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**WHERE DOES EUROPE END?  
(THE LIMITS OF THE ENLARGEMENT EU POLICY – THE  
CASE OF TURKEY)**

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**КЪДЕ ЗАВЪРШВА ЕВРОПА?  
(ГРАНИЦИТЕ НА ПОЛИТИКАТА ЗА РАЗШИРЯВАНЕ НА  
ЕВРОПЕЙСКИЯ СЪЮЗ – НА ПРИМЕРА НА ТУРЦИЯ)**

The paper presents the EU enlargement policy and conditions, their implementation in the Western Balkans and mostly in Turkey. It goes through the accession process, analyses the perspectives of Turkish membership, the attitudes towards the accession in the country and in the EU member states.

**Keywords:** enlargement policy, Turkey, accession.

Today’s European Union, with 28 member-states and over 500 million Europeans is an unique political institution based on the basic values of human rights, freedom, active and participatory democracy and functional rule of law. The policy of enlargement aims to unite the European countries in a joint political and economic union. Through the decades after its founding, the Union has passed six waves of enlargement. Croatia has been the last country that joined the Union on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013. The queue for extra countries to join includes Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey. Potential candidates from the Western Balkans are Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo. Based on the Union founding values and under the enlargement conditions, the enlargement has been seen as one of the most successful tools for encouraging the political, social and economic reforms, as well as to sustain the stability and the democracy on the European continent.

The important role of Turkey in the European political agenda is based not only on the long-term relations between Turkey and the European Union, but also on the opinion that the potential membership of Turkey in the Union would be much different and influential than all other waves of EU enlargement. Turkey has a dynamic young population, geographical situation, potential in the field of economy and security, as well as cultural and religious specifics. Turkey’s enlargement circumstances and effects on EU always have been an inspiration for hot debates both in the European and the Turkish community. The perspective of Turkey’s enlargement is still unclear

and disputable. The Turkish candidature is a historic precedent in the history of accession negotiations with EU. More than 50 years Turkey is trying to become a member of the Community. In 1959, during the founding period of the Community institutions and the formulating of its policies, the Turkish governing authorities had decided that only the European direction is the correct one concerning the development and consolidating the democratic values in the Turkish state and would be guarantee for its development. On the other hand, the European institutions also declared that Turkey is part of the European family and if it would follow strictly the recommendations, it would become a member of the Community. At the same time, over half a century, the process is on-going and there are no signs it would finish in any time limits.

The official negotiations between EU and Turkey were regulated in 1963 in Ankara Agreement, which has been reconsidered several times and in particular in the Customs' Union, signed in 1995. Turkey applied for a full membership in the European Economic Community in early 1987 and got a statute of candidate country in 1999. The negotiation process started in 2005 and is still in progress. The specifics of the process are such that there are no replies and deadlines for the final result when/if Turkey will become a member of the Union at all.

The accession process is both sided: EU accession policy and support for the needed country reforms and transformations as well as the inner country affiliations and support for the EU membership. Towards the Western Balkans, the EU had implemented a special new tool for support of the enlargement policy, specially designed and developed in 2000, known as Stabilization and Association Process (SAP), and for Serbia – cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The process has three main priorities: to guarantee stable and sustainable transition to market economy, encouragement of the regional cooperation and the perspective to EU accession. On the other hand, the candidate countries from the region have to meet the Copenhagen criteria for EU membership (free market economy, functioning democracy and its institutions and EU aquis communautaire). It helps the countries from the region to build up their institutional capacity to adopt and implement the European standards in market economy and competitiveness, in the rule of law and in the protection of human rights and their full exercise. The support has different types and samples – special market measures and donation policy, economic and financial support. The financial support since 1991 is over 12 milliard euro, one of the biggest that has ever happened per citizen in the support of EU as a global actor.

It is important to explore the other side of the accession policy as the enlargement process requires huge and important reforms from the candidate countries, real guarantees and results are expected so that the European legal norms and laws will not only be adopted and ratified but will take place in the everyday life of the citizens. In some countries, it requires the introducing and implementation of some new institutions, agencies, commissions such as protection of competitiveness, protection against discrimination, standards in education, human rights protection, etc. Also usually new

structures and substructures are required in the existing institutions such as reforms in the police and in the authorities, decentralization of authorities, anti-corruption efforts, reforms in the sphere of environmental policy, electricity, education, etc.

The analysis of Turkish citizens' affiliations and elites' attitudes towards the enlargement is divided. The majority of the Turkish citizens are not ready yet to accept the potential accession of Turkey to the Union, the elites are not active on the continuation and deepening of the negotiations. The EU membership is not stated as a real goal to be reached and no timeframes are provided and commented by the Turkish governments. The long process of monitoring, in particular in the field of human rights, and the lack of aiming at European membership has dual effects on the Turkish society. A survey shows that while in 2005, the support of the Turkish citizens for EU accession was 70%, in 2006 the Eurobarometer survey presented completely different picture: 43% of the Turkish population were positive towards accession, 35% declared trust in EU perspective, and only 29% answered in support to the idea of Constitution of EU 1000 respondents in Turkey and over 29 000 all over Europe)<sup>1</sup> In 2007, the support for accession has been registered to grow from 32% to 42%, in 2009 – to 48% (Türkler 2009). In 2011, in the last thematic opinion poll, 33% declared that Turkey would become EU member-state sooner or later.

In the last ten years, Turkey has shown certain successes in its domestic and international policies, as many researchers have argued, thanks to the politics of the governing party – Justice and Development Party (AKP). Under the aim of EU membership, some certain measures and reforms have been taken in order to strengthen and sustain democracy. On the other hand, during that governance of AKP, the negotiations between Turkey and EU have been at the lowest point of activity and support. The citizens' protests in the last years have brought back the problem of European enlargement and the potential accession of the Turkish state to EU.

The paper presents the content and the specifics of the EU enlargement policy, its importance and criteria for the candidate-countries, the logistical, institutional and financial support of the European institutions for the candidate countries. The logic of the process of accession of Turkey has been examined, with an emphasis on the governance of the AKP and its leader Erdogan, since 2002. The party has declared a positive attitude and inspiration to force the process of accession by securing the development of economy, encouraging the human rights exercise and stable democracy, and carrying on reforms in order to meet the EU requirements. Turkey has registered a remarkable prosperity for a very short period of ten years – the negotiations with EU have been following the institutional steps, the strengthening and consolidation of democracy has been shared, the serious role of Turkey as a mediator of the peace-going process in the Middle East has been registered. On the

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<sup>1</sup> New Eurobarometer poll results show a drop in Turkish support for the EU (Hurriyet 2013).

other hand, the demonstration and encouragement of unacceptable public and religious projects and support have been considered a threat for the on-going accession negotiations and to the enlargement policy. Turkey needs to face and fit with the new democratic challenges and to make further steps to protect and develop individual freedoms. The increase of the polarization and fragmentation of the society, both European and Turkish, will influence the candidature of Turkey for its membership. An adequate need for meeting the citizens' expectations on behalf of the Turkish government will determine the speed of the enlargement process. The membership of Turkey in EU might introduce both problems and contradictions and positive effects. The implementation of Schengen regulations and Copenhagen criteria, expert analysis of the negotiation chapters could make possible the positive ending of the process. At the same time, the EU institutions have to take Turkey as a key regional actor and to support the on-going democratization. With the new migration pressure to the region of the Balkans, it is challenging to mark any timing for a new wave of EU enlargement. At the same time, Turkey continues to be considered a "big" country at the European Court for Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg for the cases against it for violation of human rights and basic freedoms (in 2014, 10,9% of all the cases at the ECHR were against it) (Turkey 2015). The country has been under on-going monitoring since its accession to the Council of Europe (1949).

The accession policy of EU is specific and varies deeply from country to country even based on meeting one and the same criteria and basic values as democracy, rule of law and human rights. Many researchers from the region divide the candidate countries in two, some in three different groups grounded on the development of the countries registered in the accession meeting criteria. On the one hand, it is Turkey with all its challenges on human rights, minority rights and protection of individual freedoms. On the other hand, these are Albania (candidate country since June 2014), FYROM (candidate country since December 2005) with the no progress dispute on the usage of the name "Macedonia" and increasing its neighbourhood policy; Montenegro (candidate country since December 2010) has opened already the most problematic accession chapters on judicial reform, human rights and security, and Serbia (candidate country since March 2012). And finally, Bosnia and Herzegovina – potential country, with special dialogue and EU support for economic reconstruction, governance and development and implementation of the resolutions of Dalton process, and Kosovo. All the countries are facing a long process of hard efforts on behalf of the political elites as well as on behalf of the national civil societies, for meeting the requirements of stable and functional democracy, rule of law, human rights protection and market economy.

Along with the effects of the world and European financial crisis, the new challenge of the migration flows in Europe and the effects of the transition specifics on each country will characterise the speed and the level of enlarging the map of Europe in the coming decade.

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