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Kristina Notz, M.A.

Center for Applied Policy Research, Munich Germany

## **Enlargement of the European Union and further development of the zone of stability and security**

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### **1. Introduction: EU Eastern enlargement as a success story**

Since its creation, the European Union has undergone a number of enlargements and more and more countries joined the first six Member States. Following the accession of ten new Member States in May 2004, the EU successfully started to operate as an entity of 25. This enlargement was the most ambitious in the history of the EU; it was the largest ever in terms of number of countries and population acceding to the EU, and the most complex one, as it brought in ten countries which had experienced very diverse economic, social and political developments. After only a few years, this enlargement proved a clear success not only in terms of its political and strategic implications for reunifying Europe, but also economically.

(for example: The stability provided by the accession helped multiply trade and investment. There was a win-win situation for all involved by contributing to growth and employment. In addition it has a favourable impact on consumers across the EC, who can now benefit from a broader choice)

Enlargement is one of the EU's most powerful policy tools. The pull of the EU has helped Central and Eastern Europe to transform into modern, (more or less) well-functioning democracies. More recently it has inspired far-reaching reforms in the candidate - and potential candidate - countries. All European citizens benefit from having neighbours that are stable democracies and prosperous market economies. Enlargement is a carefully managed

process, which helps the transformation of the countries involved, by extending peace, stability, prosperity, democracy, human rights and the rule of law across Europe.

After Bulgaria and Romania had acceded on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2007, the success story of recent EU enlargement to the East was completed with 27 Member States. The accession of 12 new countries to the European Union was a major contribution to the stabilization of Europe. With eastern enlargement, the European Union has overcome the division of the continent and laid the foundation for the unification of Europe.

However, as a result of enlargement, the EU now borders on sensitive neighbourhoods: the EU adjoins the post-Soviet space in the east, from Barents Sea in the far north to Black Sea in the south, the Middle East to the southeast, and the states of northern Africa to the south.

The stabilization of these areas is in Europe's main interests; let me say it as simply as possible: if the European Union does not *export* stability, instability will be *imported* to the European Union.

But it is not only this; at the same time, the stabilization of the European Union's neighbourhoods constitutes a crucial contribution of the EU to the maintenance of world peace. In other words, the international / global responsibility of the European Union begins in its immediate geographic vicinity.

We should not forget one aspect: Europe is a vulnerable continent: global interdependence, especially in the field of security, requires that the European Union improves its abilities. The situation is characterized by a new quality of conflicts that range from the professionalization of international terrorism and asymmetrical warfare and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to regional crisis and the negative consequences of the failure of states. These new risks and threats combined with energy dependency, growing migration pressure, and geographic proximity to future crisis regions make Europe particularly vulnerable.

Through the 2004 enlargement (and maybe further enlargement in the future, e.g Turkey), new challenges have arisen for the EU, since it now has a new direct neighbourhood consisting of countries and regions - namely Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Macedonia, Albania, Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia, and Moldova, some of which are characterized by a high crisis and conflict potential.

Even though the European Union has extended the zone of security and stability across much of the continent, the vision of a whole and free Europe is not yet complete, since two regions remain - the Balkans and the Black Sea – both of which have a key position for Europe from a

geopolitical point of view. They are not only in the immediate neighbourhood of the European Union but also embody a bridge to the critical regions of Central Asia and the Middle East. For that reason, it is in Europe's interests to close this gap by a coherent strategy towards each region.

In particular with regard to the southeast of the European continent, the Union has special responsibilities. On account of its potential and its own historical experience, an enlarged Europe is now in a position to make an effective contribution to the solution of a cluster of problems in Southeastern Europe. The failure of European crisis management in the 90ies taught European states the necessity of working together.

## **2. Future prospects of further enlargement**

Although the European strategy of enlargement has clearly proven successful in enhancing stability and security, the French and Dutch rejections of the European Constitution, however, have demonstrated that the political will for further enlargement is limited. Since then, the EU has to tackle with the internal struggle of institutional reforms encompassing the question of how to ensure the well-functioning of the EU system with 27 (and more) member states. This crisis is in part a result of the previous widening the Union without reforming it internally. Enlarging and deepening the EU should have happened simultaneously, but the members states were not able to so do. The member states are currently working again on finding an agreement of a new treaty.

**2.1 Let me say a few words about the Western Balkans.** Even though further enlargement is a controversial topic within the EU and despite an increasing enlargement fatigue within the EU-27, a clear European perspective was given to the Western Balkans (as early as in 1999), which means a path toward membership. It seems to be a contradiction, but the next steps of the enlargement process are already mapped out: The EU officially launched accession negotiations with Croatia (and Turkey) in October 2005 and Macedonia was granted candidate status in December of the same year, although negotiations with Macedonia have not started yet.

Despite the general reluctance from the European side to further enlargement, the prospect of membership for all countries in the Western Balkans has been confirmed on numerous occasions since then. As we can see, there is a strong political will to close the "black hole"

on the map of Europe, nevertheless, we will have to wait and see how things develop **within** the European Union in the next 2 years. The prospect of EU membership for the countries of the Western Balkans promotes not only reforms and western-oriented and liberal political forces in the countries; it is also a fundamental interest of the Union and its member states. E.g. Besides the positive economic development, the participation in the area of freedom, security and justice ensures that the same standards apply and reduces mutual mistrust in sensitive areas of inter-state cooperation (such as border security, combating organized crime, as well as immigration, refugee and asylum policy).

To conclude this chapter of further enlargement, I can only say that this is not a question of whether or not, but when and how.

## **2.2 Turkey**

The previous question cannot be answered for Turkey, though. The prospect of Turkey's membership in EU was, is and remains probably one of the most controversial topics in European public debates.

Starting accession negotiations with Turkey meant that Europe has finally come to a point where it no longer has definitive borders. In essence, the decision concerning Turkey marks the start of a large-scale process of enlargement reaching far beyond the Balkans. Where this will end is currently impossible to say. But what Europe needs urgently, is to understand the strategic ramifications of the path on which it has embarked with the decision on Turkey.

## **3. European Neighbourhood Policy**

As I said before, one political aim of the Union is to export stability in order to ensure not to import instability. The enlarged European Union needs new instruments for exporting stability and change into the fragile regions and countries beyond its borders. That is why the EU is developing and implementing the European

Neighbourhood Policy: this is a strategic concept which is to enhance the Union's capability of being a driver of reform – without automatically promising the “golden carrot” of membership to the neighbours.

Besides enlargement, the main tool of the European Union to put into practice the aim of developing a zone of stability and security around Europe is the promotion of greater economic development, political stability and better governance. This happens through the European Neighbourhood Policy - short ENP. ENP is not an enlargement policy, but it can be seen as security policy and stabilization policy. Established in 2004, the Neighbourhood

Policy seeks to create closer ties between the EU and its neighbouring countries, but *without* offering a membership perspective to the countries concerned. This new policy was also designed by the European Commission to avoid the creation of a new dividing line within Europe after eight Central and Eastern European states joined the EU. The “ring of friends” comprises EU neighbours in Eastern Europe as well as the states of the Mediterranean littoral. ENP provides means for reinforcing bilateral relations and for strengthening security and stability. It offers wide-ranging forms of cooperation and holds out the prospect of a significant degree of integration, including the possibility of participating in the internal market and its four freedoms.

Romano Prodi, the former president of the Commission, called the ENP an “everything but institutions” approach, which was welcomed by the EU neighbours (even though some of them today do not perceive it as a sufficient alternative to membership).

How does ENP work?

As part of the ENP, the European Commission produces detailed Country reports that serve as the basis for tailor-made action plans, which are detailed plans for reform in individually agreement with each neighbour. The level of cooperation is determined by a differentiated, step-by-step process with specific criteria. While the implementation of ENP to its fullest extent would provide clear advantages for both sides and further more ambitious possibilities - such as a common European economic space without customs and trade barriers, problems can be identified as well:

- a) with its strict criteria and evaluation benchmarks, the Policy contains a set of “sticks” but lacks the budgetary and political “carrots” associated with membership prospects.
- b) all EU neighbours were placed within the same framework, regardless of the fact that they are very diverse in terms of economics, politics, culture and their strategic impact. There is a significant difference with regard to the strategic priorities that shape EU relations with its Mediterranean partners on the one hand and Eastern Europe on the other hand. Therefore, because of its generalised formulation, the ENP courts the danger of being unable to provide an effective strategy toward either region’s problems that serves the EU’s interest.

#### **4. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona – Process)**

In addition, I’d like to mention briefly another framework of political, economic and social relations between the Member States of the European Union and neighbouring countries: The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership or so-called Barcelona Process between the EU and partners of the Southern Mediterranean. It is with regards to the geographical aspect more coherent

than the ENP, but it is unfortunately less effective, too. It was created in 1995 aiming at peace, stability and prosperity. At this time, it was a unique and very ambitious project, which represented a turning point in Euro-Mediterranean relations, since it included all parties involved in the Middle East conflict. One of the three main objectives of the Partnership was nothing less than “The definition of a common area of peace and stability through the reinforcement of political and security dialogue.” But a major problem is the diverging perception of security that means what kind of security questions the partners should talk about. While for the Mediterranean partners the Barcelona Process is more about the resolution of the Arab-Israeli-Conflict, from a European perspective, the main security interests lie in soft risks as well, such as combating illegal migration, organised crime, militant Islamism and international terrorism. In other words, unless the Middle East conflict will be solved, the Arab partners in the Barcelona-Process refuse to talk with Israel about other security issues. This means at the end a clear failure of the Barcelona Process. Nevertheless, with regard to the lower-level aim to create a framework for mutual trust and cooperation, the results of the Barcelona-Process are not so badly, at least it still exists despite all conflicts. Recent developments have also shown the continued interest in this cooperation.

### **5. The German EU Presidency: EU towards a new Ostpolitik, filling the strategic gaps in Central Asia**

Central Asia is a transit region between Europe and Asia and has thus a deep strategic impact. Until now, the European Union plays only a minor role in this region (compared to Russia, China or the United States) although it is the most important partner for trade and investment. For this reason, one priority of the German EU presidency has been on Central Asia, even though it is not in the direct neighbourhood of the Union. With regard to aspects like ensuring energy security, political transformation Nevertheless, it is in Europe’s interest to conduct a clear-sighted security policy with regard to this region that after the break-down of the soviet union has to bother with drug traffic, organized crime, political instabilities and so on.

To that purpose, next week, the European Council will – for the first time – adopt a strategy for multilateral cooperation with the countries in Central Asia.

This is just to show you another example, where the prospects of an intensified policy towards the European neighbourhood become obvious: the EU offers dialogue and cooperation in order to satisfy its need for a zone of stability, prosperity and security around the European Union while offering a partnership for reforms.