

CHAPTER 8

EU Expansion and Wider Europe

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Summary

The European Union (EU) has expanded many times, and its widening continues. Enlargement demonstrates the success of the European model of integration, but poses fundamental questions. It has implications both for how the EU works (its structure and institutions) and for what it does (its policies). The expansion in the 2000s to include countries of Central and Eastern Europe showed how the EU's transformative power can promote stability, prosperity, and security. The EU has extended the prospect of membership to more countries, including the Balkans and Turkey. It has developed a 'neighbourhood' policy towards other countries, some of whom aim at future membership. The EU now operates on a continental scale: where will its final frontiers lie?

Introduction

The EU's process of expansion is interesting for students of European affairs because it goes to the heart of important questions about the nature and functioning of the EU. Why do countries wish to join? How does the EU decide its future shape and size? How should it interact with its neighbours? Enlargement is also ongoing: since the EU is committed to further expansion, past experience can help to guide future policy.

It is often said that enlargement is the EU's most successful foreign policy (see Chapter 10). It has indeed extended prosperity, stability, and good **governance** to neighbouring countries by means of its membership criteria, and this success gives enlargement a special place among the EU's external policies. But enlargement is much more than foreign policy: it is the process whereby the *external* becomes *internal*. It is about how non-member countries become members, and shape the development of the EU itself. In accepting new partners, and deciding the conditions under which they join, existing members define the EU's future composition and collective identity. In that sense, enlargement could better be described as 'existential' policy, since the EU determines its own nature when it makes choices concerning membership.

Widening versus deepening

The prospect of enlargement poses fundamental questions both for applicant countries and for existing members. Before applying, countries need to analyse how membership will affect them. What will **accession** (see Box 8.1) mean in political and economic terms? What will be the costs and benefits? What should be the country's long-term aims as a member? This kind of reflection raises questions of national strategy and even identity.

A recurrent theme in the development of the EU has been the tension between 'widening' of its membership and 'deepening' of the integration between its members. Each time the EU contemplates a further expansion, its members are compelled to address fundamental questions which do not present themselves to policy-makers in the normal course of events.

When considering *who* should be new members, the EU has to reflect on *what* it should do with them (what set of common policies?) and *how* to do it (with what institutional set-up?). Debates on the future of **European integration** regularly accompany enlargement, although for countries trying to join the EU these debates can be mystifying. To outsiders, the 'widening versus deepening' debate can seem introspective, and even a tactic for delaying enlargement.

But the potential impact of enlargement on the Union's capacity to act and take decisions is a very important question. Non-members apply to join the EU because

BOX 8.1 Key concepts and terms

Absorption capacity refers to the EU's ability to integrate new members into its system.

Accession is the process whereby a country joins the EU and becomes a member state.

Candidate refers to a country whose application for membership is confirmed by the EU but which is not yet a member.

Conditionality refers to the fact that accession is conditional on a country fulfilling the criteria for membership.

European Economic Area (EEA) is an arrangement which extends the EU's single market to Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein.

Screening occurs at the start of negotiations when the applicant and the Commission examine the **acquis** to see if there are particular problems to be resolved.

Transitional period is a period after accession when application of some of the **acquis** may be phased in or delayed.

Variable geometry, also known as multi-speed Europe, is the idea that not all EU member states should take part in every field of policy.

it is attractive, and one of the reasons why it is attractive is that it is effective in taking decisions and developing policies. To expand without safeguarding its effectiveness would be an error. Enlargement policy is thus linked with the wider debate on European integration; in fact, the accession of new members often provides an occasion for institutional reform.

Have successive enlargements weakened the EU? While it is true that the arrival of new members requires a period of 'settling in', it is often followed by the development of new policies and the strengthening of the institutional framework. For example, the EU's structural funds and a more ambitious **cohesion policy** resulted from the 1980s accession of Greece, Portugal, and Spain, poorer countries needing financial aid (see Chapter 5). Later it was feared that the accession of Austria, Sweden, and Finland, countries which had pursued neutrality or military non-alliance, would put a stop to the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). But in practice they have viewed the CFSP's development more favourably than some of the older members.

From time to time 'old members' (those already in the EU) complain that it was easier to take decisions when the EU was smaller. That may be true (though crises were a regular feature of the EU even in its early days), but nevertheless it is plausible

to suggest that successive increases in size have allowed the EU to develop more substantial and effective policies, internally and externally, than would have been possible with a smaller group. The process of widening has often accompanied or reinforced deepening: *more* has not necessarily led to *less*.

Enlargement as soft power

The success of enlargement in helping to drive political and economic change in Central and East European countries offers a good illustration of the EU's 'soft power' (Nye 2004; Grabbe 2006). The **conditionality** (see Box 8.1) or leverage of prospective membership encouraged policy-makers in those countries to pursue the basic reforms necessary for EU membership. External pressures—the 'demands of Brussels'—were a powerful factor during the pre-accession period.

Conditionality was not employed in earlier enlargements. When the Commission proposed in 1975 that Greece's membership should be preceded by a period of preparation, the idea was rejected by the EU's leaders. Later, Austria, Sweden, and Finland were able to join within two or three years of applying for membership.

Why was the principle of conditionality developed for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe? First, they were in transition from the Communist period and in search of western political and economic models, which required sustained external assistance and encouragement. Second, the existing members were apprehensive that taking in so many new countries without adequate preparation could impair the EU. It was enlightened self-interest, rather than altruism, that led the EU in 1993 to define the membership criteria for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

These membership requirements (referred to as the Copenhagen criteria, see Box 8.2) have become the standard template for enlargement. They require a wide-ranging assessment of a country's political, economic, and administrative standards, going further than any examination made by the EU of its existing members. This has led to the complaint that the Union demands higher standards of new members than it does of itself. Moreover, the leverage is effective only in the pre-accession period; after joining, an applicant country becomes a member like others. The EU does not apply its accession criteria to existing members, although potentially it can sanction them for failure to respect the EU's basic principles of democracy or human rights.

An institutional paradox

The enlargement process casts interesting light on the functioning of the EU's institutions. The mode of operation for enlargement is essentially intergovernmental in character. The Council adopts all decisions on enlargement by unanimity—though majority voting in EU decision-making has been extended in many areas, no one has

BOX 8.2 Criteria for membership

TREATY PROVISIONS

The Treaty on European Union, as amended by the Lisbon Treaty, states:

- Article 2:

The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

- Article 49:

Any European state which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union.

COPENHAGEN CRITERIA

The European Council at Copenhagen (1993) stated in its conclusions:

Membership requires:

1. that the candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities
2. the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union
3. the presupposition of the candidate's ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

The European Council added:

4. The Union's capacity to absorb new members, while maintaining the momentum of European integration, is also an important consideration in the general interest of both the Union and the candidate countries.

ever suggested extending it to enlargement. Accession negotiations take place in an intergovernmental conference organized between the member states and the applicant state. The result is an Accession Treaty, signed and ratified unanimously between sovereign member states.

The roles of the European Parliament and the Commission in the intergovernmental process of enlargement are limited. The Parliament has the right to approve enlargement by **consent** (see Box 6.3), but only at the end of the negotiation process, when it can vote on an Accession Treaty on a yes/no basis, without being able to modify the text. During accession negotiations, Parliament is informed regularly, but has no seat at the table.

The Commission's status in accession negotiations is not the same as in external negotiations where it acts as spokesperson (such as trade, see Chapter 10). In accession conferences the Council Presidency, rather than the Commission, presents EU positions, even on matters where the Commission has competence. Formally the Commission is not the EU's negotiator, although it may be mandated by the Council to 'seek solutions' with applicants. Nevertheless, in practice the Commission plays an extremely influential role in the process of enlargement. Its role provides an illustration of the new institutionalist notion that influence can be exercised even in the absence of formal power. The Commission is better equipped technically than member states to monitor the progress of applicant countries in respect of the criteria for EU membership; its regular reports on each country provide the benchmarks for decisions on the conduct of enlargement. In matters where it has competence, the Commission has the sole right to present proposals to the Council for 'common positions' to be taken by the EU side. It is thus in a privileged position to act as interlocutor and intermediary with the applicant countries, and it can (and should) make proposals that reflect the views of the future members as well as existing members.

Within the Council enlargement is handled in the General Affairs Council, not the Foreign Affairs Council, and the EU's High Representative for foreign and security policy has no role in enlargement negotiations. When responsibility for foreign policy passed to the European External Action Service as a result of the Lisbon Treaty (see Chapter 10), enlargement policy remained with the Commission. This continuity illustrates that enlargement is not primarily foreign policy. It also shows that although enlargement is intergovernmental, the Commission plays a key role: in fact, it exercises more influence over applicant countries before rather than after they become members.

How the EU has Expanded

The first applications for membership were made by Britain, Denmark, and Ireland in 1961, soon after the European Communities came into existence. Although that first attempt was stopped when France's President Charles de Gaulle (twice) said 'No', the three tried again and joined in 1973. This first enlargement was followed by others (see Box 8.3) and more are in prospect (see Box 8.4). Over time the number of EU member states has quadrupled, its population has tripled, and its official languages have increased from four to 23. In fact there have been few periods in the life of the EU when it was not engaged in discussions with prospective members—a remarkable tribute to its magnetism.

But for countries wishing to join, the path to membership is not easy. Negotiations for accession are arduous (see Boxes 8.5 and 8.7): there is no guarantee that they will

BOX 8.3 Chronology of enlargement

	Application for Membership	Opening of negotiations	Accession
United Kingdom	1967	1970	1973
Denmark	1967	1970	1973
Ireland	1967	1970	1973
Greece	1975	1976	1981
Portugal	1977	1978	1986
Spain	1977	1979	1986
Austria	1989	1993	1995
Sweden	1991	1993	1995
Finland	1992	1993	1995
Hungary	1994	1998	2004
Poland	1994	1998	2004
Slovakia	1995	2000	2004
Latvia	1995	2000	2004
Estonia	1995	1998	2004
Lithuania	1995	2000	2004
Czech Republic	1996	1998	2004
Slovenia	1996	1998	2004
Cyprus	1990	1998	2004
Malta	1990	2000	2004
Romania	1995	2000	2007
Bulgaria	1995	2000	2007

Notes

- The UK, Denmark, and Ireland first applied in 1961, but negotiations ended in 1963 after France vetoed their admission.
- Norway applied twice (1967, 1992) and completed negotiations (begun in 1970, 1993), but Norwegians twice said 'No' in referenda (1972, 1994).
- Switzerland made an application in 1992 but suspended it in the same year after the 'No' vote in a referendum on the EEA.
- A 'silent' enlargement took place in 1990 when the German Democratic Republic reunited with the Federal Republic of Germany.
- Morocco's approach to the EC in 1987—not a formal application—was rejected as it was not considered European.

end in agreement, or by a certain date, and the bargaining is one-sided. The EU insists that applicant countries accept all its rules (known as the **acquis**), and allows delays of application (**transitional periods**, see Box 8.1) only in exceptional cases. Meanwhile, as the EU's policies have expanded over the years, applicants, like athletes,

BOX 8.4 Prospective members

	Application for membership	Candidate status	Opening of negotiations
Turkey	1987	1999	2005
Croatia	2003	2004	2005
Macedonia (FYROM)	2004	2005	
Montenegro	2008	2010	
Albania	2009		
Iceland	2009	2010	2010
Serbia	2009		
Bosnia-Herzegovina			
Kosovo			

Notes

- This list includes all countries currently considered by the EU to be in the enlargement process.
- When the EU decides that an applicant country has made sufficient progress, it may award it the status of 'candidate'. Until then, it has the status of 'potential candidate'.
- Kosovo is not recognized as a state by some EU members.

face a higher 'bar' that is more difficult to cross. But after all, they applied to join the Union, not vice versa. The EU has never invited others to join its club—in fact, it has tended to discourage them. In this sense, the EU's strategy for enlargement has been reactive rather than pro-active: it has grown mostly under pressure from its neighbours, not as a result of imperialist ambition.

Why countries want to join

Countries apply to join the EU because they think membership is in their political and economic interest. While opinions have differed, according to the country, on whether economics or politics were the most important factor, both have always counted. In the case of the United Kingdom (UK), its application was motivated by the prospective benefits of the common market for its trade and economic growth. But its leaders also understood that the original six members were on the way to creating a European system from which the UK could not afford to be excluded politically. It was natural for Ireland and Denmark, with their tradition of agricultural exports to the UK and the Six, to apply as well.

The applications from Greece, Portugal, and Spain were made in different circumstances. After getting rid of totalitarian regimes, these countries wanted membership

BOX 8.5 The path to membership

Start. A country submits an application for membership to the European Union's Council of Ministers.

1. The Council asks the Commission for an Opinion.
2. The Commission delivers its Opinion to the Council.
3. The Council confirms the applicant country's candidate status.
4. The Council decides to open accession negotiations, which are conducted in an intergovernmental conference between the EU member states and each applicant individually.
5. The Commission screens (see Box 8.1) the different chapters of the *acquis* with the applicant.
6. For each chapter in the negotiations the EU decides to open, the applicant presents a position; the Commission proposes a 'common position'; the Council approves it for presentation to the applicant.
7. After agreement is reached on a chapter, the EU decides whether to close it.
8. When all chapters are closed, the EU and the applicant agree on a draft Treaty of Accession (which may cover other applicants).
9. The Commission issues its Opinion on the Treaty.
10. The European Parliament gives its consent to the Treaty.
11. The member states and the applicant(s) sign the Treaty.
12. The signatory states ratify the Treaty according to national procedures (which may require referenda).

Finish. The Treaty of Accession comes into force, and the applicant becomes a member state.

BOX 8.6 Compared to what?**EU and NATO—a double race to membership**

After the end of the Cold War, most of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe wanted to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as well as the EU. NATO is a transatlantic alliance created in 1949 in face of the perceived threat from the Soviet Union. Under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, signatories commit themselves to mutual assistance: 'an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all'. NATO now has 28 members:

- two from North America (US and Canada);
- 26 from Europe:
 - 21 EU states (EU-27 minus Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Ireland, Malta, and Sweden); plus
 - Norway, Iceland, Turkey, Albania, Croatia.

Most other European states, including Russia, have an association with NATO but are not full members.

For the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, concerned about Russia's future intentions, NATO offered *hard security* in the military sense, including the US's nuclear 'umbrella'. The EU offered *soft security* through its political union (see Chapter 10). Even without a mutual defence clause this soft security was important, but the Central and East European countries considered the EU's nascent security and defence policy insufficient to guarantee their territorial integrity. Their accession to NATO in 1999 and 2004 preceded their joining the EU in 2004 and 2007. It was easier for these countries to join NATO for two reasons. First, NATO has simpler tasks and requirements than the EU. Its membership conditions mainly concern the organization and equipment of troops, while the EU has a wide range of political, economic, and administrative requirements. Secondly, NATO's leading member, the US, decided to push for its enlargement, much to the irritation of Russia.

The result of the double enlargement is that the membership of the two organizations now largely overlaps, which makes it easier for them to work together. But the NATO/EU relationship is not simple, and there remains a basic asymmetry. NATO, unlike the EU, includes the US. Moreover, NATO's role is now less focused on territorial defence and more on intervention in other regions. In these regions NATO still has the best military tools to deal with the *results* of insecurity, for example in Afghanistan. But the EU has the best civilian tools to deal with its *causes*, by promoting economic integration, prosperity, and good governance.

as a confirmation (and guarantee) of their return to democracy. The sense of being accepted back into the European family was as important to them as the prospect of access to the common market and the budget. Austria, Sweden, and Finland applied for membership despite having access to the common market through the European Economic Area (EEA; see Box 8.1). In their eyes, the EEA's economic benefits were compromised by the obligation to accept rules from Brussels without having a say

BOX 8.7 How it really works**Joining the EU singly or together**

The EU says it treats all applicant countries on their merits: the path to membership depends on individual progress in meeting the criteria, with no linkage between applicants. This principle is called 'differentiation'—there is no predetermined grouping of countries for accession. That is why accession negotiations are conducted by the EU with each applicant separately, which also gives it the possibility to play them off against each other ('divide and rule').

The EU prefers an organized process of expansion, with intervals between enlargements. So, although each accession negotiation is separate, and a country can join singly (as Greece did in 1979) there are usually groups or waves of accession. Countries wishing to improve their chances in the race may be tempted to apply for membership prematurely in the hope of joining a good 'convoy'. For example, Macedonia applied soon after Croatia, but it did not succeed in opening accession negotiations.

By creating competition between applicant countries the EU brings the market into the enlargement process. This 'group dynamic' (the wish to emulate others, and the fear of being left behind) helped to push the Central and East European countries forward to membership together. Applicants often demand a target date for membership, but the EU refuses to concede it until towards the end of negotiations since it considers that the promise of a date weakens the conditionality of the process.

Accession negotiations are 'asymmetrical': the EU is always in the stronger bargaining position.

in deciding them. These countries also realized that the collapse of the Soviet bloc created a new political situation in Europe in which their traditional neutrality was less appropriate.

When the 10 countries of Central and Eastern Europe made the change from communism and Soviet domination, they turned to the EU not only for economic help but for membership. Like Greece, Spain, and Portugal, they wanted to rejoin the European family, and to consolidate their return to democracy. They also had further reasons. For their transition from central planning to market economy, the EU's system and standards offered a convenient 'template'. Uncertain of Russia's future role, they wanted EU membership for national security and as a back-up to NATO membership, which they pursued at the same time (see Box 8.6).

Recent enlargements

The collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989 was a seismic shock, creating risks of instability in Europe. Civil war broke out in ex-Yugoslavia, and this strife could have occurred elsewhere if events had unfolded differently. But the countries of Central and Eastern Europe succeeded in charting a route to democracy, stability, and prosperity

by making far-reaching economic, social, and political reforms. The prospect of EU membership served to guide them in a peaceful 'regime change' in which the process of **Europeanization** (adapting domestic politics to the EU's rules, norms, and policies) played a key role (see Chapter 4 and Grabbe 2006).

Faced with many new aspirants for membership by the early 1990s, the EU's first response was cautious. In its **Europe Agreements** (covering aid, trade, and political links with these countries) the EU refused to include the promise of membership. But at the Copenhagen summit in 1993 the EU accepted that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe could join when they fulfilled certain criteria for membership. These Copenhagen criteria (Box 8.2) were defined for the first time at that summit.

In the accession negotiations, which opened with six countries in 1998 and six more in 2000, the main problems (see Avery 2004) were:

- free movement of labour: the EU allowed old members to maintain restrictions on workers from new member states for up to seven years;
- agricultural policy: the EU insisted on a period of 12 years for introducing direct payments to farmers in the new member states; and
- money: the level of payments to new, much poorer members from the EU budget became a contentious issue.

But the negotiations in Brussels were less important than the preparation for membership in the applicant countries themselves. The 'conditionality' of the process created a framework in which the Central and East European countries were able to make the transition to democracy and market economy peacefully and on a durable basis. The economic consequences of enlargement were positive for both old and new member states, and created conditions for the European economy to face increased global competition. However, the influx of migrants from the new members caused social problems in some areas, and the persistence of bad governance (corruption, maladministration, weak judiciary) led to the realization that the accession criteria should have been applied more rigorously, particularly for Romania and Bulgaria. Nevertheless the enlargement to EU-27 was an extraordinary episode in the history of European integration, and it shifted the EU's scale of activity to a continental level. Whereas previous enlargements took place in a Europe divided between East and West, these enlargements helped to unite it.

The admission of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe has led to an interesting debate among political scientists. According to liberal intergovernmentalism, the EU-15 must have been guided in their decision to enlarge by the expected costs and benefits, and since enlargement proceeds by unanimity all member states must have reckoned that it was advantageous to them. But was that really so? In fact, some members were quite reluctant. According to the constructivist approach, which emphasizes the role of principles and values, it was the historic promise of peace and unity, rather than the material prospects, that created a 'rhetorical entrapment' which was the main driver of the decision (see Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005).

Prospective Members

We now review the countries which the EU officially considers as prospective members beyond the EU-27: Turkey, the Balkan countries, and Iceland. We also look at Norway and Switzerland, which have applied for membership in the past. Although the Treaty says any European state may apply to become a member (see Box 8.2), other countries are at present discouraged from applying, including those subject to the EU's Neighbourhood Policy (see below).

Balkan countries

In South-east Europe about 25 million people remain outside the EU:

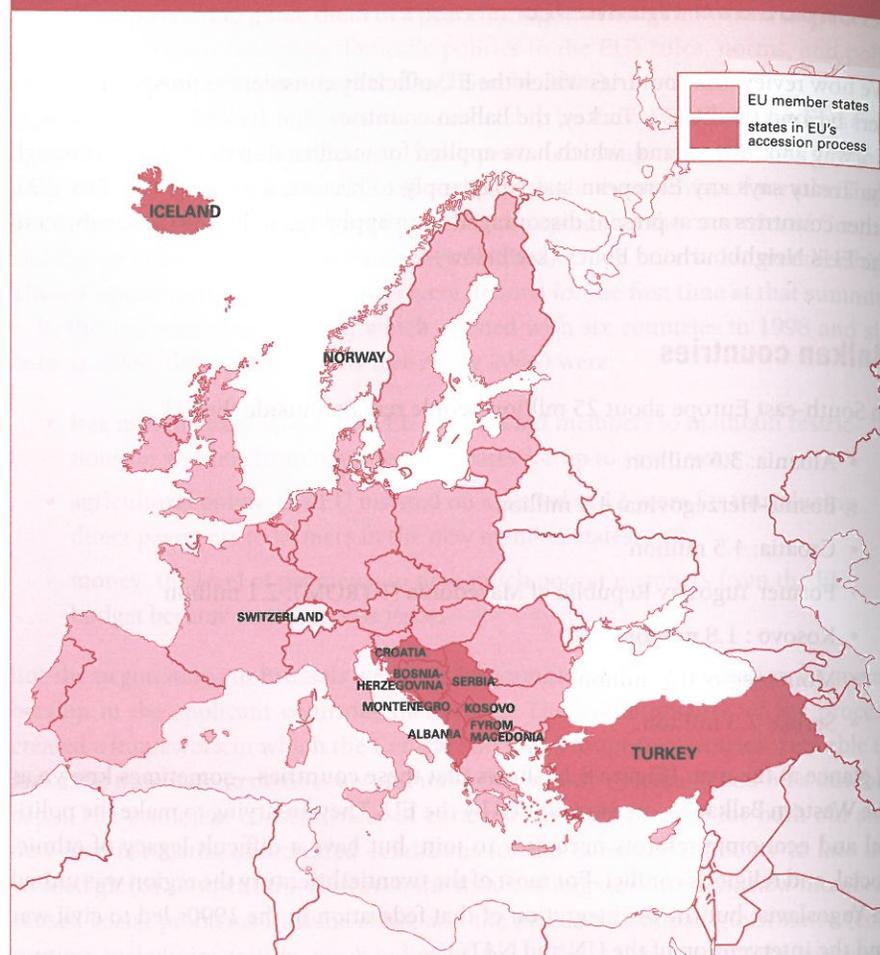
- Albania: 3.6 million
- Bosnia-Herzegovina: 4.5 million
- Croatia: 4.5 million
- Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM): 2.1 million
- Kosovo: 1.8 million
- Montenegro: 0.7 million
- Serbia: 7.3 million.

A glance at the map (Figure 8.1) shows that these countries—sometimes known as the Western Balkans—are surrounded by the EU. They are trying to make the political and economic reforms necessary to join, but have a difficult legacy of ethnic, social, and religious conflict. For most of the twentieth century the region was united in Yugoslavia, but the disintegration of that federation in the 1990s led to civil war and the intervention of the UN and NATO.

As a result ancient rivalries and fears lie just below the surface. There are basic problems of statehood—the question of Kosovo's international status is not fully resolved (its independence from Serbia is not recognized by all EU members, and its government is supervised by a European Union Rule of Law Mission—EULEX) while Bosnia is still under external tutelage: it is supervised by a UN High Representative who is also a EU Special Representative. Coupled with problems of poor governance, corruption, and criminality, the region suffers from a syndrome of political dependency on external actors. But reforms, and EU membership itself, require autonomy and a functioning democracy.

The countries are at different stages on the way to EU membership (see Box 8.4). The Stability and Association Process (SAP) package, which combines trade concessions and financial aid, has been a stepping-stone for all of them: Croatia concluded accession negotiations in 2011 with a view to accession in mid-2013. The others have either applied or intend to apply for EU membership.

FIGURE 8.1 The Expanding European Union



Although the United States and Russia have influence in the region, the international community now sees it as Europe's main responsibility. At a summit at Thessaloniki in 2003 the EU's leaders recognized all the countries of the Western Balkans as prospective members. The region poses the biggest test yet of the EU's transformative power. Can conditionality and pre-accession instruments be used as successfully as they were in Central Europe? Can European integration provide a basis for the region's stability and prosperity by encouraging good governance and reconciliation between communities?

Turkey

Turkey's 'European vocation' was avowed as early as 1964 in its Association Agreement with the Community. Its application for membership dates from 1987. But as Redmond (2007) recounts, the path towards membership has been long, and remains

difficult. Despite the fact that accession negotiations opened in 2005, Turkey's future membership is by no means assured.

Many of the arguments that were valid for preceding enlargements apply to Turkey. As Barysch *et al.* (2005) explain, its growing economy and young labour force would bring benefits for the **single market**. Although there would be costs for the EU's budget in the fields of agriculture and cohesion policy, the overall economic impact of Turkey's accession should be positive. Turkey has a big population: 78 million now, expected to grow to 90 million or more in future. In terms of income per head, it is much poorer than the EU average. Its position on Europe's southeastern flank gives it geostrategic importance in relation to the Middle East and the Black Sea region, and as a member of NATO it has played a key role in European security.

The majority of Turkey's population is Islamic, but it has been a secular state since the 1930s. Its efforts to conform to European standards of democracy, human rights, and rule of law are monitored closely by the EU. Progress has been made towards meeting the Copenhagen criteria, but more still needs to be done. Amongst the main problems are Turkey's treatment of its Kurdish minority, its restrictions on freedom of expression, and the political role of its military.

Many argue that by admitting Turkey, the EU would give a signal to other countries that it accepts Islam. To refuse Turkey would show that Europe is culturally prejudiced, and might lead to a reversal of Turkey's reforms, or even turn it against the West. Others reject this argument: just as religion is not a reason to say 'No' to Turkey, it is not a reason to say 'Yes'. Although Turkey's population is Islamic, it is not an Arab country, and it has a historic legacy of difficult relations with neighbours such as Armenia.

In foreign policy, Turkey's membership would be positive for the EU in many ways. For example, Turkey has more soldiers than any other European member of NATO. But it would also bring new problems and risks. With Turkey's accession, the EU's external frontiers would extend to Azerbaijan, Armenia, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, so it would be in direct contact with regions of instability.

Public opinion in the EU is influenced by fear of an influx of Turkish migrant workers, and the idea that Turkey is different—that it is not part of Europe in geographical or cultural terms. As a result Turkish membership is opposed by a number of political parties particularly in France, Germany, and Austria. It is also argued that the EU's decision-making system would have difficulty coping with Turkey, which would be the biggest member state.

Cyprus is a further thorn of contention. Since Turkey intervened militarily in 1974, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus—not recognized by the rest of the international community—has been separated from the south by a UN peacekeeping force. Hopes of reuniting the two parts of the island were dashed by referenda in 2003 when the Greek Cypriots in the south said 'No' to a UN plan that was accepted by the north. As a result, the EU's enlargement of 2004 brought in a divided island. All these problems put a question-mark over Turkey's bid for EU membership. Some argue that, even if it does not finally become a member, Turkey has an interest in

continued modernization in line with European criteria. But with an uncertain prospect of membership, the leverage for change in Turkey is less effective. There is a growing risk of crisis with Turkey in the accession negotiations, where progress has been slow and several chapters are blocked by objections from France and Cyprus.

Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland

Iceland applied for EU membership following a banking crisis which showed its vulnerability as a small country. It certainly fulfils the EU's basic criteria for membership. However, the common fisheries policy may be an obstacle in accession negotiations and the people of Iceland may not say 'Yes' in a referendum on the EU (see Avery *et al.* 2011).

It is sometimes forgotten that membership applications have been made by Norway and Switzerland (see Box 8.3). Oil-rich Norway negotiated and signed two Accession Treaties, but did not join after its people said 'No' twice in referenda. This divisive experience has made its politicians reluctant to reopen the question of EU membership. As a member of the EEA, it has access to the common market and participates in other EU policies. In fact, the EEA (which also includes Iceland and Liechtenstein) is the closest form of relationship that the EU has made with non-member countries.

Switzerland's application for EU membership was suspended when its citizens voted 'No' in a referendum on the EEA, and since then it has pursued its interests through bilateral agreements with the EU. While the French-speaking part of the population is broadly in favour of the EU, a majority of German-speakers are opposed. Switzerland's 'direct democracy' with frequent use of referenda could pose problems for its membership. However, small, rich countries like Switzerland and Norway are ideal applicants for the EU: if they decided to apply again, they would be accepted as candidates.

Wider Europe

European Neighbourhood Policy

With expansion to include Central and Eastern Europe, the EU encountered a series of new neighbours to the east. It already had a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership with countries to the south, and now it was obliged to rethink relations with the countries of Eastern Europe that were formerly in the Soviet Union. New EU members such as Poland and Hungary did not want to see their accession lead to the erection of new barriers to countries with which they have cultural, social, and economic links.

The result was the development of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) covering 16 countries: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian

Authority, Lebanon, Syria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Belarus (see Figure 8.2). Its aim is to extend stability, prosperity, and security, and create a 'ring of friends' by developing political links and economic integration with the EU. Its main instrument is a series of Action Plans negotiated with each partner country and backed by financial and technical assistance. These plans cover political dialogue, economic and social reform, trade, cooperation in justice and security affairs, transport, energy, environment, education, and so on. They require the neighbours to take on European regulation and a large part of the *acquis*: the system is modelled, in fact, on the EU's Accession Partnerships with future members.

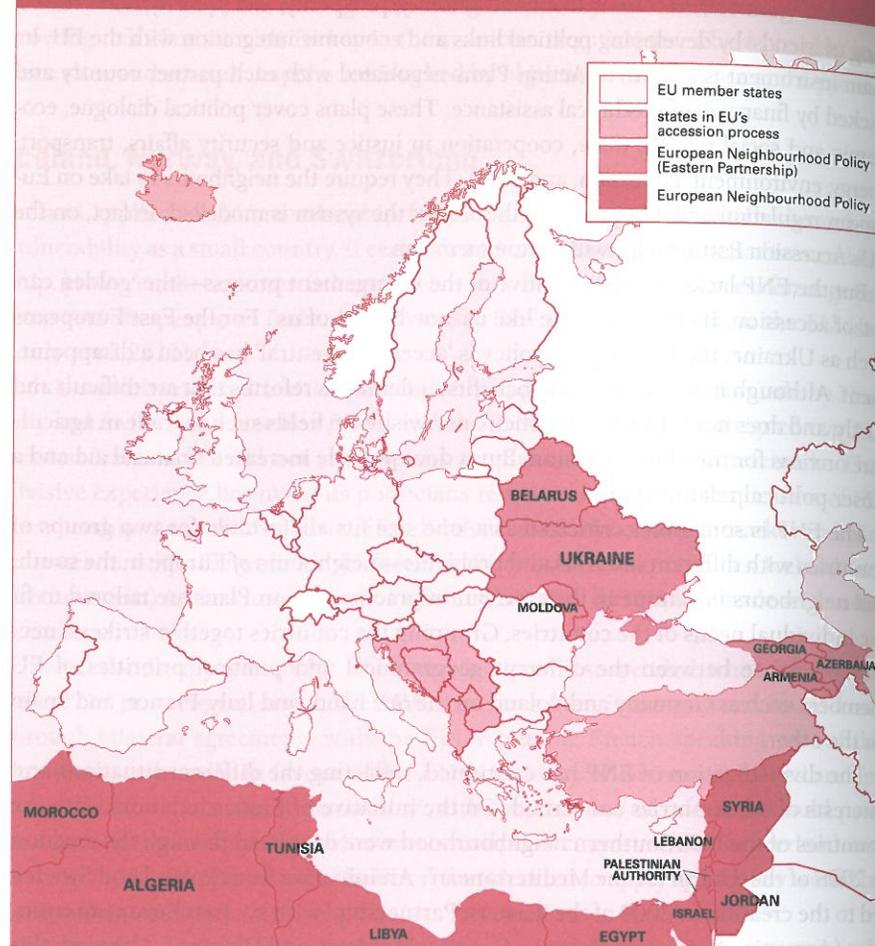
But the ENP lacks the big incentive of the enlargement process—the 'golden carrot' of accession. Its message is 'be like us' not 'be one of us'. For the East Europeans such as Ukraine, the fact that the policy is 'accession-neutral' has been a disappointment. Although it offers long-term benefits, it demands reforms that are difficult and costly, and does not fully satisfy participants' wishes in fields such as trade in agriculture or visas for travel to the Union. But it does provide increased financial aid and a closer political relationship.

The ENP is sometimes criticized as a 'one size fits all' formula for two groups of countries with different interests and problems—neighbours of Europe in the south, and neighbours in Europe in the east. But in practice Action Plans are tailored to fit the individual needs of the countries. Grouping the countries together strikes a necessary balance between the different geographical and political priorities of EU members such as Germany and Poland on the one hand, and Italy, France, and Spain on the other.

The diversification of ENP has continued, reflecting the different situations and interests of the countries concerned. On the initiative of France, relations with the countries of the EU's Southern neighbourhood were deepened through the creation in 2008 of the 'Union for the Mediterranean'. An initiative from Poland and Sweden led to the creation in 2009 of the 'Eastern Partnership' with six East European countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine). Although this Partnership remains accession-neutral, it provides improved political cooperation, further economic integration, and increased financial assistance. Partnerships then lead to Association Agreements, which in the past have been precursors of the accession process. However, despite the ENP's declared aims, in practice the EU has had limited success in exploiting it to promote democracy either in Belarus or in the Southern neighbourhood, where local rebellions against autocratic regimes obliged the Union to adapt the ENP to strengthen its conditionality.

The EU offered to extend its European Neighbourhood Policy to Russia, but the invitation was rejected. Russia has preferred to see itself as a 'strategic partner', and remains suspicious of the EU's links with countries such as Ukraine that it considers historically as part of its 'near-abroad'. With its invasion of Georgia in 2008 Russia demonstrated its capacity to influence events in its neighbourhood by the use of force, and that the EU's involvement with the East European neighbourhood does not extend to security.

FIGURE 8.2 The European Union's Neighbourhood Policy



What Limits for the EU?

The EU has used the prospect of membership successfully to extend stability and prosperity to neighbouring countries. But is it realistic to continue without predetermined limits? Logically, the EU cannot expand indefinitely: it was not designed to be a world system of government, but an 'ever-closer union' of European peoples. How far can the European Union's expansion continue? Where should its final frontiers lie?

The EU can have different frontiers for different policies. This is already the case for the euro and Schengen (see Chapter 9). In this sense, the EU is already a multi-frontier system. But problems arise when its multi-tier potential is perceived as leading to a 'core-group', with some states having more rights than others. All members, and all applicants, want full rights in decision-making; there is no market for 'second-class' membership.

What is Europe?

The Treaty of Rome in 1957 said 'any European state may apply to become a member'. Subsequent Treaties have added a reference to values (see Box 8.2). It is sometimes suggested that the EU is based on shared values rather than geography. But if this argument were correct we would expect like-minded states in distant parts of the world—such as New Zealand—to be considered as future members. In fact geographic contiguity or proximity is a precondition for membership. The exception which proves the rule is France's overseas departments (such as Guadeloupe or Martinique) which are in the EU because they are part of French territory.

What are the geographical limits of the European continent? To the North, West, and South, it is defined by seas and oceans, but to the East there is no clear boundary. Although the Ural Mountains and the Caspian Sea are often invoked as natural frontiers, some geographers consider Europe as the western peninsula of the Asian landmass—a subcontinent rather than a continent.

In any case, different geographical, political, and cultural concepts of Europe have prevailed at different times. Asia Minor and Northern Africa were within in the political and economic area of the Roman Empire, but much of today's EU was outside it. Other historical periods are cited as characterizing Europe in cultural terms, such as the experience of the Renaissance or the Enlightenment. For some, the Christian religion is a defining factor. Such examples show how difficult it is to arrive at an agreed definition. The European Commission (1992) has taken the view that:

The term 'European' has not been officially defined. It combines geographical, historical and cultural elements which all contribute to the European identity. The shared experience of proximity, ideas, values and historical interaction cannot be condensed into a simple formula, and is subject to review by each succeeding generation. It is neither possible nor opportune to establish now the frontiers of the European Union, whose contours will be shaped over many years to come.

But is it so difficult to know which countries are considered European today? Another European organization, founded in 1949 before the creation of the European Communities, is the Council of Europe. It has a wider membership than the EU (see Box 8.8) and provides an important indication of the limits of Europe as recognized internationally. EU members are all signatories to the Council of Europe, and they can hardly refuse to consider the other signatories as 'European'. This suggests the following list of potential members of the EU:

- Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia
- Turkey
- Iceland, Norway, Switzerland
- Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine
- Russia.

BOX 8.8 Other Europeans

Not all European states are in the EU. The other main intergovernmental organization in Europe is the Council of Europe which is mainly concerned with human rights, social and legal affairs, and culture. It has 47 members:

- EU countries (27);
- Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia (FYROM), Montenegro, Serbia;
- Turkey;
- Iceland, Norway, Switzerland;
- Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Russian Federation, Ukraine; and
- Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino.

We should add two potential members: Belarus which would be accepted as a member if it became more democratic, and Kosovo which would be accepted if the problem of its international recognition was solved. However, looking at the list in relation to membership of the EU, we should leave aside the last four, which as mini-states have little interest in joining.

Of this list of 18, some are already considered by the EU as potential members. Could it eventually embrace all the others? Will the final limits of the EU be set at 45 countries?

An attempt by the EU institutions to decide in advance its ultimate limits—a decision requiring unanimity—would not give a clear answer. Member states have differing views on future membership. Those sharing borders with non-members often wish to include them in the EU for reasons of stability and security. Poland, for example, wants its neighbour Ukraine to be a member of the EU. But other states such as France have a more restrictive position, especially on the inclusion of Turkey. In fact, a discussion of the ‘limits of Europe’ can easily become a debate on ‘should Turkey join?’

What are the prospects for countries such as Ukraine, which are presently in the framework of the EU’s European Neighbourhood Policy? They are so far from meeting the Copenhagen criteria that EU membership is impossible for many years. So why try to decide ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ prematurely, particularly when ‘No’ could have undesirable consequences for both sides?

Russians consider their country to be European as well as Asian, and the idea of its membership of the EU has been mentioned by leaders on both sides. But could Russia, with its self-identity as a great power, accept the EU’s *acquis*? Its geographic expanse and population of 140 million mean that Russia’s joining the EU would be more like the EU joining Russia. But with its population declining towards 100 million by mid-century, and facing 1.3 billion Chinese, maybe Russia will one day look with more interest to the EU.

In this situation, prudence argues for keeping open the prospect of EU enlargement. Aspirant countries may be willing to modify their behaviour significantly in the hope of obtaining membership. To define the EU’s ultimate borders now would demotivate those excluded, and diminish the leverage for those included. Thus a diplomatic policy of ‘constructive ambiguity’ seems likely to prevail.

Evaluating Enlargement

The pace of enlargement depends not only on the applicant countries but also on the attitude of the public and politicians in the EU. After its expansion to EU-27 the question of **absorption capacity** (see Box 8.1) has become an element in the debate. This notion, introduced at Copenhagen in 1993 (see Box 8.2), refers to the need to ‘maintain the momentum of European integration’. It thus explicitly links future enlargement to the development of the EU’s institutions, policies, and budget.

This brings us to the question, what is the purpose of enlargement? At the beginning of this chapter we saw that enlargement is not only foreign policy, but also a kind of existential policy, in the sense that each successive accession reconfigures the EU’s composition. So what are the criteria for evaluating the success of enlargement policy? One cannot evaluate it by reference to the number of countries joining, or by the speed of their accession. The correct approach for evaluation is twofold: a first group of criteria applying to the period before enlargement—the ‘pre-accession’ period—and a second group to the period after accession, when applicant countries have become members of the EU.

The criteria for the pre-accession period are similar to those for foreign policy: enlargement policy is successful if it enhances security, stability, and prosperity both for the EU and for the neighbouring countries concerned. But a more important test of enlargement policy concerns the period after accession. Here the conditions for a successful result may be defined as the harmonious integration of new members (without disrupting existing members, or the functioning of the EU’s institutions and policies) and the satisfactory continuation of the EU’s development. Since there is no general agreement on the last criterion—what is a satisfactory development of the EU?—it is not surprising that opinions differ on the merits of enlargement. According to some, the supporters of expansion (typically, the British) want to weaken the EU, while according to others the opponents of expansion (typically, the French) want to safeguard acquired positions and advantages. Although these caricatures are both false, they show how attitudes to enlargement policy can differ widely within the EU (see Sjørnsen 2008).

What was the result of the increase from 15 to 27? It has not, as some feared, paralysed the EU’s decision-making, which seems to work as well, or as badly, as it did in the past (see Chapter 3). Nor has it led to an increase in ‘variable geometry’ within the EU (see Box 8.1), as commentators predicted: most of the new members, unlike some old members, have joined the Schengen system, and many of them have joined the euro.

However, EU-27 is more complex and heterogeneous. In recent years 'enlargement fatigue' has also become a factor: public opinion in the EU, particularly among the 'old' member states, is more resistant to enlargement, which is sometimes blamed for problems arising from other causes such as globalization or the economic situation. Accessions may in future be subject more often to referenda in member states. Consequently the EU will be rigorous in applying its conditions for potential members, and cautious in making promises to others.

Conclusion

The expansion of the EU has been remarkable in its pace and impact. But after increasing its membership from 12 to 27 states and its population by a third in the period from 1995 to 2007, the EU will expand more slowly in future. In the medium term, it will limit its expansion to the countries of the Balkans and Turkey, whose accession is uncertain and in any case will not take place for many years. Iceland may join more rapidly, as would Norway and Switzerland if they applied for membership. In the longer term the EU may eventually accept other East European countries such as Ukraine, but in the meantime they remain in the framework of its Neighbourhood Policy. Thus the final limits of the European Union are likely to result from the course of events and successive political decisions, rather than from a strategic choice made in advance.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Has the EU's enlargement to 27 members weakened its capacity for effective action? Has the 'widening' stopped the 'deepening'?
2. Turkey's application for membership dates from 1987: why is it so difficult for the EU to handle, and will it ever succeed in joining?
3. The EU's basic treaty says 'any European state may apply for membership': should it decide where its frontiers will ultimately lie?
4. The EU's Neighbourhood Policy aims at making a 'ring of friendly countries': can it be a substitute for joining the EU?



FURTHER READING

The enlargements of 2004 and 2007 are the subject of a voluminous literature, particularly on EU conditionality and reform in Central and Eastern Europe. The early stages of the process are covered in Mayhew (1998) and Torreblanca (2001), while the accession negotiations

are described in Avery (2004). Schimmelfennig (2003) examines the expansion of NATO as well as the EU. Analyses of the theoretical aspects of enlargement can be found in Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005) while Sjursen (2006) comments on the EU's motives, Vachudova (2005) presents the 'realist' view and Schneider (2008) analyses the role of transitional periods. For conditionality and 'Europeanization' see Grabbe (2006) and Epstein and Sedelmeier (2009), and for a critique of the EU's handling of conditionality with Romania see Gallagher (2009). On neighbourhood policy, see Weber *et al.* (2007) and Whitman and Wolff (2010).

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Weber K., Smith M. E., and Baun M. (eds.) (2007), *Governing Europe's Neighbourhood: Partners or Periphery?* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press).

Whitman, R. and Wolff, S. (eds.) (2010), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan).



WEB LINKS

- The European Commission's websites provide information, official documents, and speeches on enlargement at <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/>. For Neighbourhood Policy the official sites are <http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/> (including a useful

interactive map and bibliography of academic research) and <http://www.eeas.europa.eu/enp/>.

- For regular analyses and updates on developments in both areas see the newsletter <http://www.euractiv.com/> and publications of the Centre for European Policy Studies <http://www.ceps.eu/> (especially its newsletter 'European Neighbourhood Watch'), the European Policy Centre <http://www.epc.eu/> and the Centre for European Reform <http://www.cer.org.uk/>.



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CHAPTER 9

The EU as a Security Actor

John Peterson and Sandra Lavenex

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Summary

At first glance, EU security policy seems limited by three powerful constraints. First, it is exclusively concerned with 'soft' security issues, such as immigration, transnational crime, and drug trafficking. Second, policy-making is dominated by sovereignty-conscious EU member states and national capitals. Third, security is not a major driver of European integration. We challenge all three of these assumptions. The EU is now involved in 'hard' security, especially counterterrorism but also military security. Second, policy-making is increasingly Brussels-centred. Third, while European integration has been driven primarily by economic cooperation, the safeguarding of Europe's (especially internal) security has emerged as a major *raison d'être* of the integration project.