ukraine for the Czech Republic, and the Western Balkans for Poland.

These papers aim to energize the debates on EU enlargement, discussing issues at stake or arguments that should be more prominent. The papers analyse how well founded the positions of the newcomers on further EU enlargement are, whether the newcomers have a clear favourite whose EU membership they promote first and foremost, or they support EU enlargement in general. The papers also analyse whether the dominant argument in favour of further EU enlargement is a kind of solidarity towards all EU candidate countries, and whether the considerations traditionally ascribed to the old EU members – costs of EU enlargement (less structural funds, smaller representation in EU institutions) and difficulties (absorption capacity) – also emerge in the debates in the new Member States.

The papers formed the basis for conferences organized within this project in the capitals of the three new Member States. The conference in Riga “Turkish accession to the EU: On Track or Derailed? Views from new Member States and Turkey” took place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November, 2006. The conference in Prague “Thinking beyond Bulgaria and Romania... Perspectives of further EU enlargement: Views and debates in new EU Member States and candidate countries” took place on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December, 2006. The conference in Warsaw “EU Accession of the Balkan states – Debates in the New Member States” took place on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December, 2006.

We hope that this publication will stimulate substantive debates on the role of the EU newcomers in planning of further enlargement and that it will lead to a better informed general public within the EU about the debates in respective candidate or potential candidate countries. We hope that this publication will also contribute to creating an environment where voters ask for more accountability from their politicians and politicians do a better job of explaining the reasons for further EU enlargement so that, as the enlargement process goes on, the European public and the citizens of the acceding countries have enough substantive information for forming their viewpoints.

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 March 2007

# **Ukraine and the EU: Membership or Partnership? The Czech Perspective**

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## **Introduction**

The Czech Republic, as well as the other new Member States of the European Union, belongs to the group of EU countries most vigorously supporting the future EU enlargement. The support runs across the political spectrum as well as public opinion. According to the last Eurobarometer poll, as much as 65% of the Czech population supports further EU enlargement. Explicit anti-enlargement rhetoric cannot be found in the programme of any of the parliamentary parties. The strong support can be explained by relatively fresh accession memory, recognising the importance of the EU enlargement policy for creating a stable and democratic environment, but also by a genuine belief in the need for overcoming post-Cold War divisions in Europe, and the right of non-EU countries to stability and prosperity, which has changed the region of Central Europe in the last fifteen years beyond recognition.

However, the picture becomes more complex if we look at the individual potential candidates. While relatively prosperous Western European countries (Switzerland, Iceland, Norway) and Croatia enjoy very high support, poorer countries of the Western Balkans, Turkey and Ukraine are by far not so well off.

This chapter will look more in detail at how the EU aspirations of one important Eastern EU neighbour – Ukraine – are perceived in the Czech Republic. It will also try to provide some suggestions as to what factors might be a determinant of the Czech position on Ukraine and in what ways the Czech Republic is likely to treat Ukraine vis-à-vis its European aspirations.

## **Czech Attitudes Towards the EU Enlargement and Ukraine in Particular**

When exploring the Czech attitudes towards the “European choice” of Ukraine, one has to acknowledge that this country does not represent a priority in the general discourse on future EU enlargement. This is despite the generally very warm welcome by both the political representation and the media of the outcome

of the Orange Revolution in December 2004 and victory of the pro-European stream in creating the successive government. Despite this, the signals sent by the Czech politicians towards the Ukrainian political establishment were rather vague, communicating general support for the political and economic direction of the country but not making any clear signals of support to establish firmer links with the EU, such as a roadmap to the EU candidacy or the enhancement of relations within the European Neighbourhood Policy.

As far as public opinion is concerned, compared to other countries, the Czech Republic is not very receptive towards the idea of seeing Ukraine as an EU Member State in the foreseeable future. The latest two public opinion polls (Eurobarometer 64.2 and 63.4) even show a drop in support for Ukrainian membership in the EU; while at the beginning of 2005 46% of people supported the membership of Ukraine and 45% opposed it, in June 2006 only 40% wanted Ukraine to join the EU while 49% opposed it. This trend is in sharp contrast to the public attitudes in most other new Member States, notably Poland (65% in favour, 19% against), Lithuania (67% in favour, 14% against) or Slovenia (66% in favour, 27% against). Thus, the Czech public opinion towards Ukraine exhibits a pattern rather similar to some old EU Member States than the one identified among most of the newcomers (e.g., in Denmark the respective figures are 41% for and 48% against, in Belgium 44% for and 52% against, or in France 38% for and 48% against).

Providing an explanation for this trend is not easy. Firstly, the support for Ukraine to join the EU has dropped among the new EU Member States as well, and in some cases it has been even more dramatic than in the Czech Republic. For instance in Poland (often viewed as the primary advocate in recognising Ukraine as a future EU candidate), the support decreased by 11% between spring and autumn 2005 (while in case of the Czech Republic it fell “only” by 6%). The failing support for the membership of Ukraine might probably be explained by a possible mistrust towards future EU enlargement following the French and Dutch “no” to the Constitutional Treaty or difficult negotiations over the EU budget. However, it must be underlined that this might be part of a more general trend of convergence between the public opinion in the EU-15 and EU-10 (in terms of decreasing public support for further enlargement) rather than driven by motives specific to the Ukrainian case.

As far as the Czech political establishment is concerned, the rather lukewarm attitude towards Ukraine might partially stem from the highlighted internal problems encountered in the EU in 2005 over the unsure fate of the Constitutional Treaty and future direction of the EU. The second explanation is that Ukraine is not a top priority in terms of Czech views on the enlargement policy. The Czech diplomacy recognises the structured approach to enlargement policy based on previous EU commitments, thus pushing for a faster approach vis-à-vis countries with a clear membership perspective (Turkey, Western Balkans) and only then dealing with the eventual membership of the EU Eastern neighbours (such as Ukraine, Moldova, etc.). In balancing the importance of Ukraine as a strategic priority for the Czech diplomacy with concerns over the settlement of internal problems of the EU, the latter consideration clearly seems to outweigh the former one. The regional politics does not seem to bear much weight either.



Despite the repeated calls of Poland on other EU Member States, and its Visegrád partners in particular, to take the Ukrainian calls for “European choice” more seriously, the Czech political class and diplomacy did not seem to respond very enthusiastically. The only noticeable political move in terms of recognising the political importance of the Orange Revolution was the lifting of fees for Czech visas for Ukrainian citizens as a response to the decision of the Ukrainian government in August 2005 to lift the visas for all EU citizens. However, this gesture was also more reactive than pro-active. Poland and Hungary negotiated asymmetrical visa regimes (not charging fees on visas) even before the EU accession, and most of the new Member States in the region (such as Slovakia or the Baltic countries) responded with the same move.

### **Public Perceptions of the Ukrainians and Ukraine in the Czech Society**

The feature that seems to dominate the Czech discourse on Ukraine is that of Ukraine as a source of cheap labour, especially in construction, household and retail sectors. Ukrainians are notorious for migrating to the Czech Republic for work, lured by higher salaries, cultural closeness (language barriers are not as large due to the common Slavonic roots of the Czechs and Ukrainians) and relatively flexible conditions which make it possible for them to undertake jobs as self-employed individuals (although the legality of such a status is disputable and the system is known for being abused). The Ukrainian presence in the country is far from negligible; although the official statistics of long-term resident Ukrainians in the Czech Republic quote figures of around 70,000 (including those who have already acquired Czech citizenship, or some repatriated people of Czech origin, such as the so-called Volyně Czechs), the unofficial estimates might be as high as 200,000. This makes the Ukrainians the second largest migrant community after Slovaks who, however, since the split of Czechoslovakia have always enjoyed a preferential status compared to other foreigners.

The data available on the public attitudes towards Ukrainians do not seem to give much ground for optimism. In the March 2005 poll of the CVVM centre, the Ukrainians received one of the worst rankings among the foreigners surveyed – worse marks were awarded only to Turks, Kurds, Afghanis, Iraqis and Palestinians (in total the survey included 24 nationalities). Out of the national minorities residing in the Czech Republic, the numbers were among the worst, with only nationals of some Balkan countries and Romas receiving worse marks.<sup>1</sup>

The numerous and still growing Ukrainian community in the Czech Republic might potentially play a role in the perception of the Ukrainians among the

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<sup>1</sup> This sample included the following nationalities: Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Germans, Jews, Vietnamese, Russians, Ukrainians, citizens of the Balkan countries and the Romas (ranked in decreasing order of popularity).

Czechs, but also in the shift of the Czech policy on Ukraine. Examples of other countries show that if the migrant community is well organised and effective it can have an impact on policy-making processes in the host country. It would probably be too ambitious to expect the organisations representing Ukrainians to have an impact similar to the Israeli lobby with the US administration and Congress, as it has incomparable resources and building relations with the state institutions takes considerable time. However, smaller and less resourceful diasporas can be influential even in Europe, such as for example the Armenian organisations in different European countries who have with various degrees of success lobbied the countries on the issue of opening EU accession negotiations with Turkey (through conditioning this process on the recognition of the Armenian genocide by Turkey). Thus, depending on how well organised and goal-oriented the Ukrainian organisations in the Czech Republic are, they can bring the issue of the “European choice” of Ukraine more to the public debate. However, that would require a shift from the current focus on assisting the Ukrainian fellow citizens with integration in the Czech society or promoting Ukrainian culture into more strategic, policy oriented goals. So far, this does not seem to be the case. Many of the Ukrainians who come to the Czech Republic do so solely for the purpose of improving their own economic situation and that of their families back home, without necessarily wanting to acquire Czech citizenship and thus being less inclined to intervene in Czech politics.

The press coverage of Ukrainians seems to foster a rather negative perception of this community. The survey of media reporting on Ukrainians<sup>2</sup> seems to suggest that such coverage is mostly associated with criminality, namely murders and robberies. Stories on Ukrainian workers usually also point out cases associated with their illegal employment but also with the shortage of labour in some regions. It is also worth noting a group of articles that use the term “Ukrainian” as a parallel, synonym or idiom. For instance members of the ODS party used the reference to practices used in this party as those of the “Ukrainian mafia”. Particularly the references to the “Ukrainian mafia” are rather widespread, without explaining the meaning of this idiom. Generally, the connotations in which the term “Ukrainian” is used are exclusively pejorative. On the contrary, references conveying rather positive attitudes towards Ukraine or Ukrainians, such as describing Ukrainian associations and their initiatives (such as celebrations of Ukrainian feasts), are fairly rare.

Reporting on Ukraine as a country has significantly changed during and after the Orange Revolution, with many journalists exhibiting sympathy to the changes there or even making parallels with the November 1989 events in Prague. However, the coverage of political changes was limited to serious media whose impact on the general Czech public opinion remains rather limited. This can explain a still negative prevailing attitude to the Ukrainians and a lack of interest in the European future of this country within the Czech society.

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<sup>2</sup> Klvačová, P., and Bitrich, T. (2003). “Hard to make out foreigners: How the foreigners are (not) written about in the Czech press.” *Multikulturální centrum Praha*.

## **Czech Activism towards Eastern Europe (the Czech “Eastern” Policy)**

One could argue that the “Eastern dimension” was not the foremost focus of Czech foreign policy, at least since mid-1990s, certainly not compared to Poland or even Slovakia or Hungary. Foreign policy activism focused on the NATO and EU accessions as prime foreign policy goals. The improvement of relations with immediate neighbours, especially Germany and Austria, was next on the agenda. However, in general, Czech foreign policy was aimed more westward rather than eastward in the whole course of the EU and NATO accession processes.

Once a member of these two organisations, it seems that the floor for refocusing the Czech policy would be greater. In fact, the Czech Foreign Ministry discovered that there could be an added value in having special “Eastern” expertise which would enable the country to project Czech interests through the EU institutions. However, in this sense one might think that the Czech interest in the East emerged too late. Poland has been developing the “Eastern agenda” and particularly the Ukrainian agenda consistently throughout the 1990s, and it has already made an impact at the EU level. Poland negotiated the postponement of the introduction of visas for Ukrainians as late as a few months prior to the EU accession, which made the impression in Brussels that this issue is really important. Polish government was one of the first to provide input into the first instruments underpinning the European neighbourhood policy. And finally Kwaśniewski (together with Adamkus) travelled to Kiev in December 2004 to engage on behalf of the EU in negotiating a solution to the electoral impasse.

The Eastern policy is re-emerging in the Czech foreign policy agenda, but Ukraine does not seem to be a key component of it. On the contrary, it could be argued that two of Ukraine’s neighbours, namely Russia and Belarus, are gaining more attention. Russia is emerging as a new power, as an important player in the world energy game and as a strategic partner to Europe in many areas (at least in the four common spaces in which it had concluded agreements with the EU). The growing awareness in Europe of this fact seems to be reflected in new initiatives such as the plans of the forthcoming German presidency on “anchoring” Russia in Europe.<sup>3</sup> Even the Czech diplomacy recognises that the incoming German presidency will play a key role in shaping future relations between the EU and Russia, not least because a new framework agreement between the two will start to be negotiated during this period. The Czech interest in Russia might further be facilitated by the fact that, unlike for other countries in the region (notably Poland or the Baltic countries), relations with Russia are short of contentious issues, underlined by the recent visit of Putin to Prague.

The reason for the increasing interest of the Czech Republic in Belarus is driven by a different motive, which is related to the Czech perceived expertise on sup-

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<sup>3</sup> “Germany wants to bind Russia to the EU.” *EU Observer*, 1 September, 2006. [<http://euobserver.com/9/22312/?rk=1>]

porting transformation know-how. The recently established Transformation Cooperation Unit (TRANS) focuses on Belarus – along with Cuba – as a primary country of interest. Recently the government has approved additional funding for the Czech NGOs co-operating with Belarus opposition. Similarly, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate established a special subcommittee focused on Belarus, aiming at expanding support for the Belarus dissent.

The prevailing position of the Czech Foreign Ministry is that in the current state of affairs it is unrealistic to push for an explicit recognition of the European choice of Ukraine that would most markedly be demonstrated by the candidate status, although strategically the Czechs could align with the Poles on the issue. The key element on which the Czech diplomacy is focusing is the negotiation of the new EU-Ukraine agreement after the expiry of the current Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA)<sup>4</sup>, which could come into force around 2008 and the negotiating mandate will be brought forward soon. One of the concerns is that as the EU-Ukraine agreement will be concluded after the new agreement with Russia (the PCA with Russia expires in 2007), the content of the EU-Russia treaty will be simply copied in the new agreement between the EU and Ukraine. Another concern is that perhaps too much effort will be devoted to the preamble to the new agreement, with the assumption that the Ukrainian representation will focus too much on at least some implicit recognition of membership aspirations, and not much attention will be paid to the real substance of the new treaty.

On the other hand, quite a lot of progress can be achieved on the economic integration of Ukraine with the EU with the conclusion of a free trade agreement and the creation of a free trade zone. Although the Czech position is still not clear, a swift liberalisation of trade could possibly damage some of the Czech producers in areas such as steel or agriculture. Similarly, the accession of Ukraine to the WTO is seen as a priority which can realistically be achieved by the end of 2006 and the process could be easier than with Russia (as for Russia it will be difficult to establish a bilateral deal with the US, for Ukraine the only contentious countries are Taiwan and Kyrgyzstan where the agreement could be found more easily). Similar importance is attached to the visa facilitation agreement with Ukraine, seen as one of the tangible outcomes of mutual rapprochement between the EU and Ukraine. However, the current wording of the agreement will in fact imply a less liberal regime applied currently by the new Member States of the EU who do not charge fees for visas to any category of applicants. This possibility will have to be lifted with the full integration of the new Member States into the Schengen area.

Ukraine is seen as an important element in the future development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, European Security and Defence Policy and energy security in Europe. Especially for the Czech Republic Ukraine does matter as a transition country, as most of the supplies of gas from Russia run

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<sup>4</sup> Partnership and Co-operation Agreement, which came into force in 1998 and represents the basic legal framework for the relations between Ukraine and the EU. It will expire in 2008.

through its territory. The attitude of Ukraine is also critical vis-à-vis the Transnistrian conflict, especially towards the EU Border Assistance Mission launched in this disputed territory. However, less alignment can be seen in relation to Belarus, where the Czech Republic is pushing for a harder stance towards the Lukashenka regime at the EU level, while Ukraine has so far kept a rather cautious approach. It has not for instance joined the EU-wide travel ban on high-ranking representatives of the Lukashenka regime due to economic interests in Belarus that could possibly damage the Ukrainian business interests therein.

The Czech Foreign Ministry proposed an action plan focusing on areas such as energy or the environment, but it was noted that this initiative was met with rather lukewarm interest on the part of the Ukrainian political representation. However, the situation seems to be improving, and an inter-departmental commission should be established soon to help Ukraine progress on these issues.

Some expectations can be associated with the Czech presidency of the EU in the first half of 2009. It might be that the new agreement with Ukraine will be concluded under the Czech presidency, which would give the country some additional leverage on influencing the outcome of negotiations. Most probably, the negotiations will be concluded before 2009. Apart from this, the Czech government will have many other important issues on the agenda for its EU presidency, such as the EU budget reform, the preparations for the appointment for the European Parliament elections and for the appointment of the new European Commission, and possibly the settlement of the Constitutional Treaty (it is probable that another Intergovernmental Conference will proceed under the Czech presidency). How much space will be allotted for Ukraine is thus a question, and the composition of the government and who is going to be in charge of foreign affairs might be an important factor here.

### **Internal Developments in the Czech Republic, the EU and in Ukraine Itself**

These factors are probably not specific to the Czech attitudes towards the EU aspirations of Ukraine. They reflect an interconnection between the perception of continuing enlargement being complemented by ongoing deepening of the EU. On this issue, the position of the Czech political representation is not clear. It is likely that a lot will depend on the current constellation of the Czech government. While the centre-left government might see the deepening, mostly manifested by resolving the EU constitutional crisis, as a necessary precondition for opening any EU accession prospects for the countries who do not currently enjoy a candidate status, the centre-right government might be willing to proceed with enlargement even if the constitutional issue is left unsettled. The current climate in the EU, however, is not very favourable – demonstrated recently by statements of Jose Manuel Barroso, president of the European Commission (which has always been perceived as a defender of EU enlargement) proposing to halt further enlargement promises until the constitutional issue is settled.

Secondly, the internal developments in Ukraine will play a crucial role, too. The rather lukewarm reaction to the Orange Revolution compared to Poland as well as the outcome of the 2006 parliamentary elections reflect the lack of conviction that Ukraine has made a final choice. Ukraine is still very much perceived and portrayed as a country with deep internal divisions regarding its foreign policy orientation (e.g., having an “orange” west and “blue” east), with a strong influence of the Kremlin and a buffer zone between the EU and Russia.<sup>5</sup> With the post-election situation with the Orange camp disintegrating and the deal between the two originally rival camps, that of Yushchenko and Yanukovych re-emerging, the enthusiasm for supporting Ukraine on its way to the EU might grow even stronger.<sup>6</sup> Recent developments show that Yanukovych as the new prime minister might be interested in keeping a balanced relationship with both Moscow and Brussels and to reach some tangible deals with the EU such as an enhanced free trade agreement<sup>7</sup> rather than pushing for an explicit recognition of candidate aspirations. However, the reaction in the Czech press to the outcome of the elections did not mark such negative reactions and the fact that Yanukovych was given a chance to form a government is actually perceived as a sign of the growing maturity of the young Ukrainian democracy.<sup>8</sup> From the Czech perspective, however, it seems that Yanukovych will be forging the relations with the EU while his enthusiasm for Ukraine integrating more closely with NATO is seen as potentially posing more problems for its relations with Moscow.

### **Conclusions: What Might Change the Czech Perception of Ukraine and Make It More Supportive of EU Membership Aspirations?**

To conclude, it is clear that the reasons why the Czech Republic could become more enthusiastic about supporting Ukraine on its road to the EU lie with the developments in the EU, in the Czech Republic and in Ukraine.

At the EU level, the basic pre-condition is overcoming what is at least perceived to be the major crisis, following the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by two founding members. Unfortunately, the Czech Republic, also given quite turbulent developments internally, has almost forgotten the issue that was definitely not a priority in the last year.<sup>9</sup> The political representation will have to formulate

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<sup>5</sup> See, e.g.: Robejšek, P. *Ukrajina za hranicí nové Evropy* (Ukraine beyond New Europe's Boundaries). *Tyden*, 3 March, 2006.

[<http://www.tyden.cz/text.asp?rid=8&show=text&tid=20371>]

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Beatty, A. “Yanukovych touts trade deal with the EU.” *European Voice*, Vol. 12, No. 33, September, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g.: Černý, A. “The Ukraine Has Changed.” *Hospodářské noviny*, 4 August, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> The Czech Republic did not ratify the Constitutional Treaty and did not even set terms for the ratification.

a position and discuss and suggest possible scenarios for solving the current deadlock, which will ultimately become a necessary pre-condition for continuing enlargement that seems to be so much supported by the political establishment. Given the complicated outcome of the June 2006 elections, with an unclear prospect of forming a stable government, the issue might not top the agenda until the solution of the domestic political impasse is found, such as grand coalition of two major parties (the ODS and CSSD) or an early election.

Further on part of the Czech Republic, several additional factors will play a role. Firstly, the "Eastern" agenda of the Czech foreign policy is coming to the fore again. However, it is not clear whether it can rather act as a catalyst or an inhibitor of a more supportive and active Czech policy vis-à-vis Ukraine. The complicated triangular relations between Russia, the EU and Ukraine might make the Czech Republic oscillate between the three parties, keeping the fragile balance rather than deciding on a confrontation.

The gradual emancipation of the Ukrainian community in the Czech Republic might mark some shifts in the Czech positions, too. So far, the image is predominantly negative, associated with crime (including organised crime) or illegal employment. Changing this negative stereotype can be precipitated by, for example, having a success story such as a Ukrainian immigrant achieving a high Czech political position or occupying one of the top positions in the Czech business. A more robust programme for the integration of the largely illegal Ukrainian labour migrants could make a difference as well. It will send a signal that the Czech Republic needs labour migration and is able to create a framework for its regulation, as well as for the integration of the Ukrainian migrant community. This idea is already shared by some parts of public administration and politicians, demonstrated by the inclusion of Ukraine in the programme of managed labour migration by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Furthermore, the Ukrainian migrant community needs to become more self-conscious. Once it shifts from focusing on merely helping the Ukrainian expatriates to handle the formalities regarding their residence and labour paperwork or from promoting Ukrainian culture to more politically articulated stances, the Czech political representation and media will start to take it more seriously. So far, however, it seems that the Ukrainian organisations do not have such ambitions.

Business can have an impact on the Czech policy towards Ukraine, once Czech investment in and trade with Ukraine start to grow. The growth of trade has been immense since the Czech Republic's accession to the EU, growing by 50.6% in 2005 and by as much as 80.9% in the first half of 2006,<sup>10</sup> and the rapidly developing Ukrainian economy has a huge potential for attracting the Czech exporters in traditionally strong areas such as machinery, engineering, cars, etc. Also investment is starting to attract more attention of Czech companies, such as the PPT group investing between 45 to 60 million USD into the Ukrainian banking sector.

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<sup>10</sup> Available at: [<http://www.businessinfo.cz/cz/clanky/ukrajina-souhrnne-informace/obchodni-a-ekonomicka-spoluprace-s-cr/1001236/24747/>]



Other potentially big investors such as CEZ (which is already making acquisitions in some Western Balkan countries) or Skoda might follow this example. The businesses will have an interest in a more transparent regulatory environment, a more liberal trade regime, clearer rules of public procurement, etc. The best way of doing this is through closer links with the EU, so the businesses can actually become one of the main supporters of closer links between Ukraine and the EU.

Tourism can be an important incentive for raising the interest of the Czechs in Ukraine and eliminating some of the stereotypes currently present in the Czech milieu. Ukraine is not the most typical tourist destination, however, in terms of number of trips of people visiting this country it ranks quite high – in the 16<sup>th</sup> place in terms of number of trips undertaken by Czechs in 2005.<sup>11</sup> The statistics available do not reveal how many people actually visit Ukraine for leisure and how many for business. However, it can be assumed that a more pro-active promotion of Ukraine as an interesting tourist destination could lead to a better acquaintance of the Czechs with Ukraine. This results in a more positive perception of it as a “European” country. This is, however, a task for the Ukrainian government and tourism promotion services.

Given the current state of affairs in the EU, the Czech Republic and Ukraine, it cannot be realistically expected that the Czech Republic will become a strong advocate for recognizing Ukraine as a candidate for EU membership. The Czech Republic will rather try to foster relations between the two entities through closer economic integration, such as supporting Ukraine’s accession to the WTO or forging an enhanced agreement with the EU, leading to a gradual establishment of a free trade zone between them. Although strategically it is important for the Czech Republic that Ukraine makes a “European” rather than “Russian choice”, the Czech political representation as well as diplomacy does not feel strong enough to influence this decision. Moreover, the internal political situation in the Czech Republic is unstable and problematic following the outcome of the 2006 parliamentary elections. Without a strong political mandate, the Czech policy on Ukraine is not likely to move forward. Thirdly, the same would apply to the internal political situation in Ukraine itself. While Yushchenko after he took the presidential office at the beginning of 2005 sent strong signals to the West that it is the primary intention of his new government to foster the pro-EU orientation of his country, the Yanukovich government, which emerged in 2006, is likely to take a more cautious course, paying attention to a balanced relationship with both Brussels and Moscow.

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<sup>11</sup> Available at: [[http://www.mmr.cz/upload/files/cestovni\\_ruch/060714\\_cr\\_v\\_cr\\_aktualizace.doc](http://www.mmr.cz/upload/files/cestovni_ruch/060714_cr_v_cr_aktualizace.doc)]



# EU Enlargement to the Western Balkans from the Polish Perspective

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## An Overview of the Polish Discourse on Further EU Enlargement

### *Public Opinion*

The Poles lead European rankings of support for expanding the EU. Both in Eurobarometer 63 (May–June 2005) and 64 (October–November 2005) the Poles were second only to the Slovenes in general enthusiasm for the idea of enlargement, with 76 and 72% of the respondents supporting inclusion of all applicants or selected states.<sup>1</sup> According to Eurobarometer 65, 78% of the Polish respondents assented to the statement that the enlargement strengthens the EU, while only 11% believed the opposite. This level of support places the Polish society among the top enthusiasts: compared to 67% Czechs in favour (with 25% of an opposed view) and 62% Latvians (and 26% in opposition).<sup>2</sup>

A significant share of the Polish public is willing to see the EU extended without reservations. National polls conducted in 2004–2005 indicate that the support for an unqualified position is consolidating. While in November 2004, 20% subscribed to the view that the EU ought to expand to “all states willing to accede” in the near future, in July 2005 that share rose to 30%. Although the percentage of the definite opponents increased from 12% to 18% in that period, the largest flow could be observed away from the middle position that in November 2004 enjoyed the support of 50% of all respondents (and which was down to 36% seven months later) – that of the integration of only selected states.<sup>3</sup>

However, a Eurobarometer poll conducted in 2006 shows that the majority of Poles (64%) are uninterested in the events taking place in the EU’s neighbourhood

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<sup>1</sup> See: [[http://europa.eu.int/comm/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63_en.pdf)]; [[http://europa.eu.int/comm/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb64/eb64\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb64/eb64_en.htm)]

<sup>2</sup> QD8.2 of Eurobarometer 65.2 (255).

<sup>3</sup> Polls were conducted by the CBOS and included in the report No. 155/2005, “Opinions on the Functioning of the European Union”, Warsaw, September 2005. [[http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2005/K\\_155\\_05.PDF](http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2005/K_155_05.PDF)]

taken as a whole. This relative lack of interest is shared by the respondents in other Central and East European new Member States (including Latvia and the Czech Republic). As it will be shown below, the interest varies greatly when different states are considered: the term “neighbourhood” is commonly used to refer to the eastern flank of the Union.

Support for further expansion of the EU has been generally high since the first national polls on the topic were carried out in 2002 and continued to rise after accession. The share of supporters of integrating other East European countries reached 68% in December 2002 and 70% in January 2003, and respectively 49% and 51% were in favour of Turkey’s entry.<sup>4</sup> By November 2004, a strong majority of respondents expressed support for the accession of the following countries: Ukraine (74%), Turkey (68%), Croatia (78%), and Serbia and Montenegro (74%). Lower levels of support were shown for Russia (54%), Morocco (50%) and Israel (43%).<sup>5</sup>

The enthusiasm for further enlargement, especially to include the eastern neighbours, characterised Poland as a candidate country and continued in the first months after accession to mark the peak at the time of Orange Revolution in late 2004. However, the support dissipated somewhat between the spring and autumn of 2005 (Table 1). In the unfavourable circumstances of a perceived internal crisis in the EU and the absence of positive signs from the EU institutions and other major states, a decline was observed in support for both the eastern and southern direction of enlargement. One variable that certainly played a part in dampening the readiness to enlarge the EU was the recognition of a crisis within the EU spurred by the negative votes of the Dutch and the French during the constitutional referenda. Thus, although the Poles remain among the champions of the enlargement, they have also become more aware of the need to acknowledge

**Table 1.**  
**Decline in Polish Support for Enlargement in 2005**

<i>Support for enlargement to:</i>	<b>March 2005</b>		<b>November 2005</b>	
	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>
Morocco	42	33	35 (-7)	35 (+2)
Russia	46	39	34 (-12)	45 (+6)
Turkey	55	28	44 (-11)	33 (+5)
Ukraine	77	12	64 (-13)	18 (+6)

Source: TNS Sofres, [<http://www.yes-ukraine.org/en/survey/november.html>]

<sup>4</sup> Surveys were administered by the Warsaw-based Centre for Social Opinion Research (CBOS). See: [<http://www.cbos.pl>]

<sup>5</sup> Results obtained from surveys conducted among the citizens of large EU states (TNS Sofres).

the concerns of other Europeans about this process. Moreover, the decline could be attributed to the realisation that the optimism about the possibilities to realise this agenda, for instance in relation to Ukraine, had been unrealistic.

At the same time it is worth noting that two key arguments for drawing the lines of enlarging the EU that reappeared in the discourse across Europe have not carried much weight in the Polish public since the country's own accession. The criteria for integration that could potentially exclude some of the candidates are mentioned by a minority of the respondents. When in November 2004 the question was posed as to the conditions to be met by the candidate states, the membership in the "Christian cultural milieu" and the location within the geographical boundaries of Europe were cited by 11% and 10% respectively. A stable democratic system was considered essential by a far larger share of the respondents (30%). The majority named two criteria that focused on the state of the political and economic systems of the applicants: a stable market economy was mentioned by over two-thirds (68%) followed by the rule of law and respect for human rights.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Official Position and Public Debate***

An analysis of the official statements of the presidential and the prime minister's office as well as interviews with members of the national and European parliament reveal the existence of a broad consensus. EU enlargement is generally in Poland's interest; therefore Poland will not block further enlargement. However, given the country's limited clout within the EU for realising its agenda, all efforts need to be deployed for stabilising Poland's eastern neighbourhood (Belarus and Ukraine) by anchoring them in the Euro-Atlantic institutions (NATO and the EU). As a tactical choice, Poland will not play a leading role as the advocate of any Southeast European country to the same level that it has vowed to pull its weight behind the aspirations of Ukraine.

The eastern dimension clearly takes precedence over the southern or southeastern vector in the activities of both Polish diplomacy and in the interests of both the domestic and European parliamentarians. In contrast to the vocal support to the cause of Ukraine in the EU, the Polish government chose to take a similar position as other EU states, approving the decision to close negotiations with Bulgaria and Romania and open talks with Croatia and Macedonia, but it did not express any signs of strong enthusiasm. Moreover, as opposed to the EU integration of Ukraine, where Poland has proven to be a major driving force within the EU, neither the membership of Romania and Bulgaria nor the prospects of further expansion of the Union in the Western Balkans (Croatia, Macedonia) evoked any debate or explicit formulation of the national position. The relative low priority accorded to the issue of the accession of countries of Southeastern Europe or Turkey in the

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<sup>6</sup> CBOS No. 187/2004, "Opinions on Further Enlargement of the European Union." Warsaw, December, 2004. [[http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2004/K\\_187\\_04.PDF](http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2004/K_187_04.PDF)]

national public could be seen by its absence in the programmes of the parties for national elections and only veiled references to the question of further enlargement in the campaigns for the European Parliament. There were virtually no public consultations on the issue and the government did not run a campaign to communicate either its position or grounds for it.

This contrast stems from the unequal weight that Poland has placed on its foreign policies to the eastern and southern vectors. The question of leaving EU membership open to Belarus and Ukraine was implicit in Poland's efforts to avoid drawing new divides in Eastern Europe that could occur if the country's eastern border would be a permanent frontier of the Union. Through its diplomatic activities dating back to the early 1990s, Poland has been a committed and vocal proponent of raising the profile of its eastern neighbours (Belarus and Ukraine) vis-à-vis the Euroatlantic institutions, in particular the EU. The Foreign Ministry's proposal for institutionalising an "eastern dimension" in the Union's foreign policy foreshadowed to some extent the European Neighbourhood Policy. The Orange Revolution was the occasion for the Polish politicians and the public to demonstrate their commitment to the activist policy aiming at democratisation and opening Euro-Atlantic prospects to Ukraine.

In comparison with the long-standing preoccupation with the eastern direction of its national policy, the southeastern vector has been accorded far less prominence. The main argument raised to justify Poland's official support for further EU enlargement in Southeastern Europe has been the reference made to the principle of adhering to agreements and promises made beforehand (*pacta sunt servanda*). Former President Aleksander Kwaśniewski pointed to the commitments that the European Union undertook as regards both the candidate states (Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia and Turkey) and the successor states of the former Yugoslavia that were given the prospects of gradual integration. His successor, Lech Kaczyński, echoed these sentiments on a number of occasions.

This argument is based on the conviction that "it is not appropriate" that Poland and other new Member States that just acceded should deny accession to other states. The official position stresses on the one hand that the EU side ought to guarantee a "fair starting point" and should be willing to present each candidate state with prospects of eventually becoming a member. On the other hand, it is hinted that the speed and outcome of the negotiations depends largely on the candidates' state of preparations and their will to introduce the required reforms.

The IPA's research in 2005 revealed that the Polish politicians and analysts do not relate the issue of accession of new candidates from Southeastern Europe to Poland's interests, but rather to its impact on the direction of the European integration. The fact that the potential costs to Poland were not contemplated at this point could be related to the commonly shared belief that the enlargement would not involve a negative monetary impact for Poland as a sure net beneficiary of EU funds for the period of the next two financial perspectives. Some respondents stressed, however, that they expected the issue of financial implications to be a more likely component of the debate towards the end of the negotiations

when the details of the offer for future Member States would be known. At the same time, the proponents of continued enlargement were looking forward to receiving support from prospective new Member States in votes at the European Council and the Parliament. However, they note that they count more on the solidarity from the new members than on a genuine convergence of actual interests.

The issue of EU accession of the two eastern neighbours (Belarus and Ukraine), however, is accorded much higher priority as it is related to the geopolitical concerns of Poland. For these reasons, the Polish officials (including consecutive governments and presidents) came to a national consensus on the objectives of the policy towards the two eastern neighbours, which came to be known as Poland's eastern policy. As the country proceeded towards EU membership, the national agenda was reformulated to match the change in the instruments of Polish foreign policy upon the country's accession to the Union. Opening the "European perspective" for those states was thus considered to be an incentive and eventually an anchor for economic and political reforms. As such it has been regarded by all the major political groups as an issue that is central to national security, which is then extended to the realm of regional geopolitics, influenced by the unceasing concern with the spectre of Russia's influence in the area. Rapprochement between the enlarged EU and Ukraine and Belarus is thus seen not only as a solution to Warsaw's lingering preoccupation with its own geopolitical position vis-à-vis Moscow, but also as an ultimate solution to the security dilemma of the countries in between the EU and Russia.

Poland's activism in the policy of "drawing" Belarus and Ukraine to Europe is also frequently justified by the historical heritage of a common statehood with Belarus and Ukraine. The Polish eastern policy is based on the so-called Giedroyć doctrine, developed in the émigré circles in the 1950s. The geopolitical vision was laid down in the Paris-based *Kultura* journal and included three main lines of thought. Firstly, it precluded any of Poland's territorial claims on its eastern neighbours. Secondly, it called for the recognition of their independence. Thirdly, it postulated the end of the possible Russo-Polish rivalry for influence over Belarus or Ukraine.

Although the geopolitical concerns underlie the agenda in Poland's relations with Russia and by proxy with the current Belarusian regime, the country has developed a full-scope national neighbourhood policy going far beyond security considerations. The territories adjacent to Poland's eastern borders have been the object of activities aiming at promoting democracy and human rights, economic transformation, state apparatus reforms and third sector development. The priority of the region of Eastern Europe is apparent in Poland's official democratisation efforts and development aid as well as in the traditional focus of non-governmental actors on seeking partnerships in the direct eastern neighbourhood.

## **The Polish Position on the EU Accession of Western Balkan States**

### ***The Place of the Region in the General Polish Support for Enlargement***

Poles display significant support to enlarging the EU in all directions. According to both the Eurobarometer and TNS Sofres polls the majority of Poles would include both the countries of the Western Balkans (such as Croatia or Serbia and Montenegro), the CIS (with Ukraine in the first place) and the Mediterranean (in particular Turkey). Although less than the absolute majority would see EU membership extended to Israel, Morocco or Russia, the figures, which exceed 40%, are still much higher than those found for supporters of those three states elsewhere in the EU.

The Eurobarometer results<sup>7</sup> show that, in agreement with the polls taken in other states, the opposition has been the lowest towards the three states with a higher GDP than the EU average (Iceland, Norway and Switzerland), and less than 20% of the respondents expressed strong reservations about the likelihood of accession of the three Slavic states (Bulgaria, Croatia or Ukraine). As in other states, Albania and Turkey are listed at the bottom of the rankings. Significantly, the sequence does not follow the state of official talks with various candidates as neither of the top choices has expressed interest in EU accession and the support for Ukraine, which is not even a candidate, is much higher than that for Turkey.

The Poles, like the citizens of other new Member States, are most interested in the countries that are either wealthier or evoke positive associations on other grounds (for instance, a shared historical experience). The rankings reflect the preoccupation of the Polish public and elite with the area that for centuries formed a single state and where the Polish language and culture were present: the western CIS, covering Belarus and Ukraine, and to a smaller extent European part of Russia. In that context, Southeastern Europe may understandably be featured far less prominently as an area outside the historical zone of interest. On the other hand, the potential factors fuelling negative attitudes towards the integration of Southeast European states are generally absent, too. The wartime associations of the Balkans with interethnic conflicts, weak, unstable states and general insecurity have given way to the positive images of tourist destinations on the Adriatic and the Black Sea, investment opportunities and to the rediscovery of cultural heritage. The economic recovery of many of the post-Yugoslav states has particularly appealed to the Polish observers who were frequent visitors to the relatively affluent and West-oriented Yugoslavia in the 1980s and later watched with dismay the dramatic disintegration of the once successful economy and multiethnic society. Such a spectacular upturn is appreciated by the Poles who themselves had a turbulent history and for whom European integration was an important anchor of security and an opportunity for consolidating the economic and political transition from autarchy and authoritarianism to a liberal market economy and pluralist democracy.

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<sup>7</sup> Based on Eurobarometer No. 63, 64 and 65 of May–June 2005, November 2005 and June 2006.

The accession of these states appeals also to the Polish public on more emotional level. Unlike the case of relations with Russia, the appreciation of common Slavic roots is not tinged by a history of political conflict. Moreover, the fact that Yugoslavia represented a form of a Western-oriented, relatively liberal version of the socialist system with elements of the market (including virtually non-collectivised agriculture) made it into a model for the generations of Poles in the period of Communism. The area was a tourist and commercial destination for the Poles already in the 1980s, and the personal experience solidified the images of hospitality, informality and “kindred spirit”. The experience of granting temporary asylum to the victims of the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo was accompanied by general sentiments of empathy especially since the hostilities were recognised as major humanitarian tragedies.

Against the background of the virtual absence of references to the individual states in the Polish national debate, the position of the European Commission differentiating the states is of growing importance. Considering that Poland does not play a role of major advocate of any of the states of the region within the EU, the Commission’s assessments are generally accepted as accurate. In the official statements and few media reports that cover the region particular attention is paid to the issue of the co-operation of the governments of the states of the region with the international bodies dealing with the prosecution of crimes against humanity in the former Yugoslavia. It is noteworthy that the Polish Foreign Ministry officials on several occasions have singled out the record of collaboration as a key indicator of the countries’ commitment to the EU course.

### ***Level of Support for Different Western Balkan Countries***

The ranking of support for the accession of countries in Southeastern Europe remains stable among the Polish respondents and corresponds to that of the EU-25. Croatia is consistently the country with top support (70%), followed by Macedonia (63%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (61%), Serbia and Montenegro (60%), Albania (59%) and Turkey (51%).<sup>8</sup>

**Table 2.**  
**Support Levels for the Accession of Countries of Southeastern Europe**

	Date	Croatia	Macedonia	Bosnia & H.	Serbia & M.	Albania	Turkey
EB 65.2	04/2006	70	63	61	60	59	51
EB 64.2	11/2005	70	57	55	55	48	42
EB 63.4	06/2005	74	63	62	61	56	54

Source: Eurobarometer.

<sup>8</sup> QD16 of Eurobarometer 65.2 (255).



Only a small minority (4%) of the Polish respondents believed that the accession of Western Balkan countries would be primarily in the interest of their own state – which is around the average for the EU-25. However, fewer respondents in Poland than in the EU-25 asserted that the accession would be mainly in the interest of the acceding states (38% compared to 45%), while relatively more believed that the accession was in the common interest of the EU and Western Balkan states (31% compared to 23%) or primarily in the interest of the EU (13% compared to 9%).

Virtually no coverage of the issue of EU enlargement to the Southeast in the Polish press indicates that the support levels may be unrelated to the state of bilateral relations or the awareness of the merits of the applicants from that region. Although the respondents do not claim to attribute much significance to the questions of culture or geography, personal experiences and judgments based on the perceived distance play a role. While the support levels remain far above those found in many other EU states, a similar pattern prevails in which the highest support is reserved for states that are perceived as clearly belonging to Europe in a geographic as well as the cultural sense.

However, the absence of the debate on the desirability of EU membership for either the eastern neighbours or states of Southeastern Europe that enjoy the highest support (Croatia or Macedonia) is striking. This silence confirms that the issues of geography and religion are not among the terms that would be explicitly central to the debate on further enlargement to the East European region. This may reflect the perception that the states of the region are unquestionably within the geographical boundaries of Europe and their shared Slavic and Christian identities are acknowledged. However, some correlation between the cultural distance and the weakening support for EU accession could be noted in the cases of Albania and Turkey, which are consistently at the bottom of the rankings. Recent trends indicate a convergence of support for most Western Balkan states at around 60% (with the exception of Croatia at 70%), while the Turkish candidacy has seen a slippage with only slightly more than a half in support.

## Conclusions

Several Western Balkan states have expressed hope that Poland would be among the champions of this enlargement. Are these expectations realistic? There are some reasons warranting optimism in this regard. Firstly, Poland is vitally interested in keeping the overall momentum of enlargement and the progress in accession negotiations of any candidate demonstrates the viability of the process as a whole. Secondly, given the difficult “climate” for enlargement in the EU, the candidacies of the smaller Balkan states are seen as relatively easier to accept than that of Ukraine or Turkey, so the success of these countries may be viewed as a way out of the recent deadlock over the entire issue. Finally, since the Balkan candidates are post-Communist European states, their accession is regarded (as was the inclusion of Bulgaria and Romania) to be a continuation of the process



of bridging of Cold-War divides that represented the primary rationale for the overall EU eastern enlargement.

There are also some signs of the growing significance of the region for Polish diplomacy. The measures that were recently adopted are symbolic: such was the decision to use the form the Republic of Macedonia in bilateral relations with Skopje; others are practical: Warsaw waived visa fees for the nationals of some Balkan states, paralleling the move adopted for the citizens of Ukraine and Moldova. The region is becoming an increasingly important area for the Polish development aid, reflecting the preoccupation with stabilizing the once war-torn areas and advancing the transition to liberal democracy and market economy through the recourse to own experience of transformation.

However, Poland is likely to remain in the second line of supporters of the accession of this group of countries. There are some reasons for the low-key position of Warsaw. Firstly, Poland has not identified vital national interests in the area going beyond the general support for continuing enlargement and the wish to stabilise the EU's neighbourhood. Secondly, no single country has been selected as a "strategic partner" along the lines adopted towards Ukraine (Croatia's candidacy has been warmly welcomed; however, Poland has not taken a leading position on this candidacy, either). Finally, the current government and president stress the need to focus on a few priority issues as part of Poland's activism in the EU.

Nonetheless, another process is likely to take place. Just as it happened with Bulgaria and Romania, their accession increased the Polish interest in increasing bilateral relations. The Balkan candidates and would-be members will be prized by the Polish government as potential allies within the Union, representing the once minority view of the more market-oriented and Euroatlantic course for Europe. The anchoring of the states in the EU norms is likely to have an appealing effect on the level of commercial exchange and investment for the Polish businesses.

Clearly, the ultimate objective for Polish diplomacy is extending the EU eastwards to include Belarus and Ukraine. However, the accession of southeast European states is not seen as a detour or alternative to reaching that goal. In the current "cold climate" for enlargement in general, the continuation of the process is particularly welcome as a signal of the fundamental commitment to accept the qualified members. Although Poland will not be among the key champions of this direction of enlargement, it will certainly cheer the progress on that front, too.

# Turkish EU Membership from Latvia's Perspective: Why Should We Care?

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## Introduction

EU enlargement is not a topic that has caused heated discussion in Latvia. Moreover, similarly to the “big European questions” on where the borders of the EU are, or what ambitions the EU should have both in regard to its internal performance but also to the EU’s global role, debates on further enlargement of the EU are almost non-existent. For example, a former minister has said that he cannot recall “a single discussion in the Cabinet of Ministers or the parliament” on Turkish EU membership bid during November 2002 – December 2004.<sup>1</sup>

This could be partly explained by the assumption that Latvia as a small country is likely to have a minor influence on these “big European questions” within the EU. In addition, as a new member state, Latvia knows very well what an effect EU membership can have on the development of a country. Thus, the logic of further EU enlargement is not questioned.

Hence Latvia supports further expansion of the European block and, according to official statements, there seems to be no differentiation placed on the potential candidates, i.e., whether Latvia supports speedy accession of the Balkan countries before Turkey. Also the public opinion in Latvia – like in other new member states – is more favourable of further EU enlargement than in the EU-15. According to Eurobarometer data, 62% of Latvians support further expansion of the EU while only 26% are against it.<sup>2</sup>

But when it comes to possible Turkish accession, official statements, political party programs, media coverage as well as public opinion reveals that it is not perceived unambiguously. Turkey is the only candidate country whose EU integration has caused some, albeit limited, discussion.

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<sup>1</sup> Muižnieks, N. “Latvia’s Interests and Fears Regarding Turkey’s Accession to the European Union.” Presentation at the conference “Turkey in the European Union: What Does Latvia Have to Say?” organized by Baltic Forum, the European Commission Delegation to Latvia, and the European Parliament Information office, in Riga, 28 April, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Eurobarometer 64, Autumn 2005.

The most common issues raised about Turkish EU accession in Latvia are the loss of EU structural funds (for EU-10) that would have to be spent in Turkey, in addition to the overall economic burden of Turkey's membership for the EU, the immigration potential, the 'otherness' of Turks, and human rights violations in Turkey. The need to change the EU's common policies and institutional set-up is also mentioned. Summing this up, one could easily come to the conclusion that Turkish EU accession is not favoured in Latvia, or that at the moment Latvians see little justification for Turkish EU integration. To investigate these perceptions this paper examines the arguments that are used, and should be used, in the debates on how Turkish EU accession is considered from the perspective of the EU, and Latvia in particular.

## **Arguments in Favour of Turkish EU Membership from Latvia's Perspective**

### ***EU as a global actor***

Those in favour of Turkish EU accession point to Turkey's role in increasing the significance of the EU as a global actor. They say that Turkey could serve as a bridge to the Islamic world and be a very useful partner to help the EU achieve its foreign policy ambitions.

Turkish EU accession supporters also point out that the evolution has left Turkey quite closely aligned with EU policies, and that Turkey has taken part in every EU-led military operation, except for the mission in the Republic of Congo. Besides, the recent decision to deploy troops in Lebanon proves that Turkey wants to be and has the means to be a regional player, a mediator and a contributor to the European response<sup>3</sup> thus increasing the space for stability in the world.

The same argument can be heard in Latvia. It is believed that due to the size of the Turkish population, its territory, geographic location, and its economic, security and military potential, as well as culture and religion, "Turkey can significantly contribute in enhancing regional and international stability."<sup>4</sup> By having Turkey in the EU, the European block would be able to "secure its influence and spread its values to regions that traditionally have been considered unstable, including the Middle East and the Caucasus" so that stability, peace, democracy and functioning market economies spread to these regions, as well.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Boland, V. "Turkey claims Mideast peacekeeper role." *Financial Times*, 6 September, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> "Turcija un Eiropas Savienība: izaicinājumi un iespējas" (Turkey and the EU: challenges and opportunities), speech of Einārs Sēmanis, deputy state secretary in Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the conference "Towards United States of Europe: Future Challenges and potential Solutions" at the University of Latvia, 8–9 December, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

It is also believed that Turkish EU accession would give “Latvia and the EU an Islamic ally at a time when hatred against the USA and a mistrust of Europe dominates in Islamic countries.”<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, Latvian Foreign affairs minister Artis Pabriks has explicitly said that not admitting Turkey into the EU is not in Latvia’s interests. “We have to have close relations with Turkey (...) If we don’t, the EU’s international role will decrease, there will be less security around EU’s borders which will result in a negative influence for relations with countries like Ukraine and Moldova. Turkey will be like a litmus test for EU policy in these countries”.<sup>7</sup>

However, Latvian member of the European Parliament (MEP) Inese Vaidere disagrees and argues in favour of a special Turkish-EU partnership. She admits that enhancing stability at EU borders is a “sufficient reason for finding a golden mean [compromise] in relations with Turkey.” However, she stressed that Turkey’s EU membership and the possible strengthening of the EU’s role in the world has an indirect benefit for Latvia. Moreover, because the “risks from Turkish EU membership are large and benefits for the EU and especially for Latvia are mediated” Turkish EU accession should be replaced by a special partnership.<sup>8</sup>

Vaidere echoes the argumentation of the critics of Turkish EU integration who point out that Turkey could bring instability into the EU because it borders on Iraq, Iran, Syria, Georgia and Armenia.

It has to be noted here that EU’s common foreign and security policy (CFSP) is still decided in unanimity, but internal divisions – in particular relations between Cyprus and Turkey – cast a shadow of a doubt on whether unanimity on CFSP issues can be achieved if Turkey joins the EU.

### ***Turkey and EU’s defence capacity***

Latvia – as a new NATO member state and an ally of the USA – believes that Turkish EU membership would benefit not only European defence capacity but would also strengthen Latvia’s position on the future shape of the European security and defence policy (ESDP). This is an argument that is specific to the new EU member states of Central and Eastern Europe, but it does not come up in European debates that often.

As to the first part of the argument, the supporters of Turkish EU membership stress that Turkey has been a NATO member since 1952. Turkey’s army is the

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<sup>6</sup> Timofejevs, P. “Turcija Eiropas Savienībā” (Turkey in the EU). DELFI, 9 October, 2005. [<http://www.delfi.lv>]

<sup>7</sup> “Ārpolitika pēc saprāta un satversmes principiem” (A foreign policy according to common sense and constitution). Interview with Foreign affairs minister Artis Pabriks, Public policy portal Politika.lv, 19 July, 2005. [<http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=7942>]

<sup>8</sup> Vaidere, I. “Turcija – lielākā ES dalībvalsts?” (Turkey – the biggest EU member state?). *Diena*, 15 December, 2004.

second largest army in NATO after the army of the United States of America.<sup>9</sup> In the long run, the size and quality of Turkey's armed forces could be a considerable plus for Europe's defence policy. This is why some experts have said that, "when it comes to security policy, Turks believe that the EU needs them more than they need the EU."<sup>10</sup>

Latvia also attaches great importance to Turkish support in NATO regarding the protection of Latvia's air space as Turkish planes have been patrolling the air space over the Baltic States.<sup>11</sup>

As to the second part of the argument, Latvia has a strong interest in continued EU-NATO cooperation, not in seeing the development of ESDP as somehow weakening NATO and transatlantic ties. Turkish EU membership is perceived as strengthening the cooperation between the EU and NATO while maintaining a strong transatlantic lobby within the EU.

Thus, the 2006–2011 strategy for Latvian foreign affairs explicitly says that Latvia supports the strengthening of the military capacity of European countries and the EU, "based on the consideration that the ESDP is not an alternative to NATO, the ESDP's role has to develop in harmony with transatlantic relations, avoiding duplication and securing a close cooperation between the EU and NATO."<sup>12</sup> The document also states that Latvia and Turkey cooperate within NATO and have "common foreign policy interests in enhancing European security and stability."<sup>13</sup> Strengthening the ESDP and EU-NATO ties is something that Latvia "as a small country strongly stands for because we are not interested in unsuitable use of resources and we want both organizations to complement each other."<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the above-mentioned arguments, some believe that having Turkey in the EU would diminish security risks coming from some Islamic countries. This is why, according to some experts, security reasons are the main argument behind Latvia's support for Turkish EU membership, i.e., it would give the EU a

<sup>9</sup> Turkey has approximately 800 thousand personnel in its armed forces. Source: BBC.

<sup>10</sup> Barysch, K. "The economics of Turkish accession." In: Barysch, K., Everts, S., Grabbe, H. "Why Europe should embrace Turkey." Centre for European Reform, September 2005, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup> Muižnieks, N. "Latvia's Interests and Fears Regarding Turkey's Accession to the European Union." Presentation at the conference "Turkey in the European Union: What Does Latvia Have to Say?" in Riga, 28 April, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> "Latvijas ārpolitikas pamatnostādnes 2006.–2010. gadam (Informatīvā daļa)". Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005. [<http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Arpolitika/pamatnostadnes/>] Last accessed in December 2006, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement on Turkish-Latvian relations, Ministry's website [<http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Arpolitika/divpusejas-attiecibas/Turcija/>] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> "Turcija un Eiropas Savienība: izaicinājumi un iespējas" (Turkey and the EU: challenges and opportunities). Einārs Sēmanis in a speech at the conference "Towards United States of Europe: Future Challenges and potential Solutions" at the University of Latvia, 8–9 December, 2004.

possibility for a dialogue with the Islamic world. But if accession negotiations with Turkey were not to start and Turkey were “marginalized, the question of Turkey becoming closer to Islamic block [of countries] would arise again” implying larger security threats to the EU.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Turkey as energy security provider***

Finding energy alternatives to minimize dependence on Russia became a popular argument in the EU after the energy crisis in January 2006, as approximately 30% of natural gas consumed in the EU is imported from Russia.<sup>16</sup> In addition to that, the Russian oil dispute with Belarus of January 2007 further strengthens the perception of Russia as an unreliable energy provider.

In this context Turkey is seen as a possible energy corridor between the East and the West because Turkey is situated right next to the regions that produce and hold huge reserves of oil and natural gas. Experts say that there are several conditions that have to be fulfilled before Turkey can become the major transit country of energy that it could be.<sup>17</sup> However, experts agree that Turkey has a large potential to help Europe to secure its energy imports.

This is a widely used argument in Latvia not only because of the energy crisis of January 2006 but also because, due to historical reasons, a part of Latvia’s population is very sensitive to being dependent on Russia. Yet, Latvia is the most dependent on Russian energy out of the three Baltic States.<sup>18</sup> This is why Ankara is often mentioned as a way to escape that dependence on Moscow. For example, an article in one of the biggest Latvian dailies stressed that the Baku–Ceyhan pipeline “today is the only artery independent of Russia for transporting oil” and, according to the article, “Turkey would guarantee energy reserves for Europe from Central Asia if new projects for pipelines were implemented.”<sup>19</sup>

Turkey’s potential as an energy transit country is highly valued, with the need for energy security and the diversification of energy resources being mentioned

<sup>15</sup> Quoting Pēteris Ustubs, the foreign affairs advisor to Latvian prime minister. In: Agnese Margēviča. “Turcijas uzņemšana apdraudēsot ES identitāti” (Turkish accession would endanger EU’s identity). *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, 3 October, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g.: “Turkey opens pipeline to skirt Russia.” Reuters, 16 July, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g.: “Consequences of Turkish membership for the EU and its neighbourhood.” Kemal Kirişçi, at the conference “What next for Europe?” in Helsinki, 13 June, 2006.

[[http://www.upi-fii.fi/fin/tilaisuudet/tepsa/prof\\_kemal\\_kirisi/#](http://www.upi-fii.fi/fin/tilaisuudet/tepsa/prof_kemal_kirisi/#)] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Latvia is the only Baltic country that depends on energy imports. Up to 50% of power consumed in Latvia comes from Lithuania, Estonia and Russia. Source: Ministry of Economics of Republic of Latvia.

<sup>19</sup> Ziemeņš, M. “Par ko vēl jārunā Turcijas sakarā” (What else should be talked about in the case of Turkey). *Latvijas Avīze*, 14 October, 2005.

even in Latvia's foreign affairs strategies.<sup>20</sup> The Latvian prime minister has also explicitly said that the Turkish EU membership could provide energy security.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Turkey as a possibility for EU's economic growth***

Turkey's economic potential is another argument often used by those in favour of Turkish EU membership. The International Monetary Fund rated the Turkish economy as the 17<sup>th</sup> largest in the world in 2006.<sup>22</sup> Turkish foreign trade has grown and hyperinflation has been brought under control. Moreover, according to UN data, there were over 73 million people living in Turkey in 2005.<sup>23</sup> This means that by the time of EU accession Turkey would be larger than any other EU member state with a large and fast growing consumer market.

Argumentation that Turkey is not developed enough to join the EU does not sound fair when one compares Turkey's economic performance with the data from the new EU member states 10 years before they joined.<sup>24</sup> Turkey also has a strategic geographical location for economic relations.

But experts stress that Turkey's economy currently is divided into two parts – a hugely inefficient agricultural sector, and a highly modern and competitive manufacturing and services sector.<sup>25</sup> In addition to that, Turkey already has had a customs union agreement with the EU since 1995, which is why “with respect to trade in goods, Turkey is almost a part of the Single Market already.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, experts say that the direct impact of Turkish EU membership to other EU members could be small. Yet, an open market in services would mean that EU companies could buy Turkish businesses, for example, banks, transport, telecom or energy companies, thus increasing competition, lowering prices, boosting efficiency, bringing benefits to businesses and consumers, translating into a large benefit from Turkish EU membership to the whole EU.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> “Latvijas ārpolitikas pamatnostādnes 2006.–2010. gadam (Informatīvā daļa)”. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005. [<http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Arpolitika/pamatnostadnes/>] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> “Premjers: Turcijas uzņemšana varētu nodrošināt enerģētisko drošību”. LETA, 4 October, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> World Economic and Financial Surveys. World Economic Outlook Database, International Monetary Fund, April 2006.

<sup>23</sup> World Statistics Pocketbook 2005, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, World Statistics in Brief (Ser. V), No. 30, September 2006.

<sup>24</sup> In 2004 Turkish per capita income was less than 30% of the EU-15 average. Poland's per capita income in 1994 (10 years before accession) stood at 35% of EU average.

<sup>25</sup> Turkey's agricultural sector employs one third of the total labour force but generates only 12% of GDP. Source: Barysch, K. “The economics of Turkish accession.” In: Barysch, K., Everts, S., Grabbe, H. “Why Europe should embrace Turkey.” Centre for European Reform, September, 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Ülgen, S., Zahariadis, Y. “The future of Turkish–EU Trade Relations: Deepening vs Widening.” CEPS EU-Turkey Working papers No. 5, August, 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Barysch, K. “The economics of Turkish accession.” In: Barysch, K., Everts, S., Grabbe, H. “Why Europe should embrace Turkey.” Centre for European Reform, September, 2005.



However, this argument is not often used in Latvia. On the contrary, local politicians say that from an economic perspective “Latvia has nothing to fear” from Turkish EU accession, because Turkey and the EU already have a free trade agreement and a customs union.<sup>28</sup> In fact, with the current trade agreement Latvia has a negative trade balance with Turkey of around 22 million Euros. Turkey is only the 58<sup>th</sup> largest export partner for Latvia – only 0.04% of all products exported from Latvia go to Turkey.<sup>29</sup> Thus, economic relations between Latvia and Turkey are not very active and it seems that Latvian officials and businessmen do not see Turkish EU accession as a possibility for Latvian companies to invest and start their businesses there.

What is more worrying for Latvia – in economic and financial terms – is the fact that Turkey would receive a large proportion of EU structural funds, which – as a result – other EU members, notably Latvia, would lose.<sup>30</sup> For example, Latvian MEP Roberts Zile has said that Turkish EU membership would not influence Latvia’s national interests in the EU but Latvia could expect less financial assistance from EU structural funds as soon as Turkey joins the European block.<sup>31</sup>

The same argument goes for the application of the EU’s common agriculture policy in Turkey. On this Latvian officials have said that budgetary questions will be agreed on by all EU member states, including Latvia, and that, “Turkey will receive the financial support that EU budget will be able to give.”<sup>32</sup>

### ***Turkish immigration potential to Europe***

Contrary to the demographic trends of Europe where the working age population and the population as a whole is shrinking and will continue to do so, Turkey is experiencing a completely different demographic trend. In the EU-25, according to estimates from the EU’s Economic Policy Committee, the population is projected to rise from 457 million in 2004 to a peak of 470 million in 2025, and thereafter decline to 454 million in 2050, due to low fertility rates and longer life expectancy. This reduction in the proportion of the working-age population is a threat to Europe’s standard of living.

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<sup>28</sup> Quoting Pēteris Ustubs, the foreign affairs advisor to Latvian prime minister. In: Agnese Margēviča. “Turcijas uzņemšana apdraudēsot ES identitāti” (Turkish accession would endanger EU’s identity). *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, 3 October, 2005.

<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs [<http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Arpolitika/divpusejas-attiecibas/Turcija/>] Last accessed in December 2006.

<sup>30</sup> According to International Monetary Fund estimates, in 2006 Latvia will lose the status of the poorest EU member state to Poland (comparing GDP per capita). Yet, Latvia still remains one of the poorest in the EU. Source: LETA, 18 September, 2006.

<sup>31</sup> “Latvijas eiroparlamentārieši atbalsta ES privileģēto sadarbību ar Turciju” (Latvian MEPs support a privileged cooperation between the EU and Turkey). BNS, 15 December, 2004.

<sup>32</sup> “Turcija un Eiropas Savienība: izaicinājumi un iespējas” (Turkey and the EU: challenges and opportunities). Einārs Sēmanis, in a speech at the conference “Towards United States of Europe: Future Challenges and potential Solutions” at the University of Latvia, 8–9 December, 2004.



On the other hand Turkey, according to UN estimates, will soon have over 80 million inhabitants and shows no sign of shrinking. Turkey's population is growing at approximately 1.5% a year.<sup>33</sup> That means that the economy needs to create 500,000–800,000 new jobs every year just to keep unemployment at its current level.<sup>34</sup>

This is something that many EU countries look at with concern, i.e., the push factors of Turkey's immigration potential. In addition to the fast growing population, one has to remember that if the Turkish agriculture sector were modernized, it would leave a large number of workers unemployed. Experts also point out that two-thirds of the Turkish population have only basic education, or none at all, that less than one-quarter of Turks have completed secondary education, and that less than 10% have a university degree.<sup>35</sup> This means that Turkey has a large pool of low skilled workers that might want to look for better prospects in European countries.

According to the highest estimates, 4.4 million people might emigrate from Turkey – if there were no limits to the free movement of labour – and that accounts for 0.7% of the EU-28 population of more than 570 million.<sup>36</sup> This would mean that the number of Turks already living in the EU would at least double.<sup>37</sup>

Those in favour of Turkish EU membership see this as a positive challenge. They stress the benefits of labour migration and how it could help alleviate the problems of Europe's shrinking working age population. The danger of having a crisis of pension systems and slowing growth is a reality which Turkey's growing population could help the EU to solve, while at the same time alleviating some future labour market shortages.<sup>38</sup>

At the present time the immigration potential from Turkey is not seen as a benefit in Latvia but rather a large disadvantage from Turkish EU accession. Stories of the unsuccessful integration of Turks, mainly in Austria and Germany, definitely have contributed to the cautious attitudes in Latvia, although they are not the main reason for Latvia's concern. One has to understand that attitudes towards potential immigrants in general (not just from Turkey) are very negative due to

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<sup>33</sup> World Statistics Pocketbook 2005, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, World Statistics in Brief (Ser. V), No. 30, September, 2006.

<sup>34</sup> Barysch, K. "The economics of Turkish accession." In: Barysch, K., Everts, S., Grabbe, H. "Why Europe should embrace Turkey." Centre for European Reform, September 2005, p. 35.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>36</sup> EU-25 plus Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia. Source: Gros, D. "Economic aspects of Turkey's quest for EU membership." CEPS policy brief No. 69, April, 2005.

<sup>37</sup> There are already around 3 million Turkish residents in the EU, almost 80% of whom live in Germany and the rest mostly in France, Austria, the Netherlands and Belgium.

<sup>38</sup> Barysch, K. "The economics of Turkish accession." In: Barysch, K., Everts, S., Grabbe, H. "Why Europe should embrace Turkey." Centre for European Reform, September 2005, p. 40.

the Soviet immigration policies.<sup>39</sup> In addition, “an incident in the mid-1990s when Kurdish asylum-seekers arrived in Latvia left a lasting imprint on the Latvian psyche, and Kurds have to a certain extent become symbols of potential refugees”<sup>40</sup>. As a result, around 40% of Latvians say that they should not be allowed to live in the country, while 45% would permit Kurds and Muslims in general to enter Latvia only as tourists.<sup>41</sup>

It should come as no surprise then that immigration is a taboo for mainstream politicians.<sup>42</sup> But that does not mean that discussions on these topics are non-existent. An article in one of the biggest newspapers in Latvia in 2004 implied that the potential of Turkish immigration to Latvia is very small. “Those who frighten Latvia with the Turkish invasion of our country after their possible EU membership should be reminded of one historical fact. After the Russian-Turkish war in 1878 around 40,000 Turkish soldiers ended up in Russian captivity and more than 100 of them were sent to Cēsis [Latvian city]. Not being able to get used to the raw Baltic climate, they started to get ill and many soon died.”<sup>43</sup>

But Latvian MEP Inese Vaidere believes that the poverty in Turkey will push Turks to look for better life prospects, including in Latvia. “They will come even to the poorest country of the EU,” Vaidere believes, adding that even Latvia’s cold winters would not be an obstacle.<sup>44</sup>

This opinion is echoed in a publication by the weekly magazine “Nedēļa” that has interviewed the head of the Asian study program at the University of Latvia, Leon Gabriel Taivan. He says that Muslim immigrants would flood Europe in 50–100 years because right now the dominating force in Europe is a “suicidal attitude to

<sup>39</sup> The USSR moved workers – mainly Russians – to the peripheral areas of the Union, like the Baltic countries to work there and Russianize the local populations. As a result, today approximately 35% of Latvia’s population is Russian.

<sup>40</sup> Muižnieks, N. “Latvia’s Interests and Fears Regarding Turkey’s Accession to the European Union.” Presentation at the conference “Turkey in the European Union: What Does Latvia Have to Say?” in Riga, 28 April, 2006.

<sup>41</sup> Šūpule, I., Krastiņa, L., Peņķe, I., Krišāne, J., Zepa, B. “Etniskā tolerance un Latvijas sabiedrības integrācija” (Ethnic tolerance and integration of Latvian society). Baltijas Sociālo Zinātņu Institūts, 2004.

<sup>42</sup> Some years ago Turks and Kurds were often mentioned in the campaigns of extreme left and extreme right activists. For example, Alfreds Rubiks (a former Communist Party leader and still active in politics) in an interview to *Dienas Bizness* in 2002 said that the EU sees Latvia’s poorest Eastern region Latgale as a convenient place for Kurds and Turks to live. In addition, a right-wing anti-EU non-governmental organization *Klubs 415* in its website until 2004 said that they had not “the slightest desire to see the development of regions [in Latvia] inhabited by Turks and Kurds.” Source: Muižnieks, N. “Latvia’s Interests and Fears Regarding Turkey’s Accession to the European Union.” Presentation at the conference “Turkey in the European Union: What Does Latvia Have to Say?” in Riga, 28 April, 2006.

<sup>43</sup> Ziemeņš, M. “Turcija – par vai pret?” (Turkey – in favour or against?). *Latvijas Avīze*, 2 December, 2004.

<sup>44</sup> In an interview with PROVIDUS in July 2006.

give in" to Islam. He alleges that Turks will fight for no limits to the free movement of labour and as a result Turks would come to Latvia because "nature does not accept emptiness and Latvia is a very empty land".<sup>45</sup>

Latvian officials in the meantime stress that most likely there would be a transition period for the freedom of labour agreed with Turkey. "In addition to that, the Commission's recommendations also include a clause that every member state can limit the free movement of labour every time job seekers from Turkey seriously endanger the labour market of that EU country."<sup>46</sup>

### ***European identity and Turkey: Turkey, EU and multiculturalism: What is European and what is Turkish?***

Many Europeans think about Turkish EU accession through the lens of the question "is Turkey European"? Those who have been to Turkey as tourists or on business often say it is nothing like a European country, citing customs and fundamental values upon which the EU is based and what they did not find in Turkey, i.e., full respect for the rule of law, democracy, human rights, the rights of minorities, and the equality of men and women.

Those in favour of Turkish EU membership say that EU enlargement is the most effective policy tool because it is "a mechanism for extending EU's values."<sup>47</sup> Others have expressed their doubts on whether enough progress is at all possible in Turkey with regard to human rights, stressing the point that in Turkey the cohesion of the nation-state traditionally has taken priority over the rights and liberties of individuals.<sup>48</sup>

As to the debate in Latvia, officials have pointed out that Turkish EU membership would enrich the multilingual and multicultural identity of the EU, and be a signal that the EU is not "a closed Christian club" and that the "clash of civilizations is not an inescapable fate of human kind."<sup>49</sup> Turkish EU accession would give a positive signal to Muslims all around the world and would erase the

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<sup>45</sup> Benfelde, S. "Mēs, eiropieši, esam pašnāvnieki" (We, Europeans, are suicidal). *Nedēļa*, 26 September, 2005.

<sup>46</sup> "Turcija un Eiropas Savienība: izaicinājumi un iespējas" (Turkey and the EU: challenges and opportunities). Einārs Sēmanis, in a speech at the conference "Towards United States of Europe: Future Challenges and potential Solutions" at the University of Latvia, 8–9 December, 2004.

<sup>47</sup> Emerson, M. "What values for Europe?" In: "Policy Perspectives: Islam and Tolerance in Wider Europe". IPF 2006, p. 22.

<sup>48</sup> See, Kramer, H. "EU-Turkei: vor schwierigen Beitrittsverhandlungen". SWP Studie, May 2005.

<sup>49</sup> "Turcija un Eiropas Savienība: izaicinājumi un iespējas" (Turkey and the EU: challenges and opportunities). Einārs Sēmanis, in a speech at the conference "Towards United States of Europe: Future Challenges and potential Solutions" at the University of Latvia, 8–9 December, 2004.

arguments for terrorists to contra distinguish the West against the Islamic world “because we could prove that Europe is a place where – based on the values of democracy and freedom – different religions can co-habit.”<sup>50</sup>

Other officials believe that “Turkey is like a bridge between Asia and Europe” and that Turkey is not as conservative as other Islamic countries.<sup>51</sup>

But voices outside of the official domain are less optimistic. For example, Atis Lejiņš, the director of the Latvian Institute of Foreign Affairs, has said that the European public is concerned about an EU identity crisis that could arise due to the EU expanding too far out of the borders of the European culture.<sup>52</sup> Lejiņš also says that Austrians are not alone in their scepticism towards Turkish EU membership because of value-based reasons, and in reality other EU countries, too, were hiding behind the Austrian position hoping that accession negotiations would take forever and Turkey would never join.<sup>53</sup>

To some in Latvia, Turkish EU membership is also linked with the question of Latvian identity. “We have to count on the fact that sooner or later there will be a large Turkish community in Latvia, there will also be Muslims from other cultures. Will we – a small nation – be able to secure our identity or will we disappear?”<sup>54</sup>

Apart from opinions on the general “European-ness” of Turkey, Latvians are also concerned about human rights, in particular the Kurdish issue and Turkey’s attitude towards the Armenian genocide, as well as freedom of expression. Since Latvia suffered mass repressions during the Soviet era, “many identify with the Armenians. Moreover, freedom of expression was the first freedom to have been won in Central and Eastern Europe, and Latvia tends to adopt maximalist stances with few, if any restrictions defended”.<sup>55</sup>

For example, an article in one of the biggest Internet portals in Latvia compares Turkey to Russia. “Today’s Turkey is a country that still does not acknowledge

<sup>50</sup> “Turcija un Eiropas Savienība: izaicinājumi un iespējas” (Turkey and the EU: challenges and opportunities). Einārs Sēmanis, in a speech at the conference “Towards United States of Europe: Future Challenges and potential Solutions” at the University of Latvia, 8–9 December, 2004.

<sup>51</sup> Latvia’s Honorary Consul to Turkey Asli Ulukapi in an interview to *Diena*, Ilze Arkliņa. “Ceļā uz Eiropu” (“On the way to Europe”). *Diena*, 21 June, 2006.

<sup>52</sup> Margēviča, A. “Turcijas uzņemšana apdraudēsot ES identitāti” (Turkish accession would endanger EU’s identity). *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, 3 October, 2005.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> “Ieguvumi un zaudējumi” (Advantages and disadvantages [of Latvia’s EU membership]). *Kurzemnieks*, 2 May, 2006.

<sup>55</sup> Muižnieks, N. “Latvia’s Interests and Fears Regarding Turkey’s Accession to the European Union.” Presentation at the conference “Turkey in the European Union: What Does Latvia Have to Say?” in Riga, 28 April, 2006.

the killings and deportations of hundreds of thousands of minority representatives (mostly Armenians and Kurds) that happened in the last century in the name of the idea of a super power."<sup>56</sup>

Arguably, similar thinking can also be found in the Latvian parliament, which has condemned the Armenian genocide and has asked Turkey to be admitted to the EU only after it recognizes the Armenian genocide. 71 deputies in the 100-seat Saeima were in favour of this proposal in 2005.<sup>57</sup>

Another article criticising the Turkish reforms on the way to EU accession serves as a good example that Latvians are very sensitive when it comes to limiting basic freedoms: "To please Europe, Turkey has started to act in a way that is reminiscent of Soviet-style atheism propaganda where ones own traditions are broken and religious people who are not loyal to the current regime are persecuted. (...) It all looks like a rather violent taking of the society in a direction where it does not want to go at all, or that the society is taken in that direction at a speed that it can not stand. The changing of traditions and political culture is a long process and, as political theorists say, this cannot be implemented in any democratic society – it has to happen in the society itself."<sup>58</sup>

At the same time others believe that the prospect of EU membership is a good instrument to improve the human rights situation of the Kurdish minority.<sup>59</sup>

### ***Turks in the EU and Latvia: happily ever after?***

There are no data on the number of Turks living in Latvia but as the smallest minority recorded in Latvia are Estonians (a little over 2500 people in the 2.3-million populated Latvia), it is safe to assume that the number of Turks living in Latvia is very small.

Yet, surveys reveal that Latvians are rather intolerant to immigrants and different religions. For example, almost half of Latvia's inhabitants (45% of Latvians and 41% of minority representatives) say they don't want to live next to Muslims.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Kalnciems, K. "Pašnāvnieku saiets Luksemburgā" (A get-together of suicides in Luxembourg). DELFI, 29 September, 2005. [<http://www.delfi.lv/archive/article.php?id=12394103>] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>57</sup> The vote took place on 28 April, 2005, but there was no further movement on this proposal after it was handed to Saeima's Foreign affairs committee.

<sup>58</sup> Lulle, B. "Latviešu rūpes par Turcijas nākotni" (Latvian concerns about Turkey's future). *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, 7 September, 2005.

<sup>59</sup> Timofejevs, P. "Turcija Eiropas Savienībā" (Turkey in the EU). DELFI, 9 October, 2005.

<sup>60</sup> Krupņikova, M. "Kāpēc latvieši nevēlas kaimiņos musulmaņus?" (Why Latvians don't want Muslims as their neighbours?). Public policy portal Politika.lv, May, 2005. [<http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=4833#01>]

But 52% of Latvians and 59% of non-Latvians supported the statement that “Muslim opinions and traditions can be dangerous for Latvia’s population.”<sup>61</sup>

Although until now no physical violence against Muslims has been recorded in Latvia, local Muslims have complained about verbal assaults, for example, being called terrorists. Media coverage of Muslims includes statements like, “there are very few Muslims in Latvia and thus they should not cause us any problems” or “show public disloyalty” – demonstrate that the society is wary, to say the least.<sup>62</sup>

A recent media discourse analysis suggests that journalists were also reproducing prejudices. This research found that stories with negative attitudes most often involved Muslims, and that stories featuring Muslims very rarely contained positive images.<sup>63</sup>

Analysing ethnic tolerance and integration patterns, researchers have found that in general Latvians feel and act like “the endangered majority” whereas Russians can’t be considered as a typical minority.<sup>64</sup> As a result, Latvians are rather unsociable, they don’t communicate with the representatives of other nationalities. Russians, on the contrary, are more open and easily communicate with other nationalities.<sup>65</sup>

According to experts, this precautious attitude towards immigrants and the opinion “that each nation should live in their homeland”<sup>66</sup> can be largely attributed to the feeling of being endangered as well as the consequences of Soviet migration policy.<sup>67</sup> As a result, in spite of Latvia having a multi-ethnic population for many decades, “many people still hold a culturally homogeneous society as a norm and an ideal.”<sup>68</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Šūpule, I., Krastiņa, L., Peņķe, I., Krišāne, J., Zepa, B. “Etniskā tolerance un Latvijas sabiedrības integrācija” (Ethnic tolerance and integration of Latvian society). Baltijas Sociālo Zinātņu Institūts, 2004, p. 16.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Only 8% of stories featuring Muslims contained positive images, while 47% of stories with negative attitudes involved Muslims. Source: Šulmane, I., Kruks, S. “Neiecietības izpausmes un iecietības veicināšana Latvijā”. Īpašu uzdevumu ministra sabiedrības integrācijas lietās sekretariāts, 2006.

<sup>64</sup> Russian is mother tongue for approximately 37% of Latvia’s inhabitants, thus knowledge of the Latvian language is not necessary in many spheres of social life. Many have got used to the privileged status of the Russian language it enjoyed in the Soviet times.

<sup>65</sup> Šūpule, I., Krastiņa, L., Peņķe, I., Krišāne, J., Zepa, B. “Etniskā tolerance un Latvijas sabiedrības integrācija” (Ethnic tolerance and integration of Latvian society). Baltijas Sociālo Zinātņu Institūts, 2004, p. 14.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Due to Soviet migration policy, many non-Latvians were sent to live in Latvia. As a result, there is a large Russian-speaking minority and Latvians have for decades felt like the endangered nation.

<sup>68</sup> Šūpule, I., Krastiņa, L., Peņķe, I., Krišāne, J., Zepa, B. “Etniskā tolerance un Latvijas sabiedrības integrācija” (Ethnic tolerance and integration of Latvian society). Baltijas Sociālo Zinātņu Institūts, 2004, p. 16.

This can be seen in local media coverage. For example, one of the most popular Internet portals published the following article: "Would you want to live next to a family where the husband more or less regularly rapes his wife, or where sons give a beating to their mother or sisters? Or maybe you would be fine with giving a part of your tax money to financially help these fathers and sons to be more prosperous? Disregarding your answer, Latvian government a couple of days ago decided on your behalf and has expressed its support for the start of negotiations with Turkey about its possible accession to the EU. Turkey, for your information, is a country where the majority of society (at least the male society) believes and in their actions proves that violence against a woman is absolutely acceptable. If these negotiations finish smoothly, Turkey's non-violent and violent citizens will get the right to either live close to you, according to the EU's principle of the freedom of movement for persons, or they will – living in their fatherland – receive benefits from the co-funded projects of the EU (and thus also Latvia)."<sup>69</sup>

The article refers to the data from a 2004 Amnesty International report according to which every third woman in Turkey is a victim of violence in the family.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, the author says that violence "is a norm in Turkish society" which the improvement of living conditions would not be able to change. The author also alleges that hoping for the younger generation to live according to different values – also due to Turkish EU integration – would be "totally naïve" because of the "overall violent environment" in Turkey. In another article the same author writes, "the idea of a secular Turkish society has only existed in the minds of some abstract "scientists" and irresponsible politicians."<sup>71</sup>

Replying to the above-mentioned allegations, the portal published another author arguing in favour of Turkish EU accession. Stressing that in Turkey the church is separated from the state, the author also says that nobody can forbid anyone to practice a religion in his or her private life, and that the religiousness of private individuals can not be a serious argumentation against Turkish EU accession.<sup>72</sup>

Those in favour of Turkish EU membership believe that "prejudices" about Turkey "disappear" as soon as Latvians visit Turkey "and with their own eyes see that it is a modern, dynamic country that develops, of course, not without any problems."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Kalnciems, K. "Asiņainā kandidātvalsts" (Bloody candidate country). DELFI, 13 December, 2004. [<http://www.delfi.lv/archive/article.php?id=9790121>] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>70</sup> "Turkey: Women confronting family violence." Amnesty International, 2 June, 2004. [<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engneur440132004>] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>71</sup> Kalnciems, K. "Pašnāvnieku saiets Luksemburgā" (A get-together of suicides in Luxembourg). DELFI, 29 September, 2005. [<http://www.delfi.lv/archive/article.php?id=12394103>] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>72</sup> Timofejevs, P. "Turcija Eiropas Savienībā" (Turkey in the EU). DELFI, 9 October, 2005.

<sup>73</sup> An interview with the ambassador of Latvia to Turkey, Ivars Pundurs. Ināra Mūrniece. "Turcija laužas uz ES" (Turkey forces itself towards the EU). *Latvijas Avīze*, 28 April, 2005.



It is interesting to note here that Turkey is one of the most popular vacation destinations for Latvians and that direct flights from Riga to Istanbul go every other day. However, as the surveys mentioned-above reveal, the image of Turkey as a European country is not prevailing yet.

## Local Debates on Turkish EU Membership and Future Enlargement of the EU

### *Official statements*

Bilateral relations between Latvia and Turkey are friendly. There have been numerous bilateral diplomatic visits, including at the highest level.<sup>74</sup> As a result, official statements from the Ministry of Foreign affairs say that Latvia supports further EU enlargement towards South Eastern Europe. "From our own experience we know how important the European perspective is on the stability of democracy, development and increasing a nation's welfare. Only close cooperation between states – both regional and in a European framework – can give them unity, regional development, security and peace. Latvia is ready to help these [candidate] countries in their growth because she [Latvia] is able to appreciate the importance of such help on the road towards EU membership."<sup>75</sup>

However, no explicit mention of Latvia's support for Turkish EU membership can be found in the strategic document on Latvia's foreign policy for 2006–2010.<sup>76</sup> But when describing Latvian-Turkish relations the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs says, "Latvia supports Turkey's drive towards the EU."<sup>77</sup> Latvia was also among the countries that supported the opening of accession negotiations between Turkey and the EU.<sup>78</sup>

This has given grounds for speculation about whether support for the Turkish EU accession bid equals support for Turkish EU membership. However, Latvian minister of Foreign Affairs Artis Pabriks has explicitly said in the media that, "Latvia supports Turkish EU membership."<sup>79</sup> Calling Turkey Latvia's ally Pabriks

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<sup>74</sup> The president of Turkey visited Latvia in 2002, and Latvian president went to Turkey in 2004.

<sup>75</sup> Website of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, [<http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/eu/ES-paplasinasanas/>] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>76</sup> "Latvijas ārpolitikas pamatnostādnes 2006.–2010. gadam (Informatīvā daļa)", Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, 2005. [<http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Arpolitika/pamatnostadnes/>] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>77</sup> Website of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia. [<http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Arpolitika/divpusejas-attiecibas/Turcija/>] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> "Ārpolitika pēc saprāta un satversmes principiem" (A foreign policy according to common sense and constitution). Interview with Artis Pabriks, Public policy portal Politika.lv, 19 July, 2005. [<http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=7942>]



has said that trading with allies – in other words not supporting Turkish EU accession – is not possible.

Supporting this argument, the starting of accession negotiations was believed to enhance peace and stability in the region,<sup>80</sup> and give EU accession countries (not mentioning Turkey in particular) a strong motivation for implementing political, economic and social reforms.<sup>81</sup>

### ***Statements of political parties***

The issue of further EU enlargement is not a prominent element in the programs of Latvia's political parties. Only a few of the political parties currently in the Latvian parliament mentioned whether they support or oppose further EU enlargement or the EU accession of particular countries in their programmes for the 2006 elections.<sup>82</sup> Possible Turkish EU accession is not mentioned at all. What follows is a narrative of the few statements directly and indirectly linked to EU enlargement and the possible Turkish EU accession from politicians and parties.

The ruling conservative People's Party (TP) mentions EU enlargement in their pre-election program for the European Parliament in 2004 where TP pledges support for EU accession of "countries that are friendly to Latvia." Although there is no elaboration on the "friendly countries", the TP strongly opposes the start of negotiations about EU accession with Russia. TP would also not allow "uncontrolled immigration" in Latvia and would be against any moves that would weaken NATO.<sup>83</sup>

TP mentions that it supports the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, provided that they comply with the Copenhagen criteria. The party also supports "a more dynamic negotiation process" with Croatia, as well as "the creation of a concept of privileged partnership agreement within the EU for providing a base for more intensive cooperation with its partners."<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Website of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia [<http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Jaunumi/PazinojumiPresei/2005/Septembris/29-2/>] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>81</sup> "Latvijas ārpolitikas pamatnostādnes 2006.–2010. gadam (Informatīvā daļa)", Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, 2005. [<http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Arpolitika/pamatnostadnes/>] Last accessed in December, 2006, p. 9.

<sup>82</sup> Only the programs for elections in October 2006 and the main declarations of parties are being analysed here as the question of Latvia's successful accession to the EU was dominating the agenda in earlier elections.

<sup>83</sup> "Tautas Partijas rīcības programma darbībai Eiropas Parlamentā" (TP plan of action in the European Parliament). [[http://www.tautaspartija.lv/lat/par\\_ko\\_mes\\_esam/eu\\_parlaments](http://www.tautaspartija.lv/lat/par_ko_mes_esam/eu_parlaments)] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>84</sup> "Tautas Partijas programma 9. Saeimas vēlēšanās" (TP program for the 9<sup>th</sup> Saeima elections), 2006. [<http://www.tautaspartija.lv/jpg/programma2006.pdf>] Last accessed in December, 2006.

The second coalition party, Christian conservative Latvia's First Party (LPP) says that it supports "building more unity" within the EU.<sup>85</sup> LPP program for the European Parliament elections elaborates that "only a united Europe can secure Latvia's future. At the same time, the European integration process cannot create threats for the cultural, regional, religious and linguistic identity of the Latvian population." LPP also supports "a united and effective common European foreign and security policy that would strengthen the EU's role in the world, at the same time not allowing the weakening of the transatlantic ties with NATO and the establishment of twin security structures."<sup>86</sup>

Another coalition party, the Green's and Farmer's Union (ZZS) in its program for the 2006 elections only said that it supports the development of the EU "as a union of countries with integrated economic, monetary and common security systems."<sup>87</sup>

The opposition party, conservative New Era (JL) has said that it supports the spreading of democracy, freedom, the rule of law and market economy to all of Latvia's neighbouring countries. JL also thinks that Latvia should cooperate with countries that have expressed their willingness to join the EU and NATO, sharing with them Latvia's experience of the integration process.<sup>88</sup> The party sees the EU as a strong, capacitated and united Europe that has to take "a significant place in international politics, and in securing peace and stability in the world."<sup>89</sup> In addition, JL supports the strengthening of NATO "that is and will remain the most significant security guarantee in Europe and the world." Thus, European security and cooperation policy should be developed "in harmony with transatlantic relations deepening strategic cooperation between the EU and NATO."<sup>90</sup>

Latvian MEP – elected from JL – Aldis Kušķis has said that he is against starting accession negotiations with Turkey because it was not in Latvia's interests.<sup>91</sup> His colleague, MEP Valdis Dombrovskis has been less sceptical and has said that Turkish EU membership could not be ruled out if Turkey fulfils the criteria. Yet, he would also support the idea of a favoured partnership.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> "Latvijas Pirmās Partijas programma 2006" (LPP program 2006). [[http://www.lpp.lv/new/data/file/LPP\\_programma\\_2006.doc#\\_Toc41898977](http://www.lpp.lv/new/data/file/LPP_programma_2006.doc#_Toc41898977)] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>86</sup> "LPP 4000 zīmju programma Eiropas Parlamenta vēlēšanām". (LPP short program for the EP election). [[http://www.lpp.lv/new/index.php?section\\_id=102&article\\_id=315](http://www.lpp.lv/new/index.php?section_id=102&article_id=315)] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>87</sup> "ZZS programma" (ZZS program). [<http://www.lzs.lv/?sad=velesanas&asad=programma>] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>88</sup> "Partijas Jaunais Laiks programma – vērtību deklarācija" (The program – declaration of values of New Era). [<http://www.jl.lv/page.php?id=2617>] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> "Latvijas eiroparlamentārieši atbalsta ES privilēģēto sadarbību ar Turciju" (Latvian MEPs support a privileged cooperation between the EU and Turkey). BNS, 15 December, 2004.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

The opposition alliance For Human Rights in a United Latvia (PCTVL) in its program for the European Parliament elections said, "EU enlargement to the East and partnership with Russia must be directed towards establishing a common political and economic space between Vladivostok and Lisbon." Only then, according to PCTVL, would Europe be able to compete with America and East Asia. "Europe has to globally enhance such a world order where mass violence, terrorism and the catastrophic poverty of large populations is impossible."<sup>93</sup> Similar wording was included in party's program for the 2006 Latvian parliamentary elections.<sup>94</sup>

The nationalistic conservative party For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK<sup>95</sup> does not mention the EU accession of particular countries – or Turkey – in its programs. However, the party says that the future enlargement of the EU should be based on the merits of the candidate countries as well as EU's administrative capacity.<sup>96</sup> The party also claims that the EU accession of every candidate country "should be decided by the Latvian people in a referendum."<sup>97</sup>

In addition, party's member Latvian MEP Inese Vaidere has been the most active politician speaking out on the question of Turkish EU membership. She is also a member of EP's Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Vaidere prefers a special partnership between Turkey and the EU rather than full Turkish EU membership.<sup>98</sup> She believes the EU has enough problems to deal with and should not take up another huge project like the accession of Turkey. Vaidere thinks that the official position of Latvia supporting Turkish EU membership bid is hasty. At the same time she said that behind closed doors there seems to be a consensus in Latvia and in some other European countries that is similar to Vaidere's viewpoint, i.e., that the EU should be more cautious about possible Turkish EU membership and should rather work on a special partnership. As to the two main risks coming with possible Turkish EU membership, Vaidere named migration from Turkey and changes in structural fund policy towards Central and Eastern European EU members getting less financial support due to Turkey being a large and poor country which requires more financial assistance.

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<sup>93</sup> "PCTVL programma dalībai EP vēlēšanās" (PCTVL programm for the EP elections). [[http://www.pctvl.lv/?lang=lv&mode=party&submode=program&page\\_id=171](http://www.pctvl.lv/?lang=lv&mode=party&submode=program&page_id=171)] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>94</sup> "PCTVL rīcības programma" (PCTVL program of action). [[http://www.pctvl.lv/?lang=lv&mode=party&submode=program&page\\_id=749](http://www.pctvl.lv/?lang=lv&mode=party&submode=program&page_id=749)] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>95</sup> It was in opposition until the 2006 October elections. Now it is the fourth cabinet party.  
<sup>96</sup> "Apvienības TB/LNNK pamatnostādnes ārējās, drošības un aizsardzības politikā" (TB/LNNK position on foreign security and defense policy). [<http://www.tb.lv/index.php?id=407>] Last accessed in December, 2006.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Vaidere has published several opinion pieces in the national media in Latvia but the opinions described here were expressed in a meeting (with PROVIDUS) on 7 July, 2006.

Vaidere thinks that many European leaders who officially back Turkish EU membership bid are simply “willing to be the good guys” while knowing that the actual decision on whether or not Turkey should be accepted in the EU will have to be taken in 10–15 years, by a new generation of politicians. Speaking of future EU enlargement, Vaidere also said that it does not make sense for Latvia to open the doors for Turkey while keeping them closed for Ukraine. She was also pessimistic about the pace of the reforms in Turkey, especially in regard to stopping human rights violations. “The only thing that happens quickly in Turkey is population growth,” she said hinting that necessary reforms take much more time.

Another problem with possible Turkish EU membership is its borders – in particular those with Syria, Iran and Iraq – that would constitute a bridge to illegal migration. On top of that, Turkey was opposing the Ankara agreement and public opinion in all EU states which are largely in opposition to Turkish EU membership. Hence, for Vaidere the only argument for why talks about Turkish EU membership continue was the promise that the EU made to Turkey in 1963. “Of course, we can not turn down Turkey,” Vaidere said, which is why she thinks the best way to proceed would be a special partnership deal that would motivate Turkey to continue the reform process as well as “coming closer to European values.”<sup>99</sup>

Another MEP and a member of TB/LNNK Roberts Zīle has also said that he favoured Ukrainian EU membership rather than the EU membership of Turkey.<sup>100</sup>

### **Public opinion**

Latvians are more supportive of further EU enlargement in comparison to the public opinion in the old EU member states. However, the latest Eurobarometer poll results also reveal a significant decrease in support. According to the survey, 54% of the respondents were in favour, 30% against. In comparison, the Eurobarometer polls of autumn 2005 showed that 62% of Latvians were in favour of further expansion of the European block, and only 26% were against.<sup>101</sup>

Eurobarometer 64 (Autumn 2005), a more detailed analysis focusing on the possible EU membership of separate countries, revealed that Latvians were also more sceptical about Turkish EU membership than other new member states. Latvian data was more in line with the average parameters of the EU-25. Only 31% of the respondents in Latvia were in favour of Turkish EU membership while 51% were against it. The average data from the 10 new member states was 38% in favour and 44% against, in comparison to 29% in favour and 57% of the respondents in EU-15 against the Turkish EU accession.

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<sup>99</sup> “I. Vaidere aicina meklēt jaunus ES paplašināšanās mehānismus” (I. Vaidere calls for new mechanisms of EU enlargement). Baltic News Agency, 15 March, 2006.

<sup>100</sup> “Latvijas eiroparlamentārieši atbalsta ES privilēģēto sadarbību ar Turciju” (Latvian MEPs support a privileged cooperation between the EU and Turkey). BNS, 15 December, 2004.

<sup>101</sup> Eurobarometer 65, First results, July, 2006.

It is safe to assume that the favourite country for EU membership from the Latvian perspective is Ukraine as 57% of Latvians supported Ukrainian EU membership and only 25% were against. At the same time Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro got on average only 40% of Latvians' support for the eventual EU accession.

Returning to the Turkish accession, the latest polls also reveal that the Latvian support for Turkish EU membership had dropped significantly (by 5%) while the opposition to Turkish EU membership had increased (by 7%).

When asked whether respondents would support Turkish EU membership if it fulfilled all EU requests in the fields of economy and democracy which would most likely happen in 10–20 years time, only 28% in Latvia said they would, while 41% said they would still be against.<sup>102</sup>

Similar conclusions can be made from a local survey where respondents were asked for their reasons to support or oppose Turkish EU accession.<sup>103</sup> 26% of those who support Turkish EU accession said, "if Turkey wanted to join, it should" and 16% thought all countries were equal, therefore it was Turkey's right to join as well. Every tenth respondent named Turkish economic growth for his or her reason to support Turkey's EU accession. In addition to that, 9.2% said they had nothing against Turkish EU membership if it fulfils the criteria, while 8.2% stated that Latvia had not been developed and still was accepted in the EU. Only then came the argument that other countries of the EU would benefit from Turkish accession (6%) and that the EU would become bigger and stronger (5.8%). 3.8% of respondents said they liked Turkey and Turks, while 3.1% said Turkey was a rich and developed country.<sup>104</sup>

When asked about their reasons for opposing Turkish EU membership, the biggest pool of respondents said it was on religious grounds (31%). One third of the respondents also named foreign culture and mentality as the reason for their

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<sup>102</sup> In a special Eurobarometer survey EU citizens were asked, "once Turkey complies with all the conditions set by the European Union, would you support/oppose the accession of Turkey to the European Union?" 35% of the respondents in Latvia would support Turkish EU membership, 47% would be against it. These results are close to the average of EU-25 (39% in favour, 48% against). The survey also found that the majority of Europeans interviewed (52%) see the accession of Turkey as mainly in the interest of the country itself. 20% would see a mutual interest to both the EU and Turkey for its entry in the European Union. See: "Attitudes towards European Union enlargement." Special Eurobarometer, European Commission, July, 2006. [[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_255\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_255_en.pdf)]

<sup>103</sup> SKDS and NGO think-tank the Baltic Forum conducted a three-question survey on Latvian's attitudes towards Turkey and its possible EU membership in February 2006. The survey was commissioned by the Representation of the European Commission in Latvia and presented at the conference "Turkey in the EU: What Does Latvia Have to Say?", organised by the Baltic Forum, the European Commission Delegation to Latvia, and the European Parliament Information office, in Riga, Latvia, 28 April, 2006.

<sup>104</sup> SKDS, February, 2006.

opposition. Only 8.6% said Turkey was not a European country and 8.3% said there were already enough Turks (Muslims) in Europe. Paradoxically, concerns about human rights, women's rights and democracy were small – 6% of respondents named that as an obstacle. Other reasons mentioned were that “Turks are too aggressive and unpredictable”; that Turkish EU membership would raise terrorism threats; that Turkish EU membership would cause problems for the EU and that Turkey was a too poor and undeveloped country. Only 4% said they feared the inflow of workers from Turkey.<sup>105</sup>

## Conclusions

One could have expected to find a kind of solidarity in the new EU member states towards all EU candidate countries because “we have been there, too,” i.e., we know very well how it was to wait on the doorsteps of the EU before accession. However, public opinion polls as well as politicians' statements show that this solidarity is directed towards Ukraine, less towards the Balkan countries, and even less towards Turkey. The main reason for this seems to be hidden in the belief that Latvians see Turkey and its development as very different to the development and the character of the other potential EU member states (Ukraine, the Balkan countries). The “otherness” of Turkey – including political issues like torture, treatment of the Kurds, the Armenian question, and the role of the army – is certainly a reason for the cautiousness of Latvians. Today, for many Latvians, just like other Europeans, Turkish EU accession seems “a step too far – politically, geographically and psychologically.”<sup>106</sup>

In addition to that, there are many unknown variables about Turkish EU accession. First, there are questions about Turkey's reform process. Second, there are questions about the EU's need to change not only but also due to Turkish accession. Should these questions not be answered in a sufficient way, a special partnership between the EU and Turkey might become more popular not only in Germany, France, Austria and Cyprus, but also in Latvia and even Turkey itself. Regarding issues that will remain of particular interest to Latvia and could influence Latvian public opinion on Turkish EU membership, it is predictable that energy security and Turkey's human rights record will be the two most important ones. While the first argument is likely to make Latvians more supportive of closer Turkish ties with the EU, in regard to the second, events like court cases against writers for allegedly “insulting Turkishness” are likely to make Latvians even more sceptic. In addition, fears of the immigration potential from Turkey are likely to contribute to the scepticism. On this topic, no major change in public opinion could be expected, given the unwillingness of mainstream politicians to discuss it and the historic reasons for the sensitivity towards immigrants.

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<sup>105</sup> SKDS, February, 2006.

<sup>106</sup> Grabbe, H. “From drift to strategy: the case for Turkey's accession.” In: Barysch, K., Everts, S., Grabbe, H. “Why Europe should embrace Turkey.” Centre for European Reform, September, 2005, p. 15.

Another conclusion to be drawn from the Latvian debates on possible Turkish EU membership could be that there is a need for more debate. The arguments used in Latvia demonstrate a lack of understanding of the reasons why Turkish EU integration was started in the first place. This is understandable given that Latvia is a new EU Member State and thus has not been part of Turkish-EU relations since the beginning. But this is a good reason for asking local politicians to explain the arguments in favour of Turkish EU membership from the EU's and Turkey's perspective, not just mentioning the promise that an older generation of European politicians made in 1963. Is Turkish EU membership needed to strengthen EU's role in the world, is it needed for economic growth potential, is it needed for the future vision of the EU as a more diverse unity? These are big questions that should be debated.

In Latvia one could hope for more discussions even among cabinet members now that the party TB/LNNK has joined the coalition, with its member MEP Inese Vaidere favouring a special partnership between Turkey and the EU.<sup>107</sup>

Explaining the reasons for Turkish EU membership is important also from another aspect – the fact that each member state has the right to veto the opening and the closure of each negotiating chapter. This means that there is room for debate between the public at large, different stakeholders and the government. Should there not be enough progress made on the commitments by both sides – Turkey and the EU – Latvia as much as any other Member State can use the right to slow down the process. The EU also keeps the right to suspend the negotiations altogether, in the event that the Commission, or one third of the Member States, see a “persistent breach... of the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law” in Turkey. Thus, there is still some room for control and a need to explain the use of this control in the negotiation process – or on the contrary, the continuation of negotiations in spite of everything.

To this end, Turkish EU membership is not only a public relations exercise persuading EU's citizens that Turkey is just like Europe, because Turkish EU accession is inevitably linked to two other questions: EU's identity and legitimacy – or the fact that “a union of democracies” should not “impose” continuing enlargement on unwilling electorates.”<sup>108</sup>

Finally, if one looks at both the EU and Turkey as they are today, critics of Turkish EU membership anywhere in the world – not just in Europe or Latvia – easily

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<sup>107</sup> Although there are no written statements from TB/LNNK on Turkish EU accession, MEP Inese Vaidere has said that her position on Turkish EU membership is in line with the party's position. Source: Inese Vaidere speaking at a conference “Turkish accession to the EU: On Track or Derailed?”, organised by PROVIDUS, in Riga, 23 November, 2006.

<sup>108</sup> Everts, S. “An asset but not a model: Turkey, the EU and the wider Middle East.” In: Barysch, K., Everts, S., Grabbe, H. “Why Europe should embrace Turkey.” Centre for European Reform, September, 2005, p. 48.

could conclude that Turkish accession would be a mess. The latest developments surrounding the Ankara protocol and the issue of Cyprus only adds to their position. But possible Turkish EU accession is many years away. In 10–15 years there will be a different Europe, a different Latvia and a different Turkey – something that the citizens of the new EU Member States might understand better because they themselves have felt how a country can change in just 15 years. Thus, if voters ask for more accountability from their politicians and politicians do a better job in explaining the reasons for Turkish EU membership, and the reform process goes on, in ten years the European public and Turkish citizens, as well as the sceptics of the Turkish EU membership idea anywhere else in the world could well have very different material for forming their attitudes.



# The Debate on the EU Membership Prospects of Ukraine

**Olga Shumylo**, *International Centre for Policy Studies*

*“Noted Western analysts are still debating whether the Orange Revolution was a revolution per se or simply a spectacular phase in the unfinished Ukrainian revolution of 1991. This question makes no sense to me because what really matters is the essence, not a formal definition. **The Orange Revolution did more than rediscover Ukraine for the world that had forgotten all about it. Most importantly, this revolution discovered the Ukraine for us. We turned capable of fighting for our rights, of making sacrifices, and even of showing mercy to the defeated enemy.**”*

*Maksym Strikha, Ph.D., Ukrainian writer*

## Introduction

European integration has been on Ukraine's agenda since its independence. There has been a period identified as “integration without Europeanization”<sup>1</sup> during the Kuchma regime, and later on it was followed by a number of “real integration” steps (e.g., the EU-Ukraine Action Plan with clear priorities and monitoring procedures). Ukraine will have to make another significant step towards the EU by signing the New Enhanced Agreement. This agreement, especially its part on free trade, will go beyond the liberalisation of trade in goods and services between the EU and Ukraine. It will primarily aim at adjusting Ukraine's regulatory policy and economic governance rules to those of the EU. Given the lack of EU membership prospects in the mid- and long-run, Ukraine must take as much as possible from what is being offered now. The Ukrainian officials and independent experts are now discussing the form of the future relations with the EU. They are trying to find the best formula for ensuring the domestic reform and instruments to modernise the country's economy. However, the public debate misses the connection with the reality as it primarily focuses on membership prospects for Ukraine and does not discuss any alternative to membership.

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<sup>1</sup> Wolczuk, W. (2004). *Integration without Europeanization: Ukraine and its Policy towards the European Union*. Working Paper, Robert Schumann Centre, European University Institute, Florence.

## **The Political Situation in Ukraine in the Aftermath of the Orange Revolution: The Context for Thinking “European”**

The Orange Revolution paved the way to democratic parliamentary elections in spring 2006. The Party of Regions gained 184 seats out of 450 seats, whereas the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc (BYT) and Our Ukraine party gained 125 and 80 seats respectively. The coalition-building process took longer than it was expected in the West. The reason behind such a delay was the lack of experience in building coalitions and negotiating a policy agenda rather than bargaining for positions within the new government. The first attempt of coalition-building made by Our Ukraine, the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc and the Socialist Party of Ukraine (SPU) failed due to the unwillingness of certain politicians to put the country's interests ahead, as well as due to various disagreements over a number of policy issues. Our Ukraine stood on more economically liberal, and pro-European, and pro-Euro-Atlantic position, whereas the SPU (and partially the BYT) advocated for free healthcare and education, a ban on the sale of land and abstention from NATO membership.

The collapse of the Orange coalition in July 2006 allowed for the appearance of a new “Anti-Crisis” Coalition that was comprised of the Party of Regions, the Socialist Party of Ukraine and the Communist Party of Ukraine. The coalition's agenda differed significantly from the president's agenda, especially in the foreign policy domain. However, a number of consultations between the President and different political parties resulted in an agreement of all political parties and in the signing of a Manifesto of National Unity. The Manifesto re-confirmed Ukraine's adherence to integration with the EU, co-operation with NATO and further domestic reform. The document was perceived as a victory of the president as it allowed all forces to agree on crucial issues. At the same time, its implementation remains problematic as the “anti-crisis” coalition is making attempts to evade the implementation of certain points of the Manifesto (e.g., co-operation with NATO).

There are a number of foreign policy priorities that have been defined by the president and accepted by the new government, such as WTO accession, the normalisation of relations with Russia, further integration with the EU and co-operation with NATO<sup>2</sup>. All political parties agree with these priorities; however, each party interprets them in its own way.

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<sup>2</sup> However, the positions of the President Yushenko and Prime Minister Yanukovich diverge over NATO. The President advocates for Ukraine's indisputable accession to NATO, whereas the Prime Minister has a more reserved opinion. During his last visit to Brussels, the Prime Minister stated that Ukraine was not ready to become a member and that the citizens of Ukraine would have to make their choice at the referendum. As we may see public opinion is used as a tool to slow down Ukraine's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. At the same time, the government has not yet launched an information campaign on NATO/EU membership.

**Box 1.**  
**Ukraine's Foreign Policy Priorities**

These priorities are important for Ukraine's integration into the world's trade and economic systems, as well as for the country's economic growth and development.

**WTO accession:** This process has lasted for almost 14 years. Ukraine is close to completing its bilateral negotiations with the members of the WTO working group.<sup>3</sup> There are no controversies on the importance of WTO accession for Ukraine. However, the political parties diverge on the terms and conditions of Ukraine's membership. For instance, the PoR and the SPU proposed transition periods for the protection of domestic producers to be ensured in the accession documents. The Parliament still has to adopt a number of important draft laws to secure Ukraine's accession.<sup>4</sup> WTO membership is a pre-condition for the beginning of negotiations on an EU-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement.

**Relations with Russia:** The previous governments (of Yulia Tymoshenko and Yuri Yekhanurov) have failed to develop an appropriate coherent policy towards Russia. The coalition government declared the transformation of relations with Russia from confrontation to "pragmatic co-operation". Many in the West perceived that as a threat to Ukraine's European integration and co-operation with NATO. By and large the rhetoric and the temperature of statements did change. However, it neither helped the new government negotiate a better gas deal, nor did it provide Russia with stronger leverage for further engagement of Ukraine into the Single Economic Space.

**Relations with the EU:** Surprisingly to many, the relations with the European Union remain stable. After a number of visits to Brussels and other Member State capitals paid for by the Prime Minister Yanukovych, the EU is keeping an open mind for the coalition government. European politicians and bureaucrats are waiting to see a mixture of pro-Russia and pro-EU rhetoric lead to deeper integration with the EU and more stable energy relations with Russia. "There has been a shift in Yanukovych [from his Kuchma days], not a huge shift, but a shift nevertheless and the EU should keep close ties with him to encourage this," a senior Czech diplomat stated. "There is understanding, especially in the new Member States, that it is hard to cut ties with the old administration too quickly."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Kyrgyzstan remains the most problematic member of the working group. It expects Ukraine to pay the Soviet-era debts.

<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to provide an exact number of draft laws to be adopted by the Parliament as some of them are approved in first reading, some are adopted in the second reading, whereas there is a number of draft laws that were adopted but they still have to be approved by the President.

<sup>5</sup> EU Observer, 22 November, 2006. [<http://euobserver.com/24/22930>]

## **From the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement to the European Neighbourhood Policy: What Is in It for Ukraine?**

### ***The EU-Ukraine Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA)***

Ukraine was one of the first former Soviet Union countries to sign a Partnership and Co-operation Agreement with the EU in 1994. The agreement aimed at assisting the consolidation of the country's democracy and the development of its economy. It regulated the political, economic and cultural relations and the bilateral trade between the EU and Ukraine. The PCA came into force in 1998 only, as it took the Member States' parliaments almost four years to ratify the agreement.

By and large the structure of the PCA resembled the structure of the Europe Agreements between the EU and Central and Eastern European countries at the beginning of the 1990s. However, the PCA neither became a tool for modernisation of Ukraine's economy nor did it help facilitate the democratic transformation. The agreement was almost unconditional. Hence, it did not provide incentives for reform. A membership perspective was excluded, while the major PCA "carrot" – a free trade area – was foreseen only upon full implementation of the agreement (in ten years). The implementation has been monitored separately and the results of progress assessment differed dramatically. For instance, the European Union was accusing Ukraine of applying discriminatory measures affecting EU business as well as of poor enforcement of PCA-related legislation; whereas the Ukrainian side reported the successful adoption of EU standards and norms in various spheres.

Ukraine sought integration with the EU without Europeanisation, i.e., without "extensive change of domestic institutions and policies in line with EU's more or less explicit targets."<sup>6</sup> Given that Ukraine's non-compliance with EU requirements bore no costs, the ruling elites failed to find incentives for the implementation of the PCA as well as for pushing domestic reform. The fear of ruling elites to have much more limited policy choices in the case of deeper integration with the EU outweighed the attractiveness of potential technical assistance and FDI flows, which could spring up if Ukraine was put on the accession track.

The EU-Ukraine relations have developed from partnership of the beginning of 1990s to a more advanced form of co-operation. A number of steps made by both sides allow us to conclude that Ukraine finally started moving towards "real integration". The period of mutual dissatisfaction and disillusionment seems over now. The EU and Ukraine are concerned with larger problems, such as the institutional crisis, the slowdown of the economic growth in a number of old Member States, as well as a burden of further enlargement for the EU; whereas Ukraine has yet to find a model for its political and economic transformation.

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<sup>6</sup> Wolczuk, W. (2004). *Integration without Europeanization: Ukraine and its Policy towards the European Union*. Working Paper, Robert Schumann Centre, European University Institute, Florence.

## ***The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)***

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) has been developed as a framework policy for the relations with the whole EU neighbourhood, including Ukraine. The ENP is a rather vague, albeit flexible, framework that stretches beyond the existing relations and offers a possibility for deeper political relationship and economic integration. The major “carrot” of the ENP is defined as a stake in the EU’s Internal Market in response to significant reform on the Ukrainian side. By and large, this “carrot” should serve as an incentive for Ukraine’s compliance with the expensive EU acquis. Although an accession perspective was not offered, the ENP brought some positive developments, such as “light” conditionality attached to bilateral ENP Action Plans.<sup>7</sup> It was a mutually agreed document that set the agenda for country’s economic and political reform with clearly defined short- and medium-term priorities and a number of entry points for EU’s support. The progress of implementation is being monitored by the European Commission on a regular basis.

Given the short time span of the ENP, it is difficult to assess the impact of its conditionality on Ukraine’s transformation. However, it holds true that the ENP laid the foundation for Ukraine’s deeper integration with the EU. The inclusion of the political Copenhagen criterion into the AP paved the way for further democratisation. Regular monitoring of the Action Plan’s implementation in a manner similar to the Commission’s Regular Reports on accession countries can make the non-compliance more costly for the Ukrainian side. Moreover, another ENP “carrot” – an EU-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement – may provide a tool for modernisation of country’s economy and its deeper integration with the EU.

## **Ukrainian Public Opinion on the EU and Ukraine’s European Choice**

### ***Overview***

A brief explanation should be given prior to the description of what Ukrainian politicians, non-political elites, expert community, and the public at large think about the EU and Ukraine’s integration with it. First of all it should be mentioned that the European integration is closely connected with the Euro-Atlantic integration in people’s minds. Moreover, many Ukrainians (both politicians and the public) link and contrast European integration with country’s relations with its Eastern neighbours, such as Russia and other CIS countries. Furthermore, the Ukrainian population perceives European integration as a foreign policy priority rather than a framework for domestic reform.

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<sup>7</sup> The EU-Ukraine Action Plan was signed in spring 2005.

The opinion on Ukraine's foreign policy priorities could be divided into three following categories:

- those who support EU and NATO membership simultaneously,
- those who support EU membership but oppose NATO membership, and
- those who oppose EU and NATO membership.

At the same time, there are people who are sending mixed messages to the policy-makers as they support both Ukraine's membership in the EU and the country's participation in the union with Russia and Belarus (24% of the population).<sup>8</sup> There is also a group of people who advocate for a neutral status of Ukraine (the number of such vary). With these explanatory notes in mind, it is easier to understand the complexity of Ukraine's official line, the positions of the political parties, non-political elites and the public opinion.

### ***The Official Position***

The official position remains intact even after the victory of the Party of Regions in the last Parliamentary elections and the formation of the "anti-crisis" coalition. The Prime Minister Yanukovych (as well as his coalition partners) signed the above-mentioned Manifesto of National Unity that contained a statement on Ukraine's adherence to European integration. In accordance with the amended Constitution, the President has a right to define foreign policy priorities. He remains the main guarantor of the continuity of the country's pro-European path.

### ***The Political Parties***

According to political parties' programmes there is a clear line between the pro-Russian Party of the Regions (PoR) and the pro-Western Our Ukraine. The pre-election slogans of the PoR were based on the idea of closer ties with Russia, on granting the Russian language a status of a second official language, and on abstaining from NATO membership. However, the last few months illustrated the inconsistency between the pre-election declarations and post-election actions. First and foremost, a significant part of the PoR (e.g., businessmen turned into politicians) is interested in closer ties with the EU. It will open a door to the EU internal market for Ukrainian exporters and grant them access to cheaper resources.

The opinions of the parties diverge significantly when it comes to the country's relations with NATO. Our Ukraine party is the only party that fully supports Ukraine's membership in NATO. The Party of Regions and the Socialist Party advocate a referendum on NATO membership. The position of the BYT is not clearly

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<sup>8</sup> Press releases of the National Institute of Strategic Studies.

identified. At the same time three parties out of five (PoR, SPU and the Communist Party) support Ukraine's neutral status.

On the one hand, all five parties have different opinions regarding Ukraine's participation in the Single Economic Space (SES).<sup>9</sup> However, all of them (except for communists) agree that "a free trade zone" is the ultimate goal of Ukraine's participation within the EU as it may help increase trade flows with the neighbours. However, very few politicians are ready to endorse a customs union with Russia and CIS countries, as well as to transfer national power to a supranational body. The results of the recent parliamentary elections led to a shift of public support to left-wing parties. The Communist Party and the SPU gained significant support. Both parties are members of the ruling coalition. Both have a pro-Russian orientation and are the opponents of Ukraine's membership in NATO and the EU (albeit to different extent). However, voters' support of these parties should not be attributed to increasing support for pro-Russian and/or anti-NATO, anti-EU views. Such support can be explained by the disappointment with the economic difficulties of Ukraine's transformation process.<sup>10</sup> The centrist parties with a pro-EU orientation could get more votes during the last elections. However, the lack of public support could be attributed to the inability to come up with a solid common position and to form blocs with each other.

### ***Ukrainian Non-Political Elites***

In brief, the position of non-political elites is shifting towards Euroscepticism, which is a response to a number of events of the last few years. The greatest disappointment with the EU was a lack of a response from the EU in the immediate aftermath of the Orange Revolution. The understanding of the lack of EU membership prospects in the short- and medium-term is reflected in debates of the elites over the future of Ukraine. Some say that Ukraine has no chance due to its large population and endless failures to implement the reform. Therefore, they expect that the European bureaucrats will oppose Ukraine's membership to avoid an additional workload. Others believe that Europeans lost their "zeal" and became inert and incapable of renewal. Thus, there is no perspective of Europe's further development.

At the same time, the elites do not offer a clear and coherent strategy for Ukraine's relations with the EU, Russia and the US. The majority of experts agree with the formula most commonly used among the Ukrainian elite: "if we do not have membership prospects, we should focus on the benefits of the ENP and "four freedoms" promised by the EU."

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<sup>9</sup> The SES has been initiated by Russia in order to tie its former partners to the former Soviet Union. Russia's idea rises from the need to create an EEU free trade zone, followed by a customs and monetary union. The European Union is based as a model for the EEU.

<sup>10</sup> The Results of Parliamentary Elections and their Possible Consequences for Ukraine's Foreign Policy can be found at [<http://www.niss.gov.ua/book/journal/Ukr2010.htm>]

### ***The Mass Media***

The local mass media is a primary source of any EU-related information for many Ukrainians (61.1%).<sup>11</sup> The second largest source of information is people-to-people contacts, which accounts for 36%.<sup>12</sup> However, it cannot be used to a full extent due to restrictions on the movement of Ukrainian citizens in the EU.<sup>13</sup>

Since 2005 the amount of information about the EU (e.g., the EU enlargement, the budget, the failure of the Constitution, institutional reforms, the accession of Turkey and the Balkans, etc.) and separate EU Member States (EU presidency, economic and political issues, attitude towards further enlargement) has increased both on television, the radio and in the printed/electronic press. This helps enlighten the Ukrainian public and provides topics for further public debate. When it comes to the EU-Ukraine relations, journalists primarily focus on the country's membership prospects. Very little attention is devoted to the consequences of the enlargement debate within the EU, the EU's current policy towards Ukraine and the assessment of possible benefits of the ENP for Ukraine. The Ukrainian mass media does not provide enough materials – both in terms of quantity and quality – for a comprehensive awareness raising campaign. This can be explained by the lack of a government policy, the lack of contracts for the state-owned media, and the lack of incentives for the privately owned media. Moreover, it can also be attributed to the much more event-rich internal politics of the last few years. Last but not least, Ukrainian journalists lack knowledge about the EU (e.g., its institutions, policies, and possibilities).

Partially, the latter problem is being tackled with the help of the Delegation of the European Commission in Ukraine through the support to Ukrainian journalists from Ukraine-wide and regional television and radio companies, printed press, Internet newspapers and information agencies for their short-term study visits to the EU institutions. However, there is a need for more advanced training for the Ukrainian journalists to turn them into an effective, impartial transmitter of the EU-related information.

### ***The Public Opinion***

The public debate reflects the growing euroscepticism and “euroindifference” of some politicians and representatives of the non-political elite. The EU is perceived as a distant partner with alien problems. The majority of the Ukrainian population does not understand the EU's problems and concerns (e.g., enlargement fatigue, economic slowdown); the population remains an outsider of the European integration process.

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<sup>11</sup> Abstract from the analytical report of the Razumkov Centre at [[www.uceps.kiev.ua](http://www.uceps.kiev.ua)]

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> About 54% of Ukrainian citizens have been abroad.



**Table 1.**  
**A Portrait of a Proponent and an Opponent of Ukraine's European Integration**<sup>14</sup>

Proponent	Opponent
Ukrainian by nationality Ukrainian-speaking person A citizen of western or central Ukraine A citizen proud of his/her Ukrainian citizenship A person from a city or village with a population over 250,000 A person from 20 to 40 years of age	Ethnic Russian A citizen of eastern or southern Ukraine A person who perceives himself/herself as a USSR citizen A person from a small village, town  An older person (27.6% – 50+ years old, almost 23% – in the age group of 30–50 years)

In accordance with the Democratic Initiative Foundation (DIF), 56% of Ukrainians supported EU membership in 2000 and 2001, and 25% and 23% would vote for NATO membership in 2000 and 2001 accordingly. Only 10% and 8% of respondents were against Ukraine's membership in the EU; whereas NATO membership was opposed by 34% and 33% of Ukrainians in 2000 and 2001 accordingly.<sup>15</sup>

The results of DIF opinion poll in May 2004 revealed that 56% of Ukrainians still support the country's membership in the EU, and NATO membership was supported by 27%. However, the number of opponents of both the EU and NATO membership grew to 20% and 49% accordingly. This could be explained by the debates that preceded the 2004 Presidential elections. In 2005 the public opinion was still quite supportive of Ukraine's membership in the EU. 44% of the respondents were for the EU accession, 28% were against and 28% would abstain from participating in the referendum.<sup>16</sup> The results of the opinion poll of the National Institute for Strategic Studies (NISS) are less optimistic: "the support for Ukraine's membership in the EU decreased from 55% in 2001, to 47% in 2005, and 43% in 2006."<sup>17</sup>

The public support of EU membership remains to be a quite stable variable. However, the number of EU opponents is growing. Some explain this impact by

<sup>14</sup> The table draws heavily on the materials of the National Institute of Strategic Studies of 2005–2006.

<sup>15</sup> Press releases of the Democratic Initiatives Foundation at [[www.dif.org.ua](http://www.dif.org.ua)]

<sup>16</sup> The results of the opinion poll held by the Democratic Initiative Foundation in co-operation with Kyiv International Institute of Sociology on 4–15 February, 2005. The results could be found at [[www.dif.org.ua](http://www.dif.org.ua)] in the DIF press release.

<sup>17</sup> "Ukrainian society", Sociological monitoring of the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Science of Ukraine (2005–2006).

the negative attitude towards Ukraine's membership prospect within the EU Member States. However, neither the statements of EU politicians nor the negative public opinion has had impact on the perception of Ukrainians. Moreover, the results of various opinion polls from the EU Member States (see Box 2 below) provide a "rosy picture" of the European's attitude towards Ukrainians and the possibility of Ukraine's accession to the EU in the future.

**Box 2.**  
**EU Public Opinion on Ukraine's Membership Prospects**

Bertelsmann Stiftung Opinion Poll<sup>18</sup>: One in three Europeans believes Ukraine will be among the new members. When asked about the prospects for individual countries, only 37% think that Turkey will become a full member and 35% believe that Ukraine will achieve full member status. Only one in three Europeans, however, predict that Turkey or Ukraine will be among the new members. The majority of respondents believed that both countries would not join the Union by 2020. Only a handful of the respondents from the Central and Eastern Europe could envisage Turkey or/and Ukraine as EU members in fifteen years' time.

TNS Sofres Opinion Poll: A recent survey conducted by TNS Sofres showed that 53% of respondents from Germany were against Ukraine's accession, whereas 41% opted for it. In contrast, only 37% of French respondents were against Ukraine's membership versus 58% of those in favour. The opinion on Ukraine's membership differed significantly in Poland where 77% of those interviewed supported Ukraine's accession to the EU and only 12% were against. Spain and Italy represent an interesting case: 60% and 62% of the respondents (respectively) backed Ukraine's membership.

The decline of support for Ukraine's membership could be explained by the growing disappointment and disillusionment of the Ukrainian public over domestic institutions, political parties and separate politicians.

The public opinion is grounded on little knowledge about the EU. The costs and benefits of integration, and possible alternatives (e.g., integration without membership, all except institutions offered by the EU) are not clear to the public. Although it is frequently advertised in the Ukrainian society, the idea of Euro-

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<sup>18</sup> The Bertelsmann Stiftung survey was conducted in August and September 2006 throughout thirteen EU Member States by the opinion research institute tns/EMNID. It was a representative survey that polled over 10,000 people. The countries that took part in the survey represent 88% of the total EU population. The survey covered all geographic regions throughout the EU and included old as well as new members, net contributors and net recipients.

pean integration lacks a solid basis of knowledge in order to be deeply rooted in public perception. The discourse on European integration in Ukraine did not change in essence even with the shift of political elites. The initiatives of the EC Delegation in Ukraine, as well as the targeted activities of NGOs are not able to provide enough information. The government does almost nothing to fill this gap. Public information campaigns have failed both internally and externally.

One of the factors that did influence public opinion was the anti-NATO information campaign by a number of parties during the parliamentary elections in 2006. Some political parties (SPU, the Communist Party and others) claimed that the EU “did not want Ukraine.” Moreover, given the perceived connection between NATO and EU membership, the EU accession debate acquired additional negative connotations. Indirectly, the results of the parliamentary elections reflect the shift in public opinion; this was, however, more a choice driven by an internal political crisis, rather than by a shift in geopolitical orientation in the minds of ordinary Ukrainians.

## **The New EU Member States and Ukraine’s Membership Prospects**

By and large, the new EU Member States are in favour of further EU enlargement and Ukraine’s deeper integration with the EU. Despite rather similar support for Ukraine’s European aspirations in the national capitals, the public attitude differs significantly. With the exception of Poland, the rest of the new Member States have not had a wide public debate on Ukraine’s place in the EU. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify the main patterns of the debate in these countries and explain the logic behind it.

The presence of a large Ukrainian diaspora and labour migrant group in the Czech Republic makes the debate over Ukraine’s future in the EU more intensive and controversial, whereas the debate in Slovenia (which lacks a Ukrainian diaspora) is quite moderate. The introduction of a visa regime between the Czech Republic and Ukraine influenced the creation of a negative public attitude among Ukrainians. As a result, the number of Ukrainian tourists to the Czech Republic fell dramatically mainly as a consequence of the above-mentioned decision. Furthermore, people-to-people contacts between the Czechs and Ukrainians also decreased.

Neither the Czech Republic nor Slovenia has explicitly positioned itself as a regional leader in the enlarged EU (unlike Poland). Therefore, Ukrainians do not perceive the Czech Republic as a possible supporter or advocate of Ukraine’s interests in the EU.

## Conclusions

Ukraine has already materialised on the EU's map in the aftermath of the EU enlargement and the Orange Revolution. The possibility of the accession of Turkey and the Western Balkan countries raises the question of Ukraine's possible membership in the EU. On the other hand, Ukrainians have proven to adhere to democratic values, which remain the core issue in Europe. If the EU wants to maintain its role as an important global player and see the impact of its "transforming power", it will have to find new forms of co-operation with Ukraine. A deep free trade between the EU and Ukraine could be the first step towards Ukraine's real integration.

The debate on Ukraine's European integration will continue. It will be influenced by the domestic politics (e.g., the sustainability of the coalition, its ability to deliver the promises, the increase of gas prices in 2006) as well as by the messages sent from Brussels and other Member States' capitals.

## Appendix.

### Public Opinion on Ukraine's Foreign Policy Priorities by Regions (in %)

**Table 1.**  
The Desirable Way of Ukraine's Development in 1994 (%)<sup>19</sup>

	Western Ukraine	Central Ukraine	Southern Ukraine	Eastern Ukraine
Through intensified co-operation with Western countries	28	11	8	7
Through co-operation within the CIS	17	42	47	50
Through orientation on Russia	11	18	16	20
Through use of the country's own resources	23	12	12	7

**Table 2.**  
The Desirable Way of Ukraine's Development in 2001 (%)<sup>20</sup>

	Western Ukraine	Central Ukraine	Southern Ukraine	Eastern Ukraine
Through intensified co-operation with Western countries	27	13	11	5
Through co-operation within the CIS	11	18	17	18
Through orientation on Russia	2	5	8	11
Through use of the country's own resources	37	20	19	11

<sup>19</sup> Abstract from [<http://www.niss.gov.ua/Monitor/Monitor45/001.htm>]

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

**Table 3.**  
**The Desirable Way of Ukraine's Development in 2005 (%)<sup>21</sup>**

	<b>Western Ukraine</b>	<b>Central Ukraine</b>	<b>Southern Ukraine</b>	<b>Eastern Ukraine</b>
Through intensified co-operation with Western countries	39	16	14	7
Through co-operation within the CIS	5	11	12	14
Through orientation on Russia	2	8	11	11
Through use of the country's own resources	31	23	17	10

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<sup>21</sup> Abstract from [<http://www.niss.gov.ua/Monitor/Monitor45/001.htm>]

# **The Turkish Accession to the European Union: Mutually Beneficial? Mutually Possible?**

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## **Introduction**

Turkey and the EU have a more than 40-year-old contractual relationship, which was provided with a clear road map on December 2004 with the decision to open up accession negotiations. It is now over one year that Turkey and the EU have been sitting at the negotiation table yet, while the talks are progressing at a technical level, the political relations between the two partners have soured over a number of critical issues including for and most the question of Cyprus.

Currently, the highly-politicised Cyprus issue is a stalemate and there is little hope for reaching an agreement prior to the Turkish parliamentary elections to take place in November 2007. Diverging from the status quo, the Turkish government in power since 2002 has followed a proactive and positive role in supporting the acceptance of a long-lasting settlement on the island within the framework of the latest UN plan, the so-called "Annan plan". Turkish Cypriots too showed their approval of settlement by voting 65% yes in the referendum on 24 April, 2004. However, the plan was voted down by Greek Cypriots, then assured of EU membership with or without a settlement. To provide some compensation, the EU made two promises to the Turkish Cypriots, which it then fell short of keeping: 1) to provide financial assistance worth 256 million USD, and 2) to establish some direct trade links with the Turkish Cypriot part of the island.

Given its constructive Cyprus policy over the last years, the Turkish government now feels that it has shown its good-will and it is time for both Greek Cypriots and the EU to reciprocate. Without meaningful reciprocation, Prime Minister Erdoğan states, a further move from the Turkish part can in no way be justified in the eyes of the Turkish citizens<sup>1</sup>, who feel injustice has been done to the Turkish Cypriots. On the other side, for the EU, the opening of Turkish ports and airports to Greek Cypriot vessels and planes is a contractual obligation for Turkey to fulfil based on the extension of the Customs Union agreement between Turkey

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<sup>1</sup> H. E. R. Tayyip Erdoğan. Speech delivered at 2<sup>nd</sup> AKP Grand Party Congress, 11 November, 2006. [<http://www.akparti.org.tr/>]

and the EU to the 10 New Member States; and without its fulfilment, the negotiations, at least in certain chapters, can not proceed. It is now expected that the issue will be tackled in the next European Council in December 2006.

Analysts are currently concentrating on the possibility of four scenarios<sup>2</sup>: 1) the optimistic case where a compromise is found on the Cyprus issue on the basis of concessions made to Northern Cyprus to give enough room to the Turkish government to open up ports and airports, 2) the negotiations chapters, which directly relate to the Customs Union, are suspended, 3) negotiations are slowed down, and the EU gives a “rendez-vous” to reevaluate the status of negotiations, 4) the EU heads of state decide on a total suspension of the negotiations.

Although the last scenario is highly unlikely since the stakes are too high to risk, it is still interesting to observe how the issue of Cyprus can threaten the future of a long-lasting partnership with long-term mutual benefits. The principle of *pacta servanda sunt*, that prior commitments must be kept, is a highly cherished value in Turkey as well as it is in Europe. Therefore, both partners need to keep up to their promises and rebuild the mutual trust that is necessary to keep up the momentum of integration. However, in the current context, trust can only be fostered if both sides manage to shift their focus towards mutually beneficial aspects of this partnership and see the larger picture.

In the next part of the paper, I will try to highlight the areas of mutual interest and point out what contribution Turkish accession can bring to the European Union in these fields.

### ***Challenges in the EU-Turkey Relationship***

Both Turkey and the EU are faced with similar global challenges, the solutions to which can be better found by working together. In terms of effective coping with the numerous exigencies of today’s world, three areas stand out where a stable partnership between the EU and Turkey would prove particularly fruitful: 1) economic competitiveness, 2) managing diversity, and 3) global security.

#### ***Challenge 1: Economic Competitiveness***

At the turn of the millennia, Europe set itself an ambitious target of becoming the world’s most dynamic and competitive economy by 2010. Given Europe’s sluggish productivity and GDP growth rates in the recent years, especially compared to the emerging giants such as China and India, today Europe looks very far from reaching its objective.

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<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion of the possible scenarios, see: Hughes, K. “Turkey and the EU: Four Scenarios: From Train Crash to Full Steam Ahead.” A Friends of Europe Report in association with Chatham House and the European Institute of the London School of Economics, September, 2006.



In contrast to the European economic slowdown, Turkey has made a remarkable progress since 2001 both in terms of sustaining high levels of economic growth and achieving macroeconomic stability. The inflation rates have been reduced to single digits; the interest rates as well as public sector deficit and debt have been lowered to sustainable levels. At the same time, Turkish economy managed to constantly grow: 7.6% in 2005 and at an annual average of 4.3% for the last 15 years.

Turkey has not only achieved stable and high GDP growth, but also improved its levels of productivity at a noteworthy pace. According to the recent survey of Economist Intelligence Unit presented in *Global Competitiveness Report 2006*, Turkey's ranking in Global Competitiveness Index has been improved to 59 in 2006 from 71 just a year before.

The robust growth accompanied by macroeconomic stability contributed to a healthy investment environment in Turkey with a result of a historical peak of 9.7 billion USD worth of Foreign Direct Investment flowing to Turkey in 2005. This represents an amount six-fold higher than the yearly average of FDI received by Turkey over the previous decade. In the first 8 months of this year, the FDI flowing into Turkey has been 12.4 billion USD and is expected to reach 20 billion USD by the end of the year. Now, as UNCTAD's *World Investment Report 2006* indicates, Turkey is ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> most attractive destination for FDI in the world, up from being the 35<sup>th</sup> in 2005. Among the emerging markets, Turkey is now the 7<sup>th</sup> most attractive FDI destination.

All these complimentary developments underline the vitality of the Turkish economy and its potential for bringing much-needed dynamism to slow-growing EU economy. Turkey now enjoys a big, growing, stable market with a steadily increasing GDP, an export oriented industrial economy and rapidly developing information society. What adds to this picture is the status of human capital, a crucial factor of production and growth in contemporary economies and Turkey has a very important comparative advantage in this regard. Continuous enhancement of human capital helps to provide the current and future labour force with necessary skills and facilitates the adoption of new technologies, underpinning the conditions for a sustained economic growth. Therefore, it is now widely accepted that increases in human capital, achieved by correct educational and training policies accompanied by favourable demographic trends, stand out as one of the most indispensable tools of socio-economic development.

At the moment, roughly speaking 20% of the Turkish population are below the age of 10 and as demographic trends show, by 2020 the percentage of the working age population to the rest will reach optimal levels. If Turkey manages to enhance this "demographic gift" with correct educational policies and investments, Turkish human capital will be the driving force of sustained economic growth and structural change, not only domestically but also regionally. Increases in human capital would also facilitate a faster convergence with the EU.

In comparison to ageing Europe, Turkey is not only rich in human energy, but it also plays a critical role for Europe with regards to natural energy resources. As it

is well-known, the demand for energy in Europe is increasing day by day. Especially the proportion of natural gas within total energy consumption is growing very rapidly in comparison to other energy sources. In fact, as one recent research shows, the European need for natural gas will increase by 160% until 2030.<sup>3</sup> Today Russia is the leading provider of Europe's natural gas demands. This over-dependence proves problematic in several ways: first, considering the rapid increase in demand, the Russian supplies emerge as increasingly inadequate. Findings reveal that while in the year 2000, 67% of European gas imports came from Russia, in the year 2020 this rate will inevitably fall down to 35%.<sup>4</sup> In this respect, the need for the diversification of supply sources, particularly those from Central Asia and the Middle East, constitutes a critical concern. Second, this situation points to the necessity of diversification of transit paths to ensure safer access to energy. At the same time, the increasing dependence on natural gas obliges the search for alternative energy sources.

Given this background, it becomes apparent that both Turkey and Europe share a common interest in building a closer cooperation with regards to the area of energy security, both in terms of diversification of supplies and access. Turkey is positioned as an energy corridor not only linking the East to West, but also the North to South, channelling the Caspian and the Middle Eastern energy to Europe and to world markets. Thus, Turkey is already an important hub of energy distribution and its relevance is continuing to grow as new multinational projects, which will have geopolitical repercussions for decades to come, are becoming realized.

The newly functional Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline is a telling case in point. The 1,730 kilometres long pipeline transports Azeri crude oil to Turkey's Ceyhan port via Georgia with an annual capacity of 50 million metric tons, which roughly amounts to 1 billion barrels per day. What is also particularly important about BTC is that it is indeed independent of the control of OPEC countries and Russia.

Another significant multinational project, Nabucco, foresees the distribution of Caspian natural gas to Europe via Turkey, linking Central Asian natural gas reserves with Central European countries. Nabucco Company Pipeline Study GmbH was founded in June 2004 and the state-owned gas companies of Greece and Turkey announced their interest to start the construction on the first stage of the pipeline, which will have the capacity to carry 31 billion cubic meters of gas annually. Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Iraq, Egypt and maybe Iran are among the candidate source countries.<sup>5</sup> Another project worth mentioning

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<sup>3</sup> European Energy and Transport Trends to 2030. [[http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/energy\\_transport/figures/trends\\_2030/1\\_pref\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/energy_transport/figures/trends_2030/1_pref_en.pdf)]

<sup>4</sup> Hafner, M. *Future Natural Gas Supply Options and Supply Costs for Europe* [[europa.eu.int/comm/energy/en/gas\\_single\\_market/workshop\\_2002\\_11/external\\_commission/10.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/en/gas_single_market/workshop_2002_11/external_commission/10.pdf)] and *Russian Energy Strategy in 2003*. [[www.mte.gov.ru/files/103/1354.strategy.pdf](http://www.mte.gov.ru/files/103/1354.strategy.pdf)]

<sup>5</sup> Available at: [<http://www.botas.gov.tr/eng/projects/allprojects/bulgaria.asp>]

relates to the extension of currently active Blue Stream natural gas pipeline, now transporting Russian natural gas to Turkey. The project involves the extension of the line to Greece, Italy and France and also building a parallel line to connect Russian gas to Israel city of Ashkalon. The Blue Stream pipeline has the capacity to pump 3.2 billion cubic meters of gas annually, and enjoys the potential to more than quadruple that amount.<sup>6</sup>

It is estimated that with the completion of the pipeline projects, Turkey's Ceyhan port will become the new Rotterdam for transportation of energy resources to world markets.<sup>7</sup> Hence, Turkey as a future member of the EU would support European energy security both in terms of diversification of supplies and access routes.

### ***Challenge 2: Managing Diversity***

From its start, the European Union has been a visionary project of achieving "unity in diversity" by bringing various nationalities and cultures to work together towards common objectives of peace and prosperity. While on the one side the European project is trying to progress by espousing the values of multiculturalism, on the other side our contemporary world is marked by an increasing tension between different religious and cultural worldviews. A quick glance to the current global setting suggests that one of the major assets of the Union is that it now stands out as the strongest candidate to set an example of successful coexistence.

The Turkish accession into the EU would further strengthen Europe's global soft power and substantiate the intercultural dialogue between the Christian and Muslim populations.

In return, the European Union membership would irrevocably consolidate Turkish democracy and refute the claim that Islam and democracy cannot coexist. There are already more than 15 million Muslims living within the borders of the EU and their numbers are increasing daily. Thus, Islam is already an integral part of the European culture. Given this perspective, the joining of Turkey to the European family would also send a signal to European Muslims that their cultural values are compatible with the Union.

The current Turkish government has been active in promoting Turkey's role to foster respect and dialogue between Islamic and Western societies. To this end in November 2005, the Prime Ministers of Turkey and Spain launched a UN-backed *Alliance of Civilizations* Project with an objective to develop instruments and platforms to reduce misunderstanding between Islamic and Christian cultures and to fight extremism, intolerance and terrorism. Within the framework of intercultural

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<sup>6</sup> Available at: [<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4445158.stm>]

<sup>7</sup> See the article: "Ahmet Çalık: Ceyhan yeni Rotterdam olacak." *Radikal*, 23 June, 2006. [<http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=190966>]

dialogue, the successful integration of Turkey into the EU, the integration of a secular but Muslim country, which embraces common European values such as respect for human dignity and rights, rule of law, would set an example of peaceful co-existence in the divided and problematic world that we currently live in.

### ***Challenge 3: Global Security***

A quick glance at the regions surrounding Europe also suggests that Turkish and European interests converge with regards to the security questions involving areas such as the Balkans, Central Asia and the Middle East. In a report entitled “Turkey as Bridgehead and Spearhead – Integrating EU and Turkish Foreign Policy”, Emerson and Tocci conclude that “Turkey stands to be an unequivocal asset for the EU’s external policies” based on a combination of “objective factors” and “normative arguments”.<sup>8</sup> Some of the stated factors include “Turkey’s role of a geographical hub for regional cooperation” and her positioning to become a “forward base for the EU’s security and defence policy, for military logistics and the credibility of the EU’s presence in the region.” Emerson and Tocci’s analysis show that the EU and Turkish foreign policies are convergent and complimentary in the Balkans, the Black Sea, Central Asia, Mediterranean, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf regions. As for the foreign policy vis-à-vis the US and the rest of the Middle East, the paper argues that the Turkish and EU positions are increasingly becoming convergent and complimentary.

In fact, Turkey, a reliable NATO ally since 1952, already contributes to the European security and defence policy through an agreement, which allows for the participation of non-EU NATO allies in the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Within this framework, Turkey has so far participated in all EU-led military operations, with the exception of the operation in the Republic of Congo. Given Turkey’s strategic location and long-standing ties with the neighbouring countries, Turkey supports the EU efforts to stabilize the highly volatile regions, which indeed constitute the locus of Europe’s main security concerns such as terrorism and illegal trafficking of drugs, arms and people.

### **Turkish Perspectives on the EU Membership**

While it is very important to see the strategic implications of the Turkish accession into the EU in a larger global context, it is as equally important to try to understand why so many people both in the EU and Turkey fail to do so. All the recent public opinion surveys reveal that there is a declining support for the enlargement process in the European Union, as well as in the candidate countries. The following part will address this issue in more detail:

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<sup>8</sup> Emerson, M., Tocci, N. (2004). “Turkey as Bridgehead and Spearhead – Integrating EU and Turkish Foreign Policy.” Center for European Policy Studies (CEPS) Turkey in Europe Monitor No. 7, July, 2004.

### ***Turkish Public Opinion and the EU Membership***

Traditionally, the overwhelming majority of Turkish citizens have been supportive of the Turkish membership to the EU, where approval rates have been around 60% to 70% during the period prior to 2005. In terms of socio-economic positioning, the support for the EU has been higher among the better educated, the economically better-off and the less religiously inclined segments of the Turkish population. As one analyst suggests, in a certain way, the objective of the EU accession has been “the glue that binds together Turkey’s key groups: the Muslim democrats, arch-secularists, the armed forces and the business.”<sup>9</sup>

However, as it is the case with almost all candidate countries, Turkish public support for the EU has been constantly declining since the start of accession negotiations on 3 October 2005. According to the Eurobarometer 65 of Spring 2006, the percentage of Turkish population who saw EU membership as a “good thing” dropped to 44% in 2006 in comparison with 55% in autumn 2005. In fact, a more recent survey shows that absolute support for Turkey’s EU membership is now down to 32.2% from 67.5% in 2004.<sup>10</sup> According to the same research, 33.3% of the population are indifferent to the membership, while 25.6% are against (in 2002, 17.9% were against the membership).

The decline in the Turkish support for the EU membership for the most part can be attributed to a parallel fall in the trust for the Union. An overwhelming majority, 78% of the respondents of A&G research, state that they no longer trust the Union and 76.5% believe even tougher new preconditions will be put forward to block the Turkish accession. The decline in trust levels is also detected in the Eurobarometer 65 survey results where there is a noteworthy drop in the trust felt in Turkey for the European Commission and the European Parliament.

Among the reasons cited for the rise in distrust is the European position vis-à-vis the issue of Cyprus and Armenia, as well as counterproductive anti-Turkish accession statements of some European decision-makers. Of course, low levels of information among the Turkish public on how the EU works<sup>11</sup> adds to this bleak picture. Due to lack of understanding of the EU structure, Turks are often incapable of distinguishing between the personal or national statements of European leaders vs. the joint statements made on behalf of the EU.

As the Turks feel that the EU accession negotiations so far have brought many more sticks than carrots, the overall image of the EU is increasingly weakening

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<sup>9</sup> Grabbe, H. “From Drift to Strategy: why the EU should start accession talks with Turkey.” [http://www.cer.org.uk/pdf/essay\\_turkey\\_hg\\_july04.pdf](http://www.cer.org.uk/pdf/essay_turkey_hg_july04.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> The research was conducted by a Turkish research company A&G on 23–24 September, 2006, in 32 Turkish provinces through face-to-face interviews with 2408 people. The research question asked whether or not the respondent would agree with the following statement: “Turkey must absolutely become an EU member.”

<sup>11</sup> As Eurobarometer 65 illustrates, only 46% of the Turkish public feel that they know how the EU works.

in Turkey, where 43% declared to regard the EU positively in 2006 in comparison to 60% in autumn 2005. For the Turkish people, the EU's positive image is linked, but in lesser proportions, to three major reasons: economic prosperity" (35% in spring 2006 and 41% in autumn 2005), social protection (21% in 2006 and 32% in autumn 2005) and peace (24% in 2006 and 23% in autumn 2005), to be followed by democracy (18% in spring 2006 and 19% in autumn 2005) and cultural diversity (16% in spring 2006 and 19% in autumn 2005).

### ***The Turkish Political Class and the EU Integration***

The European accession has been an indispensable objective of the Turkish political class, both of the left and the right, for the last 40 years. However, it has been the centre-right AKP government who has shown the most decisive political will to undertake comprehensive reforms to the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria. While the espousal of EU-related reform process has extended the support base of AKP to include more western-oriented citizens and helped them to make peace with the republican institutions, it also has put AKP at the centre of nationalist critiques.

Although currently none of the major opposition parties officially adopt a Euro-rejectionist position, they nevertheless exploit the issue of accession negotiations to gain ground vis-à-vis the AKP. The main parties of opposition, the centre-left Republican People's Party (CHP), the centre-right True Path Party (DYP) and the Motherland Party (ANAP), and the nationalist Nationalist Action Party (MHP) join their forces in criticizing AKP's European policies, which they judge to be too yielding to European requests. As survey results show, nationalist feelings are in general on the rise among the Turkish population due to a combination of factors such as the re-emergence of PKK terrorism and the recent international political manoeuvres surrounding the issues of Cyprus and Armenia. Given the current tense setting and the falling public support for the European cause, AKP government, which is to face general elections in November 2007, has been treading a fine line between continuing the negotiation process and responding to its adversaries' claims on "selling out the country." Thus, despite the fact that Turkey's integration into Europe has been the longest lasting political objective of the Republican era, at the current conjuncture; the Turkish political scene suffers from a lack of leadership rallying behind the European project.

### ***The Business Community, Civil Society and the EU Integration***

The Turkish business community has been one of the most influential players in forging a closer relationship between Turkey and the EU. From the initiation of association talks back in 1960s to date, the support of the Turkish business community to the European cause has been more pronounced than any other advocacy group. Turkish business associations were the first ones to try to explain both at home and abroad the benefits of Turkish membership to the EU. As early as 1965, the business community set up Economic Development Foundation to

join in their forces to foster a better understanding of Europe in Turkey and vice versa. The positive outcome of the Customs Union between Turkey and the EU (effective since the beginning of 1996) for the Turkish companies and larger conglomerates has further strengthened the business support for the EU integration process, which became institutionalised through the works of leading employee confederations such as TUSIAD and TOBB, as well as the principal trade unions such as DISK and HAK-IS.

The efforts of the Turkish business community have constituted an example to the significant role that the Turkish civil society has played in facilitating the start of accession negotiations mainly through lobbying and informational activities carried out both in Turkey and in Europe. From where we are standing today, it is still the Turkish civil society led by the business community who are in the front line of the support for Turkish entry into the EU.

## **European Public Opinion and Enlargement**

Among the European populations too is a prevalent “enlargement fatigue” and this uneasiness becomes even more pronounced when it comes to the case of Turkey. According to a Special Barometer 255 entitled “Attitudes Towards European Union Enlargement”, the field work of which is conducted between March–May 2006 and the results published in July 2006, 45% of the Europeans are in favour of the EU enlargement in general, whereas 39% are in favour of Turkish accession to the EU, even if Turkey complies with all conditions set by the EU.

The European public opinion is very much divided on the issue of Turkey varying drastically from one country to another: Austria, Germany, Cyprus, Greece and Luxembourg are the leading countries of opposition, whereas in Spain, the UK, Sweden, Slovenia, Poland, Netherlands and Denmark the majorities support the Turkish accession. As a general trend, the opposition is higher among the old members of the Union (49%) in comparison to the 10 New Member States (40%). The two acceding countries, both Bulgaria and Romania, are in favour of the Turkish membership. With regards to the Baltic States, the support levels also vary: In Latvia, 35% are in favour (47% against), in Lithuania 33% are in favour (42% against); while 47% of Estonians are in favour and only 23% are against.

As the survey illustrates, one of the major reasons behind rather low rates of approval is again the lack of information: 68% of the respondents declare that they are not well informed about enlargement, whereas only 30% feel informed. To add to the case, even if they are more informed, the Europeans in general (with the exception of Poland and Malta out of the EU-25) know and hear more about the problems associated with enlargement rather than the benefits.

Economic fears stand out as the leading stumbling block in front of the support for enlargement, particularly in terms of delocalisation and labour immigration.



Moreover, Europeans do not perceive enlargement as a beneficial tool for better managing globalisation and for enhancing Europe's role as a key player in global politics. In fact, many fears associated with the process of enlargement seem to relate to the fear of globalisation among the European citizens.

## Conclusions

As the above picture clearly illustrates, neither the majority of Turks nor the Europeans perceive enlargement as a win-win situation. The survey results show that both sides find the membership mostly in the interest of the opposite party, where only 30% of Turks and 20% of the European Union citizens believe that enlargement is a mutual interest to both.<sup>12</sup> Given the insufficient popular levels of information on the merits of enlargement – realized and potential, the need for better explaining the publics that enlargement has been part of the solution to many political and economic concerns much more than it has been part of the problem becomes even more pressing. So far, both the European and Turkish decision-makers have failed in this regard.

The above-presented discussion has been a modest attempt at pointing out the fact that on many fronts Europe needs Turkey as much as Turkey needs Europe since problems that threaten international peace and prosperity can be tackled much more effectively by governance structures that function above the national level. Cross border problems such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, climate change, economic slowdown, ageing are all global risks, and mutual needs can be met only through building a stable partnership between the EU and Turkey, where Turkey becomes fully integrated into the European structure. The attainment of such an objective requires first and foremost sound, prudent and visionary opinion leadership in Turkey, as well as in Europe, much more than before.

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# The Macedonian Accession to the European Union

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*“Europa,” as the more learned of the ancient Greeks first conceived it, stood in sharp contrast to both Asia and Libya, the name then applied to the known northern part of Africa. Literally, “Europa” is now thought to have meant “Mainland,” rather than the earlier interpretation, “Sunset.” It appears to have suggested itself to the Greeks, in their maritime world, as an appropriate designation of the broadening, extensive northerly lands that lay beyond, lands with characteristics but vaguely known; yet these characteristics were clearly different from those inherent in the concepts of Asia and Libya, both of which, relatively prosperous and civilized, were associated closely with the culture of the Greeks and their predecessors.*

*Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica*

## The EU and Macedonia (Western Balkans) – State of Affairs

### ***EU Integration Process of Macedonia***

Since 17 December 2005, Macedonia has been a candidate country for EU accession. This has been a great achievement for a country that faced many challenges on its path of acquiring the candidate status. Since its independence Macedonia experienced a Greek embargo (1993–5), suffered losses due to the UN sanctions against Serbia and the Kosovo crisis of 1999. Only after the country peacefully ended an interethnic conflict in 2001 it regained the support of the EU. Today “Macedonia in Europe” is a goal supported by all ethnic communities in Macedonia. Various surveys (polls)<sup>2</sup> show that the EU integration is the common goal which unites all citizens of Macedonia regardless of their ethnicity, political orientation, social status, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Background research provided by Ms. Sanja Kostovska and Ms. Natalija Spasovska, both analysts in CRPM.

<sup>2</sup> See: [<http://www.sei.gov.mk/portal/mak/default.asp?id=88976>]; [<http://www.sei.gov.mk/portal/mak/default.asp?id=10>]

The Macedonian EU integration is marked by the following milestones:

- Macedonia was the first country that signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement on 9 April, 2001, in Luxembourg (SAP); it was ratified by the Macedonian Parliament on 1 June, 2001, but came into effect on 1 April, 2004, when Member States of the EU ratified it,<sup>3</sup>
- on 22 March, 2004, Macedonia submitted its request for membership in the European Union,<sup>4</sup>
- on 1 October, 2004, the European Commission submitted to the Government of Macedonia a Questionnaire,<sup>5</sup>
- the Government of Macedonia returned the answers to the EC Questionnaire on 14 February, 2005, to the President of the European Commission,<sup>6</sup>
- on 9 November, 2005, the Commission issued an opinion on the Macedonian application recommending a candidate status for Macedonia,<sup>7</sup>
- on 17 December, 2005, the EU Council granted Macedonia a candidate status for EU membership.<sup>8</sup>

### ***The Macedonian “To Do List”***

The EU opened its doors to Macedonia and the Western Balkan countries<sup>9</sup> in 1997 when the Union established a regional approach as a basic framework for its relationship with the Western Balkans, which meant that besides the fulfilment of the EU Copenhagen Criteria, the countries would have to meet an additional condition: an established regional co-operation. At the same time it was proclaimed that each country will be evaluated in accordance with its individual achievements. Thus, while the European integration of the Balkans would have to go through a regional integration first, the countries will become EU members one by one according to their success in meeting the EU criteria.

The Thessaloniki Summit in July 2003, seen as “a milestone in the European Union’s relations with the Western Balkans,”<sup>10</sup> gave an unambiguous sign to the Western Balkan countries that if all conditions are met their future will be a European one. At that summit a new European Partnership was offered to the Balkan countries. It was, however, stressed that the framework set by the Stabilisation

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<sup>3</sup> Macedonia in the EU; Government of the Republic of Macedonia, pp. 12–13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> See: [[http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/the\\_former\\_yugoslav\\_republic\\_of\\_macedonia/key\\_documents\\_en.htm#elarg\\_pck\\_2005](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia/key_documents_en.htm#elarg_pck_2005)]

<sup>8</sup> See: [<http://www.vlada.mk/Informacii/Dekemvri2005/i17-12-2005.htm>]

<sup>9</sup> The Western Balkan countries are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia (Kosovo).

<sup>10</sup> See: [[http://www.europa-eu-un.org/articles/en/article\\_2444\\_en.htm](http://www.europa-eu-un.org/articles/en/article_2444_en.htm)]

and Association Process (SAP) would remain central, and compatible with the European Partnership.

Macedonia has had the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU for six years now and its progress is evaluated on yearly basis. Since the first report produced in 2002 when Macedonia scored well only in the area of regional co-operation and good neighbouring relations, a trend which continued to be positively noticed in the other reports, the main progress noted in subsequent years was related to the political situation assessed as generally stable and successful in terms of the implementation of the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement. Certain progress in the public administration reform, management of public finances (noted as a priority in the previous reports), and the reform of the army, has been also achieved. Still, the main weaknesses such as the incomplete reform of the judicial system, the problems with the rule of law, corruption, and the economy (high level of unemployment and low investments) remained.<sup>11</sup>

The approximation of the Macedonian legislation with the EU laws is another priority area. For that purpose the National Programme for Approximation of Legislation was adopted in April 2003 and a Working Committee for European Integration was established in March 2003. A subcommittee for approximation to the EU legislation established Working Groups for Harmonisation of Legislation with the “community acquis.”<sup>12</sup> Moreover, since October 2003 a “Statement on Compliance with EU Legislation” must accompany each draft of a new law or policy thus directly supporting the harmonisation of the Macedonian legislation and policies to the EU acquis. The general assessment of the EC is that Macedonia is making progress in the approximation of the legislation.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to the SAA, the European Partnership<sup>14</sup> introduced at the Thessaloniki Summit was promoted as an additional and compatible mode for the realisation of the European perspective of the Balkan countries within the framework of the Stabilisation and Association process. The first European Partnership with Macedonia was adopted by the Council in 2004 and it has been updated since then with new priorities that have emerged. In that direction, in January 2006, an Action Plan for the European Partnership 2005<sup>15</sup> was adopted promoting actions based on the Opinion of the European Commission and the Analytical Report for the Opinion on the Membership Application of Macedonia. The organisation of the priorities was divided into two groups:

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<sup>11</sup> See: Stabilization and Association Report 2004, European Commission; Stabilization and Association Report 2003, European Commission.

<sup>12</sup> Stabilisation and Association Report 2004, European Commission.

<sup>13</sup> Cierco, T. “Stabilizing Macedonia: The Key Role of the European Union.” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Town & Country Resort and Convention Center, San Diego, California, USA, 22 March, 2006, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> See: [[http://europa.eu.int/smartapi/cgi/sga\\_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=en&numdoc=32006D0057&model=guichett](http://europa.eu.int/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=en&numdoc=32006D0057&model=guichett)]

<sup>15</sup> See: [<http://www.sep.gov.mk/Documents/eip/jordan-radF0E2B-1.PDF>]

- Short-term priorities (a one year timeline), focused on the reforms and organisation of the electoral process for the parliamentary elections held on 5 July, 2006.
- Medium-term priorities were laid down with the action plan for the European Partnership (on 4 July, 2006) referring to important and urgent reforms in the police sector, the rule of law, the economic environment, the approximation of the legislation to the EU law and standards and the strengthening of the administrative capacity.

The obligation to translate the *acquis* should be mentioned in this context. The Committee for the Translation of Legal Instruments is responsible in this field. Until now, 3500 pages have been translated with technical help received from the projects PRAQIII and GTZ. A future translation of another 8000 legal instruments is planned.<sup>16</sup> The point of this is that every country before its accession to the EU has to adopt some 80,000 pages of EU legislation.

### ***The EU “Unfinished Business” in the Western Balkans***

One of the main obstacles in the Europeanisation process of the Western Balkan countries is the EU visa regime. This is a great limitation to travel, to seeing, learning and absorbing the positive experiences of the European Union. Although the EU is investing a lot in the reforms of these countries, it will not be enough if the citizens of these countries remain closed in a “Balkan ghetto.” All EU Member States have imposed a visa regime on the countries of the Western Balkans (except Croatia). The two countries that joined the EU in 2007, Bulgaria and Romania, since 1 January, 2007, also require Western Balkan citizens visas to enter. That means that the “hoop” around the Western Balkans is narrowing. The frustrations felt from the isolation among the citizens of these countries are growing. Although the purpose of a visa regime is prevention of organised crime, law-abiding citizens of the Western Balkan countries are mainly those that face limitations on their travel opportunities to pursue education and business within the EU.

Many analysts and reports, including the most recent ones of the International Crisis Group<sup>17</sup> point out that the visa regime has a negative impact on the motivation and the energy of these countries in the process of reforming trade, the economy in general, and education and might have a negative impact on the regional stability. Knowing this, the EU made a promise at the Thessaloniki Summit to liberalise the visa regime for the Western Balkan countries. This however, has not yet shown concrete results. The situation is especially irritating to the citizens from the Western Balkans because the EU has started a negotiation process on visa facilitation with Russia, Ukraine and China.

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<sup>16</sup> See: [<http://www.sei.gov.mk/portal/mak/default.asp?id=7>]

<sup>17</sup> See: [<http://www.google.com/u/crisisgroup?q=visa+regime&ie=UTF-8>]

Positive signals on the liberalisation of the visa regime for Macedonia, were sent during the Finnish Presidency of the EU (July–December 2006), as it is to be the first country from the Western Balkans to start negotiations for visa facilitation.<sup>18</sup> However, the liberalisation would not mean the elimination of the visas for the Macedonian citizens, but the introduction of simpler and easier procedures to obtain visas. That is supposed to be the first step towards the abolition of the visa regime for the Macedonian citizens. Macedonia should fulfil the following conditions in order to be eligible for visa facilitation: implement an integrated border administration and electronic management system, it should sign readmission agreements with all EU member states and improve the quality of passports<sup>19</sup>. Macedonia has signed 13 readmission agreements until now. Four countries have stated that concluding such agreements with Macedonia is not necessary, due to the insignificant numbers of immigrants. Readmission agreements with Sweden, Norway, Ukraine and Bosnia and Herzegovina are expected to be signed in the forthcoming period.<sup>20</sup> Regarding the integrated border administration a significant progress has been made since the police have taken over the control of all the borders. The Common Platform regarding the border control adopted on 22 May, 2003, in Ohrid moved things towards bringing the new law for the control of the borders, in compliance with the EU standards in this area. Moreover, a new Police Law was adopted by the Parliament in October 2006.

The rules of origin appear as other “unfinished business” of the EU in the Balkans. These rules of origin define the “nationality” and the origin of the goods in the international trade. There exist two types of rules of origin: non preferential rules and preferential rules. In the focus of interest of the Western Balkan countries are the preferential rules. At present, there are two distinct types of EU agreements with the countries in the Western Balkans, granting them free access to the Community market for almost all products, with only a few exceptions: autonomous trade measures – ATMs (in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia and Montenegro) and the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (for Albania, Croatia and Macedonia). These agreements do not regulate the system of regional and diagonal cummulation and thus the countries have different rules of origin regime when exporting to the EU. All the SAP countries did not succeed to take full advantage of the asymmetric trade liberalisation with the EU the reasons being besides the lack of productive capacity, the insufficient ability to comply with EU quality standards, and the non-participation in Pan-European Diagonal Cummulation of Rules of Origin.

Macedonia and the rest of the countries in the Western Balkan region are not members of the Pan-European Association of Diagonal Cummulation, whereas Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria are. Their products have preferential treatment when exported to the EU. As a result, if a Macedonian manufacturer imports fabrics from Serbia or Bosnia the final products are not being considered as originating

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<sup>18</sup> See: [<http://www.a1.com.mk/vesti/default.asp?VestID=65644>]

<sup>19</sup> See: [<http://www.sobranie.mk/uploads/soopstenie%20Teuta.doc>]

<sup>20</sup> See: [[www.sei.gov.mk/portal/mak/bilten/MONTHLY%20PROGRES%20BRIEF\\_June%2006.pdf](http://www.sei.gov.mk/portal/mak/bilten/MONTHLY%20PROGRES%20BRIEF_June%2006.pdf)]

in Macedonia if exported to the EU and thus she/he will be required to pay 12% custom fee, as neither Serbia, Bosnia, nor Macedonia are members of the system for diagonal cummulation. Whereas, if the Macedonian manufacturer imports certain fabrics from other country with which Macedonia has signed Free Trade Agreement (e.g., Bulgaria), the final product can be treated as originating in Macedonia if that product is exported in the same country (principle of bilateral cummulation).

Therefore, the leaders of the Western Balkan countries agreed that the membership in the Pan-European association of diagonal cummulation would help the further development of their economies:

*"We are confident that the full and efficient implementation of the network of bilateral **free trade agreements** combined with further trade liberalisation and facilitation measures, will contribute to sustainable economic growth in the region. Given progress to date, we believe that the possibility of moving to a single free trade framework should be fully explored. In this context, we welcome the European Commission's proposal to extend the Pan-European diagonal cummulation of origin to the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process in a manner consistent with all relevant Community Policies and dependent on their administrative capacity."*<sup>21</sup>

Within the Pan-European system a manufacturer can use any originating input (raw materials or component) from the area in the manufacture of finished products, without running the risk of losing the free trade status if it is exported within the area. For example, a manufacturer in Macedonia would be able to import all materials from Bulgaria and export the finished products not only back to Bulgaria, but also to all EFTA countries. The objective of the system is to create an incentive for cooperation between industries and to promote an international division of labour. If the Western Balkan countries were treated as one region for the purposes of the EU rules of origin or were members of the Pan-European diagonal cummulation, the rules of origin would not be a hidden trade barrier to Macedonian industry because Macedonian products would cumulate origin, when using raw materials from Turkey, for example, and be exported to the EU without having to pay additional 12% of custom fees.

At the Thessaloniki Summit (19–20 June, 2003) the leaders of the EU Member States agreed upon the strategy of the Union towards the Western Balkan countries. One of the items on the Thessaloniki agenda was the idea of extension of the system of diagonal cummulation to the Western Balkan countries:

*"Only when the necessary conditions are fulfilled and the administrative arrangements are in place an extension of the Pan-European system of diagonal cummulation of origin to the Western Balkans could be envisaged, which would then further facilitate reaping the full benefits of regional trade integration. If any such*

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<sup>21</sup> See: Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the South East European Cooperation process (SEECP), 9 June 2003, Sarajevo.



*extension were to be envisaged, it should be applied in a manner, which is fully consistent with all relevant community policies.*"<sup>22</sup>

The Macedonian Government and the producers are aware of the need for the Macedonian industrial production to be improved. One of the factors for the upgrade to be achieved is for the country to become a member of the Association for Diagonal Cummulation, so that, for example, Macedonian clothing will receive preferential treatment. The Government has put all its efforts to build an administrative capacity for assuming this function and the European Commission, at the first meeting with the Macedonian authorities within the Committee for Stabilisation and Association of Macedonia (held on 3 June, 2004), noted that "Macedonia fulfilled the conditions for accession to the system which was particularly necessary for the encouragement of foreign investment and the increase of export."<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the minutes of this meeting emphasize that "there was a delay in the implementation of this item of the Thessaloniki Agenda, but the responsibility for the slow progress was entirely on the European Commission."<sup>24</sup>

When it was expected for the Union to initiate an extension of the system for diagonal cummulation and invite Macedonia to become a member, something unexpected happened. The European Commission recommended and the European Council decided on 11 October, 2005, to extend the Pan European Association for diagonal cummulation to the Mediterranean countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and the Palestinian territory – West Bank Gaza. With this a Pan-Euro-Mediterranean Association of Diagonal Cummulation was established, excluding the Western Balkan countries. Sources in the European Commission that the Center for Research and Policy Making consulted say that this decision was made under strong pressure from the diplomacies of the Mediterranean countries, as well as the clothing manufacturers and the powerful European clothing retailers, who lobbied actively in the EU for this decision to be made.

This decision gives the products from the Mediterranean countries a preferential treatment, whereas those coming from the Western Balkan countries, which traditionally belong to Europe and have European future, will continue to be charged with 12% custom fees when using raw materials from countries such as Turkey. As a kind of compensation to the two countries that have Agreements for Stabilisation and Association and are candidates to become EU member states, Croatia and Macedonia, the EU offered an agreement for sub-regional diagonal cummulation between them. But this system will have little, if at all, value for Macedonia as the amount of the raw materials its manufacturers source from Croatia is very small.

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<sup>22</sup> See: The Stabilisation and Association Process for South East Europe, *Second Annual Report*, Commission of the European Communities. [<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UNTC/UNPAN012924.pdf>] Last accessed in December, 2005.

<sup>23</sup> Minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the European Community – the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Stabilization and Association Committee, Skopje, 3 June, 2004, p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

## The EU and the Balkans

### *The EU's Security Role In the Balkans*

The stability of the Balkans is an important goal to be achieved and maintained not just by the Balkan countries but also by the European Union. The EU wants to deal with every potential and current threat to its stability, and the Balkans, since the breakdown of Yugoslavia, are seen as a problematic region. The stability of the Balkan region is set as a strategic objective of EU. The EU interest and involvement in the Balkans began since 1991 and the disintegration of former Yugoslavia. That was also a great challenge for the European Union, a completely new experience for the EU institutions to deal with. The involvement in the "Balkan story" did not only mean the EU influence on the stability of the region grew, but it was also a "capacity building" lesson for the EU's common security and foreign policy.

The European Union has invested great energy and financial resources in the stabilisation of the Balkan countries. Through its aid programs the EU has provided more than 6.1 billion Euros between 1991 and 2001<sup>25</sup> for the Balkan countries. After the NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999, the EU felt that a more serious and long term approach was needed for the Balkan challenge, and for that purpose the Stability Pact was established.<sup>26</sup> The crises in the beginning of the 1990s, and the crisis in Kosovo were important experiences for the European Union and a key moment for the EU to understand the situation, to adapt and perform its role as stabiliser of the region better. The necessity for the EU to play a more active role that needs a different organisation and perception of the security mission on the Balkans grew further after the terrorist attacks of 11 September, 2001, and the withdrawal of the US troops from the region because of the new circumstances and the new priorities that the USA faced after that date. The EU understood the importance of improvement of its crisis management and finally saw the need for a military component in its approach. In that context, Macedonia was the test where the improved crisis management of the EU passed with a positive grade. That was the first time when the Union was proactively engaged in security affairs, covering a variety of tasks from policing to military intervention<sup>27</sup>.

The Yugoslav conflict exposed the main weaknesses of the EU approach regarding the disbalance of "hard power" (military) and "soft power" (non-military). The lack of necessary coherence between diplomacy, coercive diplomacy and the use of force, and the credible threat of the use of force, was stressed as a great problem of the EU.<sup>28</sup> However, it was not easy for the Union to achieve its more active security role in the region. It must not be forgotten that the European Union

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<sup>25</sup> See: Vincze, H. "A stronger military role for the EU in the Balkans?" In: Joachim Krause et al. *Unraveling the European Security and Defense Policy Conundrum*. Peter Lang: Bern 2003, p. 149.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> See: Cierco, T. "Stabilizing Macedonia: The Key Role of the European Union," p. 16.

today has 27 Member States, and in that context it is hard for so many voices to be articulated into one. Some of the Member States are not so interested in the Union to have so active security role outside its borders, or at least have different views about the military involvement of the Union in the security tasks.

The gained experience from the crises in the Balkans, forced the EU to take more concrete measures in improving and rapidly developing its crisis management capacities. The following European Council meetings: Helsinki (December 1999), Santa Maria da Feira (May 2000), Nice (December 2000) and Gothenburg (June 2001) led to significant changes in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) which in part gained a legal basis by the Nice Treaty (TEU-N)<sup>29</sup>. The most important achievement of the Nice Treaty was the introduction of the mechanism of “enhanced co-operation” to the CFSP, a procedure that has already been used in other policy areas. The main point is to allow a group of Member States to deepen their co-operation and to act without necessarily achieving a consensus among *all Member States*. This form of co-operation is, however, limited to the implementation of common positions and joint actions and may not include actions with military implications<sup>30</sup>. The main advantage is that it provides for a much easier decision-making process over some issues that need urgent decisions and effective acting, without potentially blocking the process if all Member States were not involved.

Consequently new institutions have been introduced in the EU, such as: Political and Security Committee, the EU Military Committee and many other sub-committees as support of the two mentioned bodies. In addition, the High Representative for CFSP (supported by the Policy Unit) was established as a key figure of the EU crisis management; the role of the Commission was also more precisely defined in this area through the Directorate General for External Relations where a small unit on “Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management” was set up.

The clearest sign about the interest of the EU in the Balkans is the opportunity for the European integration that the Union offered the Balkan countries. That decision means a great impact on the stability of the region and gives great energy and motivation to the Balkan countries to go forward on the European path to the ultimate goal of the EU membership. That is the “carrot” that the EU is using to articulate the energy in these countries to choose a stable and prospective future, instead of some backward scenarios. The Slovenian accession to the EU in 2004, the accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, and the candidate status of Croatia and Macedonia serve as examples to the other Balkan countries that are trying to catch the European train. That would be the right European strategy for achieving stability in this region.

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<sup>28</sup> See: Vincze, H., *op. cit.*, p. 152.

<sup>29</sup> See: Schneckener, U. “Developing and applying EU crisis management: test case Macedonia.” ECMI Working Paper No. 14, January, 2002, p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

### ***Macedonia – The Success Story of the EU's CFSP***

Since gaining independence Macedonia has been supported by the international community in the democratisation process. In practice since 1992 Macedonia has benefited from EU assistance of approximately 728 million Euros<sup>31</sup>. During the 1990s Macedonia successfully avoided the bloody conflict some countries experienced after the breakdown of Yugoslavia. That was a period of time when Macedonia was trying to “sell” an image of being an “oasis of peace” by putting aside important issues such as the mismanagement of interethnic tensions and not facing the emerging minority dissatisfaction.

However, Macedonia could not escape from the crisis of 2001. Eventually the problems regarding the interethnic relations in Macedonia emerged to the surface. Various factors influenced the war crisis of 2001 including the fact that the external problems that Macedonia faced with its neighbours since the independence have calmed down, (the improvement of the relations with Greece and post-Milosevic Yugoslavia) and as a consequence the internal interethnic problems could not be put aside anymore by the political elites; the end of the Kosovo crisis increased the opportunities for the ethnic Albanian militants to act.

The role of the international community, especially the role of the European Union, was crucial for the stabilisation of the country during and after the crisis in 2001. The initial events that had started the crisis in 2001 activated the EU crisis management mechanism. Essential for the successful role of the Union was the fact that after the outbreak of the violence in Macedonia the European Union responded very quickly and, most importantly, on the basis of unified position of EU Member States. EU Member States were acting jointly and there were not any divisions among the countries regarding the position the EU should have in the Macedonia case.

There are some critics<sup>32</sup> that say that the EU and the other international partners missed the opportunity to prevent the crisis from emerging at all, because warning signs were not taken into consideration, such as the reports that were pointing out to an increased arms trade in the Kosovo-Southern Serbia-Macedonia triangle. However, the European Union had an active and engaged role during the conflict and facilitated the negotiations for a cease-fire through a special envoy. The outcome of that facilitation was the signing of the Framework Agreement.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See: Cierco, T., op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 36.

<sup>33</sup> The 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement ended the war crisis between government security forces and ethnic Albanian rebels. It set out a strategic agenda concerning equal representation of different ethnic groups in public life and local self-government, and the devolution of powers from the central government to the local government units. The expected results were having more opportunities for citizens in general to participate at the civil society level and better public input that enhanced the growth of the local communities. See, for example: Daskalovski, Z. *Walking on the Edge*. Globic: Chapel Hill, 2006.

The successful role of the European Union was due to several factors: 1) the fast and timely involvement of the crisis management; 2) the overall approach that the Union had in resolving the crisis in Macedonia, by engaging different and numerous EU actors (the Delegation of the European Commission, the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy-CFSP, the EUSR, the European Agency of Reconstruction-EAR, the EU presidency, the EU military crisis management mission Concordia, the EU police mission Proxima, as well as the European Union Monitoring Mission-EUMM)<sup>34</sup> and finally 3) by combining various instruments, through which the EU was linking crisis management with long-term measures<sup>35</sup>.

In this context, a very significant and important event for both the EU and Macedonia, was the implementation of the first military operation of the EU “Concordia” with the main task to monitor the security situation in Macedonia and to promote confidence building measures in a post-conflict environment. The military mission was later replaced with the EU Police Mission Proxima, which has been assessed as one of the most effective advisory mechanisms<sup>36</sup>, where the work-motto of the mission “monitor, mentor and advise” had a great impact on Macedonia. The mission worked closely with the various government agencies pressing them to work and collaborate with each other. In 2005 Proxima was replaced by the EU Police Advisory Team (EUPAT), Macedonia becoming aware that the EU’s advice was essential and precious for the reform of the police.

Macedonia has made a great progress since 2001; it is a stable, democratic country that succeeded to be granted candidate status for EU membership. The EU has also made a great progress during the Macedonian conflict. It played a key role for the stability in its backyard – the Balkans – and proved to have foreign capacity to act together on security issues important for the peace and stability in the region. Therefore, the conflict of 2001 was a key lesson for both the EU and Macedonia.

### ***EU Membership As a Key Factor for Establishing a Functional Market Economy and Economic Reforms***

All the external and internal circumstances that Macedonia has faced since its independence diminished the already weak determination of the political elites for a decisive reform process and often served as an excuse for the unsuccessful government work. So far, Macedonia has concentrated all its efforts on implementing measures that are mostly part of the political criteria for EU accession. Much has been done for the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement, improvement of inter-ethnic relations, the process of decentralisation, reform of the

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<sup>34</sup> See: Cierco, T., op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> See: Schneckener, U., op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>36</sup> See: “Macedonia: Wobbling toward Europe, International Crisis Group.” Europe Briefing No. 41, 12 January, 2006, p. 8.

electoral system, etc. During this extremely tense period, the only platform for unifying the divided citizenship along political and ethnic lines was the hope for EU membership. Therefore, each reform activity undertaken by the government was presented to the public as an obligation that must be fulfilled in order to make progress in the EU integration process of the country. This was particularly true in respect to the reforms in sensitive areas, such as the reform of the police, the judiciary system, and the fight against corruption. The fulfilment of the above mentioned reforms will create a solid base for further growth of Macedonian economy.

In this respect the most recent public opinion survey conducted by CRPM shows that issues related to the economy such as more job opportunities (32.6%), economic development (34.8%), poverty reduction (16.8%) and combating corruption (5.1%), are top priorities for Macedonian citizens, and are ranked higher than inter-ethnic relations (1.3%), the Ohrid Agreement (1.5%), peace and security (2.0%), etc.<sup>37</sup> The results of the survey illustrate that the great majority of Macedonian citizens, regardless of their ethnic background, are interested in issues that will pave their path to Europe.

The EU, on the other hand, should also strengthen its support to the country and instead of targeting it as an aid receiving country<sup>38</sup> should treat Macedonia as a country that needs to build its membership capacity. The EU's approach to condition the integration process with the reforms implemented by Macedonia has proven to be the right attitude. The EU membership does not mean only the privilege to use EU public funds and financial support, but at the same time it entails the responsibility to take on huge obligations implied by the status of the Member State. Macedonia was granted a candidate status but without official date for starting negotiations. As the new government (in power since September 2006) accelerated the pace of the reforms it is expected that the negotiations will start soon. The relations between the EU and Macedonia so far were based on the principle of partnership. The EU consistently offered its support over the last years and there is no doubt that this partnership will continue in the following period.

## **What Does the Macedonian/Balkan Accession Mean for the EU?**

What benefits do the Balkan countries expect to gain from the EU integration? These are the countries that have the EU integration as a top national priority. They are eager to join the Union hoping to achieve greater prosperity, greater protection

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<sup>37</sup> See: CRPM survey 21 November, 2006, press release available at [<http://www.crpm.org.mk/Papers/Surveys/KolkuGraganitegiPoddrzuvaatNoviteVladinimerki.htm>]

<sup>38</sup> In the previous period when the country was struggling to overcome the post-conflict period, the EU provided financial support through programs such as CARDS, PHARE, etc. Since the country was granted a candidate status, the IPA instrument as a pre-accession assistance will become available after January 2007.

(many of these countries are facing some inner problems, for example, interethnic tensions, see the EU membership as a solution and point of closing any question of that kind) and free movement of labour and goods. On the other hand, the effect on the EU of the enlargement of the Western Balkans would be considerable as were the effects of previous enlargements.<sup>39</sup>

**Table 1.**  
**Impact of successive enlargements of the EU**

(based on 1995 data)	Increase in area	Increase in population	Increase in total GDP (*)	Change in GDP per capita	Average GDP per capita (EUR 6=100)
EUR 9/EUR 6	31%	32%	29%	-3%	97
EUR 12/EUR 9	48%	22%	15%	-6%	91
EUR 15/EUR 12(**)	43%	11%	8%	-3%	89
EUR 26/EUR 15	34%	29%	9%	-16%	75

(\*) in purchasing power parities

(\*\*) including the German reunion

Source: European Commission, *Agenda 2000*.

The figures presented in the table show that besides the increase of territory a significant increase of the total GDP follows every enlargement process. Moreover, the increase of the GDP in EU Member States disproves the argument of the supposedly dangerous effects of the enlargement on the already integrated Member States of the EU:

**Table 2.**  
**GDP per Capita, Percentage of EU Average (Purchasing Power Parity Basis)**

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Greece	59.2	57.4	58.3	59.1	57.4	60.1	61.9	64.2	65.2	66.4	67.5	69.2	68.6	69.3
Ireland	60.8	62.5	63.8	66.3	71.1	74.7	78.4	82.5	90.7	96.8	96.5	96.4	102.1	105.1
Portugal	55.1	56.7	59.2	59.4	58.5	63.8	64.8	67.7	69.5	70.1	70.5	70.7	71.1	71.8
Spain	69.8	71.5	72.5	73.1	74.1	78.7	77.0	78.1	78.1	78.6	78.7	77.8	78.6	79.6

Source: John Van Oudenaren, *Uniting Europe* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000, p. 156).

<sup>39</sup> Linden, R. "Europeanisation of Central and Eastern Europe." BNE-Slovenia, 4 July, 2006.

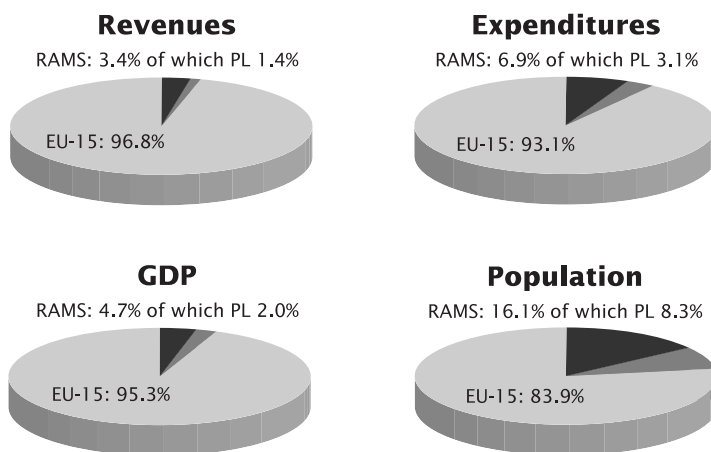
The enlargement process is not in any case an obstacle for the development of the Member States of the Union.

The Balkan countries are quite significant for the EU geographically. The space between Greece in the South and the rest of the Union is important from different perspectives: stability, economy, infrastructure, etc. In that sense, it is in the interest of the Union to have the Balkan countries reformed, democratic and stable. This is a process that will take a long time and according to experts will end sometime in 2015. Macedonia expects that 2013 is a realistic date for EU accession.<sup>40</sup> Europe has been divided into two spheres, the west and the east for too long. Now it is time to finalise the process by integrating the Balkan countries. If this strategic goal is achieved in the near future, it will be the greatest achievement that will mark the history of Europe.

### ***Macedonia – A Minor Financial Burden on the EU Budget***

A dilemma is how big a burden Macedonia would be for the EU budget. Let us take a look at a brief comparison of the part the new Member States<sup>41</sup> have taken in the EU budget and their position and part in EU vs. the “Macedonian burden” of the Union.

**Graph 1.**  
**The EU budget and the recently acceded Member States in perspective**



Data based on budgetary execution in 2004; EU-25 = 100%

Source: DG BUDG, calculations by DG ECFIN.

\* The first graph is referring to the revenues, the second to the expenditures, the third to the GDP and the fourth graph is referring to the population in the EU after 2004.

<sup>40</sup> Gligorov, V. “Balkan Stability.” BNE-Slovenia, 6 July, 2006.

<sup>41</sup> Linden, R. “Europeanisation of Central and Eastern Europe.” BNE-Slovenia, 4 July, 2006.



Macedonia is one of the smallest countries in Europe and should not be a reason for worry for the European Union. Its GDP is only 0.4% of that of the EU-25<sup>42</sup> and its population of around 2 million people is only 0.4% of the EU-25 population.<sup>43</sup> If we calculate for EU-27 including Bulgaria and Romania, the Macedonian share of the GDP and the population would be even smaller. These statistics reveal that the accession of Macedonia will not cause significant consequences for the EU budget.

The EU budget for 2007–2013 has raised many debates. From the Macedonian perspective the exclusion of Croatia and Macedonia from the EU budget is one of the problematic points of the budget<sup>44</sup>. Another problem is that the budget for foreign policy is reduced to a significant extent, affecting the IPA (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance).<sup>45</sup> IPA has five major components for the candidate countries and the potential candidate countries. The difference between these two categories of countries is that the candidates have access to all parts of the components, whereas the potential candidate countries have pre-access to only the first two components. IPA is a financial assistance agreement for 7 years starting with 1 January, 2007. In order to start to use the financial assistance Macedonia needs to establish a specialised Payment Operation Agency that will be responsible to conduct and coordinate the IPA<sup>46</sup>. In addition to that, it is important to mention that IPA is based on the capacity of the public institutions to apply for funds with their own projects. Many doubt the capacity of the Macedonian administration for that task, since until now a very small percentage of the funding for which Macedonia was eligible has been used.<sup>47</sup>

All in all, IPA is about 2 billion Euros, which is less than expected<sup>48</sup>. It would be good if the current candidate countries got the same amount of money as the previous candidates, which means at least 27 Euros per capita. In the mid of 2008–2009 a revision of the EU budget is expected. Some of the critics point out the importance of the revision of the budget for the further enlargement and the impossibility to negotiate membership with Macedonia without fundamental budgetary reform in the EU.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> See: [[http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=156&document\\_ID=73](http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=156&document_ID=73)]

<sup>43</sup> The total EU-25 population is 456 million people.

<sup>44</sup> See: [<http://www.seetv-exchanges.com/code/navigate.php?Id=214>]

<sup>45</sup> See: [[http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=156&document\\_ID=73](http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=156&document_ID=73)]

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Gabriela Konevska Trajkovska [<http://www.dnevnik.com.mk/?itemID=2A6D089EB4D78148B50CD44F2D125BA4>]

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> See: [<http://www.seetv-exchanges.com/code/navigate.php?Id=229>]

<sup>49</sup> See: [<http://www.seetv-exchanges.com/code/navigate.php?Id=214>]

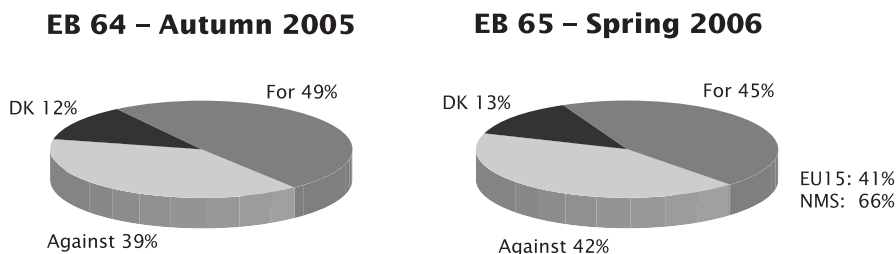
## The Macedonian Accession and the Public Opinion

### *The Macedonian Accession and the European Public Opinion*

The great project of creating the European Union started with the idea of eliminating war from the continent, as a result of the trauma of the Second World War. The traditional rivals France and Germany realised their common interest that would bring economic prosperity for the European nations. During the process of unifying the continent, both political leaders and common citizens shared a sense of optimism for the future of Europe, which culminated with the fall of the Iron Curtain and the unification of Germany. As the process continued to evolve, the Union became much more than a free-trade zone. The major overturn on the scale for support of EU enlargement was the big bang effect in 2004, with the accession of ten new members, which completely changed the map of Europe.

#### **Graph 2.**

#### **Support to the further enlargement of the European Union – EU25**

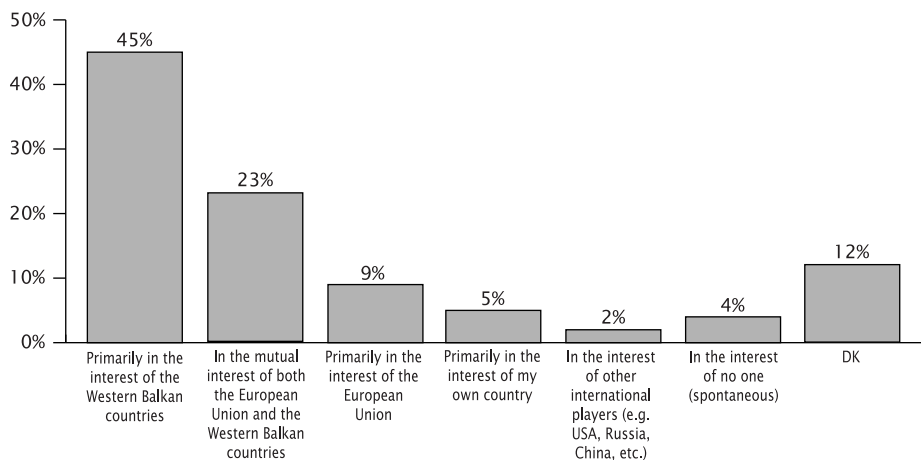


The comparison of the results from the public opinion survey made in autumn 2005 and the one in September 2006, illustrates a decrease in the overall support by 4% and at the same time an increase in those who are not in favour of the enlargement. The 25-point difference, regarding support for enlargement between the old and new members illustrates the high diversity of the European public opinion. The support is larger among the new members than among the richer states<sup>50</sup>.

The fact that the majority of the EU citizens (45%) think that the accession of the Balkan countries is primarily in the interest of these countries rather than mutual interest (23%), indicates the low level of public awareness for the long-term goals of the Union.

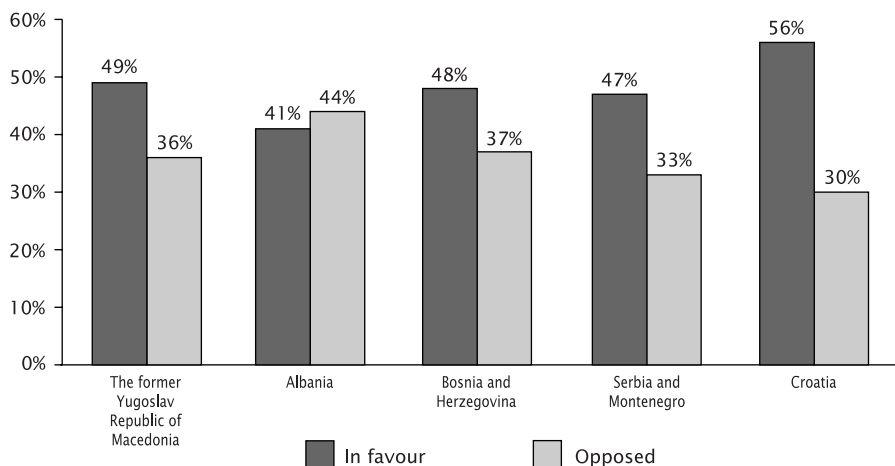
<sup>50</sup> See: Eb65\_first\_en.pdf, p. 26.

**Graph 3.**  
**According to you, European Union accession of the Western Balkan countries would be...?**



The public opinion survey of Eurobarometer indicates relatively positive attitude towards the future accession of Macedonia once the required conditions are fulfilled. The table above shows that as the country moves forward in the integration process the public attitude is increasing gradually in favour of that country. Likely enough, this trend is due to the individual improvements made by each country.

**Graph 4.**  
**Once each of the following countries with all conditions set by the European Union, would you be strongly in favour, fairly in favour, fairly opposed or strongly opposed to the accession of each of them to the European Union?**



For instance, Croatia at present is undergoing negotiations with the EU, and at the same time enjoys the highest level of public support compared to the rest of the Western Balkan countries. The position of Macedonia as the second most preferable country for accession reflects the progress made in the integration process up to now. This generally positive attitude towards Macedonia should be further improved by fulfilment of all conditions required and at the same time presenting the results and achievements made in the integration process to the European public.

### ***The Macedonian Public Opinion on Accession***

The EU integration of Macedonia is a strategic objective of every government and all political elites. Moreover, there is a great support of the European Union membership for Macedonia by the Macedonian citizens, which gives solid and legitimate grounds for the reforms that have to be taken in the process of accession to the European Union. The support of Macedonian membership in the European Union, in the period June 2002 – December 2004<sup>51</sup> has been exceptionally high, 93% in 2002, and 97% in 2004. The opinion polls regarding the potential outcome of a referendum on the accession of Macedonia in the European Union, taken in different periods between 2003 and 2005, show a significant percentage of the citizens that would vote “yes”.<sup>52</sup> The support has never been under 88%, reaching 92% support of the potential referendum in December 2005 when Macedonia was granted the candidate status.

### ***Macedonian Image in the EU and the EU Image in Macedonia: the Role of the New Member States***

The Western Balkan countries have no other foreign policy strategic goal except the Euro-Atlantic integration. Yet, at the moment the Balkans have a negative image – a black hole on the map of Europe. It is completely understandable why the European public has negative or sceptical opinion towards the possibility to integrate the Balkans within the Union. The Balkan countries still face problems like corruption, weak economic development, organised crime, trafficking in women and are located in the main corridor for drug smuggling into Western Europe. This status is neither good for the Balkans nor for Europe. Therefore the enlargement of the Union and the positive impact it brings to the acceding countries (in terms of reforms) should continue in the Balkans because it is in both the interest of the EU and the Balkans. The enlargement process means exporting stability instead of importing insecurity.

The accession to the European Union is the goal that unites all Macedonian citizens regardless of their ethnic background, education, age or political preferences.

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<sup>51</sup> See: [<http://www.sei.gov.mk/portal/mak/default.asp?id=88976>]

<sup>52</sup> See: [<http://www.sei.gov.mk/portal/mak/default.asp?id=10>]

The accession to the European Union is perceived by most of the Macedonian citizens as a fulfilment of the dream of a stable, prosperous and wealthy Macedonia. An opinion poll<sup>53</sup> shows a large percentage (more than 80%) of the citizens who believe that the European integration has and would have a significant and positive impact on the reform of the economy, foreign direct investments, stability, human rights and visa regime. The highest percentage of the Macedonian citizens believe that in the process of European integration Macedonia has to put the greatest efforts on the economic issues, but they are also hoping that the EU integration will contribute greatly to the improvement of the economy.

On the other hand, Macedonia has gained the “affinity” of the EU citizens after the peaceful solution to the war crisis of 2001 and the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The image of Macedonia in the EU is also influenced by the reports of international organisations. Here the Government needs to put some extra efforts as the reports are written by individuals resident in London, New York, etc., who do not know all the relevant information about Macedonia, so the information they provide is not evidence-based but often biased. A good example on how a report by IGO or financial institution could negatively affect the country is the EBRD strategy paper of 2004, which states that investment in Macedonia is risky, when on the other hand reports by the World Bank state the opposite. However, the EBRD strategy for 2004 is the first document that pops up on the Google search on “*foreign direct investment in Macedonia*.”

The situation in Macedonia is presented not so brightly by some parts of the EU reports and different statistics and analyses made by relevant international institutions that have great influence on the established perception of Macedonia. Macedonia is not in a position to boast with its 103<sup>rd</sup> place in the 2005 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index,<sup>54</sup> which has taken into consideration 158 countries in the world. Regarding the economic conditions Macedonia ranks 92 on the list presented in 2006 by the World Bank<sup>55</sup>, where although the Macedonian progress in the category “registration of firm” is recognised, still much work has to be done especially in the areas where Macedonia lags behind the other countries of the region.

Promoting Macedonia as a safe place to invest and do business in is a role that the EU Member States could play with significant investments in Macedonia. Slovenia is the country that has offered an unambiguous support for Macedonia on multilateral and on bilateral level, in the areas of economy, police, legal approximation, etc.<sup>56</sup> Slovenia is one of the major investors in Macedonia and in this context around 100 Slovenian companies participate with investments in the Macedonian economy and many others have announced their future investments

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<sup>53</sup> See: [<http://www.sei.gov.mk/portal/mak/default.asp?id=10>]

<sup>54</sup> See: [<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0781359.html>]

<sup>55</sup> See: [<http://www.kanal5.com.mk/ShowNews.aspx?ItemID=15314&mid=1500&tabId=1&tabindex=0>]

<sup>56</sup> See: [<http://www.a1.com.mk/vesti/default.asp?VestID=67476>]

into the Macedonian market, assessing the economic conditions in Macedonia as favourable and especially secure.<sup>57</sup>

In addition, other new Member States have announced support to Macedonia's European integration ambitions. Such is the case of the Czech Republic<sup>58</sup>. The Czech Republic has expressed its readiness to advise and help Macedonia in its accession process. There are efforts for more intensive economic co-operation, which was the aim of the Macedonian–Czech Business Forum. The trade between Macedonia and the Czech Republic was 29.3 million USD in 2005, but Macedonian part in that exchange was quite modest – only 6 million, a situation that needs to improve.

Lobbying for the Balkan's and in this respect Macedonia's accession to the EU, might be an important factor that will increase the visibility and participation of the new Member States in the decision-making processes of the Union. These would, on the other hand, influence and contribute to faster reform in Macedonia in that direction. This opportunity is recognised in most of the new Member States, which, learning from their own experience, are the greatest supporters of the further enlargement. Public opinion in these countries has shown exactly that – support for Macedonia to become a full Member State of the European Union. Macedonia needs to use this opportunity, build coalitions with the new Member States and work in the mutual interest.

### **Macedonia and Poland: A Possible Partnership**

Since 1989, independent Poland has enjoyed rapid economic growth, a large free press, and developed and a rather influential civil society and interest groups. Poland's desire to reintegrate with Europe was realised in May 2004 when it joined the European Union. Today Poland, with a population of 38.6 million, is the sixth-largest EU member. The addition of 10 new members in 2004 changed the character and political dynamics of the EU and highlighted the importance of revising the EU Constitution; an issue in which Poland played an active role. In this respect the Polish Foreign Minister has recently suggested that Poland can both mediate in the row over the EU budget, and serve as a new engine for the bloc at a time of disarray over the draft Constitutional Treaty.

This attitude should reassure the Polish citizens that their nation is large<sup>59</sup> and in terms of votes rather powerful in the EU. Poland will become a "*big country that counts*" in Europe, said Poland's new Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński. His new regime promises a stronger voice in Europe, pushing more conservative values within the EU. A stronger role for Poland in EU decision-making is to be

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<sup>57</sup> See: [<http://www.a1.com.mk/vesti/default.asp?VestID=67476>]

<sup>58</sup> See: [<http://www.turkishweekly.net/news.php?id=29471>]

<sup>59</sup> Public opinion polls show that Polish citizens think of themselves as a "small nation", while geographically it is large and very powerful.

welcomed – because of its size, the number of votes it has in the European parliament and its geo-strategic position between Western Europe and Russia. However, the challenge for Poland is to “work out how to have a positive influence in Europe.”

One of the ways is to work actively for EU enlargement, and to “*really participate, not just formal participation (of new Member States) in all decision-making mechanisms.*”<sup>60</sup> Poland also sees itself as a natural spokesman for the eight Central European and Baltic states, which joined the EU in May 2004, because it is by far the largest state among them. It sought to represent their interests in a battle over the reform of voting rules in 2003 and it believes it can do the same in the years to come.

Having in mind the present situation within the Union, regarding the negative atmosphere for enlargement, the implementation of Copenhagen criteria will simply not be good enough for candidate countries such as Macedonia. Knowing that in the past a decision for accession was often made for geo-strategic reasons, obtaining political support is an even more important factor for the Macedonian accession to the EU. Therefore, Macedonia should rely on Poland as a partner that will support its accession to the European Union and should make Poland a true Macedonian lobbyist. Macedonia needs such a partner. At the moment Macedonian officials count on the support of Slovenia, Greece, Bulgaria, but they count on Germany most. In this respect the German presidency is seen as the period when Macedonia should receive a date to start the EU negotiations. However, Germany is more of a partner to Croatia (due to historical reasons) than to Macedonia. Therefore, Macedonia should start looking for strategic partners among the new Member States and Poland, being the largest, the most powerful and in favour of further enlargement of the EU, should be seriously considered.<sup>61</sup>

Why Poland? The explanation is more than simple. Up to now, Poland stands as one of only a few EU Member States that recognised Macedonia under its constitutional name.<sup>62</sup> This support for Macedonia will hopefully produce similar decisions among other Member States. Another positive impulse in the bilateral relations between the two countries is the Polish decision to liberalise the visa regime with Macedonia. Polish visas are issued free of charge for Macedonian citizens who stay in Poland no longer than three months.<sup>63</sup>

In terms of economy, investments from Poland in our country add up to 68 million dollars<sup>64</sup>, which ranks Poland at the bottom on the list of our economic part-

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<sup>60</sup> Jarosław Kaczyński, July, 2006.

<sup>61</sup> According to last public survey made by Eurobarometer, 72% of the Polish public opinion have positive attitude towards enlargement.

<sup>62</sup> Poland as EU Member State recognized Macedonia under its constitutional name in August 2005.

<sup>63</sup> See: [<http://www.mfa.gov.mk/ministerstvo.asp?idMeni=9&idKategorija=14&idSodrzina=19>]

<sup>64</sup> See: [[http://www.nbrm.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/Tabela\\_50.pdf](http://www.nbrm.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/Tabela_50.pdf)]

ners. However, the situation with the trade exchange in comparison to the rest of the new members is in favour of Poland<sup>65</sup>. The amount of Polish products imported by the country is second largest after Slovenia, while Macedonia virtually has no exports to Poland. Unfortunately, the economic cooperation is less developed than the political and cultural relations between the two countries, and must be improved in the near future.

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<sup>65</sup> See: [<http://www.mchamber.org.mk/default.asp?tId=25&lan=mk&edit=1>]