

American University of Central Asia

European Studies

European Union enlargement in the European public discourse

By

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## Abstract

*This senior thesis is conducted on the topic European Union enlargement in public discourse. It describes the historical background, challenges and opportunities of enlargement processes that today's European Union have faced. The paper focuses on the perception of European Union citizens of future enlargement. The Eurobarometer data on attitudes of Europeans towards the expansion of EU is used in order to weigh the views of public concerning this issue. The specific chapter analyzes the data about political, economic and social aspects of enlargement in the reflection of public discourse in order to provide predictions and recommendation for future enlargement. Individual cases of candidate countries of Turkey and Croatia are also included in this work.*

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## **Introduction**

“EU enlargement: the next eight. Eight countries are waiting in the wings to join the European Union” titles the article of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) online news dating from 28<sup>th</sup> of December 2010. These eight countries are Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Iceland, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. High number of candidate countries is not surprising, since economic achievements and political stability of European Union have been attracting many European and non-European countries for decades.

However, European Union enlargement is a debatable question, especially when it has reached the membership of 27 countries. Seeking for political stability and economic prosperity in Europe, one can argue that further enlargement is needed as long as new candidate countries are able and ready to join the European Union. Before accession they need to complete so called requirements that are listed as Copenhagen Criteria of European Union. This list of criteria includes requirements in developing democratic values, respect for human rights and protection of minorities. Moreover, the candidate country must have a market economy that is able to compete with those of member-states of European Union. Applying country also has to follow the common political and economic goals established by European Union community.

In contrast, others can claim that accepting new member-states might negatively reflect on the lives of European Union citizens. These concerns are based on arguments such as migration issues and economic gap between the existing member-states and candidate countries. As a result of enlargement, migration, or the flow of cheaper labor compared to old member-states, from newly received countries takes place. This creates unemployment among the citizens of European Union member-states and, certainly, provokes European public into bad image of further enlargement. Concerning the economy, European Union has a system where richer

member-states share their income with poorer ones, which balances the economies of these states. If newcomer does not have a developed economy, others need to take the burden of providing help. It hits the economies of these countries, consequently, affects the citizens of the helping country. Apparently, people will disprove the benefits of the enlargement. Therefore, European public opinion on European Union enlargement is not homogenous and is not simple to measure.

It is not surprising that there are opponents and proponents of European Union enlargement, because opinions and ideas concerning this issue are in direct proportion to the quantity of people, particularly, in democracies where public opinion is one of the key values. So, European Union with its population of almost 500 million, being a big political player in the region in promoting democratic values throughout Europe and the rest of the world, takes or should take in account its public opinion on decision making or policy making process ("Key facts and figures about Europe and Europeans"). One of the main reasons for European Union to be concerned about the public opinion polls on further enlargement is that statistically they are getting more skeptical about this policy. What changed the attitudes of EU citizens towards accepting new member-states? The answer to this question can be given by analysis of the data from Eurobarometer about public opinion on European Union enlargement policy. Also it can be explained by revising previous enlargements, particularly the enlargement of 2004, by determining the challenges, economic and political opportunities, expectations and effects of those enlargements.

In this paper the historical background of European Union enlargement will be revised to point out the challenges and opportunities, which possibly reflect on the opinions of Europeans on further enlargement policy. The focus will be on the last enlargement, which took place in 2004. Further this paper will analyze the public opinion polls on European Union enlargement

provided by special Eurobarometer statistics. The next section will describe the Copenhagen Criteria in order to compare this list of requirements for candidate countries and public opinion, because these criteria can demand one thing from candidates, but public can favor different things from them. At the end mass media material will be analyzed, because it is the sector of activity where public opinion is reflected and needed facts can be withdrawn. As a last chapter, the future enlargement will be discussed; particularly Turkey and Croatia and public opinion on this candidate countries.

## **From six to twenty seven**

The European Union integration takes its roots from the year of 1952 with the implementation of the Schuman Plan “inspired by the father of European integration, Jean Monnet, but promoted by French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman.” (Baldwin 4-13). Schuman proposed to integrate the coal and steel industries of France and Germany, since these were the industries that caused militarism and consequently to the war. The other countries were invited to join this community. France, Germany and Benelux countries joined and created the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)

The next step in the history of European integration was the creation of the European Economic Community in 1957 by signing the Treaty of Rome. It was also called the Six. This community was a result of economic integration. Besides the forming the customs union, it also promised “free labor mobility, capital market integration, free trade in services, and a large of common policies...” (Baldwin 1-4, 2003)

Initially, the community did not have much support and neighbors, mainly United Kingdom, were skeptical of joining the community. However, its rapid growth in the economy has attracted others and in 1973 United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland have joined the European Economic Community. The attractiveness of EEC still grew. In 1981 Greece and in 1986 Spain and Portugal have joined the community. According to the popularity of this community, it can be assumed that the public opinion was in favor of the enlargement. Further in 1995, Austria, Finland and Sweden join the community which was already to that time what is called today European Union.



The biggest enlargement stage took place in 2004, when European Union accepted ten Balkan states that are Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic and Slovenia. However, there was a final stage, at least final until today, when Romania and Bulgaria have joined the community in 2007. Today European Union consists of 27 member-states and is revising the application of new candidate countries.

The main goal of enlargement for the European Union is to create everlasting peace and stability in the continent by helping the transforming countries in developing democracy, human right protection and rule of law. Torn down by both WWI and WWII, Europe needed the integration for the sake of common stability and security. By accepting Central and Eastern European countries, Europe had helped these countries to transform from former communist regime into functioning democracies (Archik, and Kim ).

Nevertheless, the enlargement does not process smooth. This is a complicated process that has its economic, political and social challenges and opportunities. In terms of economy, with the accession of new member-states, European Union has a burden of financing that lies on the shoulders of old member-states because of the GNP differences and the system of balancing the economies. Moreover, European Union is obliged to provide financial help to the candidate countries before accession as an instrument for a pre-accession assistance strategy. The expenses cover the agricultural subsidies, regional and infrastructure assistance, nuclear safety, public administration and border protection spheres of activity. In the sphere of research, culture and education 540 million euros was spent ([www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu)).

In contrast to the costs of the enlargement, there are also economic advantages like expanding the market of European Union. Accession of new member-states is a way to a greater market which reinforces the trade between old and new or candidate countries of EU. According to the speech of the European Central Bank (ECB) president Jean-Claude Trichet given at the

conference “Europe’s frontiers: EU enlargement - its implications and consequences”, the newly received countries benefit from the enlargement more than old member-states. He indicates on the growth of the trade level between old and new member-states by 50% compared to the results of ten years ago. The size of export and import between the EU and the new countries also increased from 7% in ten years ago to 11% to the date of 2004 ([www.ecb.int](http://www.ecb.int)).

Politically, the EU enlargement will benefit in terms of securing the region from conflicts and maintaining the peace across Europe, as it is one of the fundamental goals of integration. Especially with the accession of Eastern and Central European countries after collapse of Soviet Union and its control over this region and the provision of democratic values and security in the region the common benefits can be achieved. The political instability on the Balkans also pushes European Union towards expansion, since the stable political situation is a variable for the economic development of the region.

In terms of social challenges of the European Union enlargement, migration is the main concern of the Europeans. Because of the enlargement it is predicted the increase of the immigration from new members to old ones. Since the market economy of European Union allows the free movement of persons, capital, labor and services, the likelihood of immigration patterns is predictable. As a result, with the nationalistic ideology, the right-wing parties arise in the old member-states. Among the population the phenomenon of xenophobia takes places. Explanation lies behind the cheap labor of people from new countries, therefore many fear the loss of job places because of this fact (Favell, and Hansen 581-601). However, Ray Barrel in his work “EU enlargement and migration: accessing the macroeconomic impacts” argues that immigration from the enlargement of 2004 is relatively small from what was expected. The countries with the most of immigration indexes after this enlargement were UK and Spain, nevertheless the economies of these member-states did not make a significant improve in the economic sector.

The enlargement of the European Union, especially the enlargement of 2004, when 15 countries accepted 10 more, in general went positively in terms of economic, political and social benefits. However, these are the indexes that show the improvement in numbers. The important point here is to take into account the public opinion polls of European Union in order to see if expansion of the European Union is a favorable process in the understanding of citizens.

## **Public opinion polls on European Union enlargement**

As mentioned earlier, European Union has a population of 493 million. Certainly, opinions of this amount of people on the European Union enlargement are not the same, but they vary from country to country, also within the country. Except the country and region of a country, there are many factors according to that opinion may have different results. They are gender, age, political views and education about European Union and its enlargement policy.

According to Eurobarometer which was conducted two years after the biggest enlargement in the history of the European Union integration and before the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, the majority of the European Union is generally in favor of European Union enlargement. The proponents of this policy make up 45% of the population. This is a relative majority. However, the opponent side does not stay behind for much. It is only 42% of the respondents.

If to stop at every member-state of EU individually, there are quiet different results from country to country. If not count the 10 new member-states, only 3 countries out of 15 member-states passed the barrier of 50% being in favor of the enlargement. They are Greece with 56%, Spanish 55% and Danish 51%. Among the countries that do not pass the barrier of 50%, but have the relatively majority of the citizens claiming their support for EU enlargement are Sweden with 49%, Italy with 48%, Portugal 47%, Ireland with 45% and United Kingdom with 44%.

Comparatively, there are countries that disprove the policy of European Union enlargement. Ironically, they are two big founders of European Union, to be specific the fathers of European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), Germany with 66% and France with 62% of opponents of further enlargement of EU. Besides, there are countries like Luxembourg, which is also one of the founders, with 65%, Austria with 61% and Finland with 60%.

As mentioned earlier, there are other factors that may contribute to the attitude towards the European Union enlargement. For example, men in the EU, making up 47% proponents, favor the enlargement more than women, who make up slightly lesser percentage of 43%. Concerning the age as a variable that affect the attitude towards enlargement, the younger generation, that are people aged from 15-24, more in favor of enlargement of EU, comprising 56% of interviewees. In contrast, older generation, that are persons aged 55 years and older, comprise only 35% of interviewees who supports the enlargement of EU. In terms of education, which is also a factor for affecting the opinion results, the enlargement policy is more favorable for educated people. 59% of interviewees who still at the process of studying support the enlargement support the enlargement. And 51% of respondents who left the full-time education at the age of 20 favor the enlargement. And only 35% of interviewed people who left education at age 15 claimed their support for EU enlargement. A little influence has political views of people. It is mainly according to the party they belong to or they are supporter of. For example, people with the left parties (50%) are likely to support the accession of new member-states more than people with right wing parties (42%).

#### *General knowledge about EU enlargement*

In general majority of Europeans feel that they are not well informed about enlargement. According to the table which shows the answers to the question: “How well informed do you feel about the enlargement that is new countries joining the EU?”, 68% of the population of EU responded “Not well informed” versus 30% who responded well informed, the rest “do not know”. These results of knowledge are inversely to the results of general support of EU population for enlargement. Consequently, the more public informed of enlargement is the less supporters it has. At the country level, the same phenomenon can be observed with most of countries. For example, Greece and Spain that lead the list of member-states with majority of

supporters, has only 17% and 15% of informed population. Contrary, Luxembourg and Germany with their majority of opponents have high level of information (44% and 40%).

To the question of “thinking about the EU enlargement, on which of the issues would you like to be better informed?” , most of the responses (38%) fell on the “the economic development and prosperity in the European Union”. The second is “the quality of life in the EU” with 27%. “Peace and stability in the EU” (26%) and “the role of the EU in the world” (25%) take the following 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> places. So, citizens of EU are more in favor of being informed about economic issues rather than political. Therefore, economy is a prior goal of Europeans in enlargement.

According to the table of responses for the question “Do you feel you know more ..?”, the majority (40%) responded that they know more about the problems that could be caused by European Union. Only 17 % of interviewees answered that they know more about benefits that could derive from EU enlargement. So, the majority of the EU population supports the enlargement policy, however, the majority is also more aware of problems caused by enlargement. On the country level, Germany that is against enlargement is more informed about problems (53%). The same fact is observed with Luxembourg, 58% of which is informed about negative causes of enlargement. As for Greece (38%) and Spain (22%), the majority of respondents know more “neither the one, nor the other” (39% and 37%). It can be explained that Luxembourg and Germany, being economically developed member-states, carry the burden of balancing the economies of poorer ones like Greece and Spain and this is reflected on the lives of the citizens of these member-states.

The next table shows that the majority of EU population (40%) knows more about how new member-states have benefited from EU accession than how the EU has benefited from European

Union accession of new member-states (14%). 41% of respondents from those member-states of EU that joined the union before 2004 claim that they know more about the benefits of new member states in contrast to 36% of respondents from the member-states of enlargement 2004. Those member-states that joined the EU in 2004 answered that they know more about EU's benefits from the accession of new members (22%). Only 13% of old member-states' population is aware of the EU's benefits from accession.

Concerning the knowledge of the public of EU about its enlargement, it can be derived that majority of the EU is not well informed. Also that the majority of the population knows about the problems caused by EU enlargement rather than benefits of EU from enlargement. Moreover, people are more interested in knowing the economic benefits from EU enlargement rather than political. It can be summed up, that people are more informed about political benefits and problems of EU enlargement than economic ones. Therefore, there is a need to inform the population of European Union about the economic benefits from enlargement, since the majority knows about the problems than benefits.

#### *Public view of political aspects of European Union enlargement*

If rely to the surveys of Eurobarometer, most of the citizens of European Union are in favor of political aspects of the enlargement. 67 % of respondents have agreed that the enlargement of European Union ensures peace and stability on the European continent. 21 % have disagreed with this statement. If look at the countries individually, there is no member-state that has a majority of "disagrees" in terms of this question. The highest percentage of the "agree" answers showed the Slovak population (85%). The lowest is in UK with 55%.

The same percentage is demonstrated the next table of response to the question of the role of the European Union in the world arena. 67% of interviewees have agreed with the statement that in political terms, the enlargement of European Union strengthens the role of the European Union on international scene. Unlike in the previous case, there were countries the majority of population disagreed with this statement. The lowest percentage is observed in the countries like Spain, Portugal and Luxembourg. The country with the most “agree” responses is Greece with 65% of population.

Concerning the democratic values of the EU enlargement, this table illustrates the same results. Surprisingly, it repeats the exact percentage like in terms of peace and stability and the role of EU in the world. Possibly, public understands under democratic values the principles of peace and stability. The majority of EU citizens agreed with the statement that European Union enlargement promotes democracy in the European continent. However, unlike in the preceding passage, none of the member countries had majority percentage with “disagree” responses. The Polish public leads the table with its 83% of “agrees”. The end of the table is taken by UK again with 55%.

Human rights questionnaire had shown different percentage compared to others, however the majority is still in the support of European Union enlargement. The “agree” responses to the statement that, in political terms, European Union enlargement increases the protection of human rights and minorities in the European Union make up 65%, which is less for 2% compared to democratic values. 21% of interviewees disagreed with this human right protection increase after enlargement. There were no member-states that had majority of respondents with “disagrees”. The country with the most agrees is again Poland (77%) and with 1% difference is Belgium that takes the second place.



Most Europeans (62%) think that the enlargement of the European Union facilitates progress towards a political unification of the European Union. Again political terms of EU are approved by the majority of its citizens. And once again Poland leads the table with 76% of majority agreeing with the claim. France has the lowest percentage which is 50%. With the difference of 1%, United Kingdom is the second from the last on the table before France.

From the data above it can be concluded that all member-states, in terms of its public opinion, favor the political aspects of European Union enlargement. The newly received countries are likely to see more political advantages in EU enlargement than old members-states of so called EU15. Significant results were shown by Poland's citizens, majority of whom support the political advantage of EU better among other member-states. In contrast, United Kingdom is one of the countries that is overall favors the political terms of EU, but takes the last place in the list of member-states. Based on the polls, one can admit the success of European Union in promoting democratic values, protection of human rights, political unification of European countries, keeping peace and stability in the region and placing itself as a significant player in the world. All these results are based on the public opinion, which proves its authenticity.

#### *Economic aspects of European Union enlargement*

European Union enlargement has not only political significance, but also economic. The globalization theory explains that in the times of globalization, integration process takes place in order to face the challenges of this phenomenon (Janowski, 7). Today European Union is one of the economic leaders. Indeed, citizens of European Union favor economic prosperity of European Union and its role in the world as a global player or an economic giant. Relatively the majority which makes up 47% of respondents have agreed with the statement that in economic terms, thanks to the enlargement of European Union, it has become the biggest trade player in

the world. 36% of the interviewees disagreed with this position. However, it makes up the minority. Mostly it is newly received countries that see the economic player in EU, except Denmark (76%) and Greece (64%) which are the leaders of the list. Netherland with 59% of “disagrees” and only 30% of “agrees” is the last on the list of the member-states. So are Luxembourg and France.

Compared to political terms of enlargement of European Union where the results showed significantly high percentage in favor of the situation, economic aspect does not illustrate big gap between “agree” and “disagree” responses. A slight difference is observed in the responses to the question that the EU enlargement decreases economic development in the European Union as well as in the country of the respondent. Positive answers, which are, in this case, “disagrees”, are given by 43% of respondent. In contrast, with a small difference, only 40% of interviewees were negative about the question of decrease of development opportunity. On the country level, Slovaks (59%) have the most “disagrees”. Greece (54%) and France (50%) have the most “agrees”. It has to be mentioned that Greece in the previous table was one of the favorers of the EU as a global trade player, however it thinks that enlargement decreases economic development opportunities.

The market economy of the enlarged EU guarantees the free movement of goods, services, people and capital. Therefore, as an economic aspect of the EU enlargement, a question of job places arises. In the market economy everything is based on the competition. As a result the job places move towards the countries where labor is cheaper. The next table demonstrates the answers of European if the enlargement if the EU increases jobs transfer to countries where labor is cheaper. The majority (75%) answered “agree” concerning this issue. Only 14% disagreed. None of the member-states had more “disagrees” than “agrees”. Greece (87%) and Belgium (85%) have the highest percentage. To the similar, but with the different meaning question

concerning the jobs results were different. 43% “agrees” versus 42% “disagrees” were given to the statement that the enlargement of EU increases prosperity for all Europeans. The biggest doubters are actually the countries with expensive labor, among which are Luxembourg (30%), France (34%) and Germany with 30% of “agrees”.

Moreover, one of the principles of EU is financing the candidate countries. 66% of Europeans agreed with that the enlargement of the EU will increase the support for the development of candidate and potential candidate countries. Only 16% of population disagreed. Besides, the majority (57%) have indicated that the EU enlargement will also decrease budgetary resources for the country of respondents. Meanwhile, only 25% of the population disagreed. If to take particular countries, Greece (84%) along with Belgium (80%) and Czech Republic (76%) are the most positive about the increase of the development. While contrary, Germany (75%), Finland (77%) and again Greece (74%) confirm the decrease of budgetary resources in their countries because of enlargement of European Union.

Economic aspects of EU enlargement for most part are favorable by the majority of the inhabitants of Europe. Nevertheless, unlike the political aspects of the EU enlargement, economies aspects did not have homogeneous polls among member-states. Based on the competition, market economy put the countries with cheap labor on the leaders of the favoring countries. But the member-states with comparatively expensive labor force disagreed with the economic benefits of EU enlargement. The old members, including Germany and Luxembourg as a main, disproved the economic advantage, because they are the members with developed economies who at the end of the day become the main contributors for development of candidate or potential candidate countries of European Union.

*Social aspects of European Union enlargement*

Besides the political and economic aspects, there are also social aspects of European Union enlargement, which play significant role in shaping the public opinion on further expansion of the EU. The variables that determine the social aspects are criminality level, standard of living, cultural diversity and mobility. Eurobarometer survey on this issue as well. Since social aspect of enlargement is one of the most important variables for polls, the results of the survey are beneficial for this paper.

Criminality level, as a part of social aspect of enlargement, is a sector which can be increased or decrease with the widening the borders of European Union. The enlargement increases the potential of the EU to fight against the criminality, at the same time, because of the enlargement its level will increase.

According to public opinion results, 66% of the respondents of EU agreed with saying that the enlargement of the EU will reinforce the power of the EU to fight criminality and terrorism. 21% of the interviewees disagreed. Among the supporters of the enlargement in terms of fighting the criminality cooperatively are Poland with the highest percentage of proponents (78%), Malta with the same percentage, Netherlands and Slovakia with 76% both. At the end of the list are the countries like Lithuania (69%), Latvia (68%) and Finland (68%). Despite the fact that they have the lowest amount of supporters for common fight against criminality, the percentage of the result represents the majority of the respondents.

However, there is a contrary question concerning the criminality rate. The EU enlargement can strengthen the risk of criminality. Majority of the public of EU, precisely 62% of the population, responded that in social terms, the enlargement will increase the criminal activities. Only 27% of

population held the opposite position. If to take particular cases, negative polls were given by Poland (46%), France (41%) and Italy (37%).

In general, the new member states are more positive about the fight against the criminal activities than old member states, except Germany and Denmark that see the criminality and terrorism as a more global issue and tend to fight it in cooperation on the cross borders. However, in contrast, the risk of high criminality as a result of enlargement of EU concerns every state, regardless the fact that they are new or old members-states.

Life standard question has different results from criminality rate. The EU population does not fully disagree with the statement that in social terms, the enlargement of the European Union lowers life standards in the EU. Only 43% of the respondents disagreed, in contrast to almost the same percentage of 42% who think that the expansion will lower the standards. However, to the question if the enlargement of EU facilitates the expansion of European Union life standards and norms on the European territory, most respondents, comprising 61% of total interviewees, have agreed with this statement. The disagreement side amounts the percentage of 22%.

In particular cases, France (33%), Portugal (33%) and Luxembourg (34%) are the countries are less positive about the standards. Comparatively, Denmark (60%), Malta (60%) and Slovakia (58%) are the countries favoring the enlargement as a positive impact on the standard of living in European Union. In terms of facilitating the expansion of European Union life standards and norms on European Union territory, Polish (78%) and Slovakian (77%) respondents showed the most positive attitudes towards enlargement. It has to be mentioned that these countries favor the enlargement of the European Union in general. On the contrary, Germans and Finns consider that enlargement lowers the standard of living in the EU.

Certainly, the enlargement process brings cultural diversity, since Europe is a multicultural continent. Indeed, 71% of the population agrees with the fact that in social terms, the enlargement of the EU will enrich Europe's cultural diversity. Comparatively, 17% did not agree with the statement. As it is vivid, the gap between the opponents and proponents of the enlargement is very big. All the countries showed their positive attitudes towards cultural diversity as a result of enlargement. Poland (84%) and Belgium (82%) again lead the list of the proponents of enlargement in terms of cultural diversity.

The gap between "agree" and "disagree" responses get smaller when it comes to the support of the statement that the enlargement makes cultural identities and traditions disappear. 48% of respondents disagree with this fact, however the percentage of the supporters is 41%, lacking behind only by 7%. Hungary (62%) and Belgium (59%) show their positive attitude concerning the enlargement in terms of cultural diversity by rejecting the possibility of extinction of traditions and identities.

The next criterion of social aspect is mobility. The supporters of this aspect are more than any other of previously mentioned factors. 82% of the Europeans favored mobility by agreeing that the enlargement of the EU in social terms will facilitate the mobility of people like students, businessman etc. within Europe, and the negative answers were given by only 8% of total respondents. Also, there is no country that disproved this statement. So the opinion on the mobility is almost homogeneous. The list of supporter countries is led by Finland (94%), Slovenia (94%) and Belgium (93%). Italy with 72% and Spain with 73% end the list.

Nevertheless, 60% of population concerns about the increase of the illegal immigration in Europe as a consequence of EU enlargement. These are the countries from both: old and new member-states. Less concerned country about illegal immigration is Hungary with 42% of

respondents disagreeing. Only 29% of total EU interviewees disagreed with the claim that enlargement will increase illegal immigration in Europe.

## **Copenhagen political criteria vs. public opinion**

In the 1993 the Copenhagen political criteria was introduced by the European council. These are the requirement for the candidate countries to fulfill in order to be accepted. These criteria require the candidate to have:

- “stable institutions that guarantee democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the respect for and protection of minorities;
- a functioning market economy, as well as the ability to cope with the pressure of competition and the market forces at work inside the Union;
- the ability to assume the obligations of membership, in particular adherence the objectives of political, economic and monetary union.” (Conclusion of the European Council, 1993)

These criteria were clarified by the European Council in Madrid in 1995. According to it, “a candidate country must also be able to put the EU rules and procedures in to effect. Accession also requires the candidate country to have created the conditions for its integration by adapting its administrative structures... in addition, the EU must be able to integrate new members; it needs to ensure that its institutions and decision-making processes remain effective and accountable; it needs to be in a position, as t enlarges, to continue developing and implementing common policies in all areas; and it needs to be in a position to continue financing its policies in a sustainable manner.” ([www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu))

From the passages above it can be withdrawn that these requirements are perfect tools for integrating and expanding with democratic values, peace and stability, economic prosperity etc. But the main question is that if these requirements fit the requirements of citizens of European



Union member states. Do these variables shape the opinions of the public about the enlargement of the EU? Or do they match with what the citizens want from new member-states or candidate countries?

From the analyses of the data provided by Eurobarometer about public opinion on European Union enlargement, the attitudes towards new member-states are more positive, rather than negative. Moreover, they demonstrated that political aspects of the European enlargement are the most favorable compared to economic and social aspects. None of the publics of European Union have disagreed with the fact that enlargement of European Union will maintain peace and stability, spread the democracy in the region, provide security and protection of human rights. Certainly, these are the factors that Copenhagen Criteria lists on the first place, as it can be seen from the preceding passages. So, in terms of political requirements for candidate countries, the opinion of the majority of Europeans coincides with the requirements that are set by European Council in 1993 – the Copenhagen political Criteria.

The economic concerns of European public are slightly different from those of politics. If in case political achievements of the enlargement are viewed mostly positive, in the economic sector people are divided in the opinions. Most consider that the EU is one of the economic players in the world arena. However, the majority believe that expansion of the EU will cost the old member-states in terms of cutting their budget and affecting their live standards. The Copenhagen Criteria requires from the candidates their market economy and their competitiveness among other member-states' markets. Basically, the economic criteria also match the public's requirements. In order not to take the economic burden, in terms of GNP gap, which candidate countries shoulder to the old member-states, both: the Copenhagen criteria and public require economic development.

The different results could be obtained if to analyze the social aspects that require or would like to see from applying countries and the criteria of Copenhagen. Criminality and migration is the prior concerns according to public opinion. Some believe that enlargement will increase the rate of criminality in the region because of the huge population. In reverse, others argue that it is the enlargement that will reinforce common battle against criminality in the region. In terms of migration issue, public, certainly, expects the flow of immigrants. Consequently, the cheap labor of immigrants will push the old member-states citizens out of market of jobs. The Copenhagen criteria do not ensure full security, or low crime rate, and do not prevent migration from new member-states. However, it can be assumed that under “peace and stability” from objectives of EU enlargement it is meant preventing these social issues.

Dr. Saban Taniyisi in his research paper “EU’s Copenhagen political criteria and the political culture of the western Balkan countries: are they compatible?” argues that Copenhagen criteria require democratic development from the candidate countries regardless their political culture. He bases his arguments on the Balkan states, providing facts that democracy is not working in the region because of the lack of people’s trust in institutions of the state. Moreover, he brought some examples from other authors that claimed that Balkan states and their political attitudes remind Asian countries rather than European. However, most Europeans value democratic values in the candidate countries. Interestingly, the opinions of EU citizens are similar about the fact the enlargement will enrich cultural diversity in Europe.

The public opinion of EU and the Copenhagen Criteria, in general, have common interests in the candidate countries, in particular, in the sense of political and economic requirements. There is a little difference in social aspect. Copenhagen criteria do not fully or in detail provide social requirements.

## **Mass media**

According to Eurobarometer, public of the European Union obtains information about European Union and its enlargement policy from mostly TV and Newspapers. Indeed, mass media plays a great tool for informing publics about any issue that is significant at a current time. Moreover, mass media reflects the public opinion. Therefore, it will be reasonable to take into account the information provided by mass media, especially, information about enlargement of the European Union, since this is the topic which is relevant to this paper.

“Eurobarometer says EU citizens are badly informed on enlargement” titles of the articles published in 2002 on the website of EurActive. According to the article, majority of EU citizens (61%) feel favorable towards EU enlargement. 83% of the interviewees feel less informed on enlargement. Moreover, most of the respondents think that enlargement will unite Europe, will make the EU politically stronger and will bring peace. Less people (48%) believe that enlargement will create jobs. Besides, most recognize the organized crime and drug trafficking as important criteria for candidate countries among with others like human rights protection and the principles of democracy. Immigration is mentioned as prior concern by 80 % of population. Basically, the same results were demonstrated by Eurobarometer in 2006, as it was used in the chapter of public opinion polls on European Union enlargement.

## **Future enlargement**

As it is mentioned in the introduction, European Union is facing next eight countries that proposed their candidacy for membership. Among those eight countries, two of them are nearest to the full membership. They are Croatia and Turkey that started accession talks on 3 October 2005. It is predicted that Turkey is able to complete them in 15 years, but Croatia in 2011.

### *Turkey*

Turkey applied for full membership in 1987 and was confirmed as a candidate only in 1999. In 2005 Turkey had extended a customs union with the European Union to all new member-states, also Cyprus. Because of Turkey's failure to ratify the customs union the accession talk was frozen in eight policy areas in December 2006. The main concerns of European Union about Turkey are freedom of speech, democracy, treatment of religious minorities, women's and children's rights, civilian control and military and the Cyprus tension. The European Commission has pointed out aspects that Turkey must pay attention. They are to strengthen democracy and human rights and underlining the need for deeper judicial reform. Nevertheless, there are points that were appreciated by the Commission. This touches the rights of Kurds – minority that lives in Turkey. Also, building the relations of Turkey with neighboring Armenia had positive reaction by EU. The referendum conducted by Turkey in September 2010 allowed the ruling party to make changes in the constitution in order to match it with the norms of European Union. The president of France Nicolas Sarkozy sees Turkey more as a partner of the European Union rather than its full member-state. Some are concerned about the religious background of the country, since Turkey is a big Muslim country. Others favor Turkey's membership because of its young labor force, since Europe is experiencing an ageing process. The UK Foreign Office sees Turkey's membership in decades ([www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com))

Birol Yesilada has a research which titles “Turkey’s candidacy for EU membership”. In this paper he brings out common benefits from the membership of Turkey. He points at the economic, military and political ties of EU and Turkey what makes it pro-Western country. Besides, warming in the relations between Turkey and Greece provides the opportunity for EU to solve the “ancient” problem. Moreover, European Union and Turkey are big economic partners. Birol also mentions the hardships of Turkey in democratization process stressing on the human right protection and minority issues of Kurds. In terms of economy, what challenges Turkey to achieve EU target are current budget deficit, public debt, inflation rate, unemployment rate and interest rate. The author argues that if European Union rejects the membership Turkey still benefits because the economic and political reforms by EU norms will place Turkey in respectful position as democratic country. However, the rejection will be a tragedy if take into account the time and path Turkey went through.

If rely on Eurobarometer data, “a majority of EU citizens sees Turkey’s membership of the EU as a primarily in Turkey’s interest.” Indeed, the supporters of the idea that from membership Turkey will benefit more than EU comprise 52% of respondents, while only 3% of the citizens think that it is primarily in the interest of European Union. The gap is very huge, which tells us that the European public does not favor the accession of Turkey in the Union. 20% of respondents view the membership as a mutual interest of both the European Union and Turkey. 3 % of citizens see it as a benefit for other international players like Russia, the USA, and China etc. 4% think that none of the sides benefits from Turkey’s membership. However, Turkish public has different views on their accession. 30% of Turkish respondents feel that it is primarily EU’s interest. And only 13% of Turkish interviewees think that it is Turkey’s interest. It means that the people of Turkey are not convinced that the accession of their country in the European Union will be beneficial. To the question “Once Turkey complies with all the conditions set by

the European Union, would you be ... to the accession of Turkey to the European Union?" 48% of respondents opposed and only 39% favored. Thus, EU public does not support the membership of Turkey in the EU and it is not because of political or economic basis.

### *Croatia*

Croatia applied for membership in February 2003 and was granted a status of candidate country in June of 2004. In October 2005 the negotiation about full membership started. Croatia is looking forward to complete the accession negotiation in 2011. In December of the last year it successfully signed agreements on foreign policy areas, border controls, visa rules and the police. Accession negotiation might end in the first half of the 2011, as the EU presidency of Hungary aims it to. Croatia's struggle was corruption; however, the main abuser, a former prime-minister Ivo Sanader, was arrested. His four ministers in the government were replaced by the current prime-minister Jadranka Kosor. The requirements of EU from Croatia are to reform judiciary, fight corruption, to make progress in minority right protection. The Commission also is concerned about criminality, because of the killing of the newspaper editor in Zagreb in October 2008. Before continuing the accession negotiation Croatia had to solve border issues with the EU member-state Slovenia. The Lisbon Treaty ratification "paved the way for Croatia's accession, because EU's institutional changes are now going ahead." ([www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com))

Eurobarometer shows that citizens of European Union favor the membership of Croatia most out of the countries like the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro. When asked "Once each of the following countries complies with all conditions set by the European Union, would you be strongly in favor, fairly in favor, fairly opposed or strongly opposed to the accession of each of them to the European Union?" only Croatia passed the over 50%. The respondents that favored Croatia's accession make up 56% of

citizens of EU, while 30% of it opposes. Not only compared to this countries is Croatia more favorable, but also compared to Turkey.

Europeans Union population considers that “a clear political project for Europe (37%), a better knowledge and understanding between people in the EU and the (potential) candidate countries (34%), as well as a public awareness of the benefits and challenges of EU enlargement (32%) are the most important means to ensure the success of future enlargement.”

## **Conclusion**

The enlargement of the European Union has been along process, starting after World War II. Taking its origin from European Coal and Steel Community founded by six countries that are France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg, the European Union nowadays has 27 member-states. The fundamental goal of the community was to maintain everlasting peace throughout the continent of Europe.

EU faced five big stages of enlargement. Each of the enlargement processes had its own challenges and opportunities. The patterns of the challenges in terms of economy were the differences in economic development between the countries. One of the main opportunities was the development of international trade and mutual benefit from it. The political opportunity certainly was the development of democratic values in the region, including human rights protection, rule of law, respect for minority rights etc. As one of the social issues of the enlargement is migration that affects the economies of the member-states, and, of course, the lives of the citizens. These are the variables that influence the attitudes of the public towards the further enlargement.

The analysis of the Eurobarometer data for public opinion on the European Union enlargement demonstrates that, in general, the majority of the citizens are in favor of further enlargement. They base their attitudes on the economic, political and social aspects of enlargement. Public of the European Union mostly values political benefits of the enlargement which are spreading the democratic principles across the Europe, maintaining peace and stability in the region and the political unity of the nations of Europe. Economic prosperity through market economy and international trade in Europe is also valued by the publics. Social aspects like fighting against terrorism and criminality as united Europe is another benefits of the enlargement according to



the public opinion polls. However, criminality and migration are the factors that negatively influence on the public. The EU citizens feel less informed about enlargement. Thus, European Union should take measures to improve the awareness of the population about the enlargement process. It has to be done through mass media tools TV and newspaper, since these two are the most favorable or mostly used ways to obtain information about enlargement, according to public polls by Eurobarometer.

The Copenhagen Criteria of 1993 and the public requirement for the candidate countries are pretty much match. Both pursue political and economical benefits in terms of everlasting peace and prosperity in Europe. But the social aspects like crime rate and immigration risk are less represented in the main requirements of Copenhagen's list, while public pays an attention to this issues as important factors.

Enlargement process did not end with the accession of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007. There are eight countries that are knocking on the door of the European Union. Among them Turkey and Croatia are the candidate countries. Turkey has close economic, political and military ties with the European Union; therefore the accession is a mutual benefit. In contrast, many are skeptic about the membership of this country in the EU; some base their views on the religious background of Turkey. Moreover, the situation of Turkey in European public discourse is not promising. Majority of the citizens oppose the Turkey's membership in the EU, even if it meets all the requirements of the Copenhagen political criteria. The accession negotiation did not end yet; therefore the final decision is not taken for the moment.

In contrast, Croatia has more chances to become a full member of EU. Although it is very challenging for this country to follow the chapters of *acquis communautaire*, there are positive feedbacks from the community of EU and the publics of Europe as well. The citizens favored

Croatia the most as a member of the EU among other eight states, if they all complete the requirements of the European Commission.

To conclude, further enlargement of the European Union is welcomed by the majority of the Europeans. There are certain criteria that public discourse has pointed out to be one of the prior aims of the enlargement of the EU. They are clear political project, better understanding between EU and its member-states as well as candidate countries and awareness of public about the costs and benefits of enlargement. If EU will consider these objectives for further enlargement, the public value the expansion as successful.

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