

THE DEMISE OF EU ENLARGEMENT POLICY

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Summary

Enlargement has been on the EEC/EU agenda all along its history and was believed to be its “most successful” policy. Although enlargement policy was built on values and rules, geopolitics have traditionally been a strong driving force behind it, while tension between widening and deepening has always been present.

The fifth enlargement was instrumentalised by the prevailing policies of extreme neoliberalism causing public opinion reaction and nurturing “enlargement fatigue”. The implicit enlargement agenda in the neighbourhood policy has been put to the service of anti-Russian strategies which have utterly failed while jeopardising good neighbourly relations with Moscow and contributing to the negative turn of the Putin regime.

During the last decade, enlargement policy has rapidly degenerated and today it is essentially at a standstill in all three of its dimensions (Balkans, Turkey, European neighbourhood countries). This is a negative development both for the EU and its neighbours. The revival of the policy is conditional upon a necessary, but improbable, major shift in the EU, with the strengthening of solidarity.

Key words: enlargement, neighbourhood, globalisation, Balkans, Turkey

On 1 May 2004 the European Union welcomed 10 new member states in what was the largest enlargement in its history. At that time the prevailing view was that enlargement was the most successful EU policy. The notions of the EU’s “soft” and “transformative” power and of “Europeanisation” were highly *en vogue*. And most people predicted further enlargement steps in the Balkans, Turkey, even in countries of the former Soviet Union¹.

Almost thirteen years later enlargement euphoria is a distant memory. In a context of multiple existential crises for the EU, critical voices on past enlargements are multiplying. European public opinion is clearly (and in some member states overwhelmingly -see the annex at the end of the paper) against further accessions and enlargement is frequently held responsible for the EU’s mishappenings. Member states are as a whole hesitant or negative towards further accessions. Commission President Juncker declared there would be no further enlargements during his mandate and renamed the relevant service². Indeed, the accession process of the ‘next’ countries –

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¹ The Baltic countries had already joined, as part of the 2004 enlargement.

² The Commission’s Directorate General for Enlargement (DG ELARG) was overhauled and renamed DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) in a move evidently intended to downgrade the role of enlargement. Concerning Juncker’s statement about no further enlargements, enlargement optimists attempted to downplay it, claiming it simply stated the obvious. Indeed, no one ever expected any of the present candidates

the Western Balkans and Turkey- is practically at a standstill. Moreover, following events in Georgia and Ukraine, the Neighbourhood Policy is in shambles³.

What happened in a decade and the “most successful policy” is at best quietly abandoned, while at worst it is denounced as responsible for Europe’s present crises? Is enlargement policy a cause of the present European impasse? This paper argues that the shape enlargement policy has taken and its present apparent demise is a part and a consequence of the major existential crisis the EU is undergoing as well as of the policies that led to it. However, enlargement itself is not the cause of the present crisis.

1. Enlargement and the European project

1.1. *The EU, an (initially) inclusive project*

It has been rightly observed that enlargement is in the EU’s “DNA”. Indeed, accession of new member states has been on the European agenda since the creation of the European Economic Community in the 1950s: accession of the UK and the countries that eventually formed with it the European Free Trade Association was already under discussion; so was the association of Greece and Turkey –with a perspective of accession. Since then, consecutive enlargements brought EU membership from 6 to 28 and have almost incessantly been on the EU agenda.

Enlargement is enshrined in the Union’s charters since the Rome Treaty⁴. The enlargement clause establishes accession to the EU as a quasi-‘right’ of democratic European states, not as a mere option for the incumbent member states. True, there is no legal right of accession: a state can apply to become a member, but the Union is not obliged to accept the application. Besides, the requirement for democracy incorporates the well-known “criteria” for membership and it is on the basis of these criteria that member states assess each candidacy – albeit with considerable margins of interpretation⁵.

Nonetheless, in the spirit of the Union’s founders, enlargement was undoubtedly based on the conviction that Europe forms a ‘family’, with common historical and civilizational roots, built on common democratic and social values; these are reflected in freedoms, institutions and a social model which we wish to safeguard and develop. All European peoples have their place in this Union⁶. This conviction was also the basis for the broad support enlargement enjoyed for decades among the European peoples. Suffice to recall the role the Ancient Greek heritage played in the European public’s positive view of Greek accession, the importance of consolidating democracy as a motive for letting in the countries of the South (Greece, Spain,

to join by 2019, at the expiry of the present Commission’s term. Nonetheless, to the broad public, unaware of the details of the enlargement process, Juncker’s statement was an unmistakable signal that expansion to new members was no longer on the agenda.

³ This article refers only to the ‘Eastern dimension’ of the Neighbourhood Policy, i.e. the one that covers countries of the former Soviet Union. The fate of the ‘Southern dimension’ of the ENP, which covers the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries, was no better; however, developments there are not related to enlargement.

⁴ “*Any European State may apply to become a member of the Community*” (article 237). This clause is reiterated since in all Treaties that succeeded the Rome Treaty. In the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) it was added that a country that wishes to join should be democratic and this condition was further specified in the present Treaty on the European Union (TEU) (article 49).

⁵ The so-called “Copenhagen criteria” (1993) and other posterior conditions were incorporated into the present TEU Article 49 with the phrase “*The conditions of eligibility agreed upon by the European Council shall be taken into account*”.

⁶ True, the precise confines of this Europe were never defined and, as a result, the candidacies of Turkey and some of the former Soviet Union states remain contested.

Portugal) and, of course, the key role of the “return to Europe” in the consensus to welcome the countries that had been cut off during the Cold War.

1.2. Enlargement and geopolitics

Enlargement does not basically fall under the remit of foreign policy. Rather, it is related to the architecture of the Community/Union itself, since its objective is to bring third countries *into* the Union. This is why enlargement was not included in the European External Action Service (EEAS), created by the Lisbon Treaty.

Nevertheless, enlargement does largely concern foreign policy; the motives for the successive enlargements of the Union, have always prominently included geopolitics. Enlargement is a key instrument of the Union’s so-called “soft power”, which is considered as the most powerful weapon of its foreign policy. Thus:

- Enlargement to the UK aimed at strengthening NATO’s “economic base” in Europe in the context of the Cold War; the very creation of the EEC *inter alia* served that purpose. Also, this was the main reason behind strong US support to British accession.
- The central objective of enlargement to Europe’s southern and eastern periphery was democratic stability both during the Cold War and in the context of post-Cold War geopolitical turbulence.
- An evident aim of the accession of southern Europe, following the fall of the right-wing dictatorships, was to keep it (especially Portugal and Greece) from turning to an anti-Western orientation, as well as to strengthen the West in its competition with the Soviet bloc in the Balkans⁷.
- Enlargement to Sweden, Finland and Austria was largely driven by the aim to further integrate into the West countries that had been obliged or opted to remain neutral during the Cold War⁸.
- Lastly, the ‘big bang’ Eastern enlargement of 2004/2007 aimed at consolidating and strengthening the West’s victory in the Cold War, by curtailing Moscow’s influence. That enlargement was implemented in parallel with a corresponding NATO enlargement (hence the term “Euro-Atlantic perspective”).

The two main protagonists of enlargement, Germany and the UK, had strong geopolitical motives: Germany strove to dominate and secure its eastern neighbourhood, following the fall of the Berlin Wall; the UK implemented its long-standing anti-Soviet/anti-Russian and Atlanticist policy⁹. Also other member states’ support for enlargement was often inspired by geopolitical aspirations: the Northern countries’ interest in the Baltic states, Austrian interest in its surrounding area, once part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Italy’s interest in the “area danubiana” and the Adriatic, Greece’s interest in Cyprus and the Balkans.

1.3. Widening versus deepening

Champions of a strong, political and autonomous EU traditionally view enlargement with some scepticism. Given the Union’s institutional setup (in particular the requirement for unanimity or qualified majorities in crucial decisions), greater heterogeneity which would ineluctably result from enlargement, undermined their political project. New member states’ lower level of economic development would create tension in economic and social cohesion and their

⁷ Recall the initial radical inclination of the ‘revolution of the roses’ in Portugal, as well as the anti-Western rhetoric of the rising Andreas Papandreu in the first years after the fall of the Greek dictatorship.

⁸ This motive prevailed over complications caused to the Common Foreign and Security as well as Defence Policy by the inclusion of countries that continued to be formally neutral.

⁹ British support to enlargement also aimed at diluting the European project into a broad “space of freedom and free trade”.

geopolitical position would render more difficult the shaping and implementation of a common foreign and defence policy. Moreover, differences in the economic and foreign policy ‘philosophy’ of new member states raised objections: the accession of the UK and, later, of Sweden and many of the former communist countries, shifted the Union’s internal political balance towards liberalism, while these same enlargements, save that of Sweden, strengthened the Union’s attachment to Atlanticism.

The least enthusiastic member states on enlargement were predictably those that had a federal vision of Europe or strove for autonomy from the US (Belgium, Luxemburg on the one hand, France on the other). Initially, the European Commission was also hesitant¹⁰, but it gradually changed its position. The reason must be sought in the shift of the Commission towards (neo) liberalism and, more generally, towards Anglo-Saxon philosophy, but also in the fact that enlargement policy strengthened considerably and rather unexpectedly its own institutional role¹¹.

Conservative pro-European circles –influential in the founding member states- have objections also with respect to the civilizational/religious dimension of enlargements. They emphasise the Graeco-Roman and Christian foundations of the European project, notably in their Western version. They thus object to the entry of ‘non-Christian’ states, basically Turkey (and more recently some Balkan states). Even orthodox countries such as Greece (and other Balkan and East European countries) are often not considered to belong to this European heritage. In the case of Greece, though, its symbolism as the “cradle of European civilisation” usually prevails.

Tension between widening and deepening has accompanied the Union throughout its history. In the “good times” this was overcome with the simultaneous advance of both processes: successive enlargements were accomplished in parallel with further steps in integration. The two processes were at times even formally linked. Thus, the first enlargement broadly coincided with the establishment of a common commercial policy; enlargement to Southern Europe went in parallel with the adoption of cohesion policies; accession of the neutral states came shortly after the establishment of the CFSP; preparations for the Eastern enlargement took place in a Europe that had recently accomplished the Single Market and was about to introduce the euro.

2. The “fifth enlargement”¹²: a turning point

The culminant point of the EU’s enlargement policy was the completion of the “fifth enlargement”, which brought into the Union ten former communist countries (together with Cyprus and Malta). The process appeared initially as a great success: it had led to spectacular progress in democratisation and reforms in the candidate countries while Russia had hardly

¹⁰ Jacques Delors repeatedly expressed doubts over enlargement. For instance, shortly after the 1999 Helsinki European Council which opened the way for Eastern enlargement and acknowledged Turkish candidacy, he commented: « *C'est une fuite en avant incontournable. Mais le dilemme entre élargissement et approfondissement est réel. Notre devoir historique est de réunifier l'Europe et donc d'ouvrir les bras à des pays qui sont aussi européens que nous, mais nous savons, à la lumière de précédents élargissements, que nous risquons ainsi de diluer le projet* ». (*Le Monde*, 19.1.2000).

¹¹ Paradoxically, while enlargement is by definition an intergovernmental process, enlargement policy gives the Commission a key role, both for the preparation of the aspiring countries and in the accession negotiations themselves.

¹² In EU jargon, the “fifth enlargement” is the one that resulted mainly from the collapse of communism in central and southeast Europe and was accomplished in 2004 and 2007 through the accession of 12 new member states.

reacted to what was a substantial further shift in the strategic balance to its expense. Enlargement euphoria seemed justified and public opinion was largely supportive.

However, by 2004 public opinion started shifting against enlargement. A first reading saw this as natural fatigue following the “big-bang” enlargement and, later, as a result of the shortcomings of Bulgarian and Romanian accessions. This was partly true; also the fact that the remaining countries on the enlargement agenda, the Western Balkans and Turkey, were evidently more “difficult” and certainly less popular in the EU, nurtured “enlargement fatigue”. However, the causes of this phenomenon should be sought earlier, in the run up to the fifth enlargement.

2.1. A most successful policy or the “Trojan horse of globalisation”?

The 1990s were a period of optimism on the “reunification” of Europe, following the unexpected collapse of the communist regimes. German reunification, despite its technical flaws, was a forerunner, generating strong feelings of solidarity in German public opinion, but also in large parts of the rest of Europe. The accession process was key in the rapid process of rapprochement to the West witnessed by a number of former communist countries. However, this optimism concealed the negative consequences that were also part of the process, in particular in the incumbent member states.

During that same period globalisation accelerated and neo-liberalism became dominant. The new enlargement was instrumentalised for the ‘reform’ of the Union in accordance with the requirements of this philosophy: passive adaptation to globalisation and gradual abandonment of the “European model”.

With respect to enlargement, the official triumphalist narrative focused on the high growth rates and substantial modernisation recorded in the countries of Central Europe in the run up and during the first years of their accession. It overlooked accompanying negative effects in these countries, notably in terms of job security, inequalities and weakening of social protection.

More importantly, potential negative consequences of eastern enlargement in the incumbent member states were consciously underestimated and hence hardly any accompanying measures were taken to protect the losers¹³. Extreme neoliberal views among the elites of the candidate countries –novices to capitalism and often fervent disciples of “textbook capitalism”- were appraised as supportive of a necessary modernisation of the Union.

True, in view of the accession of a large number of countries that were less developed in terms of democracy, institutions and the economy, the EU took some measures to secure a smooth process: the 1993 “Copenhagen criteria” codified some prerequisites that should be fulfilled by the candidate countries, so that their accession would not harm or destabilise themselves or Europe. It also acknowledged the need for institutional reform, since a Europe of more than 25 member states could not be governed with the institutions conceived for six.

Attempts at institutional reform date from the mid-1990s; these were expressly linked to the oncoming large enlargement and were set as a precondition to it. The Treaties of Amsterdam and Nice hardly fulfilled this objective, but, in accordance with a long-established practice precluding admittance of failure, it was stated that the precondition had been met. The Treaty of Lisbon on the other hand included some substantial measures. For instance, the decision making mechanism that was adopted for the Council (‘double majority’) and the ceiling set for

¹³ Official studies on the effects of the fifth enlargement dedicated long sections to prove that also the incumbent member states had benefited in terms of GDP growth. However, the results were that measurable such benefits were marginal (while for the new member states they were indeed substantial).

the number of MEPs, regardless of the number of member states, undoubtedly facilitated enlargement. However, another crucial measure, the capping of the number of Commissioners had to be abrogated following the negative Irish referendum (2008)¹⁴. Besides, the fact that in many areas (and in particular in the CFSP) the unanimity rule was maintained meant that enlargement continued to be at odds with the functionality of the Union.

The economic and social consequences of the accession of countries with a much lower level of development and with economic regimes of the “Wild West” type were almost fully disregarded: relocation of industries towards the new low-cost member states, massive migration towards old member states with the ineluctable pressure it exerted on wages and employment, social dumping and tax competition were not addressed. Publicly, these were mostly denied and, privately, they were assessed as contributing to the strengthening of European competitiveness.

To address the above tensions, inevitable in any integration process, Eastern enlargement should have been accompanied by stronger EU policies, notably in the area of cohesion, both for the new member states and for regions and sectors of the old member states which were expected to suffer a negative impact. Yet, the Community budget shrank instead of increasing (as a percentage of GDP). Cohesion policy was initially maintained at relatively high levels¹⁵, but was substantially modified in its philosophy: from being a counterbalancing mechanism to the tensions that result from market forces and integration, it was transformed into a transitional policy assisting the “take off” of lagging member states and regions. For the rest, problems created by market forces and economic integration were left to those same forces (“the invisible hand”), as well as to a growth agenda that remained largely declaratory (the Lisbon programme, etc.).

The above mentioned approach to enlargement formed simply part of the way the broader challenge of globalisation was addressed. EU leaders were enchanted by the new emerging era, but in reality they were accomplices to a ruthless global financial capital in demolishing welfare states and in creating societies with high unemployment, insecurity and glaring inequalities.

Hence, it is not surprising that the reaction to this process often equated enlargement to globalisation and indeed attributed to both only negative dimensions. To many, enlargement became the tangible symbol of the European policies they rejected: relocations to Romania overshadowed much larger similar movements to Bangla Desh; the “Polish plumber” was more visible as a cause of unemployment than the rise of China; positive results of economic integration are diffuse and hardly perceivable, while unemployment and truck-drivers from Eastern Europe are quite visible. Official Europe claimed that enlargement provided “a shield against negative aspects of globalisation”, but an increasing number of European citizens saw it as “the Trojan Horse of globalisation”. And official propaganda often presented as benefits the very aspects which public opinion saw as negative and threatening¹⁶.

The protagonists in this new enlargement scepticism no longer opposed deepening to widening and would thus be willing to settle for the parallel pursuance of both these objectives; on the

¹⁴ Thus there is still one Commissioner per member state.

¹⁵ This happened because the old cohesion countries and especially Spain would not give their consent to eastern enlargement, lest the high level of support to themselves were maintained. Indeed, the 3% (of GDP) cap that was introduced, established a *de facto* discrimination between old and new member states, in favour of the former, since, in absolute terms and per capita such a cap favours the richer cohesion countries.

¹⁶ The studies published by the Commission to defend Eastern enlargement ex-post are typically ambiguous: it was claimed both that the acceding states did not put any pressure on the tax systems of incumbent states (through their low tax rates) and that such a pressure would be good for European competitiveness. Similar arguments can be found on industrial relocations (both denial of their extent and positive assessment of their impact). However, with respect to the sensitive issue of free movement of workers, the Commission abandoned economic orthodoxy

contrary, the dominant forces were now those of introversion and nationalism, mutually reinforcing with other reactionary reflexes such as xenophobia and protectionism. Opposition to enlargement became the spearhead of a rising Euroscepticism.

Thus, under a surface of strong support for enlargement until 2004, resentment loomed over the general direction of Europe; enlargement was soon named as a central element of this direction, as a cause and not as a part and consequence of the more general course of Europe.

2.2. The enlargement agenda post-2004: geopolitical motives versus “enlargement fatigue”

The final political decision for the ‘big bang’ Eastern enlargement was taken at the December 2002 Copenhagen European Council. European leaders were already aware at the time that the pro-enlargement climate would most probably revert. However, their geopolitical interests imposed the continuation of the policy in three directions: the Balkans, Turkey and Eastern Europe. Not without obstacles, though.

The Balkans

The collapse of the European communist regimes and the break-down of the Soviet Union in 1989-91 coincided with and were partly responsible for a major destabilisation in the Balkans; its epicentre was the demise of (former) Yugoslavia and the ensuing wars. The EU and its member states disastrously failed to prevent or end the conflicts that cost hundreds of thousands of lives in the region during the 1990s; in fact, they substantially contributed to the tragic mess¹⁷. Military intervention under American leadership proved necessary twice to terminate the bloodshed (Bosnia 1995, Kosovo 1999 -in the latter case without UN blessing).

Stability in the Balkans is of course a major European interest. The conclusion drawn from the tragedies of the 1990s was that stability was possible only within the framework of the integration of the whole region into the European structures. Thus, at the end of the Kosovo war, the EU decided to include the Balkans in its enlargement policy. Bulgaria and Romania were definitively included in the “fifth enlargement” and, as regards the Western Balkans, the “Stabilisation and Association Process” was conceived, with accession as its final goal. In 2003, with the signing of the Athens (Accession) Treaty for the “10”, the EU deemed appropriate to send a strong message that the Balkans would not be forgotten. It committed politically to complete the process with Bulgaria and Romania (their Accession Treaty was signed in Luxemburg in April 2005) and it substantially upgraded the accession perspective of the Western Balkans with the Thessaloniki EU-Western Balkan summit in June 2003.

Turkey

Turkey’s accession perspective, dating from the 1960s, had always been (and still is) controversial. The imperatives of the Cold War and the desire of the West to keep a balance in relations with Greece and Turkey, contributed to an early inclusion of Turkey into the Euro-Atlantic structures¹⁸. However, Turkey’s accession to the EU met numerous objections: a contested European identity (geographic and geopolitical position, religion), a problematic and

that would dictate a positive approach, because of expected effects on labour cost: facing an overwhelming pressure from public opinion, it only referred to initial estimates that gave very low figures on expected movements. These estimates were proved spectacularly wrong (European Commission, DG ECFIN, “Five years of an enlarged EU. Economic achievements and challenges”, *European Economy*, 1/2009, 228 p.).

¹⁷ I am here referring mainly to the policies of Germany and Austria which played a key role in the initial break-up of the Yugoslav Federation and to the EU’s incapacity to contain and terminate the conflicts once they had broken out.

¹⁸ Membership of the Council of Europe (together with Greece, 1949), accession to NATO (simultaneously with Greece, 1952), association to the EEC (1964, two years after a similar association of Greece with the EEC).

for some periods inexistent democracy, a large population and an expected great cost of accession. For all these reasons and in spite of the fact that Turkey's accession perspective was foreseen already in the 1963 Association Agreement, the process remained mostly stagnant. Indeed, an official application for membership (in 1987) was rejected in substance¹⁹. Disputes of Turkey with Greece over the Aegean and Cyprus became an additional obstacle once Athens had joined.

Following the end of the Cold War, additional arguments in favour of a European perspective for Turkey gained ground. The presence of a democratic, economically dynamic and European Muslim-majority state in the vicinity of a turbulent Middle East and Caucasus could act as a stabilising pole, to the benefit of peace, democracy, and economic prosperity in the region. In addition, it would be difficult to exclude allied Turkey from the EU, when former communist countries were acceding, all the more so since the enlargement policy's "transformative power" which was being tested with those countries, could well be applied vis-à-vis Turkey as well. In a period of enlargement euphoria and dominance of geopolitical considerations, supporters of Turkish accession managed to prevail temporarily, albeit in the midst of very strong opposition. In 1999 the candidacy of Turkey was acknowledged and accession negotiations were eventually opened in 2005. The accession of Cyprus, which had been linked to a European perspective of Turkey, contributed to these developments²⁰.

Eastern Europe

As already mentioned, through the fifth enlargement the West capitalised on its victory over Russia in the Cold War. The decline of Yeltsin's Russia in the 1990s had nurtured expectations for a further shrinking of Moscow's power and influence. Especially to the eyes of those who saw enlargement primarily as a foreign policy instrument (the UK, Sweden, but also the US), the 2004/2007 enlargement was perceived as a step towards further eastward expansion (basically with Ukraine in mind, but also Moldova, Belarus and the Transcaucasian Republics). An immediate inclusion of these countries in enlargement policy was not possible: too many member states, including some powerful ones objected to a fast and continuous enlargement or were sceptical about a strategy that aimed at pushing back Russia "to the steppes" and would inevitably provoke its reaction.

The solution that was found was the "neighbourhood policy", inspired by the UK and Sweden and adopted in 2003. Its aim was to detach the aforementioned countries from Russian influence through their economic association and political rapprochement to the EU²¹. Officially, it was said that Neighbourhood Policy "neither leads to, nor excludes" an eventual accession to the EU, but this message was translated (especially by all those in these countries for whom the European perspective was vital) into that the accession perspective remained

¹⁹ In the purely economic field, however, a customs union was established in 1995, rendering Turkey one of the most integrated partners in the Single Market.

²⁰ Cypriot accession was the result of the decisive stand of Athens which had linked it to its consent to Eastern enlargement. The fact that Cyprus' accession was linked politically, but not in terms of a time schedule, to the European perspective of Turkey was a great success of Greek diplomacy. Its importance was revealed when new obstacles emerged in Turkey's European course. From an EU perspective, the initial plan had been for Cyprus to join simultaneously with the solution of the long-standing Cyprus issue. This plan was however thwarted by the Greek Cypriot rejection of the Annan Plan. As a result, the accession of Cyprus, still a divided island, imported into the Union a major open dispute with a third country and was probably the most negative aspect of the fifth enlargement.

²¹ This purely geopolitical objective was invested with democratic and pro-détente rhetoric. The policy's declared objective was to avoid "the building of new walls and dividing lines in Europe" and to form instead "a circle of friends" [around the EU], based on "European values". Neighbourhood policy, it was claimed, aimed at the democratisation and "Europeanisation" of these countries, not at their detachment from Russia. This language was very soon proved specious, when it became clear which regimes were being supported through the policy.

open²². Thus, following the “big bang”, enlargement policy had to remain alive, not only for its declared objectives (the Western Balkans and Turkey) but also for a “hidden” one, the continuation of the “drang nach Osten”.

Strong opposing forces

Despite the geopolitical incentives and euphoria over Europe’s “reunification”, the conditions that would allow for the continuation of enlargement policy were much less favourable than before.

First, the remaining countries aspiring to accession were obviously more ‘difficult’ than the previous ones. In the *Balkans* strong nationalist winds were still blowing, with major unsolved issues concerning the very existence of states, their constitutional order and their identity (Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia²³). Democratic institutions and economies were as a rule weak. Organised crime and corruption were often dominant. *Turkey* was anyway a ‘difficult’ country in the perspective of the Copenhagen criteria, despite important steps in democratisation and the economic dynamism of the country during the first decade of our century. Moreover, developments in the Cyprus issue did not facilitate Turkey’s European course²⁴. Lastly, the *European countries of the neighbourhood policy* were ruled by regimes that varied from authoritarian to outright dictatorial, always corrupt, while a number of “frozen (or not so frozen) conflicts” with Russia in an active role rendered their European perspective highly problematic (South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria).

Hence it was only natural –notwithstanding any other factors- that many European citizens viewed the accession of such countries with scepticism. Then, one had to add stereotypes: prejudices on the Balkan countries (the “mafious” Albanians, the pro-Russian Serbs and generally the bellicose people from the region) added to those already existing on Turkey. The questionable success of the Romanian and Bulgarian accessions was an additional factor: it soon became clear that these countries had not sufficiently fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria, especially the political ones (judiciary, corruption, etc.).

Second, with the 2004 enlargement, Berlin’s desire for security and dominance at its eastern borders was largely satisfied. Having achieved its strategic objective, it reverted to its traditional role of a country that is mostly interested in the ‘hard core’ of the Union and its hegemony over it. It now viewed enlargement with suspicion and, were it not for its continued interest in Ukraine, it would probably have wholly abandoned the rhetoric of enlargement.

The other enlargement champion, London, stuck to its enlargement policy for some years. However, the unexpected massive inflow of immigrants from the new member states and the reaction of British public opinion radically affected the UK attitude towards enlargement; London became a passive and reluctant observer of the whole process (and was soon absorbed by the issue its own future in the Union).

To a considerable section of European public opinion and elites, the behaviour of the new member states in the Iraq war also played a negative role. Before they had even joined the

²² Some member states (the UK, Poland, Sweden) openly declared they favoured an accession perspective for these countries.

²³ In UN and EU practice “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”.

²⁴ Rejection of the Annan plan and nationalist policies of the Greek Cypriots under President Tassos Papadopoulos.

Union, these countries rushed to align with the policy of Bush and were critically used in the latter's attempt to split Europe (the artifice of 'old and new Europe', etc.)²⁵.

However, the rapid spread of "enlargement fatigue" among member states and especially in European public opinion had another fundamental cause: the rise of Euroscepticism, itself largely the product of a decade or more of dominance of neoliberalism and of the experiencing of negative effects of globalisation.

"Enlargement fatigue" and Euroscepticism actually grew *before* any negative repercussions of Eastern enlargement, and especially of enlargement to Bulgaria and Romania, had been felt by the broader public²⁶. The turning point was rather the debate over the European Constitution, notably the 2005 referenda in France and the Netherlands. In these campaigns, despite efforts by pro-European elites to separate the issue of enlargement (and globalisation) from that of the Constitution, enlargement dominated the public debate and opposition to enlargement was a central theme in the Euroscepticist campaigns. It is the outcome of the 2005 referenda that pushed the member states to open an official debate on the revision of enlargement policy.

3. Decline of enlargement policy

3.1. The mutation

An official EU debate on the future of enlargement policy was launched following the 2005 referenda and the completion of the cycle of the "5th enlargement". It resulted at the December 2006 European Council in a compromise labelled the "renewed consensus on enlargement". Enlargement policy was not abandoned, but 'conditionality', i.e. the conditions and prerequisites for the accession of a country, was strengthened and a dormant clause of the 1993 Copenhagen European Council conclusions was revived, namely the one stressing the need of an "absorption capacity" for the Union²⁷.

The new trend, reflected in the "renewed consensus", is stricter accession criteria, or, more precisely, the spelling out and stricter implementation of the already existing general criteria. This mostly applies to the political criteria, since it was assessed that present aspiring states mostly lag in this area (functioning of democratic institutions, freedom of expression, judiciary, public administration, organised crime and corruption). However, in this domain there is as a rule no precise 'Community acquis'; hence member states and the Commission define, in a largely arbitrary way, standards which are often not applied by the member states themselves²⁸. In practice, this process has become perpetual²⁹ and has led to an essential mutation of

²⁵ This was when, in February 2003, French President Chirac commented that these countries "*ont perdu une occasion de se taire*", also labelling them "*mal élevés*". With this comment Chirac managed to reconcile French arrogance with the general feeling in a large part of Europe.

²⁶ Excessive emphasis on Bulgaria and Romania as the main reasons for "enlargement fatigue" is arguably part of anti-Balkan prejudices. This can be seen clearly now with developments in Hungary, Poland or Slovakia, which show that the Balkan newcomers are not the only ones with problems of governance or functioning of democracy.

²⁷ "*The Union's capacity to absorb new members, while maintaining the momentum of European integration, is also an important consideration in the general interest of both the Union and the candidate countries*". "Absorption capacity", which was renamed "integration capacity" by the December 2006 European Council, means that accession of new members does not solely depend on their own preparedness (through meeting the Copenhagen criteria), but also on factors related to the preparedness for enlargement of the Union; these could also include public opinion attitudes. Before 2004, this clause had hardly preoccupied the Commission or the member states, with the exception of its linkage to institutional reform.

²⁸ Typical examples are minority rights or standards against excessive concentration of media.

²⁹ New conditionality has been introduced almost every year, together with new mechanisms carrying complicated names: a new negotiation chapter 23 ("fundamental rights and the judiciary"), which transforms the political criteria, previously subject to a summary overall assessment, into the object of detailed negotiations; the "new approach" which establishes chapter 23 (and 24) as the centrepiece, the beginning and the end, of the whole negotiation; emphasis on "economic governance"; emphasis on public administration reform; etc.

enlargement policy: from a policy aimed at preparing countries for accession in the medium term, it has become a quasi-development policy with ‘good governance’ as its main objective and with an open time horizon, within which accession itself vanishes.

Through this mutation the meaning of the unilateral character of enlargement policy changes profoundly. In a relatively brief pre-accession period, unilateralism seems justified: after all, when somebody joins a club, he has to accept its rules, he does not negotiate them. When, however, this policy is transformed into the guide for the overall development of the aspirant country, probably for decades, its unilateral character increasingly reminds of neo-colonial practices.

The adoption of this new approach where what is important is the *road* to accession and not accession itself, despite claims to the contrary, was basically the result of an increasingly negative attitude of many member states (Germany, France, the Netherlands, Finland...) towards continuing the enlargement policy. It was favoured, however, by the prevailing optimism over the effectiveness and the “transformative power” of enlargement policy. For some years it was believed the EU could both have the cake and eat it: enlargement policy, would remain effective, even with an accession perspective that became increasingly blurred. Its rhetoric would be sufficient to deliver results³⁰. Reality eventually proved very different, though.

3.2. Enlargement gets “stuck”

EU representatives routinely affirm that enlargement is not stuck and that accession remains a realistic prospect for the Western Balkans: look at Croatia, look at progress in negotiations with Montenegro and Serbia, at Albanian candidacy, at Kosovo and Bosnia SAAs³¹, at the “Berlin process”. This said, they go on, the ball is in the countries’ court, and these are not always delivering. For its part, the EU is refining its enlargement policy to better assist the countries in preparing for the EU. Hence the increased emphasis on conditionality, fundamentals, economic governance, etc. The official position on Turkey is more ambiguous: here the prospect of accession is no longer mentioned, but responsibility for the standstill is again exclusively attributed to Ankara.

Unfortunately, this narrative is no longer convincing. People who see the perspective of membership as the only viable and progressive strategy for their countries watch in despair accession fading in a distant future. The accession process has become an open-ended process with countless and increasing intermediate steps. Few are convinced that the opening of a negotiation chapter with Serbia or Turkey or the entry into force of the SAA with Bosnia are great advances. And even the staunchest pro-Europeans realise that the official explanation that the delay reflects the countries not doing their ‘homework’ is at best only part of the story. Behind the declared aim of better preparing for accession, the mutation of enlargement policy unmistakably reflects enlargement fatigue in the EU itself.

Clearly, the reason enlargement is practically stuck is not exclusively the lack of appetite for enlargement in the EU. One does not need to embrace the complex edifice of conditionality and benchmarks set by Brussels to ascertain that most aspiring countries do not meet fundamental democratic prerequisites for joining. In fact, we are even witnessing substantial back-sliding. However, the anti-enlargement mood in the EU does not make things easier; on the contrary it is partly responsible for these developments and creates a vicious circle.

³⁰ “Keep them running” [for accession] was a popular advice to European leaders some of whom went as far as to publicly state –alike Bernstein– that movement and not the final goal was what mattered.

³¹ Stabilisation and Association Agreement

In the Balkans and in some European countries of the neighbourhood policy (Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova), many citizens have put their hopes for modernisation, democratisation and getting rid of corrupt regimes on the European perspective. These people have a seemingly limitless confidence in the rhetoric of Europe; they often interpret the tightening of accession conditions as positive moves, exclusively aimed at boosting reforms in their countries. Ironically, this happens at the very moment when an increasing number of European citizens do not trust any longer Europe and its language. The leaderships of enlargement countries cannot ignore this strong current. Hence, willingly or not, they adopt the directives of Brussels and pretend they believe in its promises, although in parallel they fight to preserve their privileges, usually based on corruption and populism.

Under these conditions, enlargement policy (and its twin neighbourhood policy) initially appeared to have some successes. In the Balkans, the European agenda was accepted and led, at first sight, to some reforms. Croatia joined the Union. European diplomacy (with the assistance of Washington) managed to solve or take forward a couple of difficult open problems, using as its main weapon the “carrot” of enlargement: Montenegro gained independence from Serbia smoothly and, most importantly, the risky operation of Kosovo independence seems to have largely succeeded³². The success of neighbourhood policy in Georgia and the Ukraine initially seemed even more impressive: so-called “coloured revolutions” appeared to detach these countries from Russian influence and to promote their democratisation. The driving force behind these developments, in addition to the West mobilising of all sorts of mechanisms and encouraging virulent old-style nationalism, was the agenda of enlargement, implicit in neighbourhood policy.

Alas, most of these “successes” were ephemeral or false.

The first and predictable case was *Turkey*. Here the opening of accession negotiations was soon succeeded by their substantial freezing. The German CDU which came into power in 2005 is against Turkish accession³³. The new French President Sarkozy (2007) was even more outspoken: he declared that his country was against enlargement to Turkey and blocked a number of negotiation chapters (Hollande subsequently unblocked only one of these). The impasse in the Cyprus issue, of increased importance following the accession of Nicosia, became an additional blocking factor³⁴. The result was that the partners ran out of “non-blocked” chapters to negotiate and accession negotiations came virtually to a stop.

Ankara, as opposed to the Balkan and to some East European countries was never in favour of a European course “at any price”. Evidently, when Europe requires difficult reforms and concessions as a condition for accession, while at the same time its leaders declare that, even

³² Kosovo’s independence was achieved by a substantive trampling on international legality and with blatant use of “double standards”: coexistence of Serbs and Albanians was declared impossible within the framework of Serbia, but possible and necessary within the framework of Kosovo itself (where the secession of the Serb minority was obstructed with all means). Moreover, secession of the Serbs of Bosnia is considered unthinkable, despite the fact that the war in Bosnia had multiple victims and horrors compared to that in Kosovo. Kosovo independence was achieved by a combination of incentives and military coercion, but the relatively weak resistance which it met in Serbia is certainly related to the “carrot” of the European perspective.

³³ However, the German government did not openly go back on its previous commitments on Turkey (“pacta sunt servanda”), as it formed a coalition where the minor partner, the SPD, remains (mildly) in favour of enlargement.

³⁴ Against the background of a stalemate in the inter-community talks for the settling of the Cyprus issue, Turkey does not implement the commitments it had made on Cyprus at the start of her accession negotiations (the “Ankara protocol”). As a result the EU partly blocked the continuation of accession negotiations, while Cyprus unilaterally ‘blocked’ some additional negotiation chapters. On its part, the EU did not deliver on its commitment to lift the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot community, because of opposition by Cyprus.

if these demands are met, Turkey will not join because it is not “European”, this does not add to its credibility in Turkey. The EU’s conduct greatly facilitated the gradual distancing of the Erdoğan regime from European values, notably in the area of democracy and freedoms (press freedom in particular). When Erdoğan denounces (not without reason) Europe’s hypocrisy and double language, this only increases his popularity. Besides, further “thorns” to Euro-Turkish relations were gradually added in foreign policy issues: Palestine, Arab spring, Syria.

Also in the *Balkans* realities proved harder than expectations. The Union’s “soft” and “transformative” power, weakened by an accession perspective lost in the horizon, is not as a rule sufficient to align these states to the desires and criteria of Brussels:

- First, despite the EU’s success in unblocking the situation in Kosovo, the other two big open issues, Bosnia’s constitutional order and the name of the Republic of Macedonia remain unsolved. In Bosnia, nothing seems to convince the leaders of the three nationalities to move from their positions and form a functional state³⁵. And in Macedonia, the dispute with Greece over the name is in no way about to be solved; on the contrary, it is deepening, with a Greek veto in NATO (2008) and Athens blocking the start of accession negotiations with the EU. This dispute nurtures strong nationalist currents in Macedonia, thus rendering a solution even more difficult.
- More generally in the Western Balkans, behind official pro-European rhetoric and a seemingly noble competition for the fulfilment of the accession criteria, a much darker picture looms. The leaderships of these countries are attracted by the authoritarian governance models they see around them (Putin, Erdoğan, Poland, Hungary). And their attachment to “European values” is definitely not strengthened when they realise that accession is unlikely to come for a generation. Besides, the defeat of extreme nationalism is maybe real in some cases (Serbia, for instance), but is anything but complete throughout the region³⁶. Nationalism has of course deep roots in the Balkans and its defeat by European values would anyway be difficult. It should be noted, however, that the EU (and certain of its member states) have had a role in its revival in the region and in Eastern Europe: in supporting the disintegration of the USSR and Yugoslavia, they have provided a European alibi to nationalist forces in the Balkans (Slovenia/Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo)³⁷.

Thus, in spite of continuous pressure and strong European intervention in their domestic affairs, to a degree reminiscent of colonial micro-management, most Balkan states are moving away from European standards, notably in the key issues of the functioning of democracy and fundamental freedoms. Kosovo remains a quasi-Mafia state, in Macedonia Gruevski systematically builds his operetta-like authoritarian regime; in Montenegro, Đukanović governs unmoved –from the front stage or the back stage- his small country, the only one in Europe together with Belarus that has not seen a government change since the communist era. Even in Serbia, which seems to be overcoming the trauma of the secession of Kosovo and has stronger institutions than the other former Yugoslav states, the authoritarian inclinations of strong-man Vučić are a cause of concern.

At first sight, Croatia is an exception to this disappointing picture. The country was more “advanced” than the other Balkan countries (bar Slovenia) from the very beginning and

³⁵ Bosnian Serbs do not accept the Bosnian state, as they see around them the acceptance or de facto imposition of secessions (Kosovo, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and, later, Crimea). The Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), encouraged by the defeat of the Serbs in Kosovo, aim at a unitary state, with no autonomy for the other nationalities. And the Bosnian Croats want an entity of their own, while they have in essence already joined the EU through the backdoor, having all acquired Croat citizenship from Zagreb.

³⁶ Recent renewed tension in northern Kosovo, indicates that, even in this case, the issue is far from settled.

³⁷ Also, long-standing Greek policies towards Macedonia have nurtured nationalism in that country.

managed to join the EU in 2013. However, a careful look would show that its “success” can hardly be credited to the “renewed consensus on enlargement”. It is a common secret that Croatia, when joining, did not fulfil the increased requirements of enlargement policy³⁸. Simply, other –geopolitical- imperatives prevailed, namely traditional ties with Germany and Austria, those very ties that contributed to the demise of Yugoslavia. Thus, the EU declared that Croatia had met the numerous accession benchmarks. Croatia’s accession, while presented by optimists as a forerunner to the accession of the whole region, in reality was rather the expression of a renewed division of the region along the lines of past times.

Albania is another arguably controversial case. The country has enormous problems and lags very much behind in most areas. Until recently, an extreme polarisation of its two main political forces paralysed the functioning of democratic institutions. Yet in the last couple of years Albania seems to have embarked on a slow, yet upward course. And, exceptionally, the European interventions, particularly blunt, seem to have worked here. On the dark side of the picture, strong nationalist currents (the “big Albania” vision), prevailing throughout the “Albanian area”³⁹ in the Balkans, and especially in Kosovo, often spill over into Albania, including through Eddie Rama, its socialist prime minister.

The failure of European policies is even more spectacular in the case of the *European countries of the neighbourhood policy*. Here, EU pressure for democratisation and modernisation is fully subordinate to the imperatives of the main objective, rolling back Russia. The “revolutions” and the governments supported by the West rapidly degenerated into regimes similar to the pre-existent ones; yet Europe continues to support them on the basis of practically one sole criterion, the degree by which they serve its anti-Russian policy. Thus, it is hard to detect any progress of democracy in these countries, especially in Ukraine⁴⁰, while the EU does not hesitate to support even pure dictatorships when the latter serve its geopolitical objectives (Azerbaijan, Belarus)⁴¹.

Most importantly, however, the EU’s complete underestimation of the Russian factor had the most dramatic consequences. Moscow was bound to strongly react to Western policies that aimed at curtailing its power and influence in its “near neighbourhood” and jeopardised its own security, if not its territorial integrity (Chechnya). EU and Western “soft power” policies aroused all sorts of anti-Russian reflexes in the region, mobilised murky nationalist forces and instrumentalised the aspirations of pro-European democrats encouraging confrontation with Russia. The ineluctable result was a strong and far from “soft” Russian reaction, first in Georgia and then in Ukraine, violently halting the Western plans⁴². Also, Western adventurism facilitated the aggravation of all the negative traits of the Putin regime.

³⁸ Typically, a benchmark requiring a drop in the backlog of pending judicial cases was claimed to have been met, while the backlog had actually increased! More important cases are related to the return of refugees and pursuit of war criminals at local level.

³⁹ In addition to Albania and Kosovo, where ethnic Albanians are the overwhelming majority, there are compact Albanian minorities in adjacent areas of most neighbouring states, notably Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro.

⁴⁰ The same holds true for Moldova. In Georgia, the performance of Saakashvili in combatting corruption was debatable, though the people of Georgia did not seem to share the admiration of many Westerners for the democratic record of his regime.

⁴¹ Following the events in Ukraine, the EU lifted sanctions against Belarus with the pretext that the presidential elections held there had involved no violence (which by the way holds true also for elections in North Korea). Actually these elections were held with practically no opposition and Mr. Lukashenka obtained an impressive 84%. In the 2016 parliamentary elections, also used as a pretext for further lifting of EU sanctions, the opposition gained just two seats in a 110-seat parliament.

⁴² A process of arresting Moldova’s detachment from the Russian sphere of influence is probably also developing, though political and not military means seem the most likely.

Fourteen years after its launching in the name of European values and with abundant détente rhetoric, neighbourhood policy is in ruins and has given its place to a traditional “realpolitik”, where “hawks” confront “doves” along Cold War lines. Unmistakably, in this context, the “hidden” agenda of enlargement has been reduced to an instrument of confrontation, as credible as the ENP itself.

4. The demise of enlargement policy in an agonising Europe: recent developments

An arguably final blow to enlargement policy came with the multiple existential crises that have dominated the European scene in the last three years: Euro zone crisis, refugee crisis, Brexit, the rise of Eurosceptic and extreme-right forces and agendas throughout the continent. All of these have a direct or indirect negative impact on the prospect of new enlargements. So has the election of Donald Trump in the US and the dramatic developments in Turkey.

Changing priorities

No one would expect Europe’s leaders and European public opinion to take or support initiatives on enlargement when the EU is itself in danger, with the euro at risk, Eurozone countries collapsing, the UK leaving, the refugee wave shaking Europe’s political landscape and extreme right Eurosceptic parties on the rise a little everywhere in the Union. Practically no one in Europe is pushing any longer for enlargement, and that seems reasonable under the circumstances. Enlargement is simply off the European agenda, however much this is officially denied.

However, the blow to enlargement from recent and current EU crises goes much further than to an inevitable realignment of priorities.

Eurozone crisis and potential Grexit

The euro crisis, with the bankruptcy of Greece and the broader tensions that have created a north-south rift within the Union, crucially undermine solidarity which is at the basis of the European project as well as of enlargement. Stereotypes were spread against the peoples of the periphery (the “lazy Greeks”); support to them was presented more or less as (excessive) charity rather than solidarity imposed by mutual interest. Most importantly, in this climate, forces aiming at a “small Eurozone”, if not at a small Union, excluding a problematic periphery, grew. The periphery must be held dependent, but outside the European core. Such projects started being implemented in the case of Greece, with the planning of Grexit, a plan that was arrested in extremis in 2015, but has not been abandoned.

Obviously, the abandonment of an inclusive vision of Europe and transition from a “Europe of solidarity” to a “Europe of the fittest” does not favour further enlargement. When Grexit is on the agenda, the entry of new, problematic members is not considered seriously. On the contrary, scepticism grows on the previous enlargements, and this scepticism goes as far back as the Greek accession in 1981.

The collapse of the Greek economy affects the attractiveness of the EU in the neighbouring Balkans. Ten years ago, Greece was still seen as a success story and citizens of the Western Balkans saw in it the tangible benefits EU accession. Today, with the country in full disarray, having lost 25% of its GDP and with unemployment close to that of the Western Balkan champions, questions arise as to whether meeting the “strict and-not-always-fair conditionality” is worth the prize.

The refugee crisis

The refugee crisis –just as the euro crisis- has brought to the surface deep flaws in the politics and institutions of present-day Europe and could well trigger a process of implosion of the Union. Predictably, it has a negative impact on enlargement prospects.

The massive inflow of refugees and immigrants from Western Asia and Africa, nurtured xenophobia and right populist currents in Europe. Even Chancellor Merkel was forced to backtrack, although in 2015 she had adopted an open doors policy⁴³. However, xenophobia does not always make a distinction between the kinds of foreigners: Balkan Roma and Albanians were already targeted and the debate on Brexit mostly focused on freedom of movement *within* the Union. In this generalised climate of introversion and national fold back, with each member state taking its own unilateral restrictive measures, enlargement is definitely not on the table.

The refugee crisis delivered an additional blow to European solidarity, already deeply traumatised by the euro crisis. An east-west rift was added to the north-south one. The attitude of the Višegrad countries dissipated any illusions that the previous enlargement had produced “good students”. These countries, as well as Balkan countries of the present enlargement agenda, have largely benefited from open borders (or expect to benefit from them upon their accession). Yet, ironically, they are the champions of building fences and refusing to host refugees. This is the logic of the last bus passenger who struggles to squeeze into the overcrowded bus and, once in, shouts that the bus is full; a sad evidence of the collapse of solidarity in today’s Europe.

Brexit

When one of the largest and most influential EU member states decides to leave, the impact on the attractiveness of the Union is self-evident. Besides, enlargement, notably Turkish accession and the free movement of persons from the fifth enlargement countries, was at the centre of the Brexit debate; the Leave campaign demonised it, while the Remain camp adopted an utterly defensive attitude: Turkey would never join, and Cameron bargained with Brussels the limitation of intra-EU migration. Defending enlargement –an exercise in which British elites excelled in the recent past- would have been suicidal, it was evidently felt.

In the context of a likely protracted negotiation on Brexit, the concern of the EU will of course be to avoid a contagion of exits. Not an ideal moment for considering further expansion.

The rise of the far right

The rise of the far right and its agenda in most of Europe and in the US builds on three main themes: the economy, with opposition to globalisation; identity, with demonization of migrants and exploitation of the terrorist threat; and discrediting the political establishments. Enlargement, as “the Trojan Horse of globalisation”, opening Europe’s gates to millions of foreigners and driven by elites that arrogantly ignore citizens’ opposition to the project, becomes a preferred target of right-wing populism. And the official narrative defending enlargement mostly from a neo-liberal perspective is unconvincing to the people attracted by right-wing populism.

Populist leaders within the EU often sympathise with their brethren in enlargement countries: Gruevski and Vučić are in close contact with Orbán and Warsaw. Also, respect for democracy and fundamental rights is definitely not a sensitivity of the European far right (or of Donald Trump for that matter), so one could expect from these even less pressure for democratic reform

⁴³ Actually, Europe was highly vulnerable to xenophobia also because most conservative forces had from the very outset reacted defensively, partly adopting the extreme-right agenda on immigration. Suffice to recall that just a few years ago Ms Merkel ironized on multicultural societies (“multi-culti”).

in the aspiring countries⁴⁴. However, tactical alliances between authoritarian leaders and a slackening of democratic conditionality, will in no way reverse the obvious fact that far right, xenophobic and protectionist forces will counteract further enlargement; so will their increased influence and fear of them in mainstream forces.

The Dutch referendum on Ukraine's association

The rejection by the Dutch electorate of the EU-Ukraine association agreement in the April 2016 referendum is also indicative. Evidently, the policy of “soft power”, already ineffective when confronting Russia's vital interests, itself rests on feet of clay: the implicit promise for a European course which constitutes its centrepiece is not supported by the citizens of Europe.

The association agreement that was rejected has no direct link to enlargement⁴⁵. However, as already mentioned, the neighbourhood policy owes its influence to its implicit ‘hidden’ enlargement agenda. The Dutch vote against the agreement is clearly related to the rejection of Ukraine as a future EU member state. And, clearly, if the Dutch have rejected Ukrainian association in the present anti-Russian climate, they would reject much more Ukraine's accession or the accession of Serbia, Montenegro or Albania. The Dutch referendum confirms that each time the citizens of a member state are asked about a European issue (with or without enlargement dimensions) their answer is negative.

As with previous European referenda, a way has been found to overrule the popular vote. Yet, in the long run divergence of a policy from the will of the people is not sustainable in democracies, whatever the tricks used⁴⁶. The present wave of anti-establishment furore throughout the continent and beyond witnesses for this.

Enlargement and secessionist movements within member states

Enlargement policy has lately acquired a new actuality in the context of possible secessions from member states. In the debates on the referendum on Scottish independence and on Catalanian independence as well as in discussions on a possible break up of Belgium the issue has been raised whether new states emerging from secessions would automatically remain within the EU, or if they would have to accede once again to the Union and indeed through the demanding requirements of the enlargement policy.

Predictably, those opposed to secessions are in favour of a full-fledged accession process, which would prove particularly difficult, since the unanimity rule for each step in the process would require the consent of the state from which the candidate will have seceded. This approach –supported on several occasions by Commission Presidents- aims of course at discouraging secessions. Yet, it is far from certain it will prevail in case a secession does occur; the cost of leaving outside the EU whole regions and millions of people who are already EU citizens would have to be taken into account. However, the essence of possible secessions is arguably less the institutional dimension than the further blow they would deliver to cohesion and solidarity. Secessionist forces that reject cohesion and solidarity within their own state, yet

⁴⁴ An additional factor in the decline of the role of values in enlargement policy is that the conservative European Peoples Party, which dominates many member states' governments and all EU institutions (Commission, European Council and, now, Parliament) includes in its ranks the party of Mr.Orban, as well as that of Mr. Gruevski (as an observer). It has consistently opposed criticism or moves against the democratic backsliding of their regimes.

⁴⁵ Member states sceptical on further enlargement made sure the agreement (including its preamble) made no reference to an accession perspective for Ukraine.

⁴⁶ The appropriateness of referenda as a privileged instrument of democratic decision-making can be contested. However, once such referenda are held and yield results undesirable to political establishments, their circumvention definitely undermines the credibility of our democracies.

profess their attachment to Europe remind very much those who are already working on the project of a “small Europe of the fittest”⁴⁷.

Loss of credibility, ineffectiveness and paralysis

This paper has argued extensively that the EU’s enlargement policy has always had a strong geopolitical and foreign policy component, while national interests have always been present behind a European façade. Yet its initial successes, its attractiveness and its credibility were related to the fact that its claim of being value-based and European was at least partly true. This assured a degree of coherence and fairness in the process, while aspiring countries felt it made a difference with respect to old-style big power imperialist politics.

Present developments are destroying these fundamentals of enlargement policy. Values and “objective” criteria are being fully replaced by realpolitik, as has already been the case with the ENP; the policy is increasingly driven by German hegemonism (and Austrian imperial nostalgia for the Western Balkans) rather than by European processes; and the result for both enlargement and the ENP seems to be complete loss of credibility, ineffectiveness and paralysis, a state reflecting the present disastrous overall situation of the EU. Three cases illustrate the present situation.

Turkey

In March 2016 an EU-Turkey deal was brokered by the German Chancellor who by-passed all EU processes. The deal stipulates, in exchange for Ankara contributing to the arrest of the refugee/migrant wave to Greece, a promise to “re-energise” the accession process, and to lift the visa requirement for Turkish citizens entering the Schengen zone “at the latest by June 2016, provided that all benchmarks have been met”⁴⁸. The deal has contributed to a sharp fall of refugee/migrant arrivals to Greece and hence is key in containing a crisis that could fully destabilise the EU; it has survived until now, although none of the EU’s promises have materialised (except, in part, financial assistance), but Ankara has been threatening to denounce it, if the visa requirement is not lifted.

Diverging dynamics between migration geopolitics, the general mood on enlargement in the EU (and European double language on Turkey) and Turkish backsliding into authoritarianism are not good omens for the survival of the present EU-Turkey relationship, including the migration deal.

From an enlargement perspective, what is interesting in the March 2016 statement is that, for the first time, there is an explicit commitment for steps in the accession process as a political trade-off and not as the result of fulfilment of conditionality by the candidate country. This novelty is particularly shocking in the present context, where Turkey is seriously backsliding in the area of democracy and freedoms and –especially after last summer’s abortive coup– is evolving towards a quasi-dictatorship. The EU appears to overlook blatantly these developments in favour of an old-style diplomatic bargain. The conditionality edifice, supposedly governing enlargement policy, is thus completely demolished. This has obvious consequences on the credibility of the policy, notably among the peoples and governments in the Balkans. The fact that present-day Turkey continues to be a negotiating candidate for

⁴⁷ In the cases of Catalonia and Flanders (as well as in the secessionist movement in northern Italy) a key motive and argument in favour of secession is the refusal of transfers to the poorer regions of the respective country. The case of Scotland is somewhat different, especially when seen in the perspective of Brexit.

⁴⁸ This phrase is typically ambiguous: the condition of meeting the benchmarks invalidates the June 2016 deadline. Indeed, among the benchmarks in question is one on abolition of anti-terrorist legislation, something Turkey is clearly unwilling to do.

accession and hence supposedly “sufficiently fulfils” the Copenhagen political criteria sounds like a joke.

At a smaller scale, the same trade-off between cooperation in migration and accession conditionality seems to apply to Macedonia. Indeed, while the utterly negative developments in this country are identified in the Commission’s latest report⁴⁹, the obvious conclusion to withdraw the recommendation for opening accession negotiations is not drawn: Skopje has been cooperating with the Commission and EU member states in closing the “Western Balkan route”⁵⁰.

The Berlin process

In August 2014, the German Chancellor invited to a meeting in Berlin the heads of state or government of the Western Balkan countries, representatives of a few member states and the Commission. Many were surprised, since Germany (and the German Chancellery) counts among the less enthusiastic member states on further enlargement. It was of course noticed that the initiative came shortly after the Russian annexation of Crimea. In any case, it aroused some optimism in the Balkans. Could it be that Berlin was returning to a role of enlargement champion? A closer look at the initiative and its follow up is, however, revealing.

First, the selection of participants: EU member states invited were Croatia, Slovenia, Austria and France. Other neighbours of the WB6, Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary were not invited. The Commission, usually playing a key role in such meetings, was there almost as an observer; and the French participation was low-level. No, this was not an initiative of the two Kaisers in 1914, it was 2014.

Second, the “Final Declaration”, adopted by the Chair (i.e. Germany): Gone are the days where the interlocutor of the Western Balkans was the EU. The Declaration’s structure is that of a bilateral document between the WB6 and Germany. “Germany [not the EU] is aware of its responsibility” in the region; “German [not European] business” and German economic institutions are mentioned five times in a 2-page text. The “Berlin summit” reaffirmed the WB6 commitment to join the EU and Germany’s [not the EU’s] support to that goal. It established a process (the “Berlin process”) with similar annual meetings planned for the next four years.

Third, the follow up: the second ‘Berlin process’ meeting took place in August 2015, unsurprisingly in Vienna. Italy apparently succeeded in being added to the list of participants, but other, less influential neighbouring member states were again absent.

Compared to the Berlin meeting, the Vienna summit was somewhat “communitarised”. The Commission played a central part in its organising. In the “Final Declaration” most references were to the EU and its policies as well as to established regional initiatives, not to Germany or Austria⁵¹. The theme of “connectivity”, meaning regional transport and energy networks, was at the centre of the meeting and EU funds were reallocated to related projects.

Interestingly, the “Final Declaration” refers to an unspecified “study presented in the margins of the Summit addressing bilateral disputes in the region”. This was a study by a Graz institute reiterating general language on bilateral disputes and recommending that the WB6 would sign

⁴⁹ The report introduces the term “state capture” for the practices of Gruevski.

⁵⁰ Actually, this cooperation is in support of unilateral moves by Skopje (condemned in general by the EU) to close the border with Greece, *inter alia* by building a fence. To that end, the Commission has provided financial support to Macedonia. In other words, the Commission in this case does not finance the protection of the EU border, but the ‘protection’ of a third country *against* an EU member state!

⁵¹ An Austrian “touch” was that, unlike in the Berlin summit and in the ensuing Paris summit, Macedonia was not denominated “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” in accordance with EU practice, but just “Macedonia”.

a document committing them not to block the progress of each other on the EU path, with respect to bilateral disputes. Neighbouring EU member states were invited to join. The WB6 did sign the document, but none of the neighbouring member states –present or not- did. Obviously, discussing bilateral issues (or migration for that matter) and adopting related texts in the absence of key parties concerned cannot be seen as anything but divisive.

The third annual meeting took place in Paris in July 2016. By then, the Berlin process had lost its actuality, as other issues dominated the scene; besides, the French organisers were evidently less interested in the matter than their German or Austrian predecessors. The event was hardly noticed, and the “Final Declaration” simply reiterated various themes of the regional agenda.

In sum, an initiative that has been presented as a sign of revival of the accession process for the Western Balkans is little more than a PR-exercise driven by Berlin and assisted by Vienna, triggered by the occupation of Crimea and sustained by the migration crisis. It brings no practical result in terms of promoting the European path for the region, but adds a layer of rhetoric –actually less advanced than the 13-year old Thessaloniki language- to the established EU jargon. It does promote regional cooperation, notably on “connectivity”, but one cannot fail to notice this is basically development policy, an ersatz to the accession process. More is needed than the Berlin process to render enlargement policy its credibility in the Western Balkans.

Equally importantly, the initiative has a strong flavour of German hegemonism (the Berlin meeting, in particular, was a monument of the kind). The region is divided through the creation of a Germanic zone of influence and the exclusion of neighbouring member states that are not docile. Berlin process fans privately confide that the absence of these mostly “difficult” states is a major advantage of the initiative; yet, it is an illusion to believe that migration issues and bilateral disputes can be better addressed by excluding parties that are mostly concerned and obviously indispensable to any solution. And abandoning an institutional approach through EU bodies and established processes is a risky venture in these times of nationalist revival.

The December 2016 Council and European Council

The December 2016 General Affairs Council and European Council debates and results on enlargement-related issues are symbolic of the stalemate in these policies.

The General Affairs Council of 13 December, for the first time in the Union’s history, failed to adopt conclusions on enlargement. The reason was Austria’s insistence on suspending accession negotiations with Turkey. This position had been adopted some days earlier by the European Parliament. However, no other member state or the Commission favoured such a radical move which, if adopted, was bound to jeopardise the EU-Turkey deal on the refugee/migration flows.

The Slovak Presidency took the unusual (though not unprecedented) step of publishing a text which it labelled “conclusions” and specified it had “received the support of the overwhelming majority of delegations in the course of the deliberations on this item”. Through this practice, the principle of unanimity was circumvented, at least for the declaratory part of the text; and, anyway the text did not include an operational part. Indeed, the Commission enlargement package, traditionally the basis of the annual Council enlargement debate, had three operational recommendations: lifting the visa requirement for Turkey and Kosovo, subject to a number of conditions, and opening accession negotiations with Albania, also subject to some conditions⁵².

⁵² Also the Commission’s recommendation for opening accession negotiations with Macedonia remained on the table for the 8th consecutive year, but, as before, this was a non-starter since Greece and probably 2-3 other member states continue to object.

The (non-)conclusions circulated by the Presidency did not take on board any of these recommendations, presumably deeming that the related conditions had not been met.

The finale of this *annus horribilis* for Europe was the European Council of 15 December. No enlargement issue was on the agenda, but circumventing the outcome of the Dutch referendum on Ukraine was⁵³. The 28 heads of state or government adopted a “Decision”, legally binding according to the European Council’s conclusions, which interprets the Association Agreement signed with Kyiv. Its six paragraphs comprise an equal number of assurances addressed to the Dutch electorate which actually neither add nor subtract anything from the Agreement text, but completely invert its tone⁵⁴. The Agreement has a positive tone of (arguably) “constructive” ambiguity, allowing space to Ukrainian aspirations for a European perspective. The Decision tries to eliminate all such space; it is a unique document where the European leaders appear to have second thoughts on the deal they made and which has been the apple of discord in a major dispute with Moscow.

5. Final remarks

On the basis of what was exposed above, the following remarks can be formulated:

1. The official EU position about the success of the “fifth enlargement” does not correspond to facts, but also the view that enlargement is responsible for the misdeeds of the Union is exaggerated, if not misleading. In reality, undeniable negative effects of that enlargement are rather the result of its instrumentalisation by the prevailing extreme neoliberal response to globalisation. Hence, the view that enlargement contributed to the present grim state of the Union is not wrong, but the interpretation that it is its main cause and not just part of and a consequence of it, *is* wrong.
2. Enlargement policy is today clinically dead, despite official claims to the contrary and a heavy bureaucratic machinery in the EU and member states still dealing with it. A mood or intention for further enlargement does not exist in European public opinion nor among the leaders of Europe. The policy –or rather its rhetoric- is kept artificially alive as a foreign policy instrument, mainly in the context of rivalry with Russia, and also in order to maintain stability in the Balkans as well as collaboration with candidates over the refugee and migration crisis. However, without a visible accession prospect, this weapon is ineffective and the policy as a whole –and more generally the EU’s “soft power”- have lost their credibility. The Union’s foreign policy is rapidly reverting to the most traditional “realpolitik” of its major member states and, in this context, an enlargement policy based on values and rules has no place.
3. The abandonment of enlargement policy is mainly due to the turn the EU itself has taken. Public opinion reaction to the socio-economic effects of neoliberal policies and to massive migrations have nurtured reactionary currents of protectionism and xenophobia that led to rapid regression of solidarity and to the abandonment of an inclusive vision for Europe. This course has been parallel to the gradual distancing of most candidate countries from the European values. However, the claim that developments in these countries are the cause of the mutation/abandonment of enlargement policy is false; it is not corroborated by the sequence of events. On the contrary this mutation, by relegating the accession perspective

⁵³ Circumvention of the popular will expressed in referenda in particular member states has repeatedly occurred in the past in the context of the adoption of European treaties (France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland).

⁵⁴ These are: The Agreement does not constitute a commitment to confer candidate status to Ukraine in the future; it does not contain an obligation to provide collective security or military assistance; it does not grant to Ukrainian nationals the right to reside and work freely within the EU; it does not require additional financial support to Ukraine; the fight against corruption is central for the relations with Ukraine; the Agreement can be unilaterally suspended if Ukraine does not respect democracy and fundamental rights.

to the Greek Calends is one of the causes –and not the least important one- of the negative developments in these countries.

4. The demise of enlargement policy is bad news for Europe. Surely there is no reason to lament over the collapse of its distorted form which made it an instrument of neo-liberalism, nor over the predictable disaster of a neighbourhood policy directed against Russia. Yet, a benign version of enlargement policy is a constituent element of a positive European project: it would reflect the victory of solidarity over nationalism within the EU and would strengthen the Union; it would encourage democratic and reform-oriented forces in our neighbourhood; it would promote stability in the Balkans and Eastern Europe and would hopefully positively influence developments in Turkey. In short, it could crucially contribute to combat the revival of the ghosts of the past in our continent.
5. The broader European developments largely explain (at least as much as the weak democratic structures of the candidate countries) the authoritarian and nationalist turn of countries in Central and Southeastern Europe. The regimes of Hungary and Poland, as well as of many Balkan countries, are “eastern” versions of similar phenomena in “old” member states; they notably reflect a defensive reaction to globalisation with the rise of the far-right and the increasing influence of its political agenda⁵⁵. What is, however a specificity of the enlargement countries (recent and present) is the fact that their European perspective and their very formation was often based on nationalism, tolerated or even encouraged by Europe.
6. The Balkans definitely form an integral part of a strong and inclusive EU, all the more so since a part of it has already joined and perpetuating the division of the peninsula would disrupt subtle geopolitical balances. A credible enlargement policy would entail the setting of a reasonable time horizon for the accession of the Balkan countries and the adoption of a small number of clear criteria on whether these countries meet the basic requirement for democracy and freedom. The endless benchmarks that have been introduced into the process could form lists in the context of technical assistance, but not conditions for membership. In this way pressure for democracy would be maximised and accession could be decided on the basis of the basic prerequisite (which admittedly is not there in many of the countries), not of a multitude of expediencies that now dominate.
7. A strong EU would also be able to credibly address its relationship with Turkey, including the final form it would take (accession or other), taking into account history, geopolitics, developments in the country and the EU’s previous commitments.
8. An inclusive European project is incomplete without the eastern part of the continent. The existence of Russia imposes a creative architecture that would secure it an equal place, thus opening the possibility of integration to the countries of the European neighbourhood. Continuing to subordinate the neighbourhood policy to a “roll back” strategy vis-à-vis Russia poses a serious risk of a return to a Cold War; this would have a negative impact also on the Russian regime. A long and dangerous way has already been covered in that direction. A closer relation of the Union with its eastern neighbours within the framework of a revised neighbourhood policy would be possible, if the legitimate interests of Russia were secured in parallel⁵⁶.
9. A revival of enlargement policy does not seem probable today. It will definitely not come through improved “communication” of its benefits, nor by further loading its complex

⁵⁵ Thus targeting selectively the regimes of Central and Southeastern Europe for their anti-European stand on the refugee issue is based on a blatant distortion of facts, if one compares that position with trends in countries such as Austria, France, the UK or Denmark.

⁵⁶ This is exactly the solution that was appropriate for the agreement with Ukraine. The refusal by Brussels (under the pretext of technical obstacles) to find a solution that would combine the agreement with the EU and Ukraine remaining in the customs union with Russia is what triggered the tragic events that followed.

edifice with additional conditionality. Its revival is linked to the defeat of Euroscepticism, since “enlargement fatigue” and Euroscepticism are the two sides of the same coin. When European citizens contest the European project, it is obvious they will not support enlargement. Thus a precondition for further enlargements is a major change of course of the whole of the European edifice, a change that would put solidarity, employment and growth at the core of its policies and would be based on a strong and political EU.

10. Optimists have argued that the threat of implosion (Brexit, rise of extreme right) and external pressure (Trump) could trigger a reflex of joining forces to salvage and revitalise the European project. That would also impact on enlargement policy, whereby the door would open again to new members, counteracting the exit of an old one. Such a scenario is today indeed necessary and highly desirable, but, unfortunately, unlikely. Yet, this upward struggle is definitely worth pursuing.

January 2017

Annex

Enlargement in European public opinion

Analysis of the findings of the standard Eurobarometer public opinion research in EU member states on the question “*What is your opinion on further enlargement of the EU to include other countries in future years?*”

EU citizens mostly object to further enlargement; support for enlargement has dropped impressively during the last decade

In the autumn of 2016 39% of the EU citizens were in favour of further enlargement and 51% against. Twelve years earlier the picture was practically inverse, with 53% supporting further enlargement and 35% rejecting it. The fall in support for enlargement had been more or less continuous until 2011, after which it has broadly stabilised at the present low levels (36-39%). The sharpest drops were during the period immediately following the 2004 enlargement (autumn 2004 to spring 2006, a period that coincides with the debate and referenda on the European constitution) and during the Euro crisis (fall 2009 to fall 2011) (*Graph 1*).

Citizens in practically all “old” member states tend to oppose further enlargement, while those in most “new” member states support it

Opposition to further enlargement is much greater in the ‘old’ member states than in the new ones (55% versus 35%). Among the old member states, support for enlargement clearly prevails only in Spain, while it is broadly equal to opposition in another two cases (Portugal and Ireland). Conversely, opposition to further enlargement is spectacular (more than 60%) in eight member states, including in five of the founding members. The extreme case is Austria (for 24%, against 71%), but the negative scores are impressive also for the two members of the Franco-German axis (Germany 25% for, 68% against, France 28% for, 65% against) (see appended *Table*).

Almost all new member states (10 out of the 13) continue to support further enlargement, the exceptions being the Czech Republic, Cyprus and Estonia. In Slovakia the ‘fors’ prevail only marginally. Positive scores are impressive (60% or above) in Lithuania, Croatia, Romania and Malta.

Support for further enlargement has dropped since 2004, as a rule spectacularly, in all member states, “old” and “new”

Comparing 2016 to 2004 (*Graph 2*), we note that support to further enlargement has dropped in *all* member states *without exception*. The drop is greater in the new member states. The difference between positive and negative answers fell by more than 40 percentage points in six new member states (Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Estonia, Cyprus and the Czech Republic –in the latter case by a spectacular 79 percentage points), while in only two old member states (Greece and Italy, in the latter case by 60 points).

Countries still supporting further enlargement often do so for specific geopolitical, neighbourhood or national affinity reasons

In most cases support to further enlargement continues to prevail where geopolitical interests, neighbourhood or national affinities are involved: interest for Ukraine is probably an important factor in the attitude of Poles, Lithuanians, and, more generally most citizens of former Eastern countries; Moldova is of particular interest to Romanians and so is probably Macedonia to Bulgarians. Croatians are probably interested in the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**PUBLIC OPINION SUPPORT FOR FURTHER
ENLARGEMENT***

	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>For minus against</i>	
		<i>Fall 2016</i>		<i>Fall 2016/2004</i>
Lithuania	65	24	41	-28
Croatia	62	33	29	-
Romania	61	28	33	-25
Malta	60	23	37	-6
Spain	57	26	31	-19
Poland	57	30	27	-41
Hungary	55	37	18	-24
Slovenia	55	39	16	-43
Latvia	49	39	10	-37
Bulgaria	48	29	19	-24
Portugal	48	45	3	-16
Slovakia	47	45	2	-50
Ireland	44	45	-1	-30
Greece	43	53	-10	-43
Sweden	42	52	-10	-9
UK	39	45	-6	-20
Estonia	38	47	-9	-50
Cyprus	37	51	-14	-54
Belgium	34	62	-28	-33
Italy	32	53	-21	-60
Netherlands	32	64	-32	-39
Finland	32	64	-32	-25
Czech Rep.	31	62	-31	-79
Denmark	30	59	-29	-26
Luxemburg	30	65	-35	-19
France	28	65	-37	-25
Germany	25	68	-43	-22
Austria	24	71	-47	-13
EU28	39	51	-12	-31
EU 15 (1)	35	55	-20	-29
NMS (2)	54	35	19	-38

* *What is your opinion on 'further enlargement of the EU to include other countries in future years'?*

(1) Old member states (accession before 2004)

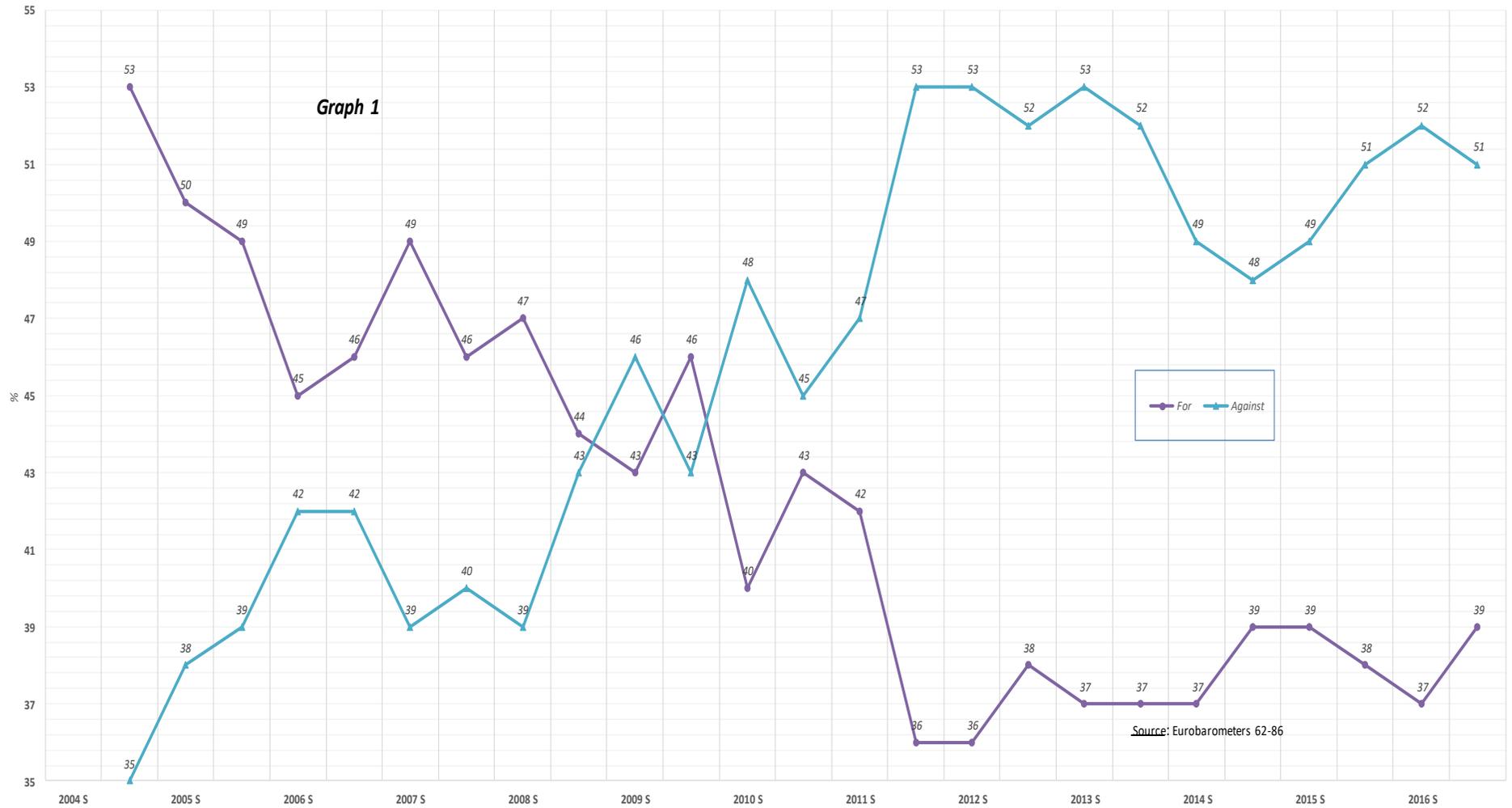
(2) New member states (accession 2004 or later)

Source: *Eurobarometers 62 and 86*

'ENLARGEMENT FATIGUE' IN THE EU 2004-2016

"What is your opinion on further enlargement of the EU to include other countries in future years?"

Graph 1

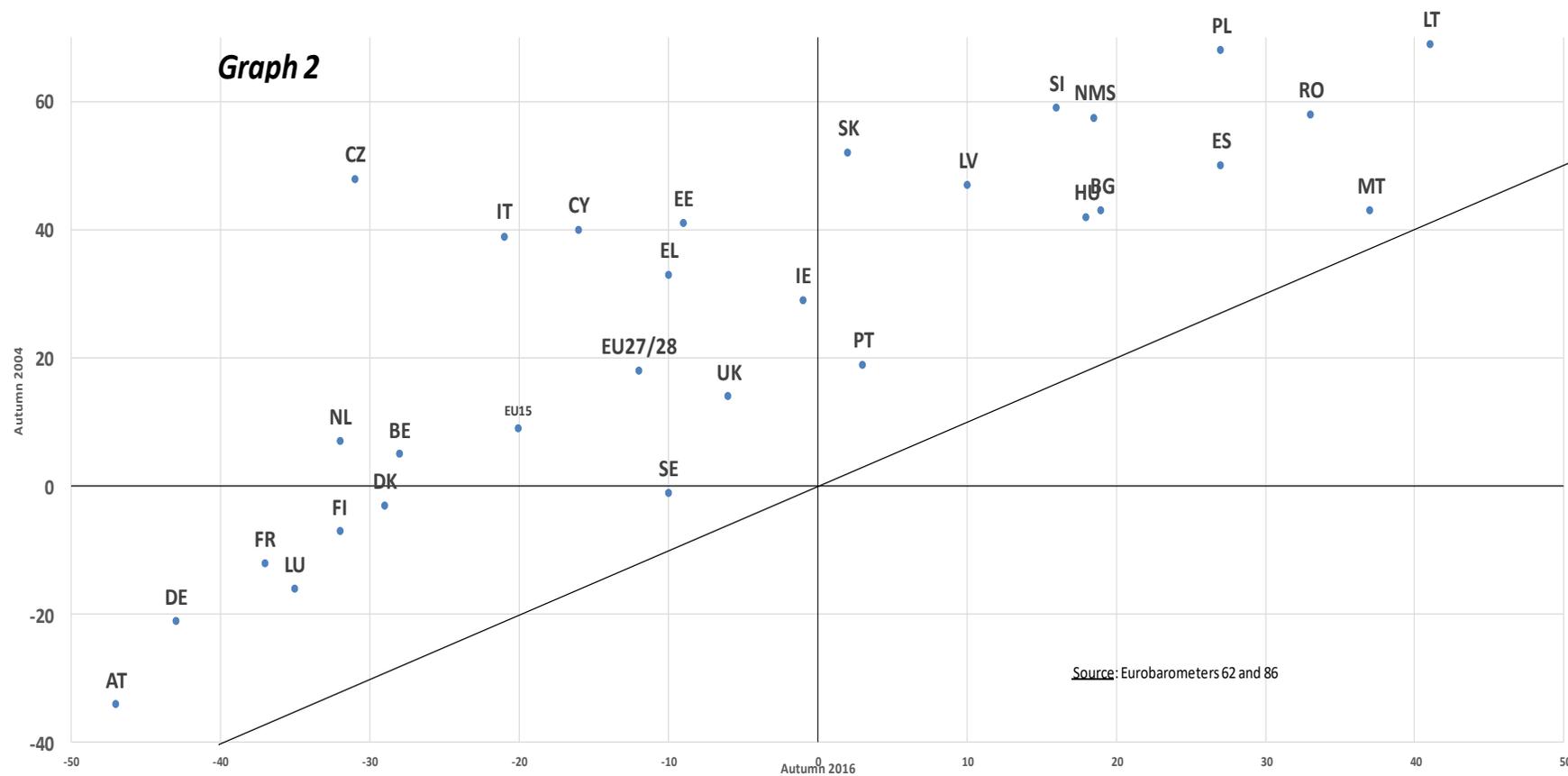


Source: Eurobarometers 62-86

EU PUBLIC OPINION ON FURTHER ENLARGEMENT 2004, 2016

Positive-Negative replies (in percentage points)

Graph 2



Source: Eurobarometers 62 and 86

THE EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURE -2017

A. EU MEMBER STATES

Accession year

1	Belgium	Founding (1957), E/S
2	France	Founding (1957), E/S
3	Germany FR*	Founding (1957), E/S
4	Italy	Founding (1957), E/S
5	Luxemburg	Founding (1957), E/S
6	Netherlands	Founding (1957), E/S
7	Denmark	1973, S
8	United Kingdom**	1973
9	Ireland	1973, E
10	Greece	1981, E/S
11	Spain	1986, E/S
12	Portugal	1986, E/S
13	Austria	1994, E/S
14	Sweden	1994, S
15	Finland	1994, E/S
16	Estonia	2004, E/S
17	Cyprus	2004, E
18	Latvia	2004, E/S
19	Lithuania	2004, E/S
20	Malta	2004, E/S
21	Hungary	2004, S
22	Poland	2004, S
23	Slovakia	2004, E/S
24	Slovenia	2004, E/S
25	Czech Republic	2004, S
26	Bulgaria	2007
27	Romania	2007
28	Croatia	2013

B. ENLARGEMENT STATES

1	Turkey	negotiating candidate, V
2	Montenegro	negotiating candidate (E)
3	Serbia	negotiating candidate
4	(fYR) Macedonia	candidate
5	Albania	candidate
6	Bosnia-Herzegovina	potential candidate (E)
7	Kosovo***	(potential candidate) (E), V

C. EASTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD STATES

1	Azerbaijan	V
2	Armenia	V
3	Georgia	V
4	Belarus	V
5	Moldova	
6	Ukraine	V

D. EEA/EFTA STATES

1	Iceland	EEA, S
2	Liechtenstein	EEA, S
3	Norway	EEA, S
4	Switzerland	EFTA, S

E. EUROPEAN MICRO-STATES

1	Andorra	
2	San Marino	(E/S)
3	Monaco	(E/S)
4	Vatican	(E/S)

F. RUSSIAN FEDERATION V

E: Eurozone member, S: Schengen zone member, V: Visa requirement for entry in Schengen zone

*In 1990 the German Democratic Republic was united to the FR Germany and thus indirectly joined the EC

** In 2016 the UK decided by referendum to exit the EU

***Kosovo is not recognised as an independent state by five EU member states (Cyprus, Greece, Slovakia, Spain, Romania)