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FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION

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European security and enlargement: shifts in public opinion

**REPORT**

submitted on behalf of the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations by  
John Greenway, (United Kingdom, Federated Group) and Alejandro Muñoz Alonso  
(Spain, Federated Group), Rapporteurs



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Report transmitted to: the President of the Council of WEU; the Secretary-General of the WEU; the President of the Council of the European Union; the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy; the President of the European Commission; the EU Commissioner for institutional relations and communication strategy; the Presidents/Speakers and the Chairmen of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and European Affairs Committees of the 39 national parliaments represented in the Assembly; the Presidents of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Baltic Assembly, the Nordic Council, the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the CIS Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation; the President of the European Parliament; the Secretaries General of the Parliamentary Assemblies of the Council of Europe, NATO and the OSCE.

*European security and enlargement: shifts in public opinion*

**REPORT<sup>1</sup>**

*submitted on behalf of the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations by John Greenway, (United Kingdom, Federated Group) and Alejandro Muñoz Alonso (Spain, Federated Group), Rapporteurs*

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MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted by the Committee on 4 November 2009.

**RECOMMENDATION 851<sup>2</sup>**

***on European security and enlargement: shifts in public opinion***

The Assembly,

- (i) Concerned that enthusiasm for pursuing EU eastward enlargement is waning;
- (ii) Disturbed to note a growing pessimism among the public at large in EU applicant countries, weary of the many unanticipated obstacles encountered with the convergence procedures and in the accession negotiations;
- (iii) Alert to the strategic interest in establishing a common security area at the geopolitical level;
- (iv) Welcoming the emphasis given to the security aspects of enlargement in the recent report of the Independent Commission on Turkey;
- (v) Wishing to use the Assembly's unique position as a forum where parliamentarians from EU member states and neighbouring and applicant countries can come together,

RECOMMENDS THAT THE COUNCIL INVITE THE WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION MEMBER STATES, AS MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, TO:

1. Seek to maintain a balance in EU priorities so that sight is not lost of common security and defence aspects among a welter of economic and social concerns for the future;
2. Be mindful of public expectation which is to a large extent favourable to the development of a common security policy and give greater visibility to the security dimension of any future enlargement;
3. Give increased priority to communication policy in order to bring into sharper focus the strategic advantages rather than the constraints of EU enlargement and provide greater clarity to decisions and strategic initiatives;
4. Make a more sustained effort to resolve long-standing disagreements between member states and accession countries which inhibit enlargement and frustrate efforts to build stability and achieve greater security for Europe as a whole.

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<sup>2</sup> Adopted by the Assembly on 3 December 2009 at the 4<sup>th</sup> sitting.

**EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM**

*submitted by John Greenway (United Kingdom, Federated Group) and  
Alejandro Muñoz Alonso (Spain, Federated Group), Rapporteurs*

**I. Introduction**

1. Five years on from the biggest wave of enlargement the European Union has known so far, the time has come to take stock of public opinion regarding the new situation of an EU of 27 countries. We shall consider most closely its security and defence aspects to try and understand whether, in the aftermath of enlargement, the general view is that the Union is in a better position to deal with crises and whether its citizens, taken as a whole, feel more secure. We shall assess whether European defence plans meet with acceptance and are understood by the population at large and we shall present an overview of developments to date and what still needs to be done. Parliamentarians, like other European Security and Defence Policy actors, must above all be mindful of changing trends in public perceptions, so as to tailor their discourse constantly towards achieving a wider understanding of policy choices. As the means available for making such an assessment are limited, we look to statistics and the results of opinion polls to help us form an initial conclusion.

2. In this latest economic crisis, the Europe of the 27 has shown it is able to pull together. The fact that there is a common currency no doubt means that the member states are more or less in the same situation and has brought home to Europeans how close a relationship they have with one another. Luckily, however, no political crises have arisen to put their common security interests and the advantage of being part of a closely-knit community of states like the Union to the test. In the crisis that arose between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 only the most astute analysts perceived the significance of the European Union position. Members of the wider public did not see in that conflict a threat that might disrupt their everyday lives.

3. This lack of awareness of an immediate threat is a failing to which attention has been drawn in other reports that the Committee has submitted to the Assembly. Thus the report by the late lamented Lord Burlison<sup>3</sup> pointed out that the awareness, among the public at large and in the media, of terrorist threats diminished the further away (geographically speaking) they were perceived to be. Few people have any understanding of the reasons behind the military missions in various parts of the world: intervention in Afghanistan, in particular, is seen as highly problematic in the eyes of the public in Europe. More recently the report<sup>4</sup> submitted by the Vice-Chairman of this Committee, Marco Zacchera, gave an initial overview of the state of public opinion following the last two rounds of EU enlargement and drew the conclusion that most people did not feel any more secure as a result.

4. Although generally speaking citizens see the advantages of ties between European countries whose territories are adjacent or are geographically close to one another within the boundaries of the European Union, they are also aware of and tend to focus on the drawbacks: highly visible sources of insecurity in contiguous areas suddenly seem that much closer – the bilateral crises between the Balkans states for instance; the permeability of internal borders which no longer suffice to contain organised crime; the rapid knock-on effects that political instability in some countries can have for their neighbours, in terms of emigration and economic crisis. These negative effects tend to be uppermost among peoples' day-to-day concerns, to a large extent eclipsing in their minds the long-term positive benefits of collective protection against other threats.

5. That being the case, how are we to keep persuading our citizens of the need to implement policies that are guided by a long-term vision? How can we bring home to them the fact that common

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<sup>3</sup> See Assembly Document 1949 adopted on 20 December 2006: "Changing perceptions of terrorism in public opinion and the media", submitted on behalf of the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations by Lord Burlison (United Kingdom, Socialist Group), Rapporteur.

<sup>4</sup> See Assembly Document 1973 adopted on 5 June 2007: "Stability and security in Europe: the challenge of enlargement as reflected in public opinion", submitted on behalf of the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations by Marco Zacchera, Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur (Italy, Federated Group), and Anca Petrescu, co-Rapporteur (Romania).

security is a fundamental aspect of European Union and that candidate countries must make every effort to contribute added value for the existing group of member states, rather than the burden of their uncertain situations?

## *II. Perception of Europe's borders*

6. The quest to define criteria for establishing Europe's borders was abandoned after the June 2006 European Council, geographic, cultural and historic criteria having been deemed useful but not wholly adequate and, moreover, variable over time. For public opinion, therefore, Europe's borders remain a vague notion, which does not help simplify the task of enlargement. The question is as relevant as ever, since the new candidate countries are further away still and less homogeneous than the former Eastern bloc countries. Although looking at the map people can perceive the advantages of having a continuous zone of security, they nonetheless have a feeling of a loss of identity and of uncertainty.

7. The political class is divided over whether or not it is necessary for the European Union first to set firm borders, thus putting a limit on its size, even though this would give the Union a well-defined framework for shaping its institutional development, and its citizens a clearer idea of where they stood. Some are convinced that this clear demarcation of territory is necessary if the idea of a common European home is to gain acceptance. Others take a more pragmatic view, aware that the massive enlargement precipitated by the fall of the Berlin wall has still not been assimilated by the peoples concerned and that a period of adjustment is necessary during which it would be premature to insist on a firm definition of Europe's borders. Therefore, we are currently in a transitional phase with public opinion pulling one way and legal requirements another, thus acting as a brake on or impediment to progress towards further enlargement. So in their attempt to chart a balanced course, political decision-makers certainly have their work cut out for them.

8. Widely differing attitudes prevail towards the various applicant countries on the outer fringes of the European Union as they do not fall neatly into one category. Iceland, the most recent candidate for membership, already meets the membership criteria and there is no attitudinal difficulty as far as the peoples of Europe are concerned towards its acceptance. The man or woman in the street might in fact think that Iceland is already an EU member state. Other countries, like Croatia, forming part of the clutch that constituted the first wave of EU enlargement were for a time held at arm's length because of their internal political instability. Once this had settled down, they fulfilled the conditions already agreed for other countries. Turkey is a case apart. As a NATO member state and a pillar of Western defence in Europe, its quest for EU accession dates back almost 50 years. Notwithstanding the progress it has made with its application and the fact that it is already considered as adequately fulfilling the required criteria, when it comes to popular opinion in Europe, EU membership for Turkey is seen as highly controversial and consequently treated with kid gloves by those with the power of political decision.

9. As to the new states born of the fragmentation of the Balkans, here the problem is whether their foundations are firm enough: some have settled borders while others are at an intermediate stage between some form of regional autonomy and full statehood. The conflicts that divide them are worrying and the general view is that they are not thought to be reliable partners. Not all EU member states have the same attitude to these new countries which obviously makes decision-making "at 27" a complicated matter since if some member states withhold recognition of a name or a territory it can set back a country's accession prospects even further.

10. The European Union must endeavour to hammer out a legal doctrine enabling it to evaluate the situation of the Balkan states objectively. To become a member of an international organisation – what the United Nations requires of a country can equally well apply for the European Union, a state must show that it is independent, viable and able to pay its way – it is unacceptable for a supposedly independent applicant state to be reliant exclusively on aid from international institutions – and that it has the appropriate institutions to conduct a dialogue on an equal footing with other countries on the international stage. This could be a useful point of departure.

### *III. The state of public opinion five years after eastward enlargement*

11. The Union would appear to have amply demonstrated its capacity for absorbing and integrating other countries. There have been five years of rock-solid progress in that direction and public anxiety at the rising tide of enlargement is gradually ebbing.

12. On 20 February 2009 the European Commission adopted a Communication on Five Years of an Enlarged EU (COM(2009)79 final). This essentially economic analysis notes that the accession of 12 countries between 2004 and 2007 benefitted the European Union as a whole as the new members enjoyed a markedly higher standard of living and the existing members were able to take advantage of widening export and investment opportunities. The enlargement process more generally helped build and consolidate democracy, stability and security on the continent. The economic crisis also put the cohesion of EU states as a whole to the test, and it was found that countries like Slovenia which had adopted the euro were more able to ride out the consequences than their neighbours that still retained their national currencies.

13. The fears of the old-established member states regarding competition from the newer members for markets or from their workers in search of jobs have proved ill-founded. Although public opinion was openly sceptical, the hard economic facts about the wider Europe do not bear out the disastrous scenarios such fears evoked. Today the enlarged Europe is the world's largest economic area accounting for more than 30% of world gross industrial product and over 17% of world trade. In the new member states per capita income went up from 40% of the average for the old-established member states in 1999 to 52% in 2008, while growth in 2004-2008 was approximately 5.5%, as against 3.5% prior to 2004. However, this improvement was not achieved at the expense of the older member states which maintained an annual rate of growth of roughly 2.2%. Even internal migration remained low, never rising above 1% of the population of working age, and the number of people returning to their own country now clearly shows a rising trend.

14. The Commission, in its analysis, also feels satisfied with the way the 27 countries are able to live side by side and with the way enlargement has served as an anchor for stability and a driving force for democracy and the rule of law in Europe. The EU is making progress as a major actor on the world stage, and its presence in crisis zones is increasingly to be reckoned with, and respected. Participation by the new members in ESDP operations is entirely satisfactory and the effort put in by certain states that once formed part of the former Eastern bloc, given their modest technical resources, is truly commendable.

15. On the security front, however, the predominant view continues to be somewhat negative. For more than half of those surveyed the tearing down of the iron curtain had given rise to feelings of greater insecurity: 53% of women and 49% of men feared its consequences. Following the 2004 EU enlargement, the citizens of the old-established member states were even less satisfied: public opinion in Denmark (77%), Ireland and Malta (73%) continued to be in favour but this was not the case for Portugal (42%), Italy (46%) and Belgium (49%). Security, as referred to in the February 2009 Eurobarometer survey report, has very little to do with the notion of stability in the political and military sense but rather seems to be defined in terms of the threat from organised crime and illegal immigration. In point of fact, owing to the permeability of borders and the internationalisation of organised crime, the most immediate threats are the ones that make the greatest impression on public opinion and receive regular attention from the media. Furthermore the causes of insecurity are perceived differently according to countries' geographic location. The countries in the southern part of the European Union are on the frontline of illegal immigration and trafficking by sea, while those in the east have the political and economic instability of the Balkans on their doorstep, generating other forms of pressure at the border. Public opinion in Sweden or Denmark does not have the same view of what is a threat as the citizens of Italy or Spain.

### *IV. Public opinion in neighbour and applicant countries*

16. In August 2009 a Gallup Balkan Monitor survey sounded the alarm about so-called enlargement fatigue among public opinion in the Balkan countries. Although European integration remains a priority for the majority of people there, they have become considerably less optimistic. The survey

points out that until the Kosovo crisis the EU's engagement in the region, aimed at supporting the Balkan countries on the path towards European integration, was both visible and popular. However, once the tension had abated, the question seemed to slip lower down the EU's list of priorities. The survey examines the diversity of situations from one country to another and gives a statistical analysis that paints a very complex picture of the perceptions and expectations of the different ethnic groups with regard to enlargement. Each of these cherishes political ambitions but is encountering problems on the path to integration: conflicts between minority groups and displacements of the population along ethnic lines stand in the way of the emergence of a cohesive view among the public opinion within each country, which remains divided and often has conflicting objectives. The accession criteria are also dampening the expectations of the citizens of these countries who appear to suffer the transformations demanded of them without fully grasping their complexity. The Gallup survey deplores a lack of communication in this area, moreover the media are not always clear and credible or trusted by opposition groups.

17. This chapter will be taken up with a brief round-up of the situation of countries that have attained the status of EU applicants or expect to do so, paying attention to trends in local public opinion towards the European Union.

### *1. Croatia*

18. According to the enlargement calendar, the next country due to join the European Union is Croatia which has already met most of the accession criteria. The reforms negotiated in 2005 regarded as necessary to enable the country to meet western standards – particularly in the areas of justice, eradicating corruption and cooperation with the war crimes investigations conducted by the International Criminal Tribunal on the former Yugoslavia – have now been implemented. The process was interrupted due to a veto by Slovenia because of a dispute, now resolved, over the drawing of the maritime and land borders between the two countries, a hurdle which European mediation efforts have been at pains to surmount. On 12 March 2009, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the position as regards Croatia's accession (Croatia: progress report 2008), by 548 votes in favour to 40 against with 34 abstentions. This underlines that “bilateral issues should not be an obstacle to progress in accession negotiations, provided these [accession] negotiations are not used to pre-empt the final settlement of such issues” but urges, nevertheless, the Croatian Government and the governments of the neighbouring countries to solve expeditiously all their outstanding issues as “good neighbourly relations remain a key element of the European integration process”, and “recalls the informal agreement reached on 26 August 2007 by the Prime Ministers of Croatia and Slovenia on the submission of their border dispute to an international body”. Commissioner Olli Rehn, addressing the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs on 2 September 2009, noted that the impasse continued for the moment, but was cautiously optimistic that the negotiations could be brought to a conclusion in the course of 2010. The point was taken in Ljubljana and Zagreb and an agreement to resolve the dispute was signed on 11 September. It is expected that during November an agreement will be signed and ratified by both countries to allow for disagreements over borders, particularly in the Adriatic, to be settled by arbitration. The calming of the dispute will therefore make it possible to open all remaining chapters which are still to be negotiated, among them those dealing with foreign policy, security, defence and with institutions.

19. At this stage, opening new negotiating chapters is much more important to Croatia than closing them. It will be a positive signal and inspire greater confidence that the country is moving towards Europe. In fact, a special Eurobarometer survey on Croatia's accession conducted in autumn 2006 showed a perceptible drop in the levels of confidence Croats had in the European Union because of the difficulty of making progress. There was a much higher consensus in favour (55%) when it came to the question of economic benefits. Croatia's NATO accession in 2009 met with the approval of 75% of respondents. It is interesting to compare this rating with that in 2006 relating to ESDP when a very large majority of Croats (71%) were in favour of a common European security policy. According to the August 2009 Gallup Balkan Monitor survey, the mood in Croatia is increasingly pessimistic: only 29% of respondents were convinced that EU membership was a good thing, while 26% disagreed and 38% were undecided. Nonetheless, the prospect of EU accession in 2013 meets with the general approval of public opinion.

## **2. Iceland**

20. On 28 May 2009, Iceland's Foreign Minister submitted a request to parliament for advance approval for the country's making an application to join the European Union. Parliament voted in favour on 16 July, although only by 33 votes to 28 with two abstentions, which dampened the initial enthusiasm. The government therefore began the accession procedure, and at the same time pledged to hold a referendum at a later date. The determination of the country's leaders to be responsive to the wishes of the electorate is clear from the publication on the government's website of the official questionnaire (with over 2 000 questions and divided into 33 chapters dealing with the entire community acquis) sent to the government by the European authorities. Iceland's objective is to ensure that the December 2009 European Council agrees to its applying for accession and grants it official applicant status.

21. Successive opinion polls show public opinion hostile or favourable by turns to the country's application, the highest degree of support (60% in favour) coinciding with the lowest point of the economic crisis. In parliament itself, EU accession has divided the political parties: only the social democrats are roundly in favour, all the other parties disagree amongst themselves and tend to fight shy of committing themselves. People never talk of "joining" the European Union but of starting negotiations with a view possibly to joining, and the parties have allowed their members a free vote on the issue. In the conservative camp some are inclined towards joining the euro without going into the EU. Professional bodies are also divided in their opinion. The unions are for entry, the farmers are against, believing that their produce is currently better protected against competition; likewise the fishing industry, worried about giving up a 200-mile wide exclusive economic zone around the coast. Following the collapse of the banking system and the wider Icelandic economy, fishing has regained much of its importance and is the country's main activity. Fish stocks are being depleted and giving other EU fishing fleets access to them would bring about an immediate loss of earnings. None of Iceland's neighbours: Greenland and the Faroe islands to the west and south and Norway to the east, are EU members. Some Icelanders feel closer to America than to Europe. Iceland has only recently acquired independence, having broken away from Denmark less than 70 years ago. Some fear that accession to the EU might call that independent status into question – a risk that should not be underestimated when the time comes for holding the planned referendum. A poll carried out in March 2009 shows a trend away from membership: 40% for, 45% against, and 15% undecided. A Gallup poll conducted in May 2009 showed that 39% were still in favour. Political commentators in Brussels view Iceland's application, which has not had a particularly enthusiastic reception in the capitals of Europe, as somewhat suspect. Paris and Berlin have said that nothing would happen until the Treaty of Lisbon had been fully ratified and had entered into force. Moreover, it is hardly likely that Iceland will be allowed to join before Croatia. Furthermore the results are awaited of a parliamentary fact-finding study set up to elucidate the causes and consequences of the country's economic collapse. Such studies could dampen the ardour of the strongest advocates for joining the European Union and the single currency.

22. Moreover, when it comes to economic integration, Iceland is already a member of the EEA (European Economic Area) along with Norway and Liechtenstein and has therefore incorporated and implemented most European directives, giving it all the advantages of Europe without any of the disadvantages. Iceland, a rich country only a year ago before its banks went under, jibbed at contributing to the European Union Solidarity Fund. However, the wind has changed and it is now looking for a new form of stability within a wider security area. If EU accession will help it meet those concerns, any residual hesitation it may have will easily be overcome.

## **3. Turkey**

23. The Treaty of Ankara signed in 1963 between the European Economic Community and the Republic of Turkey can be regarded as containing the seeds of Turkey's application for EU membership, although the country did not formally apply to join until 1987 and its application was not accepted until 1999. The negotiation process between the EU and Turkey intended to lead to the latter's accession was launched officially in 2005, but economic, legal and social changes had already been set in train well before then. The way Turkish society is organised has undergone considerable

change at every level and globalisation has accelerated the modernisation of a society whose centuries-old structures had changed very little even by the end of the second world war.

24. Already in 1952 Turkey's position, geopolitically speaking, justified its membership of the Atlantic Alliance and throughout the cold war period Europeans indubitably viewed Turkey and its territory as essential to their common security. With the tearing down of the Iron Curtain, Turkey emerged as the leading light in the establishment of a shared economic zone in the Black Sea area and as a marker for the small states of the Caucasus which hastened to conclude bilateral agreements with their large neighbour. Yet, on the military front, Turkey's membership of the Atlantic Alliance led to a cooling of bilateral relations as Turkish policies were often perceived as the manifestation of US dominance in the region and today Turkey's position in the face of the current conflicts is the result of a difficult diplomatic balancing act.

25. Within the framework of the EU accession process a Secretariat General for EU Affairs has been set up within the Turkish Government and an information campaign launched in order to educate public opinion in Turkey and get Turkish citizens used to the idea of the necessary transformations that are gradually being implemented, chapter by chapter, through reforms approved by parliament. Surveys reveal two thirds of the population view EU accession positively as conducive to economic prosperity. Concerns about national identity and fears about the loss of traditional values are nonetheless obstacles: hence the information conveyed through the media is of paramount importance for reassuring public opinion. In the longer term, the advantages of a better informed society, with freedom of speech, conscious of its cultural identity and firmly rooted in the 21st century should bring the Turks into line with European conceptions of politics and political life. According to a report published by the European Commission in autumn 2007, the army is the institution perceived by the Turks to be the most reliable (84%): security is a widespread concern in Turkey, although the international problem uppermost in peoples' minds (77%) is that of terrorism. Europe is perceived as a source of economic benefits (61% in spring 2005, 54% in autumn 2006 and 57% in 2007), yet only 33% consider that it will bring social progress. According to the latest barometers published by the newspaper *Hurriyet*, the Turkish people's level of confidence in the European Union stands at around 35%.

26. As the recent report<sup>5</sup> of the Independent Commission on Turkey chaired by former Finnish President Martti Ahtissari notes, a number of changes have been made but reform, costly and achieved only with difficulty, is not supported by all political parties, nor indeed by large swathes of the population. The inadequate nature of the reforms Turkey has been prepared to make has strengthened European nations' opposition to Turkey's accession and the feeling of being excluded emanating from Ankara has simply discouraged further supporters of reform in the country, thus creating a vicious circle. At present, of the 35 chapters for negotiation, only one – that dealing with science and scientific research – has been closed. 15 or so more are still being discussed and a start has not been made as yet on those remaining. Among these last are the chapter on foreign policy, security and defence, where not even an outline proposal has been put forward.

27. The Independent Commission's report deplores the fact that "negative reactions (...) from European political leaders and growing hesitation by the European public about further enlargement, have given Turkey the impression that it is not welcome, even if it were to fulfil all membership conditions". Conditions to be met for accession seem continually to be raised to more stringent levels than for other candidate countries. Psychologically this has been the most discouraging aspect of the the way Europeans are behaving. Turks feel that the European Union has deliberately put the countries of the former Soviet bloc before a long-standing western ally and NATO member. As far as European public opinion goes, one might wonder whether it is the political leadership that sets the tone or if the latter takes its cue from the fears and conservatism that inevitably surfaces especially in periods of economic recession. According to a statement by Pierre Lellouche to the European Affairs Committee of the French National Assembly on 16 September 2009, there would appear to be widespread opposition to future EU membership for Turkey. France and Germany are to date the only EU member

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<sup>5</sup> "Turkey in Europe: Breaking the vicious circle", report of the Independent Commission on Turkey, September 2009.

states to have come out openly against Turkey's entry, arguing instead for a "special partnership" with Ankara. However, behind them, ranged in their shadow, are many other countries that share the same opinions but dare not say so openly.

28. NATO membership has made Turkey an important and committed actor in the majority of international military missions. When it comes to ESDP operations, cooperation between NATO and the EU through the Berlin Plus agreements necessarily involves third countries that can participate if they so wish in joint crisis-management operations. In 1999, the Helsinki Summit approved Turkish involvement in the Rapid Reaction Force and public awareness began to be raised about ESDP programmes from the point of view of a non-EU member state – an argument often advanced to speed up the accession process. Turkey's contribution to crisis management in its region (for example, recently in Lebanon) has often taken the form of logistical aid, with Turkey offering its bases and territory to support allied operations. Turkish diplomacy is also highly active when it comes to the Middle East conflict, offering its good offices to the West and acting as a bridge between the latter and its Muslim neighbours. There is no other country that can better take on the role and in this Turkey holds a trump card that European political leaders could bring into play in order to overcome resistance among the general public to Turkish EU membership.

29. All these matters were discussed, during a mission by the Committee to Ankara on 15 October, with Turkish parliamentarians in the Foreign Affairs and European Integration Committees, before the ESDA parliamentarians were received by the Minister for European Affairs, Mr Egemen Bağış, chief negotiator in the EU accession talks. The key theme of these meetings was the role that parliamentarians might play in providing the impetus for dialogue with citizens. The Turkish authorities feel that the public at large, in both the European Union and Turkey, is suffering from enlargement fatigue or becoming distinctly lukewarm about the project. A particular focus was placed on common security, an area where Turkey can make a significant contribution to the EU: given its geopolitical situation, Turkey is essential for regional stability and developing good relations. Mr Bağış deplored that discussions on foreign and security policy had still not started largely because of the failure to move forward on Cyprus. Turkey favours a proactive security policy in the region. Seven Turkish Government ministers are working with their counterparts in Iraq to restore bilateral institutional and economic relations, and for several years now Turkey has had good neighbourly relations with Syria. These two developments show that as far as the Kurdish question is concerned, normality is being restored – something that seemed unimaginable just five years ago. Mr Bağış underlined that trade with Iran was growing and a protocol had been signed with Armenia which aimed to reopen the borders between the two countries. But the Turkish authorities feel that the EU will not budge however, with some European leaders doing their utmost to delay the accession process and giving the impression that no matter what Turkey does it will never fulfil the requested criteria, as increasingly rigorous demands are being made.

30. Turkish parliamentarians participate in several interparliamentary bodies dealing with common security, including the ESDA and the assemblies of NATO, OSCE and the Council of Europe, which are the only European forums where they can express themselves. Since a number of WEU bodies were placed under EU competence, however, Turkey has lost the opportunity to take part in decision-making processes. Turkish Government hopes are therefore increasingly pinned on a parliamentary initiative that will raise public awareness of the advantages of Turkey joining the EU. Turkey points out that it is a win-win situation for both parties if we want a peaceful and stable Europe that is an effective player on the world stage.

#### ***4. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia***

31. The European Council granted the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia candidate status on 16 December 2005. In its report published a year later, the Commission noted satisfactory progress with the ongoing reform process. Judging by Commissioner Olli Rehn's statements before the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs on 2 September 2009, the country can expect to receive the green light from the Commission for the opening of accession negotiations before the end of the year: this was confirmed on 14 October with the adoption of the annual strategy document

explaining its enlargement policy. A visa agreement signed in January 2008 and which entered into force in 2009 will facilitate travel by the country's citizens to European Union states.

32. The August 2009 Gallup Balkan Monitor survey reveals strong divergences of opinion among citizens of the different ethnic groups. The Albanian minority came out more strongly in favour of European integration than the Macedonian population (with 84% and 57% respectively in favour). Indeed, the support for EU and NATO accession is so strongly entrenched among the Albanian minority that they declare themselves ready to put an end to the country's naming dispute with Greece, whereas 95% of Macedonians refuse to budge on the matter. There continues to be a strong sense of insecurity in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: citizens are afraid of a resurgence of armed conflict in the region and 84% of them are convinced that EU accession is the only guarantee of peace and prosperity.

### ***5. Albania***

33. Albania's application for EU membership at the end of April 2009 was the culminating step in the process initiated in 1999 when it joined the EU's Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP). The country has implemented the institutional reforms needed to bring the workings of its administration into line with democratic standards, but was weakened by the crises in neighbouring Kosovo that triggered a stream of territorial claims along its borders. Albania served as a logistics base for Western operations in Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia following the signing of a series of bilateral agreements concerning military, stabilisation and reconstruction operations. Its situation improved markedly with its accession to NATO on 1 April 2009, a move supported by 95% of the population. Moreover 72% of the Albanian population has declared its support for the EU's objectives.

### ***6. Montenegro***

34. Since Montenegro's declaration of independence in June 2006 its relations with the European Union have provided a reference for the reconstruction of the country's democracy. Those efforts are supported by public opinion: 56% of citizens take the view that European integration will be conducive to the region's stability and prosperity. Its Stabilisation and Association Agreements with the EU were followed by a formal request for candidate status in December 2008. According to a statement by the Enlargement Commissioner before the European Parliament in September 2009, the Commission should be ready with an opinion on this request in the "next few months".

### ***7. Serbia***

35. Although no steps have been taken officially, Sweden's Minister for European Affairs, Cecilia Malmstrom, reported in her blog on 8 September 2009 that Serbia intended to file its application for EU membership in the autumn, a move welcomed by the Swedish EU Presidency. The situation in Serbia is complicated by the fact that the ratification process of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SSA) and the entry into force of the interim agreement are still being blocked by the Netherlands which is demanding the arrest and handover of Radko Mladic to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague, before Serbia is allowed to proceed down the path of European integration.

36. But public opinion in Serbia tends to be somewhat critical of the Tribunal. A mere 19% of the country's citizens think that this institution is working towards reconciliation and strengthens the peace process, while 70% feel that its proceedings are no more than a formality and the verdicts put-up jobs arrived at before the trials have reached their conclusion. Nevertheless approximately 60% of Serbs are convinced of the benefits that EU accession would bring and 55% feel that the EU Commission will bring a positive influence to bear in any accession negotiations.

### ***8. Bosnia and Herzegovina***

37. The country has to meet the criteria in full in order to be able to move away from the framework of the Dayton Accords into the European Union integration process, with the closure of the Office of the High Representative (OHR). For the time being, public opinion is far from impressed with the

international management of the country's affairs, particularly in view of the tense relations it has had with the various post-holders of that office. In 2006, two thirds of the population supported integration into the European Union. Two years later, however, the figure had fallen to 48%. A third of those asked were undecided about the benefits entry might bring. Ethnic origin had a bearing on people's attitudes to Europe. 65% of Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) and 55% of Bosnian Croats were pretty much in favour of joining, a view shared by only 34% of Bosnian Serbs. On the matter of the need for the OHR to continue, 60% of Bosnian Croats were in favour as opposed to only 16% in Republika Srpska. Similarly on the matter of the transfer of its functions to the European Union Special Representative (EUSR), most Bosnian Croats felt it made little difference. Only 31% felt it might have a positive effect. In Republika Srpska that figure plummeted to 9%. Of all the Balkan peoples, the Bosnian Serbs were those least likely to feel drawn to the European Union, with only 10% in favour of joining.

### *9. Kosovo*

38. Commissioner Olli Rehn has told the European Parliament that the situation in Kosovo is stable if precarious. The Commission is to submit a study examining what steps Kosovo must take to move towards integration into Europe. Numerous obstacles still bar the way. It should not be forgotten that five EU member states have not recognised the country's independence. That part of the population of Albanian origin is broadly in favour of integration: 72% for as opposed to only 15% of Kosovans of Serb extraction. Besides, the European Union's civilian missions which are perceived as "neo-colonial government" are a source of growing friction. Demonstrators in favour of independence point out that the Kosovo people want to move towards the EU but are not prepared to have the EU move in on them and order them around.

### *V. Conclusions*

39. When countries engage in an EU accession process, there are a number of ways in which the general public might assess the advantages and disadvantages of a particular country joining the EU: perceptions may vary depending on whether the factors taken into consideration are economic, social, historical, cultural, geopolitical or security related. Our report has sought to focus attention on this last aspect, in an attempt to isolate it from other possible contexts, each of which draws its own share of criticism and concern. Now, when it comes to establishing a common security area, public opinion indisputably inclines towards the advantages enlargement can bring – whether it is enlargement to the Balkans or to Turkey. Europe cannot have a role on the world stage unless there are on its own continent settled ongoing relationships between countries that are geographically significant and politically stable. Its territorial cohesion then enables it to present a uniform front vis-à-vis other spheres of influence in its vicinity, in Asia, the Middle East and along the Mediterranean southern rim. Security challenges today tend to be understood in their wider sense: securing energy supplies, dealing with flows of migrants, resolving minority issues, preventing trafficking of various sorts and relations with Muslim countries. Such matters cannot be handled satisfactorily unless countries are prepared to stand together, united in their aspiration to establish a security area that is sustainable. The theme is a fairly familiar one to EU citizens, as it is to applicant countries, and the statistics confirm that confidence in such an undertaking remains high on both sides.

40. The ESDA/Assembly of WEU has for many years been a common European forum for debate on security and defence-related matters open to EU applicant countries and offering various membership opportunities: there are member, associate, partner and observer parliamentarians who can unite in their work to make progress towards building a common security area. The debate on EU enlargement could usefully be refocused on this particular sphere, with the emphasis on the common interest it holds for all of us, to allay and offset those other concerns that threaten at times to overwhelm it: fears about economic stability, for example, or about social divisiveness. The recommendation put forward by the Committee seeks to place a higher value on things that unite, rather than divide us, in order to try and break out of a vicious circle of doom and gloom that could stifle the enthusiasm needed to make a success of this important European venture of ours.

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