

A decorative background consisting of a grid of grey dots of varying sizes, with several larger red dots scattered throughout, primarily in the upper and lower right areas.

Our Responsibility Does Not End at the EU's Borders

For a Committed European Union Enlargement
and Neighbourhood Policy

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- The EU must develop its external capacity to act. In order to achieve this it needs a reinvigorated and responsible policy when dealing with its neighbourhood and with the states involved in the enlargement process.
- The benefits of enlargement outweigh the cost. Putting a general stop to enlargement would cost Europe dearly. This is why the process of EU enlargement must continue. This involves the use of stricter criteria and clearly verifiable progress as well as fairness and the credibility of the EU, especially as regards the countries in the Western Balkans and Turkey.
- The EU's Eastern Partnership needs new focus. The EU must succeed in engaging the partner countries in effective cooperation without being in a position to offer the incentive of tangible membership prospects. This requires greater commitment from the EU.
- As an influential EU Member State, Germany is called upon to advocate for greater credibility, openness, transparency, solidarity and engagement in Europe's enlargement and neighbourhood policy.



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Introduction

After centuries of precarious balances of power and the catastrophes of both world wars, through the integration of states, Europe has managed to restore peace among its peoples. Dictatorships have been overthrown and democracies established in their place. Out of a region plagued by war emerged the largest and most prosperous single market in the world.

Currently, however, the EU finds itself experiencing what is probably the most difficult period of its existence. The debt and refinancing crisis has reached such existential proportions that its outcome is uncertain. The Member States are striving for unity and sustainable solutions. There is agreement in the fundamental conviction that a break up of the European Union would be a real setback from an integration policy point of view and that its consequences would be difficult to predict. Any such break up would weigh heavily upon the future opportunities of future generations.

1. Still on the agenda in times of crisis: the external dimension of Europe

Internal consolidation is of key importance and presents all of Europe's players with some enormous challenges. The strength of the EU's external ability to act is equally significant. Other states are forging their political and economic interests in the world by going it alone and they appear to be gaining influence with their approach, both within Europe and in Europe's immediate neighbourhood. In the international power balance, Europe's influence must not dwindle to the point of insignificance. For the future of our continent and its subsequent generations, it is of the utmost importance that the course is set now for a Europe of unity and solidarity that is capable of meeting the challenges of global developments head on. The European Union will increasingly be called upon to act at international level, not only from an economic standpoint but also politically and militarily. As Europe's most important ally, the United States of America quite rightly views the EU as having increasing responsibilities as an independent global player. The USA itself is pursuing a more restrained policy with regard to the area on Europe's doorstep. Therefore, alongside CFSP and CSDP, the EU needs a reinvigorated, responsible and sustainable policy on how to deal with its neighbourhood and with the states involved in the enlargement process.

2. Enlargement Policy

EU enlargement is a success story

Through the gradual accession of more and more Member States and the communitarisation of many different policy areas, the States of the EC and EU respectively have become the world's largest free trade area. They are, however, first and foremost a historically unprecedented common area of freedom, rights and the peaceful coexistence of many different peoples. We should remind ourselves of this constantly. Yet the possibility of additional Member States joining has been called into question on several occasions, despite the fact that Article 49 Paragraph 1 of the TEU is unequivocal on the subject: »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 (...)«. In the light of the current EU crisis, questions are mounting as to whether the EU is administratively, politically and economically in a position to cope with additional members and whether enlargement actually poses an obstacle to increased cooperation between the current Member States. Alongside the debt and refinancing crisis, the failed constitution process, the significant difficulties encountered in negotiating and ratifying the Lisbon Treaty and also the state of developments in (potential) candidate countries are all serving to strengthen the view that further rounds of EU enlargement can only be contemplated in the distant future at best.

The benefits of enlargement outweigh the cost

Following the accession of the Central and Eastern European countries in 2004, it is not only the countries themselves that have seen considerable benefits but the EU too, both politically and economically. In the time spanning the start of negotiations and accession, EU exports in the accession states more than trebled. A significant part of the high growth rates in the accession countries during this time can be traced back to the enlargement process. There have been major advantages of EU enlargement for Germany's heavily export-based economy. The dreaded onslaught that was predicted to happen on the labour markets of the »old« European countries never materialised. The Central and Eastern EU States have fared better in the crisis than many States that have been Members for much longer. The financial cost of enlargement has resulted in even larger benefits



on both sides. It must be said that the current crisis is mainly revealing the weaknesses of the »old« Member States rather than the failings of the »newer ones«.

The renewed consensus on enlargement reached by the European Council in December 2006 yet again emphasised the synchronicity of consolidation and enlargement through stringent accession negotiations. For additional accession processes, any political deals along the lines of relaxing accession criteria or politicising the accession procedure should be ruled out, as should be the bringing forward of accession deadlines. The early accession of Bulgaria and Romania has shown that accession does not automatically lead to stability, economic prosperity and a deeply rooted culture of democracy. In the meantime, however, steps have been taken to ensure that such mistakes can be avoided in the future and that the mistakes that have been made in the past can gradually be put right.

Halting enlargement would cost Europe dearly

The process of enlargement must not be brought to a halt but should be pursued under clearly defined conditions and with increased monitoring. The negative consequences of an outright stop to enlargement would be considerable for Europe. Any shift in the European perspective would carry the risk of the countries affected turning away from the EU and towards other partners instead. Results that have already been achieved with regard to democracy, good government leadership and reconciliation with neighbouring countries would be called into question or even disintegrate completely. Growing nationalism, reduced stability and recurrent outbreaks of conflicts would be the likely consequences of such a development which would ultimately cause severe political and economic damage to the EU. Reliable European prospects are still important in strengthening peace, democracy and stability in our immediate European neighbourhood. Following the imminent accession of Croatia and, as the case may be, Iceland, it will probably take many years before further accessions are possible. A pause in the process of rapprochement or negotiations between the EU and candidate countries, however, does not mean that the dynamic should be allowed to wane. The efforts made by both sides towards one another must not reach a standstill; the EU and its Member States must maintain and build upon their commitments.

An enlarged EU also has the power to act

In the past, the principle of unanimity meant that with an increasing number of Member States there was the real political threat of a blockade in the decision-making process. The Lisbon Treaty has gone beyond the principle of unanimity in many areas and made it possible for a great many more decisions to be made on the basis of a dual majority. Moreover, the possibility of enhanced cooperation has been extended. Both provisions make it much easier for the EU to act. The speed with which the 27 EU Member States and the 17 countries of the Eurozone respectively were able to make decisions with far-reaching consequences and to advise their national parliaments shows that within the framework of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU-27 are in a position to make important decisions as long as there is political willingness. It is difficult to discern why this ability to act in an EU of 28, 29 or more Member States would essentially cease to exist. This does not mean, however, that in the future no changes of EU policy will be needed, for example, to expand majority decisions even further.

With whom does the EU negotiate accession?

Croatia's EU accession process is almost complete. Alongside Iceland, the EU is also currently negotiating directly with Montenegro and Turkey. Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are candidate countries awaiting the opening of negotiations. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are potential candidate countries but only Albania has formally applied for accession. If the EU is to maintain its credibility, then the negotiations, dialogue and accession process with the abovementioned countries must be carried out in an honest, fair and transparent way.

Fairness and credibility towards countries in the Western Balkans

The EU must stand firm with regard to its conditions but at the same time must honour the commitment made in Thessaloniki in 2003 and maintain European prospects for the Western Balkans. The Western Balkans must not remain a blank spot on the map of the EU in the long term. A strong commitment from the EU and its Member States must not exclusively be coupled with the enlarge-



ment process. The States of the Western Balkans have earned and are in need of Europe's solidarity.

The signing of the accession treaty with Croatia in 2011 and the awarding of candidate status to Serbia in 2012 were key moments for European integration. The developments in Croatia especially are proof that after the devastating wars in the Balkans in the 1990s, it is entirely possible to bring peace, stability, democracy and lastly EU membership to the region. Croatia's example shows the transformational power of the EU's enlargement policy and how it can generate new momentum in the reform processes underway in other enlargement countries. It would therefore be downright irresponsible to signal to the other countries in the Western Balkans that they are somehow not welcome in the EU. The region may well be very heterogeneous but they share many of the same difficulties which the prospect of EU accession could be a decisive factor in solving. Even the prospect of accession is a key point in strengthening the democratic and pro-reform forces in these countries and encouraging the ongoing process of reform.

The same principle applies here too: any country wishing to accede must meet the relevant criteria and share European values. The Western Balkan countries have some major challenges to face in this sense as nationalism, corruption and criminality are widespread and pose obstacles in path towards European integration. In addition to this, there are some major economic and social problems. Constitutional reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the strained relations between Serbia and Kosovo, promotion of democracy, rule of law, press freedom and transparency in Montenegro, Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are all important milestones in the context of accession prospects. Resolution of bilateral and regional conflicts and the recognition of existing borders must also be conditions for EU membership. Furthermore, it is important to strengthen and consolidate the regional cooperation between the countries in the Western Balkans.

Fairness and credibility towards Turkey

Turkey is without doubt the most controversial candidate for EU accession. In Germany and a number of other EU Member States, Turkey's potential accession to the EU has been exploited for party political purposes for years

despite all EU Member States having agreed to open accession negotiations.

The EU and its Member States should stand firm on the pre-existing prospect of accession. It should also be noted, however, that the Erdoğan government's current policies are placing the EU in a difficult position as a negotiating partner. On the one hand is a Turkey which, also thanks to the EU accession process, has changed enormously in recent years. Countless reforms have been implemented, democratic processes have been pursued and the economy is booming. On the other hand there are some worrying developments: domestically, there have been restrictions in the freedom of expression, journalists have been detained and the Kurdish minority conflict flares up time and time again. The decision not to engage with the Cypriot EU Council Presidency was a snub to the EU and certainly did Turkey no favours. Erdoğan's policy in these matters is counterproductive to the EU accession process.

Accession negotiations between the EU and Turkey have stalled. Nevertheless, the fundamental prospect of EU accession for a country's population should not exclusively depend on whichever government is in office at the time. A great deal has been achieved thus far. The processes of reform and democracy must continue. On the back of its economic successes, Turkey has grown in self-confidence. It is increasingly acting as a regional power in its foreign policy and security policy. As such, it is becoming more relevant to the EU especially with regard to the stability of the MENA region and as a player in energy policy. In view of the deadlocked accession negotiations, new forms of closer cooperation between the EU and Turkey will have to be developed. It makes no sense to get further entangled in accession negotiations when they are not moving ahead. The EU Commission's »positive agenda« is one such approach. This, however, must be clearly distinguished from the proposal of a »privileged partnership« emanating from conservative circles and intended as a permanent replacement for EU accession. The EU and Turkey can explore new avenues without abandoning the accession process entirely. A key milestone of progress would be the long overdue implementation of visa liberalisation with Turkey. Alongside the Russian Federation, Turkey is particularly important when it comes to peace and stability in Europe and its neighbouring regions. This must be reflected in all EU policies especially as far as CFSP and ENP are concerned.



Summary

Concerns surrounding a possible EU overload are unfounded. Recent rounds of enlargement have clearly demonstrated that new Member States that meet all of the criteria for EU accession are an asset. For the EU to preserve its integration capacity and sustainability, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Kosovo as well as Turkey must undertake serious efforts to reform and must fulfil all of the necessary criteria. And yet the people in these countries must be able to trust the fact that the EU still has its hand outstretched to them. It was not without good reason that the EU's 2012 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded in allusion to the peacemaking effect of EU enlargement. This effect must also continue into the future.

A successful enlargement policy ought to be based on transparency, credibility and fairness and must take into account the following:

1. The EU must be honest, open and credible.

The EU's recognition of the possibility of further accessions must be clear and unequivocal. The EU and its Member States must demonstrate that they themselves have an interest in accepting new members, as long as all criteria are met. Once the promise of accession prospects has been made, it must be kept.

2. Strict criteria and progress that can clearly be verified are pre-conditions for a successful enlargement process. After twenty years, the Copenhagen criteria still provide an invaluable basis and are the cornerstone of enlargement. An improved monitoring process carries the major opportunity of making accession procedures more transparent and more efficient and would therefore increase acceptance of the accession strategy in the EU Member States. The EU must guarantee transparency in its basic assessment structure and in its procedures. There must be no relaxing of the criteria under any circumstances. Wrongdoing must be criticised clearly and openly. In the accession countries' strategic programmes and in the programming of pre-accession assistance, in view of the central requirements such as, for example, democracy, transparency, rule of law, freedom of the press or treatment of minorities, verifiable benchmarks must be set which make it possible to apply not only the »more for more« principle but also »less for less«.

3. Accession negotiations must start as early as possible and take place over a longer period.

It has often been shown that EU accession negotiations are the main driving force behind reform in candidate countries. The negotiating process itself should therefore start earlier and last longer overall so that the major reform impact of accession negotiations can be triggered and produce sustainable benefits. In order to convey a sense of achievement to the candidate countries and EU alike during accession negotiations lasting a number of years, intermediate targets must be met that are achievable, are easy for people to understand and which are palpable.

4. The rule of law must be at the forefront of negotiations. The European Commission's new strategy of placing a heavier emphasis in future on the rule of law and on reforming public administration and firstly opening and finally closing negotiating chapters 23 and 24 is the correct approach. Convincing progress must be made here from the outset. This way, accession candidates can begin to make reforms in key areas in good time which, from experience, can take a long time but which at the same time are both a prerequisite and driving force for successful reforms in other areas. Even before the start of the official accession negotiations the contents of chapters 23 and 24 should be processed together, possibly within the framework of preliminary negotiations.

5. Accession procedures must be transparent for the populations of the EU Member States. Even prior to the outbreak of the euro crisis, there were some major concerns expressed by the populations of EU Member States about additional countries joining. The fact that in the face of the crisis this scepticism only grew is understandable. This scepticism must be taken seriously but should not be misused to stir up fears about EU enlargement using populist means. The subject of enlargement should not be swept under the carpet. Not only the EU Commission but the political players in the individual Member States too must repeatedly and openly state their positions, explain them and solicit support.

6. In the process of EU rapprochement and during accession, there must be involvement from civil society and various different levels of structures in the candidate country. A critical public opinion in the candidate country and their assessment of the developments should be heard by the EU. Only when EU accession and the



reforms associated with it are seen as progress and are supported by society as well will it actually be possible for integration to succeed. It is important to have involvement from many different levels all the way through to municipal structures.

With regard to the monitoring process, in addition to the mechanisms that already exist, there could be stronger integration of civil society and thought could be given to setting up observation missions, financed through an extended facility to promote civil society. Furthermore, there could be an evaluation of whether an initial consultation of the draft progress reports in the form of round tables between government and civil society in the respective accession countries could make a contribution towards societal acceptance of the Community's canon of values. The EU's progress reports are often based on information from the governments in question. There should be greater inclusion of civil society perspectives or from levels beneath the government in order to increase the meaningfulness of progress reports.

7. Social aspects must play a more prominent role. Social and societal challenges such as unemployment, lack of prospects for young people, the widening gap between rich and poor, demographic change, equal opportunities and social justice, migration and integration do not only affect the EU Member States, they are just as topical for the (potential) candidate countries. This is emerging very clearly in the Western Balkan countries. Therefore these aspects deserve to be paid closer attention and more common strategies should be developed.

8. No country is to receive a political waiver. Even when the start date of negotiations is brought forward, the obstacles to actual accession should in no way be lowered. The previously agreed conditions of the EU must be met with no exceptions.

3. Neighbourhood Policy

The objective of the EU's neighbourhood policy is to promote prosperity and stability as well as peace and security within the immediate neighbourhood. It does so with the aim of improving the situation of its neighbouring countries, which is also beneficial to its own economy and security. For the EU and its Member States it is a question of preventing war, violence and its side effects (e.g. uncontrolled migration), the dissemination

of individual values (respect for human rights, free and democratic order, rule of law, market economy) as well as access to markets and resources (raw materials, energy, skilled workforce). Through rapprochement with the EU, non-EU States pledge to deliver increased prosperity, political and economic stability as well as peace and security. At the same time, however, other countries in the EU's immediate neighbourhood continue to pursue their political and economic interests in order to gain influence, and not without success.

European neighbourhood policy lacks momentum

Both the Southern and the Eastern European Neighbourhood policies lack momentum. This is how the French Mediterranean Union initiative failed in the absence of tangible results, long before the outbreak of the Arab rebellions which overburdened the EU. There is an urgent need for the EU and its Member States to develop new and effective strategies for cooperation with the states in the Southern neighbourhood and Arab countries in the process of reorganisation, in order to support them in the process of establishing democratic and economic stability.

In the time being, however, we should turn our attentions to the Eastern Partnership (EP). Germany should play a special role here in the development and implementation of new initiatives. Proposals concerning the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa) will be covered in a separate paper.

Continued development of the Eastern Partnership

The Eastern Partnership which was created on the basis of a Polish-Swedish initiative needs to be reorganised. In the six countries of the Eastern Partnership (Belarus, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia), the EU is pursuing the objective of stabilising its neighbourhood and in doing so is contributing towards economic success and the development of constitutional democracies under the rule of law. From the EU's perspective, such a policy is also in Russia's interest. Russia, however, views the situation differently to a certain extent: it views the majority of countries in the EP as spheres of interest, took offence at the creation of the EP and has turned down offers of cooperation within



this framework. Association with the EU is by no means intended to be the only option for the countries of the EP. On the contrary: these countries are actively seeking out ways of furthering their own development. Some fluctuate between a closer association with Russia, the EU or Turkey and China. Whether or not the EU becomes the preferred partner of the countries in this region depends on how attractive its policies are. The EU should promote change through cooperation in this region rather than calling for changes that have already taken place.

Involving Russia as a strategic partner

Despite the alarming events presently taking place in the Russian Federation in conjunction with President Putin's third term of office, Russia is and will remain a highly important strategic partner for the EU, politically as well as economically. Even if the EU and Russia have different opinions on matters relating to the Eastern Partnership, the EU must continue to make clear to Russia that its neighbourhood policy is not directed against Russia. This is why dialogue with Russia must form part of the policy on the Eastern Partnership. A »Cold War« over the EP countries is neither in the interests of the countries themselves nor the EU, Russia, China or Turkey. On the contrary, working constructively together with other major players is in the interests of all involved.

Conditionality: necessary means of exerting pressure or hindrance?

In the Eastern Neighbourhood, the EU has some difficult partners to deal with: the countries show substantial shortcomings in terms of rule of law, democracy and human rights. For enlargement policy it is important that the EU maintains rigorous conditionality as this is the only way of safeguarding an enlarged EU's capacity to act. The EU needs incentives and »means of exerting pressure« in neighbourhood policy too. Applying stricter conditionality, however, makes cooperation more difficult. The EU must stand firm on its values, openly report wrongdoing and demand reform otherwise it stands to lose all credibility. At the same time, the partner countries need to be met in the middle, where they currently stand; otherwise conditionality would quickly become a hindrance. Deep-seated changes in line with European values cannot be a prerequisite for dialogue and cooperation; they remain

the goal. A policy of taking small steps at a time can achieve a great deal, especially when alongside the (often difficult) governments, progressive forces on various levels and the population are also involved.

EU accession: not on the agenda but not categorically ruled out

There is no question of EU accession for any of the EP countries at the moment or for the foreseeable future. This presents an additional major obstacle when it comes to shaping European policy but the prospect of accession has proven on several occasions to be the strongest driving force for reform and a factor in establishing connections. Accession of the aforementioned countries can not, however, be categorically ruled out for all time, as provided for by Article 49, paragraph 1 of the Treaty on the European Union. Rather it should depend much more on the future development of each individual country. Neighbourhood policy must therefore succeed in ensuring close and effective cooperation from the partner countries in the long term, without being able to offer the incentive of concrete accession prospects.

Neighbourhood policy must not appear as a carbon copy of enlargement policy without accession prospects. This requires a stronger overall commitment from the EU but also new impetus for the instruments in the Eastern Partnership.

Summary

1. Adoption of the principles of democracy and rule of law cannot be made into a *sine qua non* condition for each cooperation. The EU Commission's principle of »more for more« must not be misconstrued as »more or nothing«. The principle of »rewarding« progress through increased aid, more intensive cooperation and the gradual opening up of markets remains the correct approach. It is not correct, however, for the absence of this progress to mean that all cooperation is ruled out. Substantial reforms in line with European values must be the objective but cannot be the prerequisite for cooperation between the EU and the EP countries.

2. Differences in policy approaches must be taken into account. Cooperation with states that do not opt for a



shift towards democracy and rule of law must be differentiated from the enhanced cooperation with partners that have made more progress in these areas. Countries such as Azerbaijan or Belarus, which have declared that they have no interest in developments in this sense, should not be treated with the same political approach as Ukraine or the Republic of Moldova which are edging towards a European perspective.

3. Cooperation within the framework of the Eastern Partnership must incorporate civil society and various different levels of structures. All measures, but also the fundamental decision for or against certain reform initiatives, must be discussed with government authorities as well as players from civil society. Change comes from broad-based convergence therefore through economic, political, cultural and societal exchange in equal measure. Accordingly, civil society forums and the use of successful EU programmes must be extended to include the partner countries. Increased cooperation with the levels that sit beneath the government, for example at municipal level, has the potential to achieve engagement and progress quickly for the people.

4. Negotiations surrounding association agreements, free trade agreements and visa facilitation agreements must press on. Negotiations with the individual EP countries are at different stages of development and should be spurred on. Setbacks such as those seen in the negotiations on an association agreement with Ukraine are frustrating but should not lead to a termination of the process nor should efforts wane. Visa facilitation is a key factor in rapprochement as travel allows people in the partner countries to experience Europe.

5. The countries in the Eastern Partnership are free to cooperate with the EU as well as with other partners. For the countries of the Eastern Partnership to have a strong interest in cooperating with their large and influential neighbours Russia, Turkey or China is only natural. As sovereign states they are free to cooperate with a multitude of partners. As long as they are not wishing to join the EU there must also be no »integration competition« engineered in the sense of an »either/or«. This means that Ukraine can also cooperate in different ways with the Russian-led initiative of a customs union without a contradiction in the association agreement being negotiated between the EU and Ukraine. If cooperation with the EU is seen as attractive and positive for these coun-

tries and leads to changes that make a difference, they will also begin to attach the corresponding value to it.

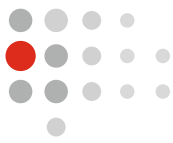
6. The EU needs a sincere and proactive information policy. Dialogue with the EP countries must be accompanied by a proactive information policy. In the light of the current economic and sovereign debt crisis, this information policy is needed now more than ever. For, in the interests of the European economic and social model's »competitiveness«, it is crucial to present the EU's capacity for further development and solidarity-based problem solving in a dynamic way. Euroscepticism is not only to be found in the EU but in countries in Europe's neighbourhood too. This scepticism must be tackled with an open, honest and self-assured policy of information.

7. There must be better coordination across the EU. To a certain extent the individual EU Member States have different interests in the countries of the Eastern Partnership and equally have varying degrees of interest in the process as a whole. Poland, Sweden and Germany can be a driving force but other EU countries must be involved too if there is to be a greater commitment.

Conclusion

If the European Union is to retain and strengthen its position globally, it must adopt a stronger outward-looking approach. This is shown very clearly by action on the EU's own doorstep. Within the framework of enlargement and neighbourhood policy there are a number of effective tools on offer which must be used intelligently and further optimised. The EU will be at its most successful when it manages to reach out to the populations of the ENP and (potential) candidate countries respectively.

Enlargement and neighbourhood policy both require new impetus and a strong commitment from the EU and its Member States. As an influential EU country, Germany is called upon and is in the position to work towards an enlargement policy based on greater credibility, openness, transparency, solidarity and commitment in the ENP.



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