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The EU's Next Big Enlargement: Empirical Data on the Candidates' Perceptions

ANIA Krok-Paszkowska
and
JAN ZIELONKA

RSC No. 2000/54

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Krok-Paszkowska/Zielonka: ***The EU's Next Big Enlargement: Empirical Data on the Candidates' Perceptions***

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EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE

ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE
FOR ADVANCED STUDIES

The EU's Next Big Enlargement: Empirical Data on the Candidates' Perceptions

ANIA KROK-PASZKOWSKA
and
JAN ZIELONKA

EUI Working Paper **RSC** No. 2000/54

BADIA FIESOLANA, SAN DOMENICO (FI)

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The issue of the EU's enlargement has become Europe's major preoccupation, if not obsession. The number of countries with ambitions to be taken in is growing. Most of the official and unofficial candidates are economically much less developed than the current EU members, and some even lack a tradition of independent democratic statehood. Most of the candidates are still struggling with a communist legacy, and some aspirant candidates even need to put behind a very fresh memory of war and ethnic cleansing. All of the candidates have some kind of European credentials, but some are Islamic and not Judeo-Christian while other adopted Christianity not from Rome but from Byzantium. The European Union has spelled out the major admission criteria for candidate countries, but has failed to spell out the enlargement's major purpose and objectives. The Union requires the candidate countries to reform themselves, but it has difficulty in achieving its own reform in anticipation of enlargement. Public opinion in the member states is also lukewarm concerning the prospect of the next enlargement. Ambiguity and double-speak is the order of a day on both sides. As one European Commission official used to sarcastically address his colleagues from the candidate countries: "We pretend that we want you, and you pretend to be ready."

One of the major problems is that we hardly know how much sincerity or dissimulation there is on the side of the candidate states. The enlargement discourse entertained in the western part of Europe is very much self-centric, with little regard being taken of the candidate states' preferences and capabilities. The candidate states are asked to look like the current members before being admitted, and they have undertaken to meet this request whatever it takes. But do they really believe that adoption of the EU's conditions would do them any good? Are their own reasons for joining the Union similar to the EU's reasons for taking them in? What kind of Union they would like to join if given a choice? Would it be a Union guided by the regime of *acquis communautaire* or by a broader political or cultural vision? Would it be a tight federation or a loose Union of sovereign states?

We have tried to find answers to these kinds of questions by interviewing candidate countries' official delegates to the European Union.[1] The interviews were conducted in May and June 2000 and they were carried out on the basis of anonymity. Thirty-four open questions were asked and grouped under five major headings: 1/ Purpose of Enlargement; 2/ Inclusion and Exclusion; 3/ Power and Interests; 4/ Unity and Diversity after Enlargement, and 5/ Elite versus Public. The countries interviewed fall into three categories: A/ the Luxembourg Group: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia; B/ the Helsinki Group: Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Romania, Slovakia and

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Turkey; C/ Aspirant Candidates: Albania, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova and Ukraine.[2]

The group of interviewed heads of missions to the EU has some characteristic features, of course. They represent the top diplomatic elite of the candidate countries, who well understands the complexity of the EU's internal and external politics. By-and-large they fall into the category of Euro-enthusiasts rather than Euro-sceptics. They speak and understand the Euro-jargon, and reason in terms similar to those of the EU's own diplomatic elite. In fact, the interviews confirmed their high level of socialisation with the EU diplomatic and political corps, and their assimilation of basic EU rationale. The interviewed heads of missions complained about the EU's lack of a broader historic vision and a clear strategic concept, but they hardly proposed any vision or strategy of their own. With only a few qualifications, they basically agreed with the principle and logic of the EU's policy of conditionality vis-à-vis the candidate states. Their evaluation of their countries' difficulties in meeting the accession criteria largely overlapped with the EU's own internal evaluation. And they were as confused as their partners from the EU concerning the future course or direction that the Union is going to take.

These findings do not undermine the utility of targeting this elite group of diplomats from the candidate states. Unlike the general public, the interviewed persons have thought through the issues tackled by the interview and they were able to give mature and sophisticated answers to the questions posed. It is also difficult to ignore their important role in formulating the accession policies of their respective countries and communicating these policies to their respective capitals. The entire European integration project has been driven by elites with the public more or less willingly following the course, and there is no reason to assume that the enlargement project will be any different.[3]

The similarity of concepts, language and ideas between current and aspirant EU member states' elites is basically good news for the process of enlargement. It means, among other things, that EU enlargement policy is not treated as something entirely alien, but as part of the candidate states' own aspirations. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that the process of enlargement is going to be painless. It is easier to assimilate ideas and imitate concepts than to actually put them into practice within a complex and diverse economic and political environment. Moreover, endorsement of certain projects or ideas does not necessarily mean that these ideas are good in principle, and that they will suit all kinds of different countries without exceptions. In fact, assimilation and imitation says more about a "doctrinal" monopoly of certain ideas and power inequalities between "East" and "West" than about good or bad

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courses of action for individual countries. The interviewed diplomats had obvious problems to cope with "the power" questions, either in terms of factual leverage or ideological dominance. This means that the entire project of enlargement could still get stuck when certain institutional solutions touch upon vested interests of different pressure groups. However, the conducted interviews show a process of coming together between different parts of Europe with the EU's enlargement policy acting as a major vehicle for such unification.

The Purpose of Enlargement

It is impossible to state clearly what enlargement is all about without specifying what European integration is about.[4] Is integration basically about economics, politics, security or culture? This is not a new question. The Union has always been ambiguous and vague about its basic aims and function because it was the only way to get the integration project off the ground. There always were differences within Europe concerning the very nature of integration (federalism vs. intergovernmentalism), the functional scope of integration (high politics vs. low politics), and competing national agendas on nearly all issues. And so the Union faced a simple choice - "integration in disguise" or no integration. In this situation, such ambiguity was an effective way of maintaining a respectable degree of consensus. Today, as the Union faces the next big wave of enlargement, ambiguity is again in vogue. A strategy of integration in disguise is being followed by a strategy of enlargement in disguise. We do not really know whether enlargement is basically about economics (creating a vast free-trade area), politics (preventing instability just across EU borders) or culture (bringing under one roof all "truly" European countries).

Of course, various economic, political and cultural aims may well be in harmony. For instance, liberals always argue that the best way to achieve peace and democracy is via free trade. However, at a lower level of abstraction various aims are often in conflict. For instance, economic aims yield policies of financial profit, while political aims yield policies of financial sacrifice. Different aims behind enlargement call for different institutional solutions. They also tell you more about which criteria of admission really matter. By now, the candidate countries are confronted with an ever growing list of conditions with few indications which ones ought to be dealt with in the most speedy and genuine fashion.[5]

The first question asked in our interview concerned the very purpose of enlargement: why should the Union take in the applicant countries?[6] Predictably, three reasons were mentioned most frequently: 1/ economic reasons: to create a larger trading bloc and market place helping Europe to compete on global

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markets, 2/ security reasons: to ensure greater stability and prevent possible conflicts, and 3/ geo-political reasons: to reunite the two halves of Europe and to "make Europe complete". The last argument was presented in moral, historical or cultural terms. For instance, the Union has a "historical responsibility of reuniting two halves of Europe" or "we need to complete the creation of a new united Europe". Interestingly enough, answers given by the group "C" respondents (aspirant candidates) tended to be more specific, if not dramatic. "It would provide a great motivation to bring greater stability and security to the region. It would help the region to feel part of the European family in political, geographical, cultural, economic and social terms. We are part of Europe. There is no alternative." Another respondent argued even more forcefully: "For us, enlargement represents an eastward extension of the zone of security and stability. Unfortunately, as things stand we feel we are being excluded from the enlargement process - we feel abandoned and although we are pro-European, the lack of any interest or support for our stance means that, in practice, we are steadily falling under the Russian sphere of influence."

The next question concerned the different motives for enlargement on the part of the EU and the candidates: Would you say that the EU and candidate countries have similar objectives in supporting enlargement or are they following different agendas?[7] Again, the answers of most respondents largely overlapped. Basically most believed that the two parts have similar objectives, but that their specific agendas slightly differ. The EU, according to several statements, is neither institutionally nor mentally prepared for enlargement which means that it has problems to cope with the candidate states' determination to get in as soon a possible. Different legacies of Europe's East and West have also something to do with the different priorities, even if the general objectives remain the same. Thus several respondents noted that agendas differ somewhat due to the fact that current members have had capitalism and stability, peace and prosperity for the past 40 years while most candidates have recently emerged from socialist, authoritarian systems. For member states enlargement is associated with costs and risks while for candidates enlargement is seen as an opportunity to strengthen the democratic order and increase stability. The prospect of EU membership is associated with catching up, strengthening their economies and increasing prosperity: "It is sometimes forgotten that we do have (or should have) similar objectives. Certainly this is the case in terms of the economic imperative for integration in the context of increasing globalisation. Objectives are also similar in the field of security. But this is often forgotten by the EU members who concentrate on the short term, rather than taking a longer perspective." It was also pointed out that the objectives of the Union as such do not always correspond with the objectives of individual member states following their own parochial agendas. Some specific examples given were also revealing: "Freedom of

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movement of labour is a common objective, but we have radically different approaches to this. In order to protect citizens of the Union, should the eastern border [...] be closed and made as a new iron curtain?"

The next question concerned the EU's criteria for admitting new countries: There are three main criteria or pre-conditions for accession: political, economic and institutional/administrative.[8] Which of these criteria are the most difficult for your country to meet? All respondents from groups "A" and "B" believe that their countries already meet the political criteria for accession and only a few of them are concerned about eventually meeting the economic criteria. However all of them envisage problems in meeting the institutional and administrative criteria. The problem is not so much the alignment of legislation, but the actual implementation of the *acquis communautaire*. Implementation will be costly both in financial terms and in terms of human and institutional resources. A vast amount of *acquis* has to be adopted and implemented in a relatively short period of time. Especially respondents from group "B" talked frankly about their problems in making their respective administrative systems to work in a Western way: "Under communism we have had a different administrative culture. Civil servants were not there to help people, to provide information, to solve problems. Civil servants were there to keep people at arm's length from the authorities, they did not answer questions, they were not polite, they were not helpful. So we have had a different institutional culture and this will have to change and the quality of civil servants improved."

In the course of the interviews it become clear that while respondents accepted the need for conditionality, they were worried about the subjective nature of the Copenhagen criteria, especially the economic and institutional criteria. They pointed to problems of operationalisation and interpretation of individual criteria for admission to the Union: "The problem with the economic criteria is that it is difficult to find an objective measure of capacity to withstand competitive pressure. It is not really possible to devise a methodology to measure this and to define the parameters. This is a practical issue on which there should be room for different interpretations. A similar point applies to the institutional criteria in terms of the administrative capacity to apply the *acquis*." A number of respondents argued that since the criteria represent general principles rather than well-established and uniformly applied norms, they should be applied in a more flexible manner.

Respondents from group "C" do not usually try to conceal their difficulties of meeting the political criteria for admission, let alone economic and institutional ones. However, they believe that keeping open the prospect of joining the Union

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is the best way of overcoming their current difficulties and making their countries more stable and democratic.

The next question concerned differences in interpretation of conditions for accession: Would you say that there are differences between your negotiating teams and the Commission in their application of the political, economic and institutional criteria? The answer is "no" in most cases.[9] However, a number of respondents argued that candidate states have no point of reference and no clear indication of what is required. "There is no such thing as an EU average with respect to implementation of the *acquis*." said one respondent, "The current member states vary greatly in the extent to which they apply the *acquis*, and application also varies between states according to the area covered. It appears that the candidate states are expected to adhere to the highest threshold." And another respondent added: "There is a slight tendency (on the EU side) to be more negative than we need to be...its almost a question of how perfect can you be." Thus, while respondents generally agreed that, their administrative and judicial structures needed to be upgraded and improved,[10] they also felt that they were expected to perform better than some of the current member states do.

The selective use of certain indicators was also mentioned, especially by countries belonging to group "B". One of their delegates complained about too much focus being placed on relatively low GDP per capita, notwithstanding remarkable improvement in other economic indicators.

The last question in this section concerned their vision of the future Union: As you know the Union has greatly changed since the Treaty of Rome established the European Economic Community in 1957. What kind of Union would you personally like to be in 20 years from now?

Naturally, answers to this very large and open question differ. Exactly what the final destination for the Union should be is something that many respondents among candidate states are unable or unwilling to spell out. In this their views are closer to Gunther Verheugen than Joschka Fischer.[11] Among respondents from group "A" a pragmatic, incremental approach clearly dominates. As one of them put it: "I am more concerned with immediate goals and a step-by-step approach. What seems to me to be most important is that we have an efficient set of institutions. There is bound to be increased differentiation within an enlarged Union. An inner, hard core and an outer core is inevitable, but we should have more subsidiarity and more democracy in decision-making with elected representatives wielding more influence. There also needs to be a level playing field and uniformity of application, so that an eventual hard core is not an exclusive club." Other respondents from this group argued in a similar fashion: "I

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am in agreement with the general trend towards deeper integration. I accept the principle of sharing sovereignty, harmonized foreign and defence policies as well as internal security and sharing a common currency. I take a rather pragmatic approach and believe we should continue to make progress towards common policies." "I see a Union which is enlarged, deepened and more coherent." said another respondent in this group, "This would bring governments and people even closer together. But this will be a gradual process and an evolutionary development."

That said the issue of sovereignty and national independence remains sensitive.[12] As one respondent from this group put it: "It is important that we conserve national identity. I do not see the emergence of a united states of Europe. So I envisage a similar situation to the present one: sharing of sovereignty but with more efficient mechanisms than we now see."

This pragmatic and evolutionary vision is also shared by respondents from the countries belonging to group "B". However, some of them entertain a vision of a two-tier Europe while others oppose it. "I would like to see a flexible Union in which it will be possible for some countries to draw closer, reinforce cooperation, perhaps some will even join in federal structures" said one respondent from group "B". However, another respondent from this group strongly argued against a two-tier Europe and in favour of a united states of Europe, claiming that it would be impossible to combine a vision of a federal Europe with the idea of a hard core and an outer core within the Union.

Visions of respondents from countries belonging to group "C" are more extreme. Some strongly favour creation of a political Union or even a European single state, while others believe in a more flexible, diversified, and decentralized institutional arrangement.

In conclusion, for the elites of candidate countries enlargement is about many different things and most of them see benefits in terms of economics, security and culture as complementing one another. Moreover, they share a vision of a united Europe, even though this does not mean that they all support a European super state. The respondents endorse the EU's principle of conditionality although they would like to see a more positive attitude on the part of EU negotiators in judging the candidate states' progress in meeting the criteria for admission. The Union they would like to join ought to be more effective, but there is reluctance to delegate too much sovereignty to the Union. Pragmatism and incrementality in reforming the Union's institutions is wholeheartedly endorsed.

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Inclusion and Exclusion

Although the list of countries negotiating membership of the European Union is growing, only some of them will be admitted in the first round of enlargement. In fact, one can argue that either enlargement will take place in waves or there will be no enlargement at all, because the Union cannot survive an accession of some fifteen countries in one single swoop.[13] Moreover, it would be virtually impossible for all applicants to meet the accession criteria simultaneously. This raises several sensitive questions. How many countries will be taken in the first round, and when (if ever) will there be a second and eventually also a third round? Even more importantly, to what extent would EU membership increase or decrease the gap between new members and those left out of the first round? Can countries left out of the first round be offered temporary substitutes to membership? The European Union is obviously not eager to produce a feeling of exclusion with all its destabilizing implications. At the same, it must maintain some kind of differentiation between members and non-members both in terms of access to the internal market and participation in decision-making. In fact, some policies of the Union, such as the single market and the Schengen agreement make the distinction between members and non-members sharper than ever. With the abolition of internal borders and the creation of a hard external border it now makes much more difference to countries on which side of the EU border they find themselves than used to be the case. The delicate issue is not only how much difference membership would make, but also whether the new members would act as a magnet for those on the waiting list. In the final analysis the issue is about the definitive geographic reach of the Union. We have started with this latter issue by asking our respondents: Where do you think the borders of the EU should ultimately end?[14]

All of the respondents believe that the future borders of EU ought to be flexible and that they should eventually include most of South-Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and possibly even the Caucasus. "If Turkey is being considered, then there is no reason not to admit the southern Caucasus some time in the future," said one of the respondents from group "B". However, all respondents agreed that countries admitted to the Union must assimilate European values and meet the Copenhagen criteria for admission. If they do so, even such unlikely candidates for EU membership as Serbia or Belarus were being mentioned as potential members of the EU. Only one respondent acknowledged that there are some in his country who believe that the borders of the EU should roughly coincide with that of Charlemagne's empire, following the dividing line between Western and Orthodox Christianity.[15]

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This inclusive vision of the future EU does not apply to Russia, according to most of the respondents. Nor does it apply to Maghreb countries which were referred to by only one respondent.[16] Russia is either considered a half-Asian country or simply too complex and too large to be digested by the Union without lethal implications.[17] "If Russia joined the EU the nature of the EU would change completely." said one respondent from group "A", "It would not be the same EU. Russia is too big, it already is a federal union." Another respondent from group "C" stated: "Russia is a Eurasian country greater in size than any EU state. If Russia were to join the EU this could have a significant negative effect on it's functioning." That said, a few respondents stressed the importance of good relations with Russia: "What is important is that there is no clash, no confrontation with Russia. We must have collaboration."

When asked whether the EU should differentiate between potential candidates on the basis of the Copenhagen criteria alone or whether other criteria, such as historical or cultural links should be taken into account as well, all respondents, without exception, thought the Copenhagen criteria should comprise the essential preconditions for a country to become part of Europe. Twelve of the eighteen respondents were of the opinion that the EU should differentiate between potential candidates on the basis of the Copenhagen criteria alone and that to rely on other criteria, such as historical or cultural links would be dangerous and even discriminatory. Certainly new criteria should not be imposed for countries with weaker historical and cultural links: "What is important is that a country's society adheres to values that are compatible with EU values". A minority of respondents, mainly from group "B", thought that historical and cultural links were important and should be a contributory, although not a primary, element in decisions about candidates.

If we compare these answers with answers to questions on the Copenhagen criteria in the section on the purpose of enlargement, we see that there is a clear difference between respondents' perception of the Copenhagen criteria as a guiding framework for fundamental norms and values ("The criteria are objective and sufficient") and the use of these criteria to assess candidates' performance in what is often seen as overly pedantic detail. ("They [the EU side] come up with models and non-specific comments, generalities, which we don't always understand, and it is difficult then to know what they actually want us to do. I think they sometimes use political rather than technical considerations. This makes some of their demands irrational and subjective."). In other words, all respondents accepted that potential members have to be functioning democracies, fulfil certain basic attributes of market economies, and have reasonably competent administrative and judicial structures. The problems with the criteria

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arise when they are seen to be used by the Commission as a way of hindering rather than enhancing the enlargement process.

Of course, although twelve countries have now opened accession negotiations with the EU, many more would like to be at least acknowledged as potential candidates for EU membership. We asked both candidates (groups "A" and "B") and aspirant candidates (group "C") what kind of strategy they would like to see for countries not included in the accession process. Did they think such countries should be offered increased opportunities for participation in Union programmes and activities? Most respondents from groups "A" and "B" thought the Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAA's) in particular provided good prospects for participation and cooperation and offered sufficient opportunities for countries to adopt EU values and prepare themselves for future membership. Aspirant candidates were urged to make greater use of the opportunities provided by either SAA's or Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA's), but a number of respondents noted that such agreements also engender obligations. A certain amount of preparation and effort is needed to take full advantage of the possibilities. However, there were also warnings against the danger of creating false expectations by the EU: "It should be made clear to them that they are not candidates for accession – at least not in the immediate future. A clearer perspective is needed and there should be no illusions, because disappointment may lead to instability."

The need for a clearer strategy, of knowing just how far the EU can go or is prepared to go in offering the prospect of accession, was underlined by a number of respondents from group "C". "We need to have a clear perspective of membership – that we are welcome, if and when we fulfil the criteria." Respondents from the countries that have PCA's with the EU argued for equal treatment with the Western Balkans:[18] "For us the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement does not go far enough. The objective must be membership".

Certainly full membership is the ultimate objective for respondents from all three groups. Despite the scope and difficult nature of accession negotiations, none of the respondents from groups "A" and "B" saw any alternative to accession with immediate full membership. Although many respondents spoke about transitional arrangements, they underlined that this should mean "full membership with transitional periods, not a form of institutionalised medium level integration". As one respondent put it: "Naturally we are looking to full membership because that is the only way we can exercise influence and have a voice." For respondents from group "C" membership is a more distant goal: "It is clear that our final goal is full membership, although we are aware that this may take some time".

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How would membership of the EU affect a country's relationship with neighbouring countries that are not members? In general respondents from group "A" and most of group "B" thought that such relationships would be positively rather than negatively affected. The delegates from the three Baltic states thought relations with Russia would improve once they became members of the EU. Where there were problems envisaged, respondents were confident solutions could be found to soften the impact of a hard border regime: "The frontier is mainly a technical issue. We have to ensure there are many crossing points, computers, trained border guards, and greater efficiency. [...] I do not agree with the demagogic approach about new iron curtains, dividing lines and so on. We have cross-border cooperation. There are Euroregions. Again, I think the impact will be positive". Another respondent had very similar views: "With respect to Schengen and new visa obligations, the EU has been criticised for imposing a new iron curtain. In practical terms, I don't think things are so bad. Look at the example of trade between Finland and Russia. There may also be possibilities for multiple entry visas, the costs of visas could be lowered, and once citizens of a neighbouring country have legally crossed the border, they will be able to travel throughout the EU. Such a possibility would lessen the psychological cost of having to impose visas".

Respondents from countries with particularly close links such as the Czech Republic and Slovakia, or Romania and Moldova as well as those with significant minorities in neighbouring countries mentioned the need to find solutions specific to their situation: "More flexible solutions will have to be found along the lines of the situation between Norway and Sweden".

Other respondents, mainly from group "C" were less positive about how their countries would be affected:[19] "For us, as a land-locked country, largely surrounded by neighbours who are candidate members or members, hard borders would be an economic and psychological disaster". Another respondent expressed a similar view, although he differentiated between more positive consequences in the long-term and more negative consequences in the short-term. In the short term, "the introduction of the visa regime will have extremely negative consequences on public opinion, on our economic and trade links, on the whole political climate with respect to integration of our country with Europe. Our people will feel they are being left on the other side of a paper curtain. We must use this time, before the first wave of accession, to come closer to the EU, to avoid a new division of Europe."

There are thus clear differences between respondents from countries involved in accession negotiations who expect to be among the first to become members and participate in the Schengen regime in the foreseeable future, and

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those who are afraid of finding themselves on the other side of hard borders for the medium- to long-term and with limited leverage to affect border policies. For the latter countries, Schengen is also the most potent symbol of exclusion.

Power and Interests

Enlargement is said to be a win-win process, in the sense that it benefits citizens in both parts of Europe.[20] Western Europe gives Eastern Europe the best it has: democracy and a market economy. In return it is allowed to explore new markets and does not need to worry about instability on its borders. Enlargement is also said to bring about tangible economic benefits to both Eastern and Western Europe.[21]

However, the Union and the applicant states are far from equal partners in terms of power and leverage, and the question is how much does this matter. In fact, the applicant states have no choice but to adopt an ever-growing list of conditions that they themselves can hardly set or question.[22] Moreover, enlargement is likely to benefit some countries more than others, both in the West and in the East. For instance, Austria, Germany, and Finland will enjoy the security and economic benefits produced by enlargement more than Portugal, Spain and Greece. At the same time, reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy and the structural funds system that were prompted by the prospect of enlargement will bring serious disadvantages to Portugal, Spain and Greece. Similarly, not all Eastern European countries will benefit from enlargement equally, if only because they will not all be admitted to the Union simultaneously. And if some countries are admitted earlier than others one can expect, for instance, that foreign investment will be diverted from countries initially left out to those that will be taken in.

Although enlargement is guided by noble slogans and even sincere intentions, it sometimes falls victim to narrow interests and pressures. Individual sectors from applicant states have time and again been confronted with protectionist policies of the EU in different forms and shapes. For instance, the Association Agreements signed with the applicant states were supposed to enhance the export of their products to the EU, but in reality they produced a dangerous trade imbalance between the EU and the candidate states and subsequently, public anger with EU producers who flood eastern European markets with subsidised agricultural products, in particular.[23] The conditionality principle combined with very detailed and often trivial criteria for admission are clearly prone to parochial pressures and can overshadow the noble political rationale for enlargement. All too often one has been given the impression that enlargement is more about some minor import quotas or administrative

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regulations than about peace and development on the entire old continent. Equally, the protracted and technical nature of accession negotiations invites arbitrary assessments by stronger actors and is prone to manipulation by sectoral interest groups.[24]

Finally, it should be borne in mind that enlargement will affect various social groups in different ways. For instance, within the Union farmers are likely to lose their privileged position, and those industrial sectors in which Eastern Europe now has a competitive advantage will also be on the losing side. If cheap and relatively skilled Eastern European labour is allowed to enter the EU market, some Western Europeans are likely to lose their jobs. In Eastern Europe the rapid restructuring of the economy and politics is likely to benefit young, mobile and educated people living in big cities. Those who do not share these characteristics will find it difficult to cope with the mounting changes and are likely to end up on the losing side.[25]

We asked heads of missions to the EU several questions concerning these complex issues of inequality, power and different sorts of conflicting interests. We first asked them to assess the relationship between current EU members and candidate states.

Most respondents accepted that they were substantially weaker partners in relation to member states[26] In general, the negotiating process was thought to be skewed in favour of the EU. However, as one of the respondents remarked: "It is in the nature of negotiations that there will be some inequality. We have to adapt the rules, laws, and habits. It is not for us to change the EU or its policies, although we will negotiate for the best conditions we can achieve for entry."

In general, East European candidates felt at more of a disadvantage than candidates that have not had to transform their systems from planned to market economies. Although many East European candidates admit that the reform process is far from concluded, there is also a feeling that they are not really seen as equal partners in other fields as well: "Despite the growth in trade and relations and our democratic credentials, negative stereotypes are still strong, even among the elites. A gut feeling persists that we do not share the same vision and goals as our western neighbours."

Members of group "A", who are in the process of negotiating difficult chapters, tended to be more critical and frustrated with the negotiations than members of group "B". When asked to evaluate the relationship between current EU members and candidate members in the context of having to apply EU policies while not being in a position to shape them, some respondents said the

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Commission could take more account of their specific problems or issues when reaching common positions on negotiations. More information and consultation would be welcome but they also admitted that they could do more to promote themselves, explain their problems and create a better understanding of their position. The somewhat ambiguous relationship with the EU was described by one of the respondents as follows: "Broadly speaking, everything that the EU requests of us, is in our own interest. We have no psychological problem with this. But in specific matters, they sometimes request more than is necessary or feasible. We are expected to adhere to the highest criteria. In some cases, the full implementation of parts of the acquis by candidates contains elements of discrimination because such implementation by us strengthens certain economic interests of member states."

However, two respondents from group "B" pointed out that in economic terms, they had benefited quite substantially from EU programmes and concessions: "Actually in some aspects we are the beneficiary. I am thinking of the asymmetry in exports. We get some facilities which members do not have".[27] At the same time, they were worried that their candidacies were being treated with less priority than those of the Visegrad countries or the Baltic states.[28] Nevertheless, as another respondent pointed out, there is a vested interest for both sides to succeed in negotiations: "We are not in a position of complete subordination. We are negotiating and failure would affect the EU negatively as well as us. Once negotiations have started, there are expectations that they will be concluded."

What then did the delegates see as the three most important barriers to integration; factors that might disrupt or slow down the enlargement process? Most answers to this question fall into three broad categories: 1/ the problem of maintaining the dynamics of negotiations and reforms; 2/ the lack of public support for enlargement; and 3/ the lack of vision and political will. The first, and largest,[29] group of answers refers mainly to the ability of candidate countries to maintain, and in some cases even increase, the momentum of reform, especially if negotiations appeared to be dragging on indefinitely: "The whole process, reforming the economy, adjusting to the new situation, adopting and implementing parts of the acquis, has been a painful one. If this uncertainty, about timing, about conditions, persists, then the public will turn against the process". The first group of answers thus leads to the second – the lack of support for enlargement. This category of answers was most frequent among respondents from group "A" who were worried about the lack of public support for expansion, not only in the current member states, but increasingly in some of the candidate states as well. Half the respondents, mostly in groups "B" and "C" decried the lack of political vision: "The tendency to look at everything from a

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short-term perspective means that political elites act like politicians, playing to public opinion and worrying about electoral success, rather than acting like statesmen. There is no statesmanship." Another respondent linked the lack of a clear and agreed vision of Europe's future to the slow internal reform of EU institutions.[30]

Many of these answers are interrelated. A loss of momentum in negotiations and reforms may lead to decreased public support. A lack of vision may result in the enlargement process getting bogged down. We asked respondents whether they thought the EU should concentrate less on conditionality and more on the political imperative of consolidating the European continent.[31] All respondents accepted the need to fulfil the political, economic and institutional/administrative conditions so as not to jeopardise what the EU has achieved in the past 40 years. They recognised that a political commitment alone was not enough and that countries need to be prepared for membership. At the same time, there was a feeling that the whole process was getting caught up in technicalities and a fear that conditionality might be used as a pretext for delay. More enthusiasm and creativity was needed to come up with political solutions: "The conditionality must be there but there could be some more flexibility. We must have conditionality backed by solutions. Assessment should be based on conditionality but accession conditions are based on political will. The EU pushes ahead, mainly on conditionality but avoids political decisions."

Many respondents thought conditionality, in terms of the economic and institutional/administrative criteria, was being taken very far. "We are expected to apply aspects of the acquis which are still in gestation and certainly not fully applied by every member state", was the reaction of one respondent. Another stated: "The process has become too technical, too specific and the political imperative has been driven too much into the background." Others, less advanced in negotiations, were less negative: "[Conditionality] is in our interest at this stage."

Aspirant candidates (group "C") had a different perspective. For them, adherence to the political criteria took precedence: "A country must meet the basic democratic criteria. In terms of macro-economic indicators, there should perhaps be some more flexibility". However, another respondent warned, "...in the field of political criteria we should remember that cultural backgrounds and political cultures differ. The criteria should encourage others to aspire to common norms and values, but it should be remembered that we can't all be Scandinavians. We should avoid 'democratic fundamentalism'. There is not only one way of doing things and one way of looking at things."

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Despite the view that the accession process was overly technical, none of the respondents from groups "A" and "B" thought the Union could or should have offered some sort of political union in the short term, with substantive negotiations taking place after having joined rather than before. All felt that the accession process prepared them to face the obligations of membership and what they wanted was to be full and active members. Moreover, as a respondent pointed out: "What we are doing in economic reforms would have to be done whether or not we wanted to join the EU. The reform and adaptation are not exclusively due to the demands made by the EU, but because they form the basis for a market economy". Respondents from group "C" would have liked some form of political gesture, perhaps more of a commitment or the perspective of membership in the future. However, as one head of mission admitted: "For us [political union without substantive negotiations first] might have been an interesting proposition, but the EU would not be so enthusiastic. For the founding fathers it was not what divides, but what unites that was important. But then there was no acquis, no single market. In today's circumstances, and especially in the case of enlargement with countries that were not capitalist before, deep screening is a necessary element of the process. There is no point in diluting it."

There is little attempt by candidate countries to work out common approaches to strengthen their bargaining position vis-à-vis the Commission. Each country has individual interests, problems and priorities. As one respondent put it: "...a common approach would slow down the negotiating process. It would not make us stronger". However, members of group "A" do have consultation mechanisms. There is a regular exchange of views and notes. Chief negotiators and foreign ministers meet formally every six months and there is a lot of informal interaction or "flexible cooperation" as another respondent put it. Members of group "B" hope such formal consultation mechanisms will soon include them as well, although informal interaction already exists. Finally, members of group "C" are eager to learn from the candidates' experiences and most are helped by individual candidate countries, usually neighbours or countries with which they have had historical links.

It is clear from answers to earlier questions that candidate countries accept that they need to prepare themselves thoroughly for membership. However, many of their answers also imply that they think the EU could do more to prepare itself for enlargement. Their responses to the question: What, in your opinion, are the major weaknesses in EU enlargement policy? – are more explicit. The main thrust of answers in all three groups was that the EU had not yet made up its mind on basic issues relating to enlargement. Decisions in the IGC are still pending, and it is unclear what compromises will be reached. A number of respondents pointed

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out that there should be more willingness on the part of member states to cover the costs of enlargement.[32]

Moreover, many felt there was no clear strategy of who to let in, when to let them in, and under what conditions; in short there was a lack of any clear vision.

Several respondents thought that part of the problem was due to the technical nature of the accession process: "We are confronted with "technicians" (civil servants) – good as they are they lack political clout. There is a lack of involvement on the part of political actors. The speed is dictated by technical rather than political pressure."

Another respondent put it as follows: "...the process is so technical partly as a function of whom we are negotiating with. Negotiating with the Commission, we get dogma. When we deal with members, positions are more diffuse. It is sometimes difficult to know what to think. I would agree with the Luxemburg six, who argue that there must soon be a qualitative leap in negotiations."[33]

At a much more personal level, respondents from all three groups referred to the human dimension in their dealings with the Commission and the need for a better understanding of each other. Negative stereotypes tend to linger. One respondent referred to: "The lack of mental preparedness to accept us as equal nations". Another complained "... there is sometimes a degree of arrogance and cultural and social prejudice. There is not enough understanding and a little more humility would be in order."

Nevertheless, as was pointed out at the very beginning of this section, and despite the often painful and difficult road to get there, enlargement is expected to be a win-win process, in the sense that it will benefit citizens in both parts of Europe. Such a view is held by a large majority of respondents. Asked which countries will benefit most from enlargement, two-thirds said that in the longer term both current members and new members would benefit. In the shorter term, the first of the candidates to become members and those closest to the new markets, Germany and Austria, were thought most likely to benefit economically. Most respondents also thought the enlargement process was being driven forward mainly by the economic interests of both sides and the forces of globalisation.[34] The desire for greater security and stability came a close second. Asked who were the most important and influential actors behind enlargement, most respondents underlined the elite nature of the process, mentioning political elites and governments on both sides. More specifically, large member states, especially Germany and France were thought to be the most influential, as well as the Commission through its role in negotiations.

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Unity and Diversity after Enlargement

One of the greatest fears related to the next wave of enlargement is that it will produce a paralysing scope of diversity within the Union. While free trade zones can operate in a vastly diversified setting, the same does not equally apply to more ambitious projects of political, economic and military integration.[35] The level of homogeneity/diversity after enlargement will partly depend on the Union's institutional set-up and partly on the new members' ability to catch up with the current members in terms of economy, democracy, law and administration. Of course, the two are closely linked. For instance, common laws and administrative regulations can hardly cope with a highly diversified environment, and so various complicated opt-outs and multi-speed arrangements are required.

So far, the European Union is following a two-track policy. On the one hand, it pursues a policy of conditional assistance vis-à-vis the applicant countries that is aimed at making them more compatible with the current members. Only when the applicants resemble the current members will they be allowed to join, while others will be kept at bay through customs quotas, tariffs and Schengen. On the other hand, the Union is also trying to reform its current institutions to make them more flexible and adjustable to the greater diversity prompted by enlargement.[36]

The problem is not only that both sides are making insufficient progress in preparing themselves for enlargement (*i.e.*, the applicant states are slow in adopting the *acquis* while the member states are slow in reforming the EU). The problem is also that the two-track policy of the Union is pregnant with contradictions. For instance, reforming the CAP and the structural funds system will make it harder for new members to catch up with the old ones. Increased flexibility may further undermine the Union's democratic legitimacy and cultural identity and it is hard to imagine a more coherent Union without some kind of common cultural identity and a legitimate democratic government. But how can democracy work in a complicated if not impenetrable system of multi-layered and multi-sped arrangements run by an ever-changing group of unidentified and unaccountable people? Similarly, affection and identity can hardly develop in a complex system of open-ended arrangements, with fluid membership, variable purposes, and a net of concentric functional frames of cooperation.

Of course, increased diversity should not be demonised and used as an argument against enlargement. In the Western part of the continent divergence is a normal state of affairs. Some would even argue that divergence called by another name "pluralism", is Europe's greatest historical treasure. Divergence is

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also a prerequisite of modernity in the sense that only highly diversified and pluralistic institutions are able to sustain global competition. And as mentioned earlier, divergence is subject to political and economic engineering, with enlargement policy able to play a key role in doing away with various sorts of discrepancies. We started with this latter issue by asking our respondents how will enlargement influence patterns of trade and direct investment in their country?

For both groups of candidate countries, respondents did not expect enlargement to make much difference to patterns of trade. Trade constitutes a very large proportion of GDP in CEEC's and most are more dependent on trade than EU economies. In these countries, most trade has already been redirected to the EU.[37] Indeed one or two respondents even mentioned the need to develop new markets outside the EU. Foreign direct investment has also increased in the past few years but many respondents thought that enlargement, by providing the guarantee of a more stable investment environment, harmonisation, and the existence of compatible norms would lead to an even more favourable investment climate.[38] Respondents from SAA countries in group "C" had very similar expectations, but respondents from the PCA countries thought that their trade with candidate states would suffer: "There will be more barriers as new members reorient to the internal market. For a certain number of goods currently supplied to the CEEC's, there will be new sanitary, certificate, ecological, technical and other barriers. [...] Complications with the visa regime will negatively influence trade and the economic activities of our businesses in CEEC's. The attractiveness of the CEEC's for investment, especially for EU companies, which is already higher compared to our country, will only strengthen, and this will work against us." This assessment reflects the expectations of the candidate states – but seen from the other side of the fence.

How realistic is it, however, to expect new members to quickly adopt and implement the rules and regulations of the internal market which most agree will guarantee a more stable investment climate? Candidates must adopt about 85,000 pages of legislation that has been divided into 31 chapters. Very often this requires completely changing the way things were done before. It also encroaches upon almost every aspect of the economy, administration, public health, internal security and environment. Respondents from candidate countries thought adoption was a realistic proposition but many underlined that the process was complex, costly and bound to take time: "What time basis are you talking about when you say 'quickly'? Ten years is quickly. We have to adopt the acquis for the whole internal market." Others pointed to the need for transitional periods, especially in areas where significant investments and technical adjustments were needed to conform to the requirements of the acquis communautaire. In this

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context, nine of the twelve negotiating candidates mentioned environmental protection as one of the most difficult fields for them to deal with. Several respondents also returned to the problem of the lack of human and administrative resources for proper implementation of regulations. Respondents from group "C" recognised that adoption of the acquis was not realistic in the short-term and would be a difficult, long-term exercise.

In this situation, bearing in mind the costs of taking up the obligations of membership, the heads of mission were asked which of the current institutional arrangements aimed at strengthening economic and social convergence within and between member states (structural funds/CAP) they would most like to keep. Not surprisingly, structural funds were mentioned by almost everybody. Asked whether they thought any of the current arrangements would be reformed or removed before enlargement took place, opinions varied. Most respondents agreed that structural funds were an essential tool in enabling poorer new members to catch up with richer current members and should be left unchanged.[39] However, in other areas, namely the CAP, the general view was that it should be changed to accommodate new needs and requirements arising from enlargement. Some respondents were eager for the next stage of reform to go ahead so that farmers would not find themselves in the position of having to apply expensive and time-consuming regulations only to see the whole policy being reformed a year later. However, others were less keen on seeing major reforms before enlargement: "We shouldn't prejudge the situation once new members join. There is a tendency to think that everything must be prepared beforehand and everything will be resolved. This is simply not true. I think the EU will continue to evolve. We will have more IGC's. Certainly the CAP will always be in evolution".

At a more abstract level, and moving from the social and economic sphere to questions of democracy and legitimacy, we asked whether respondents were worried about enlargement leading to a greater democratic deficit in the sense that decision-making would be even less transparent and further removed from citizens. At this stage, certainly, there is little evidence of the misgivings seen in current member states about what is often perceived as centralised diktat from Brussels, an unaccountable European bureaucracy, and a lack of transparency. Indeed, most respondents, particularly from groups "B" and "C" thought membership of the Union would compliment and reinforce good governance in their country. Several mentioned that inclusion in a Union of countries with established democratic traditions would help them overcome the legacy of decades of dictatorship and weak or even non-existent democratic heritages. Among respondents from group "A" there was no particular worry about a democratic deficit following enlargement provided that decision-making would

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not become excessively centralised: "We have to uphold the principle of subsidiarity". Moreover, enlargement would give them a say in Union affairs. As one respondent pointed out: "The deficit is present now, when our citizens have no influence on EU policies but must comply with them".

Another respondent referred to the changing nature of state-like organisations: "...in the context of globalisation, national sovereignty is a relative sovereignty. De facto, many decisions are out of our control anyway. For us, given that we no longer have this control, it is better to be part of a larger group so that we at least have some influence around the table."

Are future members of the EU then in favour of a greater sharing of sovereignty? We asked whether they are in favour of extending qualified majority voting? All respondents, many without qualification, agreed that an extension of qualified majority voting was indispensable for an efficient working of the EU. However, respondents from group "A", with more experience of defending national interests in accession negotiations, all added proviso's. There were some (unspecified) areas which they thought should remain in the domain of national sovereignty.

The final question in this section touches upon the current debate on how to accommodate diversity in an enlarged Union.[40] Was the development of a "flexible" Europe in which some members take part in monetary union, defence and free movement of people while others "opt out" or are excluded considered to be a danger or an opportunity for new members? As new members, would they be worried about a "flexible" Europe with first- and second-class members or would they welcome the possibility to "pick and choose"? All three groups have agreed that some degree of flexibility was necessary. It was pointed out that the Treaty of Amsterdam already provided for flexibility in the form of closer cooperation[41] and that this was the only way of moving forward. However, as one respondent noted: "We would be worried if the process of a "flexible" Europe goes too far. Not for national reasons but for European reasons. If flexibility were constitutionally extended, this would encourage division. I think the right balance already exists". This reflects the dilemma enlargement is seen to pose. On the one hand, respondents identified the need for a "motor of integration" or a "locomotive" core group[42] to push forward the integration project, otherwise the EU would be left as little more than an economic space. On the other hand, a number of respondents expressed the fear that "flexibility" might lead to "differentiation": "...caution needs to be exercised to prevent the creation of first and second-class members". The greatest worry was that a "flexible" Europe, and more particularly proposals for enhanced cooperation might lead to de facto exclusion: "The process needs to remain an open process. If the inner core moves

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too fast, there must be clauses to enable the outside to catch it up." There were also worries that the whole process would become so complex and opaque that it would be difficult to control: "There should be objective criteria [for enhanced cooperation projects] and there should be a strong role for the Commission in establishing and applying the criteria because this would help defend the interests of small states. Thus there should be minimum strict conditions and a guarantee of entry if a country fulfils the criteria."

Elite versus Public

Enlargement may well be a project driven by elites, but at the end of the process the elites need to get their respective publics behind them. The problem is probably more acute within current member states rather than among applicant ones, but this does not mean that the public in the applicant states can be taken for granted. In some countries, such as Estonia, Latvia or even the Czech Republic public opinion polls reveal a rather low degree of public support for joining the Union.[43] And even in countries such as Poland where public support for EU membership was always relatively high we have seen a rising level of Euro-scepticism as the prospect of accession becomes more realistic.[44]

Opposition to EU membership is linked to other issues discussed earlier. With the accession date coming closer winners and losers resulting from enlargement became more identifiable and the latter usually became more vocal, if not more organized than the former. Accession negotiations also reveal discrepancies of power between negotiating partners which if misused cause anger and frustration. And as joining the Union turns from myth into reality there is an increased degree of nostalgia among especially the older population for a given national, characteristic way of organizing public and private affairs. The accession process has created a new situation in which general ideas about the European Union are starting to take a new shape under the influence of new information. Most people have come to realize that they are not only about to "rejoin" Europe, but also to join a complex and at times controversial institution: the European Union.

Our first question tried to grasp the pattern of change in public opinion within the applicant countries: Do you expect public support for EU membership in your country to diminish or to increase as the prospect of accession draws nearer?[45] It was difficult for respondents to give a straightforward answer to this question. Respondents from group "A" with more experience of difficult chapters to negotiate thought that levels of public support would depend on progress in negotiations, not only on tangible results but also on the speed and date of enlargement. "If the general public perceive a certain degree of reluctance on the

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part of the 15 to let us join, this may [negatively] affect levels of support."[46] In these countries, which have been candidate members since March 1998, public opinion is better-informed, more aware of what is going on, and also more frustrated than tends to be the case in countries of group "B". There is greater awareness of the costs and obligations as well as the benefits which enlargement will bring. The desire to become part of a prosperous club of nations is tempered by a fear of loss of sovereignty and identity. In some cases there is even fear of excessive EU bureaucracy. Public support thus tends to be higher in countries which have not yet been confronted with tough negotiations and which do not have a realistic prospect of early entry: "The absorption of the acquis is not really a priority in public perceptions. We want to be part of Europe. There is over 70% support for membership and very few people are against." As another respondent from group "B" noted: "I have seen in other countries that the closer the prospect of accession comes, the more reluctant people are. There are more obligations."

Although public support has diminished in the countries of group "A", and even in some of group "B", political elites remain as committed as ever to membership. Asked which groups or parties in their country are most in favour of enlargement, almost all respondents answered that, with the exception of extreme right wing or left wing parties, there is broad all-party consensus in favour of enlargement. However, in Poland some members even of officially pro-Europe parties are uneasy about the impact of membership on sovereignty and on traditional values. In Malta political elites are divided straight down the middle along party lines between proponents and opponents of membership. In all the countries, enlargement is supported most by the young, well-educated and urban population. A number of respondents mentioned the business community, although "some producers and manufacturers are worried about whether they will be able to stand up to the competitive pressures".

This brings us to the question: which groups or parties in your country feel most threatened by enlargement? Farmers and pensioners were the most frequently mentioned. A number of respondents also referred to companies that have failed to restructure and reorient towards competition in wider markets.[47]

Enlargement Commissioner Verheugen has pointed to the problem of winning public support in member states for enlargement with worries mainly in the fields of agriculture, free movement of workers and border security. Given the lack of public support in member states and in some candidate states, the EU is about to launch an intensive information campaign. The Communications Strategy for Enlargement is aimed assuaging fears by explaining the reasons for enlargement and by promoting a debate to bring about better understanding and support for the process. In candidate countries the campaign will aim to improve

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knowledge and understanding of the EU, to explain the implications of membership and to link the progress of negotiations with preparations for membership. But how do politicians in the candidate countries themselves try to "sell" Europe? What sort of issues do they most frequently refer to when explaining the advantages of EU membership? And what sort of issues do they refer to when talking about the disadvantages of membership?

The advantages centre around two issues – economics and security. Economic issues were mentioned by ten of the thirteen respondents, security issues by seven.[48] Two respondents from group "B" replied that support for membership was so high that politicians in their countries did not have to make much effort to explain the advantages. However, both also said that they expected that politicians would be confronted with having to "sell" membership at a later stage. If there were any differences between answers from the two groups, they were reflected in the more sophisticated nature of the political debate in countries which have been involved in negotiations for longer: "In the past few months the emphasis has been on increased participation in decision-making and greater influence through a sharing of sovereignty", or "... as negotiations develop, more and more interest groups are beginning to stress the positive impact of membership".

Disadvantages fall into three categories – loss of sovereignty, loss of national identity and culture, and too much interference from Brussels. Rigid bureaucracy, unnecessary rules or simply "meddling" by Brussels was the most frequently mentioned category (8 out of 13 respondents). Fears about loss of sovereignty are expressed mainly by right-wing politicians but there is also a more general worry about loss of national identity and culture. Indeed, throughout the interviews cultural diversity and differences in political culture was a recurring theme. Although most respondents mentioned the need for common norms and values, many also underlined the need to maintain diversity as a source of enrichment of these shared values.[49] Much of this is translated into the desire to maintain national identities even while being prepared to share sovereignty.

Conclusions

Diversity notwithstanding, the two parts of Europe are growing increasingly alike. In just one decade, Central and Eastern Europe has seen the establishment of democracy and human rights and the emergence of a private sector that is capable of competing on the world stage. Intense political and cultural exchanges have developed and economies are becoming increasingly interdependent. It can be argued that the EU and the CEE countries are already more of a single community than many appreciate. At the same time, the whole process of

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enlargement is much slower than many initially expected. It has lost its dynamism and has become dominated by technicalities rather than political vision. Such an assessment is particularly strong among respondents from group "A". Many candidate members are worried that the whole process getting bogged down and they are beginning to count the cost of postponement. There is increasing frustration and concern that the reform process in their own countries may as a result lose momentum. Negative publicity on difficult negotiations and the apparent lack of enthusiasm in the members states for enlargement has led to diminishing public support in many candidate states as well. There is a feeling that there should be more political flexibility and rather fewer strict rules. Most of the interviewed ambassadors argue that some sort of confidence-boosting measure, such as setting a target date for accession would speed up the process, make it more transparent and leave politicians less dependent on voters' fears of eastward expansion. A target date, they believe, would help them push through reforms and would weaken internal opposition. The pain of reforms would be sweetened by a clear prospect of accession. The EU, on the other hand, argues that fixing a date may have the opposite effect. Candidate countries may grow complacent and expect to join by that date whether they are ready or not. However, our respondents feel that the real reason is that the EU itself is neither institutionally nor mentally prepared for enlargement. Whatever the reason, without a clear strategy of who to let in, when to let them in, and under what conditions it is difficult to get the qualitative push on negotiations that many respondents feel is needed.

While the candidate members are worried about when, others are worried about being left out the process altogether. This is not only because they feel they have a European "destiny" or commitment but because with the abolition of internal borders and the creation of a hard external border it now makes much more difference to countries on which side of the EU border they find themselves than used to be the case. If enlargement is seen as a way of stabilising new democracies, with the common market, the structural funds and the CAP being used to reduce the potential for social tension and the danger of illegal economic migration from the candidate states, then what sort of consequences does this engender for those left out (indefinitely) from membership? It is to be hoped that those who join first will be in a position to influence reforms and conditions for following members as well as participate in decision-making. Indeed, as one of our respondents argued, "...our membership in the EU should promote commercial relations, increase cooperation and act as a magnet to bring others in." The problem, however, is the requirement for hard border regimes. Again our respondents argue for greater flexibility in borders and a regime that would promote cooperation and exchange not hinder it. Indeed it has been argued that borders can be "less territorial, less physical, more complex and less visible" to

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use Pierre Hassner's words.[50] They can be more about civil rights and duties, tourism and trade, cooperation and foreign assistance and less about border guards, surveillance techniques and visa restrictions.

Ania Krok-Paszkowska
& Jan Zielonka

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Endnotes

[1] In all but one case we were able to interview the candidate country's ambassador to the European Union. In the one case the interview was given by the First Secretary. For official documents and statements of the applicant states:
http://www.europarl.eu.int/enlargement/applicants/en/default.htm

[2] At the Luxembourg European Council in December 1997 the decision was taken to start the enlargement process, including accession negotiations and a reinforced pre-accession strategy. The process embraced thirteen countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Turkey. In March 1998 the First European Conference formally launched the accession process. Accession negotiations were opened with five of the ten candidate countries from central Europe (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia) and Cyprus. Malta, which had "frozen" its application for membership in 1996, reactivated it in October 1998. In December 1999, the Helsinki European Council, following a recommendation from the European Commission, decided to open accession negotiations with all the remaining candidate countries that respect democracy, the rule of law, human rights and minorities. In March 2000 negotiations started with Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and Romania. Although Turkey was accepted as a candidate for membership at the Helsinki Council in 1999, it is not yet deemed to meet the Copenhagen political criteria and negotiations have not been opened.
The aspirant candidates make up a number of groups. First, the countries of the Western Balkans are divided into two groups: Macedonia and Albania, which were not involved in the 1991-1995 war and the three countries that are party to the Dayton peace agreements. All five are potential candidates for EU membership. All will have to comply with the Copenhagen criteria, but they will also have to fulfil a number of additional preconditions for their integration in the EU. These preconditions are: mutual recognition of each other's borders, the settlement of all issues relating to the treatment of national minorities, and the pursuit of regional economic integration. In the meantime they are being offered Stabilisation and Association Agreements. These have been created to draw the region closer to the perspective of full integration. The start of negotiations depends upon compliance by the individual country with relevant political and economic conditions. At the time of interviews, Macedonia had already started the first round of negotiations, Croatia was expecting to enter into negotiations within a few months, and Albania is still some way from fulfilling the conditions. Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia were not included in our sample. Finally, Moldova and Ukraine have Partnership and Cooperation Agreements with the EU which offer no perspective for membership although in Helsinki the EU recognised their European destiny. Group C – aspirant candidates and Turkey from group B were asked exactly the same questions as negotiating candidates, with the exception of five questions relating to the negotiating process and reactions to enlargement negotiations within their countries. Most important documents relating to enlargement are available via the internet: Agenda 2000: http://europa.eu.int/comm/agenda2000/index_en.htm The European Commission's analyses and reports: http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement The European Parliament's analyses and reports: http://www.europarl.eu.int/enlargement

[3] This assumption has recently been challenged by the EU Commissioner responsible for enlargement. See an interview with Günter Verheugen in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 2-3 September 2000, p. 14. For a more in-depth analysis of democracy within the European Union, see Fritz W. Scharpf, *Regieren in Europa. Effectiv und demokratisch?* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag,

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1999), pp. 16-46 or Joseph H.H. Weiler, *The Constitution of Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 264-285.

[4] For a recent analysis of the latter issue see *e.g.*, Romano Prodi, *Un'idea dell'Europa*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999), pp. 23-39 or Philippe de Schoutheete, *The Case for Europe*, (Boulder, Co.: Lunne Rienner, 2000), pp. 97-106.

[5] This is so notwithstanding the attempts by the Commission to address this problem. Under the pre-accession strategy, candidate countries have Accession Partnerships which set out the short-term and medium-term priorities tailored to each individual candidate. The Accession Partnerships are regularly updated in order to adjust the priorities and to cover all pre-accession assistance (Phare, ISPA and SAPARD). In return, candidates prepare a National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis to show how they intend to prepare for their integration into the EU. The problems arise when the Commission asks for more and more details which are not available or even possible to calculate or when it ignores the candidate states' queries about interpretation of individual admission criteria. See *e.g.*, Janet McEvoy, "Frustration marks EU expansion talks", Reuters News Agency 14 March 2000, drawing upon an interview with a senior Hungarian diplomat in Agence Europe Bulletin, February 2000.

[6] For a more elaborate analysis of this question see Jan Zielonka, "Ambiguity as a Remedy for the EU's Eastward Enlargement?" *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. XII, No. 1, (Summer/Fall 1998), pp. 14-27.

[7] For an official explanation see *e.g.*, Václav Havel, "Overcoming the Division of Europe", Speech to the European Parliament, June 15, 2000. Internet source: http://www.TheEPC.be/Challenge_Europe/text/122.asp?ID=12.

[8] For an in-depth analysis of the admission criteria see *e.g.*, Alan Mayhew, *Recreating Europe. The European Union's Policy towards central and Eastern Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 161-164.

[9] Here we are of course only talking about groups "A" and "B".

[10] In accordance with decisions made during the Madrid European Council (December 1995), candidate countries are required to create the conditions for their integration through adjustment of their administrative structures to enable European Community legislation to be transposed into national legislation and for that legislation to be implemented effectively. See *European Union enlargement. A historic opportunity*. European Commission: Directorate General External Relations. (Published by the Information Unit (DG1A) – no date). Also http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement.

[11] Unlike foreign minister Fischer, enlargement commissioner Verheugen is firmly opposed to a fixed blueprint for Europe, fearing that such a plan, in the current climate of opinion, could blow the whole edifice sky-high. That is why he argues for sticking to the so-called Monnet method; a step-by-step approach, never pushing things further than they will go and leaving the ultimate goal open. See interview in *Süddeutscher Zeitung*, 2-3 September 2000, p. 14. For Joschka Fisher's speech see "From Confederacy to Federation-Thoughts on the finality of European integration", Speech by Joschka Fischer at the Humboldt University in Berlin, 12 May 2000, available via internet: http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/aktuel/index.htm

[12] For a more in-depth analysis of this problem see *e.g.*, Paul Taylor, *The European Union in the 1990's*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 147-157.

[13] See *e.g.*, Horst Günter Krenzler, "The EU and Central-East Europe: The Implications of Enlargement in Stages", *Policy Paper 97/2*, Robert Schuman Centre, European University Institute, Florence 1997, especially pp. 31-32 or Heather Grabbe and Kirsty Hughes, *Eastward Enlargement of the European Union*, (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1997), pp. 10-13.

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[14] For an in-depth analysis of the issue of the EU's eastern border see *e.g.*, Giuliano Amato and Judy Batt, *Long-Term Implications of EU Enlargement: The Nature of the New Border,* (Florence: Robert Schuman Centre, 1999), pp. 64-67 or Michael Emerson, *Redrawing the Map of Europe,* (London: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 225-229.

[15] This roughly corresponds to the dividing line between civilizations suggested by Samuel P. Huntington in "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer 1993), pp. 22-49.

[16] Morocco once applied for EC membership but was rebuffed on the grounds that it is not a European country. However, King Hassan of Morocco disagreed with the argument and accused Western Europeans of colonial atavism. See an interview with King Hassan in the *Financial Times*, 28 October 1994. It should be mentioned that on the eve of the Eastern European transition (1992) Morocco with $ 950 per capita looked better than, for instance, Romania with its $ 610 per capita.

[17] According to some Russian commentators, Russia is not some mixture of Europe and Asia, nor does it play a role of bridge between Europe and Asia. Russia is a European power *sui generis*. The fact that at the beginning of the 1990's Russia did not succeed in adopting capitalism Western style does not undermine its European credentials, but shows the inability of both local and external economic elites to adopt capitalism to the Russian peculiar environment. See *e.g.*, Alexei Arbatov, *Bezopasnost: Rossiiskii vibor*, (Moscow: Epizentr, 1999), pp. 29-30.

[18] On 25 May 1999 the European Commission proposed the creation of a Stabilisation and Association process for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and Macedonia which would draw them closer to the perspective of full integration into EU structures. The Feira European Council of 19 and 20 June 2000 confirmed that all countries of the Western Balkans are potential candidates for EU membership, including a democratic Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. See Santa Maria da Feira European Council: Presidency Conclusions, Press Release: Sta Maria da Feira (19-06-2000) – Nr: 200/1/00.

[19] The question for countries making up group "C" was turned around: If neighbouring countries become EU members before your country does, in what ways do you think that will affect your country's relationship with these neighbours?

[20] See *e.g.*, Alan Mayhew, *Recreating Europe. The European Union's Policy towards Central and Eastern Europe,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 385.

[21] See *e.g.*, Helena Tang (ed.), *Winners and Losers of EU Integration. Policy Issues for Central and Eastern Europe*, (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2000), pp. 1-13 or R. Baldwin, J. Francois and R. Portes, "The costs and benefits of Eastern enlargement: the impact on the EU and Central Europe", *Economic Policy*, 24/1997, pp. 148-9.

[22] For an in-depth analysis of the conditionality principle see *e.g.*, Karen Smith, *The Making of EU Foreign Policy. The Case of Eastern Europe*, (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 139-143 or Heather Grabbe, "A Partnership for Accession? The Implications of EU Conditionality for the Central and Eastern European Applicants", *EUI Working Papers*, RSC No. 99/12.

[23] See *e.g.*, comments by former Czech Prime Minister, Vaclav Klaus quoted in the *Financial Times*, 18 June 1997.

[24] Alasdair Smith, Oeter Holmes, Ulrich Sedelmeier, Edward Smith, Helen Wallace, and Alasdair Young, "The European Union and Central Europe. Pre-Accession Strategies", *Sussex European Institute Working Paper*, 15/1996, p. 16 and *ff.*

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[25] See *e.g.*, András Inotain, "Enlargement of the European Union: A Hungarian Perspective," in *The Second Decade. Prospects for European Integration after Ten Years of Transition*, Guido Biessen (ed.), (The Hague: Sdu Publishers, 2000), p. 207.

[26] On a scale of 1 to 7, if 1 is total inequality and 7 is total equality, most respondents assessed their relationship as somewhere between 2 and 3, although one or two put it as high as 5 and in some policy areas even a 6.5. For initial fears of the candidate states see Vaclav Havel, "Don't Make Us Europe's Second-Class Citizens," *The European*, 14 June 1991.

[27] The psychological importance of EU support was also underlined: "Already now over 5% of our budget comes from EU assistance – in the form of the various programmes, Sapard, Ispa, Phare. The fact that this is a partnership, half the funds must be provided by us, half by the EU is a source of motivation for us. It makes us work. It is psychologically very important, both the learning process and the material support. It is proof of the EU's commitment and it is a great change for the better."

[28] See also *e.g.*, Renate Langewiesche, "The Enlargement of the European Union – Reflections on the Position of Romania and Bulgaria", *South-East Europe Review* vol.2 No.3, 1999, pp. 95-106.

[29] Twelve of the eighteen respondents mentioned possible slowing down of reforms or the length of time needed to reform the economy as a factor that might disrupt or slow down the enlargement process.

[30] Indeed the risk posed by failure of member states to agree on internal reform in the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) was mentioned more frequently in answer to a related question: Are there any issues, outside the framework of the Copenhagen criteria, which may pose a risk to the successful conclusion of enlargement negotiations?

[31] For an analysis of this dilemma see *e.g.*, Jacques Rupnik, "An Anatomy of Reticence", *World Link*, July/August 2000, pp. 44-46 or Jan Zielonka, "Policies without Strategy: the EU's Record in Eastern Europe", in *Paradoxes of European Foreign Policy*, Jan Zielonka (ed.), (The Hague & London: Kluwer Law International, 1998), pp. 131-145.

[32] If all 12 current negotiating applicants became members, the population of EU would rise by about 30%, territory by 33% but income by only eight or nine percent. (Romano Prodi on Europe, *European Affairs*, Winter 2000, vol.1 No.1, pp. 7-12.) However, the financial perspectives for 2000-2006 were put together on basis of six new members in 2002. Six milliard Euro were put aside for 2002 to increase to 17 milliard in 2006.

[33] For an in-depth analysis of the role of the Commission in successive enlargements of the EU see Desmond Dinan, "The Commission and Enlargement," in John Redmond and Glenda G. Rosenthal (eds.), *The Expanding European Union*, (Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner, 1998), pp. 17-40 or Graham Avery and Fraser Cameron, *The Enlargement of the European Union*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 22-53.

[34] Accordingly, most respondents expected that entrepreneurs who don't adapt to the new conditions and those who are not sufficiently competitive as well as small farmers would be the most likely losers of enlargement.

[35] For an in-depth analysis of the Union's efforts to cope with diversity see *e.g.*, Adrienne Héritier, *Policy-Making and Diversity in Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 87-98.

[36] For a discussion of this problem see *e.g.*, Renaud Dehousse, "Institutional Models for an Enlarged Union: Some Reflections on a Non-Debate", in *An Ever Larger Union? The Eastern Enlargement in Perspective*, Renaud Dehousse (ed.), (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1998), pp. 143-155 or Helen Wallace, "Coming to Terms with a larger Europe: Options for Economic Integration," *Sussex European Institute Working Paper*, 23/1998, pp. 4-5.

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[37] In 1998 imports from the EU-15 made up over 60% of total imports in all countries from group "A". Exports to the EU made up over 60% of total exports, except in Estonia (55%) and Cyprus (51%). Figures for group "B" were somewhat lower, but are likely to have increased since then. See *Regular Report from the Commission on Progress towards Accession* by each of the candidate countries, 13 October 1999. Internet source: http://europa.eu.inta/comm/enlargement.

[38] Progressive adoption of the acquis has already served to improve business confidence and inward investment in the candidate countries. In the CEEC's 79% of direct foreign investments come from the EU-15. See *Transition Report.* European Bank for Reconstruction and Development 1999.

[39] Regional assistance will be one of the most tangible advantages of membership for all candidates. All the candidate states, except Slovenia at 71%, fall well below 75% of the EU average in GDP per capita.

[40] Many prominent politicians such as Joschka Fischer, Helmut Schmidt, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Jacques Chirac and Jacques Delors have recently proposed various forms of advanced integration by a small core-group of countries. For a background analysis of the core-Europe argument see *e.g.*, Jonathan Story, "The Idea of the Core: The Dialectics of History and Space", in *The Politics of European Treaty Reform*, Geoffrey Edwards and Alfred Pijpers (eds.), (London: Pinter, 1997), pp. 23-24.

[41] The French presidency (July – December 2000) has included the idea of reinforced or enhanced cooperation on the IGC agenda. Proposals include changing some stipulations of closer cooperation under the Amsterdam Treaty, such as lowering the number of countries required to trigger closer cooperation, extending the scope of such cooperation and possible removal of veto mechanisms. This may, however, lead to certain states cooperating together, using the institutions, mechanisms and procedures of the EU to develop policies which are not part of the acquis. See Eric Philippart in *European Voice*, 18-25 May 2000, who argues that closer cooperation could provide a new form of subsidiarity under which some governments stick to national options while others adopt sub-continental ones. The risk is that it may provide the institutional basis for an (exclusive) hard core of members.

[42] This is a view shared by politicians in the Union. See *e.g.*, *Financial Times*, 6 July 2000, "Amato insists UK must be at Europe's core".

[43]. For an in-depth analysis of public opinion trends related to enlargement see *e.g.*, Heather Grabbe and Kirsty Hughes, "Central and east European views on EU enlargement: political debates and public opinion", in *Back to Europe. Central and Eastern Europe and the European Union*, Karen Henderson (ed.), (London: UCL Press, 1999), pp. 185-202. Recent survey data from the Czech Institute for Public Opinion Research (IVVM) give 45% support for EU membership in the Czech Republic, 55% support in Poland and 68% in Hungary. Figures in *Has the EU enlargement process lost its way?*, Phillip Morris Institute, Discussion Paper No.17 January 2000, p. 47. For the most recent public opinion data on the candidate countries' views on enlargement see: http://www.cbos.pl/ENGLISH/cbos_en.htm.

[44] See *e.g.*, Lena Kolarska-Bobinska, "Completed Transformation: Integration into the European Union," Institute of Public Affairs' Working Paper, Warsaw 1999, p. 12.

[45] This question did not apply to group "C".

[46] Support for enlargement in current member states is low. Only in four countries, Sweden, Denmark, Greece and the Netherlands does it reach over 50%. The average for the EU-15 is 43%, with lowest levels of support in Germany, 38%, Austria, 35% and France, 34%. Only 28% of EU citizens consider enlargement a priority. Eurobarometer 52, Autumn 1999. See also *The Economist*, 9-15 September 2000, pp.40-41.

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[47] This ties in with answers to the question: which sectors and social groups will be the most likely losers of enlargement, see footnote 34 above.

[48] Six (three each from groups "A" and "B") of the thirteen respondents said that politicians in their country most frequently referred to both greater security, peace and stability and to greater access to investment and markets. One respondent ("A") mentioned only security, four (two from each group) only economic issues.

[49] This is in line with the Millennium Declaration adopted at the Helsinki Council in December 1999: "The Union's citizens are bound together by common values such as freedom, tolerance, equality, solidarity and cultural diversity...". Full text of document at http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/intro/criteria.htm.

[50] Pierre Hassner, "Fixed Borders or Moving Borderlands? A New Type of Border for a New Type of Entity", *EUI Working Papers* (forthcoming in 2000).

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