

## EU Enlargement: From a Success Story to Fatigue

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### Abstract

*This paper examines the prospect of European Union (EU) enlargement as a crucial step in the context of “enlargement fatigue”. It reviews the enlargement process in the post-2000s. From the late 1950 onwards, the idea of European unification has gradually been emphasized by an attempt to bring peace and stability. Between 1957 and 1995, the EU grew from six to fifteen members. The high point of this development was reached in 2004 and 2007, with an inclusion of Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs), who had the communist traditions. After a decade of difficult economic and political reforms, the applicant countries finally edged toward centre stage. Since then, the debate has focused on the question of whether enlargement is fundamental to European unity and how far new member states can contribute to European integration and share the Union’s benefits. The study relies on the key findings from the European Commission and the number of independent studies in this field. The study draws upon interpretative models in the existing literature.*

**Keywords:** European Union, Conditionality, Enlargement, Integration

**JEL Classification Codes:** F53, F55

### AB Genişlemesi: Bir Başarı Öyküsünden Yorgunluğa

#### Öz

*Bu çalışma “genişleme yorgunluğu” bağlamında önemli bir adım olarak gelecek Avrupa Birliği (AB) genişleme ihtimalini incelemektedir. Çalışma 2000’li yıllarda genişleme sürecini gözden geçirmektedir. 1950’lerin sonlarından beri Avrupa’nın bütünleştirilmesi fikri aşamalı olarak Avrupa’ya barış ve istikrar getirmesi çabaları çerçevesinde değerlendirilmiştir. 1957’den 1995’e kadar AB üye sayısını 6’dan 15’e çıkarmıştır. 2004 ve 2007’lerde komünist geçmişe sahip Orta ve Doğu Avrupa ülkelerinin katılmalarıyla bu gelişmenin doruk noktasına ulaşılmıştır. 10 yıllık zorlu politik ve ekonomik reformlardan sonra, üyeliğe başvuran aday ülkeler sonuçta merkezi aşamaya ulaştılar. O zamandan beri, tartışma genişlemenin AB için zorunlu olup olmadığı, yeni üye ülkelerin Avrupa entegrasyonuna ne kadar katkıda bulunabilecekleri ve faydalarını paylaşabilecekleri sorusu üzerine odaklanmıştır. Çalışma, Avrupa Komisyonu ve bu alanda bir çok sayıda bağımsız çalışmalardan elde edilen anahtar bulgulara dayanmaktadır. Çalışma literatürde yer alan yorumsal modeller üzerinde durmaktadır.*

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Avrupa Birliği, Koşullar, Genişleme, Entegrasyon

**JEL Sınıflandırma Kodları:** F53, F55

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In June 1993, the European Council in Copenhagen explicitly established the accession of the CEECs as an EU objective. The Copenhagen Council required the candidate countries to achieve ‘stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities’ and ‘the existence of a functioning market economy’.<sup>2</sup> They must accept the aims of political, economic, and monetary union as stated in the Treaty on European Union (Schimmelfennig 2001: 5). Under Article 49 of the EU's treaties, any European country that respects for European values, as mentioned above, may apply for membership of the EU. While this does not mean automatic acceptance, it clearly leaves the right of initiative with the interested states.<sup>3</sup>

The EU's enlargement policy was enshrined in the Treaty on European Union of 1992 and typically presumes the legitimate aspiration of European citizens to join the endeavour of a unified Europe. The Treaty aimed ‘to promote economic and social progress, which is balanced and sustainable, in particular through the creation of an area without internal frontiers, through the strengthening of economic and social cohesion’ (European Commission 1992: 23). Simply, this is a reflection of ‘maintaining in full the *acquis communautaire*’,

The EU has been tightly linked to the question of enlargement. From its inception in the 1950s, the Union has experienced a series of enlargements. In 1973, countries joined the EC: the UK, Denmark and Ireland. This was followed by three accessions: Greece joined in 1981, and Spain and Portugal in 1986. The next enlargement was in 1995 with the accession of

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<sup>2</sup> Presidency Conclusions Copenhagen European Council, 21-22 June 1993, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/enlargement/ec/pdf/cop\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/enlargement/ec/pdf/cop_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> EurActive, Future Enlargement: Absorption Capacity Coming to the Fore? 23 March 2006 <http://www.euractiv.com/enlargement/future-enlargement>

Austria, Finland and Sweden. In 2004, eight CEE countries; the Czech Republic, Latvia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Cyprus and Malta joined the EU. The membership size has grown to 27, with the most recent expansion of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007.

The most recent EU enlargements of 2004 and 2007 have fuelled a discussion of enlargement *fatigue* in the EU, with possible negative consequences for the membership chances of Turkey, Croatia and other Balkan countries. The accession negotiations are currently underway with Turkey, Iceland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro. At the moment, there are accession talks with Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Other countries expressed long term EU aspirations. At the same time, the applications from other countries, for example Ukraine and Georgia can be anticipated.

## **2. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EU ENLARGEMENT**

In mapping the original understanding of EU enlargement, the entire range of theoretical approaches have been developed and put forward for analyzing integration in the member states since 1960s. These studies correspond to building blocks for a theory of European integration. In the past, many prominent theorists and commentators have cast doubt on the worth of debate about the process of integration. This is because the theories of European integration are disputed concepts. Most studies claim that European integration is a set of beliefs about the nature of the member states and where the process is going today is the fundamental issue in terms of political debate. A condition of political, social and economic circumstances is that they are subject to change as steps forward. Therefore, the usual assumption is that the theorizing European integration has moved on significantly from early approaches.

Hence, the study of European enlargement is dominated by the competing approaches. In the first period of European integration, neofunctionalism was often used as a term of spillover. This is largely for historical reasons, as neofunctionalism was the first attempt at theorizing the new form of regional co-operation that emerged after the Second World War (Cini 2003: 81). It is important to note that, neofunctionalism appears to be winning the theoretical debate. The theory sought to explain how and why states voluntarily mingle, merge and mix with one another, while acquiring new techniques for resolving conflict between themselves. There are four key parts to the neofunctionalist argument:

- The concept of the “state” is more complex than realists suggested.
  - The activities of interest groups and bureaucratic actors are not confined to the domestic political arena.
  - Non-state actors are important in international politics.
  - European integration is advanced through “spillover” pressures
- (Bache and George 2006: 16).

From this viewpoint, the question of defining the limits to the EU enlargement seems an underlying issue. Historically, once the EU went ahead and enlarged itself, neofunctionalism might have incorporated this fact within its calculations, for example, with regard to the impact of greater interest diversity on transnational group formation or the likelihood that the sheer increase in members would have an effect upon the promotional role of the European Commission. In both cases, as well as other possible examples, the prediction is seemingly straightforward: enlargement attenuates and delays the probability of spill-over-unless such a spill-over in task or authority is built into the negotiations surrounding the accession process as a means of compensating existing members or accommodating the new ones (Wiener and Diez 2004: 70). Yet, this apparent complexity of

bargaining framework should not obscure the the compliance of the member states with the EU norms and regulations, which offer the applicant countries rewards, as they contribute more to European integration.

In the case of the EU enlargement, the most important argument about neo- functionalism is that the rise of new Europe delays and even slows down the enlargement impact. That's why, the spill-over effect of the negotiation process prior to full membership should be put forward and compensation of the member states as well as the candidate countries for damages should be the basic requirement (Kutay 2008: 152).

Some studies acknowledge that there is no link between both functionalism and neofunctionalism with enlargement. According to Schmitter (2004), both approaches have remained silent about the enlargement phenomenon. Neofunctionalism particularly focused on the issue of whether new member states can provide full compliance with the *acquis* and transfer the necessary authority to a supranational body as a result of successful negotiations (Schmitter 2004: 70-71). Quite apart from this, neofunctionalism has stressed the long term effect of enlargement on the *acquis*. This is despite the fact that no similar emphasis can be found regarding the option of opting out long derogations and some common policies.

Along this line, a new "intergovernmentalist" school of integration was developed in response to the neofunctionalist analysis of European integration. Hoffmann (1966) claimed influentially that the EU member governments played the central role in the historical development of the EU rather than international organizations (Hoffmann, 1966). Hoffmann's argument here is, in some measure, critical to the extent of which he discerned the development of the global international system in the light of changes in the global economic situation since the early 1970s. Moreover,

the process of European integration is shaped by the national governments that are uniquely powerful actors in the pace of integration. However, the debate about the unique nature of national governments still leaves us to address the matter of how far the member states can avoid to protect and promote the national interests. Basically, co-operation in the area of “high politics”, such as national security and defence is limited as a justification for promoting the national interests.

According to Rosamond (2000), one of the theories that explain EU’s deepening and widening process as well as the revision of the treaties is intergovernmentalism. To a larger extent, the enlargement decision is the outcome of intergovernmental negotiations generated by a unanimous decision. Although the theory of intergovernmentalism does not base on an empirical study of enlargement issue, much of work by Mattli (1999) and Gstöhl (2002) have focused on membership of candidate countries. However, the analysis of the EU’s approach to enlargement has largely been neglected (Schimmelfennig, 2004).

Moravcsik (1993) argued that the changing face of intergovernmentalism could be seen in the EU’s treaties including the 1957 Treaty of Rome and the 1992 Treaty on European Union. These treaties were not driven primarily by the supranational entrepreneurs from the early integration, but rather by a gradual process of preference convergence among the most powerful member states. In this regard, much of the reasoning behind the theory of intergovernmentalism derives from the idea of liberalism. In the mid-1980s, as the integration process was speed up, there was a revival of the theoretical debate. Such a process could, as Moravcsik has pointed out, only be continued effectively when powers and preferences of the EU member states were revised in the context of intergovernmental model. On the whole, Moravcsik offers mitigating circumstances in which the theories

of European integration should be supplemented by more general theories of national responses to international independence. Therefore, an emphasis is placed on the institutional transfer of competence by the member states. By doing so, the member states are more likely to contribute to further integration pointing to a real surrender of sovereignty (Wallace *et al* 2005).

During the 1990s, liberal intergovernmentalism emerged as arguably the leading theory of European integration, yet its basic theoretical assumptions were questioned by the international relations scholars coming from two different directions. A first group of scholars, collected under the fabrics of rational choice and historical institutionalism, accepted Moravcsik's rationalist assumptions, but rejected his spare institution-free model of intergovernmental bargaining as an accurate description of the EU policy process. By contrast, a second school of thought, drawing from sociological institutionalism and constructivism, raised more fundamental objections to the methodological individualism of rational choice theory in favour of an approach in which national preferences and identities were shaped, at least in part, by the EU norms and rules (Wallace *et al* 2005: 19).

By now, it is clear that the general theme of enlargement conditionality requires the applicant countries to demonstrate a pattern of cooperation and underlying a set of attitudes. One may easily assume that intergovernmentalism is disputed, but undeniably potent idea of the European integration. Across the member states, political passions are continuously excited by the call of supranationalism. A team of scholar led by Wayne Sandholtz and Stone Sweet in 1997 offered an alternative cut through the dichotomy. Fundamental to this approach was the argument that if the EU was to be analysed as an international regime, as Moravcsik insisted, it could be, then it had to be seen not as a single regime, but as a series of regimes for different policy sectors. Therefore, Sandholtz and

Sweet sought to explain the different levels of supranationalism that existed in different policy sectors. The three key elements in their approach were the development of transnational society, the role of supranational organizations with meaningful autonomous capacity to pursue integrative agenda, and a focus on European rule-making to resolve what they called ‘supranational policy externalities’ (Sandholtz and Sweet 1997: 76).

Applying federalism to the enlargement logic, some commentators argue that the integration of different entities is far more important than assimilating them in the EU, while acknowledging difference and diversity. As Wiener and Diez rightly assumed (2004), previously discrete, distinct, or independent entities come together to form a new whole—a union-in (Wiener and Diez 2004: 29). Obeying the rules and regulations is key to this. So, it is easy to figure out which country can join the Union (Schmitter 2004: 73). For federalists, the most important reason for the process of enlargement is the alignment of the candidate countries without a considerable loss in the Union’s *acquis* and to avoid interruption of Europe’s ongoing deepening process, which has been facilitated since 1989 (Burgess, 1989).

Given this, the EU may offer a clear indication of what a supranational world order might look like. As a matter of fact it sits between the nation states and the international system and arguably transforms both through its very existence. This is to say, the EU is multidimensional, that integration is uneven, that EU governance is composed of multiple, co-existence policy modes all force us to think carefully about how the nature of authority is changing. The trick is to think about the EU as an internal part of this changing pattern of governance. To treat the EU as a political system “above” national political systems ignores the complex interpretation of the domestic and the supranational in contemporary Europe (Cini 2007: 73). So, the European integration is not easily comprehensible. It is a political

phenomenon, which reflects complexity. This is to say, the present vibrant theoretical culture in European studies leads to confusion in a reasonably sophisticated way.

These complex considerations are not only of theoretical interests, but also reflections of the cost benefit balance. There is no doubt that successful integration derives from the approximation of the national policies of the applicant countries. Essentially, the harmonization process is a key to the technical functional sectors. Essentially, an emphasis placed on the role of states in international relations. To a certain extent, the enlargement strategy is based on the benefits of EU rewards that exceed the domestic adoption costs.

### **3. THE ENLARGEMENT PROCESS**

#### **3.1 The Fall of Communism**

In 1989, the fall of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) promoted a flood of requests to help the citizens of CEE to transform their economies and politics. In many former Communist states, the demise of the old regimes was accompanied by calls for a “return to Europe”, which found concrete expression in formal requests to join the European Community (EC) (Wallace 2005: 19). During this period, Gorbachev reforms were virtually non-existent—transcended the political landscape between the EC and the CEECs. At the same time, the challenges for the EC itself were gradually emerging, when CEECs faced the reality of adjusting themselves in the post-1989 Europe. In fact, the European Political Co-operation (EPC) was a rare and positive experience; it quickly gave rise to the forms of light co-operation and communication. The individual partnership and co-operation agreements aside, the new *détente* under Gorbachev was seen as tentative attempts to establish “more normal” relations, most notably Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) declaration of 1988.

On the one hand, Western Europeans found themselves in a quandary. They saw membership as the best way of assisting the former Communist states of the CEE, in order to make the transition to liberal democracy and the market economy. Following the Madrid summit in December 1995, enlargement was regarded as ‘both a political necessity and an historic opportunity for Europe’ (White *et al* 2002: 137). On the other hand, the institutional structure of the EU was the main attraction for the successive CEE governments, which would provide the commitment to the principles of democracy, pluralism and the rule of law.

For the economic logic, the EU was regarded as a strong platform to implement economic reforms. In the context of the Cold war, the Rhodes European Council in December 1988 indicated that the European integration project did not accelerate conflict, but rather sought to end the division in the continent. By doing so, such a project defended market economies (as well as liberal democracies) in Europe. As the need to change became a real issue, the Strasbourg European Council in December 1989 pledged a full support for transformation in the CEECs as a further step.

Generally, more coordinated Western policy was crucial under the leadership of the European Commission, which would promote systematic transformation in the CEECs. Such a policy had important implications for the outlook of political and economic reforms within the context of enlargement process of the CEECs. The credit was high, when the Commission developed bilateral Trade and Co-operation Agreements (TCAs) with the individual countries. Further political mandate was given to the Commission to coordinate aid with other international organizations and agencies, the Western Industrialized countries (G24) were created as a result of the G7 Summit in July 1989. The Commission undertook a leading role with the intention of a “framework for action” on behalf of the EC.

Consequently, the Commission submitted its own Action Plan, which was already a clear indication of increasingly combative confidence. The aim was to create an incentive for other members of the G24 to take similar and coordinated initiatives.<sup>4</sup>

Much of the rhetoric of these attempts contained fully conscious of the common responsibility. Obviously, a special role was assigned to the EU to support transformations in the CEECs. However, a range of emerging intensity of interests, particularly among the bigger member states made it more difficult to perform such a role. This related to a perceived desirability and the need to re-establish historic ties in the region. For example, the French and the British governments were increasingly more concerned about German influence in the CEECs following the German unification in 1990. Apparently, there was no general agreement on precisely how the spirit of co-operation should be achieved. Most crucially of all, some anxiety had been arisen from particularly from the unilateral activities of the bigger states, which could create tensions within the EU. Consequently, a truly EU-wide shared interest in geopolitical stabilization of the region was the main requirement for the long-term political and economic developments. In this respect, coordination was seen as a reassuring way forward. Here, the key role of the EU should not be underestimated, which would later become the political rationale.

Still, there was much concern regarding the core values of European integration, as the new CEE governments would frame their goals of reforms, with the explicit references to the European identity. The new democracies were – albeit fragile – undertaking a crippling overload of implementing changes, dealing with tight economic as well as specific

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<sup>4</sup> The Action Plan included measures such as the improvement of market access for the emergency of humanitarian aid and the provision of macroeconomic assistance, in order to set up the Community's own programme for technical assistance—the Phare programme.

political conditions. The extensive tests of their ‘ability were to assume the obligations of membership’ (Pridham 2002: 953), which were mainly consisted of the appropriate administrative and judicial structures. Unlike the previous accessions, the significance of the EU’s role was largely beyond the external demand and expectation. There was no pretence. Simply, the principle foreign policy aim was to join Europe via becoming a member of the Union. To a lesser extent, this interest repeatedly was fuelled by the US administration because it was no longer playing a greater role in European affairs. Once German unification was under way, there were naturally more general supports for the EU membership.

It is possible to suggest that this rhetoric put a strong emphasis on the *finalite politique* of economic co-operation and assistance, but seemed to fall short to provide the fruitful results. It was certainly not easy task to achieve what was previously set up. Even so, there was a fairly pervasive commitment to the principles of the EPC by CEECs, which eased the political conditionality, to a lesser extend. Nevertheless, the policy responses of the CEECs were *ad hoc*. Surely, a more determined approach would be essential to coordinate political (as well as economic) transformation in the CEECs closely within the EPC framework. This complication stemmed from the critical period of Communist regime. From the perspective of enlargement process, the EU was not prepared for the unexpected change, which was under time pressure and uncertainty about the speed of reforms and durability. One paradox for this is that the shortages of staff and expertise in the CEECs. At the technical level, a lack of policy blueprints for appropriate responses was also the case. It is perhaps not surprising that efficiency was not always evident, especially in relation to some of the innovative elements for, at the very least, the sake of delivering economic results.

### **3.2 Europe Agreements**

During the 1990s, challenge was how to ensure a degree of “political significance” of the latest enlargement. With some joy of movement towards more long-term relations with the CEECs, the EU member states (i.e., the UK or the German government) demonstrated a positive response to further enlargement. They frequently renewed upon their commitments to more coherent and strategic policies. At the same time, an explicit controversy amongs the policy-makers, who were nervous about opening up potentially divisive debate about future EU integration model. Consequently, debate between two strands was called the “widening versus deepening” that dominated new geopolitical balance in Europe.

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the EC acted promptly to support the transition process. In the initial phase, the EU granted the CEE countries for the preferential tariff treatment within the framework of the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP). They were soon replaced by the Europe Agreements (EAs), aimed at introducing free trade between the EC and the associated countries (Putten 2002: 85). In 1990, the outcome of a special meeting of the European Council was the agreement that would set up a multilateral political dialogue. This was to ‘create a new type of association agreement as part of the new pattern of relationships in Europe’. In 1991, this decision reflected on the balance of opinions derived from the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), which gave the priority to deepening rather than widening. The EC policy-makers found it convenient to address the CEECs as an “external” problem (Sedelmeier and Wallace 2000: 436). The EAs were to soon introduce great benefits. In particularly, the agreements included the most advanced countries, notably Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. They were mirrored in subsequent negotiations over

transformation strategies and requirements for external supports concerning economic, political and social reforms in CEECs.

It is easy to see potential relevance in the acceptance of EAs formula. This was made especially clear during the EA negotiations. Instead of offering generous trade concessions, EAs formula was arguably seen as most appropriate market needs of the CEECs. The cross-cutting cleavages emerged in the defence of sectoral interests from steel to potatoes in resistance to the large-scale financial transfers to the CEECs. Quite apart from this, some EU-15 countries were most concerned about stability in the region (i.e., Germany) used the segmented nature of EU decision-making to their advantage and opposed significant financial support to the region, despite their earlier support at the highest political levels for the transition. As a result, the trade provisions of the EAs were sharply criticised as being too restrictive (Friis and Murphy 1999: 75). The constraints were also more evident, where the gap between CEECs expectations and concrete proposals from the EU became obvious. In this sense, the EAs provided a real dissatisfaction to slow the pace of transitional advance for most CEECs. For example, the Polish delegation refused to send a high-level delegation for negotiations. This action led to two periods of deadlock, first in late March 1991, and again in July 1991. It should also be noted that a systematic antagonism on both sides entailed only limited relationship prior to 1989. The centrally planned economies did not engage much in foreign trade, although the development of bilateral relations had been a priority in the 1980s. The links were still in their infancy, when the Cold War ended.

To reiterate, the economic substance of the EAs fell short of the CEECs expectations within the context of trade liberalization and financial assistance, despite the EC committed itself to the free trade in industrial products for several years in principle. Not surprisingly, the EAs offered

slower and limited liberalization. Concern of this kind meant that the EU activities were limited for the purpose of protecting the sensitive sectors, such as coal, steel, agriculture and textiles, which remained outside the framework of the EAs protocols and annexes. Such sectors were accounted for the bulk of the CEECs exports as their medium-term comparative advantages. Although the objective would eventually be achieved through means of liberalization, the EC producers chose further provisions for a contingent protection. This triggered an economic commitment to defer potential foreign investors.

Forging the fragile compromise, most EU leaders thought that they reached a broad membership aspiration, but learnt the shortcomings in the implementation of the EAs. The Eastern enlargement began with the scale and difficulties. There was a gradually decreasing public support for the vigorous reforms. At the same time, the EU was heavily influenced by the public opinion to use the instruments of commercial protection. Consequently, a trade surplus with the CEECs became harder to avoid. The gap between the EU rhetoric and substance should not be overstated, but neither should it be dismissed. This implies that the opening of the European labour markets to the CEECs was a long term prospect. For that reason, a new strategy was necessary to focus on assisting these countries for their new situations.

### **3.3 Deciding on a Wider Membership**

Since 1989, the EU membership has seen as a consistent priority for the CEECs. This is because joining the EU was regarded as an astonishing development only a few years after the disappearance of the major symbols of the East-West dichotomy – including the Berlin Wall (Virkkunen 2001: 141). The EC was originally devised to be a dynamic organisation with flexible institutional relations: it was not the end-point in the process of

European integration, but the beginning (Holand 2004: 158). The legal and technical procedures for enlargement were uncomplicated, but the political barriers were far more difficult to overcome. In June 1993, the Copenhagen European Council specified the EU membership condition for the new accession countries ‘that so desire shall become members of the European Union’ as follows:

‘Membership requires that the candidate county has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union. Membership presupposes the candidate’s ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union’ (European Council, 1993).

Accordingly, each candidate country must adopt the EU’s *acquis communautaire* - the entire body of the EU laws and policies. To complete the accession process, each applicant must negotiate 31 sectoral chapters of the *acquis* such topics as free movement of goods, competition policy, and the environment. In addition, the candidate country must continue domestic reforms, in particular the strengthening of their administrative and judicial structures, so that they can effectively implement and enforce the *acquis* (Guth 2001: 22).

In December 1994, this overall policy saw the emergence of a pre-accession strategy for the CEECs at the European Council in Essen. In effect, this strategy was a one-sided adjustment programme which outlined many of the key tasks to be undertaken, in order to secure membership. Prescriptions for the EU preparations were restricted to policy and budgetary reviews, while the institutional implications would be tackled in the (then) forthcoming 1996 Intergovernmental Conference (Friis, and Murphy 1999: 222). In June 1994, the European Commission report on the strategy already revealed more engagement of policy towards the CEECs at

the Corfu European Council, with the aim of preparing these countries for accession. There were clear indications of initiatives of the 1985 Commission White Paper on the Single Market. This made implicit assumptions on the capacity of the CEECs to adopt the EU market regulations. The main aim was to build a strategy to align with EU legislation. On varying scales, a range of innovation was employed to increase the alignment. Such an alignment related to the economic restructuring, in order to facilitate internationalization of the CEEC economies. This regulatory alignment included many areas (i.e., agriculture) aimed at the effective use of the Phare programme,<sup>5</sup> limit the use of commercial defence instruments and improvement of trade opportunities through liberalization. On the political front, it was expected that deepening the political dialogue would allow a significant participation of the CEECs' governments in the second and third pillars of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA).

On a similar vein, the European Commission White Paper on regulatory alignment was agreed at the Cannes European Council in June 1995. By doing so, an extensive effort was made to provide more economic aid to the CEECs or improve aid package. In December 1995, the Madrid Summit moved one step further to enlargement. The Summit agreed to begin the preparatory phase of accession negotiations following the end of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC). However, the tension between maintaining the EU governance system – contributing the overall security order in Europe – and containing the internal costs of enlargement resurfaced in Chancellor Helmut Kohl's trail balloon at the summit. The aim

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<sup>5</sup> Phare Programme aimed at the accession countries, in order to improve their economic and financial well-being. Having said that, the countries of CEE) were the main beneficiaries of the Phare within the context of the EU's the pre-accession strategy. Since 1994, the priorities and needs of each CEECs have become more important than other accession countries.

was to limit the promise to the “avant garde” of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic (Financial Times 1995: 8). Nonetheless, these initiatives were at their speediest in relation to the pre-accession strategy.

It should also be noted that the EU-15 member states were concerned with fostering negative attitudes for the accession process from the outset. This was believed to be central to weaken incentives and render the entire negotiation process. Perhaps the best indication of this was “favouritism” for some applicants of whom individual EU member states had geographical and historical ties. Given well-known position of German governments on some issues, the UK was inclined to regard the enlargement process as a treat to the coherence of the EU – especially if it involved with Turkish membership. However, the UK obstacle was at least partly removed by the outcome of 1997 general election. In spite of this, many of the more important internal EU changes needed to accommodate CEECs – notably reform of the CAP and of the Structural Funds (Nugent 2003: 105).

No matter whether an increased membership would generate both management problems and a greater heterogeneity, the IGC tried to facilitate a more flexible model of integration. In this context, any shortcomings of the Treaty of Amsterdam, signed on 2 October 1997, could be compensated. What was more crucial was that the EU should be careful not to weaken the basis for the establishment of ‘Freedom, Security and Justice Area’, as the Treaty envisaged. As regards to common entry rules, the free movement of persons was particularly relevant. It was stressed that any shortcomings on these issues would be reversed by co-operation.

Eventually, the European Commission revealed its opinion, which was ambitiously entitled *Agenda 2000* on the candidates. It was a framework of enlargement strategy including the effect of enlargement on internal policies and a proposed new financial perspective (2000-2006). It soon became

obvious that bringing stability to the EU was a difficult task, although it was expected that enlargement would create opportunities for ensuring peace in Europe and accessing new market.

To elaborate this point further, the publication of the Commission's *Agenda 2000* provided a clearer picture of how the EU would proceed with enlargement process. The Commission proposed that enlargement negotiations should be opened with five CEECs (the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia and Estonia) and Cyprus. The opinions were organized in sections examining the ability of the applicants to meet Copenhagen criteria. The increased emphasis was placed on the ability of candidates to meet the conditions in the medium term. Only those five CEECs were recommended by the Commission for an early accession negotiation. Some policy-makers argued against differentiation and for the "regatta" option; all of the candidates should start the accession race, but row at different speeds towards the finishing-line, depending on the pace of their convergence with the EU and the success of their domestic reforms (Wallace 2005: 18).

In March 1998, the EU began accession negotiations with the six applicant countries mentioned above, following their adaptation, implementation and the application of the *acquis*. Through these stages, the applicant countries were expected to meet their obligations, as set out in the EU treaties. During the Summit meetings in Finland and Helsinki in December 1999, the accession negotiation was opened with Slovakia, Romania, Malta, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Latvia. Although Turkey was recognised as a candidate country, its application was to be assessed on the basis of the same criteria. In December 2002, the Copenhagen European Council concluded accession talks with ten countries: the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Latvia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Malta, Slovakia and

Slovenia. They acceded to the EU on 1 May, 2004, following the signing of the accession treaty on 1 April, 2003. On 1 January, 2007, the EU's integration capacity included two additional countries: Bulgaria and Romania. The inclusion of the CEECs completed the *Big Bang* enlargement to 27.

From the perspective of the late 2000s, the expansion of the EU to 27 or more member states raises questions about the way in which the Union has traditionally managed the enlargement process and whether this is an appropriate framework for the future. The wide claims sometimes made for the optimism: enlargement can be a catalyst for solving some of Europe's outstanding problems, and thus convincing the EU leaders to make a leap forward. Such an optimism goes some way in explaining the refocusing on the EU strategy by considering the situation of the enlarged EU. This necessitates looking ahead the future situation where the EU should launch a new enlargement strategy to overcome *fatigue*.

#### **4. ENLARGEMENT FATIGUE**

The controversy over the EU's capacity for continued enlargement brings into question whether the EU can take in new members without jeopardizing the political and policy objectives established in the treaties. It also raises the question of whether or not continued enlargement can still be one of EU's main goals (Sundell and Karlsson 2010). The functioning capacity of the Union are more likely be retained in the future, unless necessary reforms are not launched. An unlimited enlargement of the EU-27 may not only seriously endanger the ability of institutions to function, but the efficiency of decision-making processes in the EU.

Hence, an emphasis has placed on the question of whether more states can be integrated into the EU. Having completed its biggest and most significant enlargement round, voices arose in the EU claiming that a halt in

further enlargements was necessary. Since the most recent enlargement in 2007, the question has again arisen as to whether this marks a break or even the end of the enlargement policy pursued by the EU so far. For now, there is no real consensus on where the EU's ultimate borders lie and if an EU with 30 or 35 member states could still function efficiently (Devrim and Schulz 2009: 3).

A focus is on the overall identity of Europe that is what the EU stands for and where "Europe" ends. There are many divisions and differences based on language, political ideologies or religious background between the old EU, new member states and the applicant countries. Especially, diversities in the context of geography, history, and culture make the applicant countries distinct. It is necessary to take into account the difference in the approach of membership of Turkey. The admission of Turkey with an Islamic culture is perceived as vastly different and incompatible with Europe. This is one of the reasons for generally negative attitude towards enlargement. However, the Treaty of Roma of 1957 stated that 'any European State may apply to become a member of the Community' (Article 237), but no clear definition of "Europe" was given. It is not surprising that voices have been raised against further expansion, in particular to include Turkey since the enlargement 2004. As claimed, the defeat of the European Constitutional Treaty in the 2005 French and Dutch referendums was partly due to a backlash against the idea of Turkish membership.<sup>6</sup> While Turkey's accession affects the fulfillment of the EU conditionality, it is difficult to figure out whether other applicant countries, notably Ukraine or those of the Southern Caucasus should be considered as part of Europe.

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<sup>6</sup> Euromove Future Enlargement of the EU, January 2009, <http://www.euromove.org.uk/index.php?id=6502>

A successful integration requires peaceful solution to political crises. A particular question arises as to whether there will be a political solution to the conflict over Cyprus within the context of enlargement *fatigue*. This is indispensable, as often stated by the EU officials, but not a precondition. Prior to its accession to the EU, the reality was more complex because Greece would block future enlargements if Cyprus was excluded. Twin referendums on United Nations plan to reunify the Island were held on 24 April, 2004. Approximately, 65% of Turkish Cypriot voters in the North approved the plan, but 76% of Greek Cypriot voters in the South rejected it (Archick and Morelli 2008: 4). On the one hand, the EU is cautious on the Cyprus issue. On the other hand, the Southern Greek Cypriot benefits greatly from the EU financial aids. Indeed, the divided Mediterranean Island as a whole will likely be better off in the EU.

Equally important, inclusion of the CEECs into the EU caused some anxiety. For instance, corruption in some countries, (most notably Bulgaria and Romania) is believed to be endemic and causing restrictions on volume of trade as a result of their early access to European labour markets. Like any other candidates, the use of strict accession conditions was applied to these countries to improve their political and economic situation. However, it proved difficult to strengthen their pre-accession strategies.

Proof of this newly hesitant attitude towards future enlargements is provided by the public opinion. According to the Eurobarometer survey in 2008, almost half of Europeans (48%) believed that the enlargements of 2004 and 2007 have strengthened the EU, while just over a third of Europeans (36%) said that they have weakened the Union (European Commission 2008: 62). Interestingly, this sentiment in the old EU was much more divided: the only clear majorities in favour of strengthening were in Sweden, Spain, Denmark and Greece, and strongly negative were in France,

Luxembourg, Belgium, Austria and Germany. The former was reflection of widespread appreciation of the political benefits of enlargement across the member states and the later negative perceptions of the economic impact on the national markets. Usually, economic studies of the impact demonstrate that enlargement has been a success story. However, the tendency is that the perceptions of European citizens diverge at present from reality.

Some EU policy-makers and European publics have long worried about the inclusion of new countries with weak economies and low incomes, which can prompt the influx of low-cost or unwanted migrant labour. Such fears in turn prompted the EU to allow the “old” member states to introduce some temporary restrictions on labor migration from those countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. Some members states, notably the UK and Ireland chose not to impose any transitional restrictions did see an increase in workers from the CEECs. Most studies since 2004 suggest that the migration flows from the CEECs has been relatively small. Such migrants have not displaced local workers or significantly driven down local wages (Emerson *et al* 2006: 4).

According to the Office for National Statistics, although numbers of Eastern Europeans have grown in the UK, they still form a comparatively small part of the workforce.<sup>7</sup> In 2011, there were 106,390 workers – down from 158,545 in 2010. Nevertheless, there is still concern, pointing to the inclusion of big, relatively less affluent countries, such as Turkey or possible Ukraine in the longer term. It is equally important to note that May 1st 2011 marked the removal of restrictions on the right to work in any member state for citizens from the CEECs. All workers from the countries that joined the EU in 2004 are now able to take up employment freely in the

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<sup>7</sup> Office for National Statistics, Migration Statistics Quarterly Report May 2012, Statistical Bulletin.

EU-15 member states, where labour market restrictions were in place until the very end of the seven year transitional period ending April 30th 2011.<sup>8</sup>

In part, enlargement *fatigue* is a reaction to the relative lack of democracy in the European institutions. For instance, France has amended its constitution to ensure that the French voters would have a say in any contemplated future enlargements. Similarly, Austria has indicated that before it would vote to admit Turkey into the Union in a referendum. These promises were made in an atmosphere in which the polls show that less than 40 percent of the electorate in Austria, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the UK support further enlargement of the Union (Forgue *et al* 2007: 2). The most obvious feature is the weaknesses of the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers, given the fact that the term “democracy deficit” is closely associated with the capacity of the institutions. This perceived deficit arises from the decision-making mechanisms in the EU. In particular, the European Parliament is not an elected body, and thus is not accountable to the electorate. Consequently, the EU citizens have no opportunity to vote on whether to expand the Union.

Equally important, the recent global financial crisis and the present difficulties in the Eurozone have highlighted the interdependence of national economies both within and beyond the EU. These events underline the importance of further consolidating economic and financial stability and fostering growth, also in the enlargement countries. The enlargement process is a powerful tool to that end (European Commission 2011). The inclusion of large countries like Turkey or Ukraine into the European mainstream could also have substantial financial consequences for the Union’s budget and regional assistance programs, as well as implications for

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<sup>8</sup> EUbusiness, End of Transitional Arrangements for the Free Movement of Workers, on 30 April 2011, 29 April 2011. <http://www.eubusiness.com/topics/employment/workers-11>.

the functioning of the EU institutions. The EU member states may fear that an ever expanding Union could ultimately weaken their ability to set the tone and agenda in EU institutions and to drive EU policies. Moreover, doubts persist about the ability of some potential EU aspirants to implement EU standards, especially in areas related to the rule of law, fundamental rights, and anti-corruption measures (Archick 2012: 10). Additionally, enlargement is being blamed for social problems that are more difficult to live with (i.e.,unemployment). Anger at the apparent failures of the authorities to clamp down on illegal immigration is being directed at the enlargement (Wyles, 2009).

To elaborate this point further, it is often claimed that the EU's recent financial problems and sovereign debt crisis – which have hit the countries of the Eurozone particularly hard and caused some observers to doubt the future of the EU's common currency – could potentially slow future rounds of EU enlargement. It is also widely claimed that EU leaders are grappling not only with trying to remedy the Eurozone's financial troubles, but also with uncertainty about the future direction of the EU itself. As a result, they may be less inclined to robustly push forward the enlargement agenda. Conversely, the EU's economic difficulties might make joining the Union – and ultimately the common currency – less attractive for some current and potential EU candidates. For decades, many countries aspired to join the EU largely for the economic benefits that membership would bring. If financial instability in the Eurozone persists, however, some aspirants such as Turkey – with a rapidly expanding and dynamic economy -may not view the benefits of membership as outweighing the potential constraints on its sovereignty and national fiscal and monetary policies (Archick and Morelli 2008: 4).

Yet, the well-intentioned half-measures currently being discussed in EU circles fail to recognise what is at stake. The offers of partnership, funds or trade concessions smack of Europeans fiddling, while their neighbourhood burns (Menon 2011). A useful anchor for reform is initiated by the European Commission within the context of “the Europe 2020 objectives”. Such objectives aim to establish dialogues on economic policy and employment, and social policies between the Commission and the applicant countries. Precisely, the Europe 2020 is the Union's growth strategy for the present decade, guiding it towards becoming a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy in a changing world. The applicant countries are encouraged to align with the Europe 2020 strategy. This initiative is digital agenda for Europe, innovation Union, youth on the move, resource efficient Europe, industrial policy for the globalisation era, agenda for new skills and jobs, European platform against poverty (European Commission 2011: 4). It is also important to note that, as was the case of Eastern enlargement, the Commission has launched financial assistance programmes towards the objectives of Europe 2020, with the aim of socio-economic development development of the applicant countries.

It is perhaps sensible to suggest that there is no way to obscure that enlargement has driven the EU's success. The EU's capacity to absorb new members has proven Union's most useful and transformative characteristics. The democratic and normative conditions to increase integration for the potential candidates has driven transformation in Eastern Europe, while new members have provided labour, skills, cultural diversity and new languages, as well as business and trade opportunities (Devrim and O'Leary 2010: 2). As Schimmelfennig (2007) argued, positive political conditionality became a general feature of the EU relations with the third countries in the 1990s, it has been used less consistently than in EU relations with the potential future

member states (Schimmelfennig 2007: 16). In this vein, one little-noticed side effect of the Greek debt crisis is that it is playing into the hands of those who oppose faster progress on enlarging the Union. Although Balkan states are queuing up at the EU's door, but only Croatia has any chance of membership in the next three years. Among the reasons is that Greece – the first Balkan state to enter the EC in 1981 – has been exposed as a country that ran ruinous and reckless fiscal policies for many years (Barberi 2010). Reflecting these or parallel concerns, when the European Council awarded the Former Yugoslav Republic (FYR) of Macedonia the candidate status in December 2005, it not only referred to the need for further progress before the FYR of Macedonia could join, but also added that ‘the absorption capacity of the Union also has to be taken into account’.<sup>9</sup>

While focusing on the impact of the future enlargement, on the other hand, the EU has a history of stabilizing new democracies in Europe. Many fears expressed at the time of successive enlargements (excessive cost and stalling the internal development of the enlarged Union etc.) have been shown to be unfounded or excessive. Enlargement has proved to be a remarkable transformational instrument, consolidating both the transition of three authoritarian South European regimes (Greece, Portugal and Spain) into democracies, and similarly that of the former Communist countries of CEE into market economies and democracies. Thus, the cases of Greece, Spain and Portugal in the 1980s, and two decades later, the CEECs illustrate how enlargement can be used to entrench democratic reforms and foster economic development. This model of stabilization may also be applicable for Croatia, Serbia, Ukraine, and even Turkey. This expansion of stable democracy in Europe is a once-in-a-millennium opportunity that citizens of

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<sup>9</sup> Euromove, Future Enlargement of the EU, January 2009, <http://www.euromove.org.uk/index.php?id=6502>

the EU may yet rise to seize.<sup>10</sup> Conversely, the EU's role as anchor in international arena should not be underestimated, especially with regard to the modernization and democratization process in the CEECs.

It can be assumed that enlargement, as a concept and a policy, is bringing Europe steadily closer to the benefits of lasting peace, stability, democracy, shared welfare, human rights and cohesion, it should be recognised and re-defined as such as soon as possible (Devrim and O'Leary 2010: 2). Article 49 of the Treaty of Amsterdam sets out conditions and process for any European country wishing to become a member of the EU.<sup>11</sup> The candidates have to fulfil the membership conditions. Under the Treaty of Nice, the EU must ensure that its institutions and decision-making process remain effective before enlargement.<sup>12</sup> It is confirmed that, with the Treaty of Lisbon of 2009, European leaders launched a process to make the EU 'more democratic, more transparent and more efficient'.<sup>13</sup> As in the case of the proposed European Constitution, the Treaty attempts to streamline the EU institutions to make the EU-27 member states function effectively.

As envisaged by the EU treaties, the integration of the CEE over the past decade has shown that enlargement benefits the EU as a whole (European Commission 2011: 18). Not only has the process of enlargement gone smoothly in technical terms, with no failed accession negotiations since Britain was vetoed twice by General de Gaulle in the 1960s and no insurmountable post-accession problems, it has brought substantial benefits

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<sup>10</sup> Euromove (2009), "Future Enlargement of the EU", <http://www.euromove.org.uk/index>

<sup>11</sup> Official Journal of the European Communities, Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union, 24.12.2002.

<sup>12</sup> Official Journal of the European Communities, Treaty of Nice Amending the Treaty on European Union, the Treaties Establishing the European Communities and Certain Related Facts (2001/C 80/01) 10.3.2001.

<sup>13</sup> Official Journal of the European Union Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed at Lisbon on 13 December 2007, 2007/C 306/01.

in the way of increased security, stability and prosperity to both new and existing member states.<sup>14</sup>

If and when EU enlargement is to continue, the EU will need effective conditionality in order to get new candidates to reach a level of accession preparation to ensure the undisturbed functioning of the internal market and the Union's decision making, and multi-level system of governance (Steunenberg and Dimitrova 2007: 2). The countries of the Balkans region must now keep up the hard work of democratic and market reforms that will allow them to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria. The Treaty of Lisbon has opened the avenue to this process, but any slowing down of the aspiring applicant countries, or diminishing degrees of support in the EU member states, would be detrimental to efforts for further stabilizations and strengthening of peace in this post-conflict region. Enlargement *fatigue* is not an option. For the continuing EU peace project to succeed and encompass the whole of South Eastern Europe, the strong pre-dispositions that exist for this project must come to fruition. All the national governments in the region have defined their priority in terms of EU integration and all have both declared and are now implementing resolution of all outstanding issues through peaceful, legal and institutional means (Vejvoda, 2010).

It is equally important to note that future enlargement may be postponed until the Union finds ways to reform itself. Having said that, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is emerging as an alternative policy to enlargement and is expected to create positive interdependence with neighbouring countries of the East and South.<sup>15</sup> This may compensate the

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<sup>14</sup> Euromove (2009), Future Enlargement of the EU, <http://www.euromove.org.uk/index.php?id=6502>

<sup>15</sup> The ENP was established in 2003 as an option for the EU's neighbouring countries. However, there is no real prospects of joining the Union in the foreseeable future.

weaknesses of the EU's 'Wider Europe' initiative. Throughout 2003, the European Commission had been drafting proposals for a ENP, with the aim of enhancing the EU's relations with sixteen neighbouring states to the East and the South by offering 'more than partnership and less than membership' (European Commission 2003: 23). Simply, as a sustainable incentive for the regional cooperation, partnership is seen as an alternative to the EU membership. In particular, the ENP was presented as the Union's strategic response to deal with the new situation following the 2004 enlargement. These changing circumstances have led to new rationales i) coping with its new external borders and neighbours and ii), finding a solution for a further enlargement problem. Both rationales are drawn out of strategic interest avoiding potentially damaging consequences on stability and development (Boedeltje and Houtum 2011: 130). To put differently, almost all relevant positive consequences of the EU membership could be obtained, in theory at least, even without membership of the Union (Chilosi 2005: 1497).<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, legitimization of shared European values by the Union's neighbours is crucial, in order to maintain the EU's influence over the neighbourhood without the ability to offer the prospect of membership. The discourse of "shared values" establishes a natural link between the EU and its neighbours, a link that can exist without formal agreements. European neighbours, however, seem currently to lag behind in accepting the EU's normative discourse, rendering the framework inefficient and illegitimate (Bogutcaia *et al* 2006: 127).

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<sup>16</sup> Such consequences include integration of non-members into the EU's economic and political area and the support policies.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study demonstrated that, from the perspective of the late 2000s, the expansion of the EU to 27 or more member states raises questions about the way in which the Union has traditionally managed the enlargement process and whether this is an appropriate framework for the future. The wide claims sometimes made for the optimism: enlargement can be a catalyst for solving some of Europe's outstanding problems, and thus convincing the EU leaders to make a leap forward. Such optimism goes some way in explaining the refocusing on the EU strategy by considering the situation of the enlarged EU. This necessitates looking ahead the future situation where the EU should launch a new enlargement strategy to overcome *fatigue*.

Debate about enlargement is intensified with the inclusion of the CEECs into the EU. Here, the public perception should not be underestimated and this rests on the EU's absorption capacity to welcome new member states. As the study shown, there is a shift in rhetoric about enlargement being a success story to a more cautious step forward, with an eye on the public opinion. For general public in the EU, the whole machinery is constructed to relieve the apprehensions about future enlargement.

As it was shown, enlargement is reaching its limits and from the cultural perspective at least, the inclusion of countries of "wider Europe" seems remote. Much of the opposition towards enlargement is caused by the prospect of a large-scale immigrant from new accession countries. It is highly likely that migration flows will swap European labour markets and strain the welfare systems in the member states. Again, these complex considerations can be tackled by a new enlargement strategy.

The study emphasized that the length of the negotiations will depend on how well the applicant countries are prepared for membership in line with pre-accession strategy. The EU enlargement process will more likely to help

to accelerate reform and enhance greater stability in the applicant countries. At the same time, the candidate countries may create considerable financial problems for the EU as a whole. This is true that enlargement will bring less prosperous states into the EU, imposing strains on the structural funds. Turkey and Ukraine can be viewed in this category, who will more likely to join the EU after 2014 – the scheduled date for the beginning of the EU's next budget framework.

The study concluded that, regardless of these divisions and differences, the future enlargement seems a crucial step because it is closely linked to the stability and long run prosperity in Europe. This rhetoric in itself should be perceived as leap forward to overcome enlargement *fatigue* and accelerate the enlargement process in terms of institutional reform or financial support for applicant countries etc. Specifically, the EU should offer, at the very least, some of these states the prospect of membership, which should enable them to continue along the path of democratisation. In fact, enthusiasm for a strict sense of adherence to European values, such as democracy, the rule of law and the protection of human rights seems to increase and there has been a renewed recognition of the enduring importance of enlargement conditionality. In this way, the EU's policy on enlargement should be carefully managed in a sense that enlargement is linked with the process of internal consolidation, with the help and support of the old member states.

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