



**European Union Enlargement Policy
The Emergence of Enlargement fatigue and Possible
Future Developments**

Stefán Daníel Jónsson

Lokaverkefni til MA-gráðu í alþjóðasamskiptum

Félagsvísindasvið

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HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

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Ritgerð þessi er lokaverkefni til MA-gráðu í alþjóðasamskiptum og er óheimilt að afrita ritgerðina á nokkurn hátt nema með leyfi rétthafa.

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Útdráttur

Evrópusambandið (ESB) stendur í dag á ákveðnum krossgötum. Það hafa verið erfiðir tímar undanfarið þar sem aðildarríkin hafa þurft að takast á við miklar áskoranir. Þessar áskoranir hafa verið á mörgum sviðum, þ.á.m. í stækkunarstefnunni sem gert hefur það að verkum að hugtakið stækkunarþreyta hefur verið notað til að lýsa núverandi afstöðu innan ESB til frekari stækkunar. Í tengslum við þetta ástand er meginmarkmið þessarar ritgerðar að kanna helstu ástæður þess að stækkunarþreyta hefur myndast hjá sambandinu og verður í þeim tilgangi tvær tilgátur prófaðar þar sem að orðræðugreining verður beitt til að komast að niðurstöðu. Að auki verður í þessari ritgerð varpað nánari ljósi á mögulega þróun innan stækkunarstefnu ESB á komandi árum, með sérstöku tilliti til yfirvofandi útgöngu Bretlands úr sambandinu.

Helstu niðurstöður eru þær að það eru nokkrir samverkandi þættir sem gert hafa það að verkum að stækkunarþreyta hefur myndast innan ESB. Þá er ljóst að núverandi stækkunarferli ríkja á Vestur-Balkanskaganum mun verða hægt þar sem engir afslættir af kröfum verða gefnir hjá ESB. Fyrirhuguð útganga Breta úr sambandinu ætti þá ekki að hafa stórvægileg áhrif á ferlið en þó gæti þó verið nokkur til skamms tíma þar sem áherslan mun vera á að klára viðræður um skilmála útgöngunnar. Á sama tíma er ekki talið líklegt að annað aðildarríki haldi þjóðaratkvæðagreiðslu líkt og áttu sér stað á Bretlandi á meðan viðræður um útgöngu eiga sér stað.

Abstract

The European Union (EU) today stands at a crossroad. Recent times have been difficult for the EU, where member states have been facing challenging situations and questions regarding European integration. These challenges have arisen in many fields and policies, with one of them being the enlargement policy. Consequently, views of not expanding the EU borders further have been growing, and enlargement fatigue has been used to describe the current situation towards further expansion. The main aim of this study is to explore why enlargement fatigue has emerged in the EU where two hypotheses will be examined and falsified with a discourse analysis method. In addition, possible developments under the EU enlargement policy will be analysed, especially with regard to the expected withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU.

The main conclusions are that there are a few contributing factors why enlargement fatigue has emerged in the EU. The current enlargement process will remain a slow one, as it seems that there will be no shortcuts given by the EU. The expected withdrawal of the UK should not have a substantial effect on the proceedings but could mean that the enlargement process will be pushed lower on the agenda in the short term or at least, while negotiations for the terms of withdrawal are taking place. The likelihood of another member state holding a referendum, similar to Brexit seems, at the same time, unlikely while the negotiations are taking place.

Formáli

Ritgerð þessi er 30 ECTS eininga lokaverkefni til meistaraprófs í alþjóðasamskiptum við stjórnmálafræðideild Háskóla Íslands.

Ritgerðin var unnin undir handleiðslu Jöhönnu Jónsdóttir og vil ég þakka henni fyrir góða leiðsögn og athugasemdir við skrifin. Jafnframt vil ég þakka móður minni, Helen Brown fyrir góðan stuðning og yfirlestur.

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1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) today stands at a crossroad. Recent times have been times of crisis, where member states are facing challenging situations and questions regarding further European integration. These challenges have arisen in many fields and policies, one of them being the enlargement policy. The policy, which has been present for over 40 years and goes to the core of its functioning and nature, has arguably been a success story so far, fostering stability and establishing common values in the region. However, it has brought to light other concerns and been part of the recent Eurosceptic discourse, where views of not expanding the EU's borders any further have been growing and enlargement fatigue has been used to describe the current situation towards expansion.

The main research question this study intends to explore will be the following: Why has enlargement fatigue emerged in the EU when looking to expand further? Secondary or follow up questions will include: What is the future of the EU enlargement policy? Will the EU expand further? Could the EU even reduce further in member states after the departure of United Kingdom (UK)? UK's withdrawal or Brexit¹ is of course a historical event in EU history, where for the first time the EU will experience a decrease in membership with UK's expected withdrawal. It is therefore an interesting time to explore this subject and what effect this event could have on the enlargement policy.

If the term enlargement fatigue is defined further, it means that current member states are not willing, or hesitant, to allow new member states to join the EU.² Enlargement fatigue has emerged recently in the discourse considering further widening of the EU's borders³ and in the work of the Union, most notably where the criteria for membership was narrowed with the Lisbon Treaty. The Lisbon Treaty, described a certain sentiment that, following the large enlargements in 21st century, there was a willingness to slow down proceedings.⁴ This could mean that the current candidate states could have a long process before them; president of the EU Commission, Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker, even said in a speech to the European

¹ Brexit: A term used to describe United Kingdom's intended withdrawal from the European Union after a national referendum in June 2016.

² John O'Brennan : „Enlargement Fatigue and its Impact on the Enlargement Process in the Western Balkans”, p. 37.

³ Geoffrey Pridham: European Union Enlargement to the Western Balkans: Political Conditionality and Problems of Democratic Consolidation, p. 9.

⁴ Sonia Piedrafita : „The treaty of Lisbon: New Signals for future enlargements?”, p. 33.

Parliament at the beginning of his presidency in 2014 that there would be no further enlargements during his five-year term as the President of the Commission.⁵

Due to the above reasons, this research paper will assume that the term enlargement fatigue has emerged in the work of the EU and this study intends to explore why. To study this further, two main hypotheses will be put forward. The first hypothesis states that the recent large expansion of members from Central and Eastern and the development within the EU to accommodate these states having been the main cause for the emergence of enlargement fatigue. The second hypothesis concerns the recent and on-going crises or challenges the EU has been facing such as the financial and refugee ones and their effect on the enlargement policy, hence causing enlargement fatigue when considering further enlargements.

The opening chapter of this thesis will provide an overview of the theoretical framework used in this research. The focus will be on the main theories regarding European integration, neo-functionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism, as well as looking at one of the largest growing theories within International Relations or social constructivism. These theories will help to explain the developments of the enlargement policy, why the EU looks to expand, why countries join the Union, and further assist in understanding its actions through a theoretical lens and in predicting future developments.

The second chapter will focus on the EU enlargement policy, both historically as well as the main effects the policy has had on the decision-making and internal functioning of the EU in order to answer the former hypothesis. It is natural for an institution to make some adjustments when expanding its members, which the EU has done, most notably with ratification of three new membership treaties in a short period of time. In addition, the functional experience of a larger union will be explored. Finally, there will be an assessment of all these factors and if they can help explain why enlargement fatigue has emerged in the work of the EU.

The third chapter will explore the second hypothesis put forward, where the recent crises the EU has faced will be addressed; there is no doubt that the crises have had major effects and challenged the Union in many ways. Some of them have subsequently caused growing Eurosceptic views, therefore that view will also be explored in

⁵ Suzanne Lynch: "Europe letter: Eu may be suffering from 'enlargement fatigue'," <http://www.irishtimes.com>

connection with the enlargement policy and whether these factors can assist in explaining why enlargement fatigue has emerged in the work of the EU.

The fourth chapter will provide a closer look at the current status of the EU enlargement policy, possible developments, and what effect the situation of Brexit might have in order to answer the secondary research questions put forward. The fifth and final chapter will draw together the main results and provide concluding remarks.

1.1. Methodology

The methodology used will be qualitative research, since it covers a wide range of topics and does not rely on numerical measurements as in quantitative research.⁶ There are several sources to work with, including reviews of literature, articles, reports and news reports. In addition, primary source official EU documents will be reviewed, since the enlargement policy is currently in the discourse and addressed by summits, reports, speeches and facts on EU missions. There is a significant amount of information available on the subject; choosing the right source of information and the relevant information is a vital part of this research. Only reviewed articles will be assessed from acknowledged scholars or institutions. News reports will also play a large role in the research, since the media has given the topic a significant amount of attention, giving different views and opinions on the subject as well as summarising information on the topic. These news reports will be noted carefully and read with a critical mind, where they will be used as a contribution to the debate, which has evolved around the research questions this research intends to explore.

In order to assess especially why enlargement fatigue has emerged in the work of the Union, two main hypotheses will be explored. In order to falsify them, some methods are required to find out which one is better suited in answering the main research question. For this reason discourse analysis or critical discourse analysis (CDA) methodology of social science will be used. The critical discourse method uses discourse as a form of social practice and research in attempting to bring awareness influenced by language or social structure.⁷ There are many ways to conduct a discourse analysis; an Icelandic scholar, Ingólfur Ásgeir Jóhannesson, wrote in his article on the subject, suggesting a five step process that will be used in this research. The first step,

⁶ King, Keohane & Verba: *Designing Social Inquiry*, p. 4.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 25.

according to the article, is to choose a subject to analyse; in this research, the main question revolves around the emergence of enlargement fatigue within the EU. The second step is to decide what sources to choose from when exploring the subject.⁸ Here, a special focus will be given to EU documents since it is the emergence of enlargement fatigue within the EU that is most relevant for this research. This includes speeches from Members of the European Parliament (MEP's), since they often give more background information on the subject and are strongly related to the public discourse. Enlargement strategy reports from the European Commission are then also a vital source in this context since they provide information on what, according to the Commission, the main internal and external circumstances are affecting the enlargement process at each time. In addition, other sources such as news reports and articles from various scholars will be addressed for this purpose.

The third step is to analyse the data, and the best way to do that according to Jóhannsson is to read the documents that shape the analyses around the topic intended for exploration, which in this case is the emergence of enlargement fatigue. The fourth and fifth steps are connected, where the former focuses on pointing out the main conflicts in the discourse and whether they are direct or not. The final step revolves around assessing the context in which the documents are put forward, assessing their circumstances and ideas, and considering how they shape the discourse of the study.⁹

⁸ Ingólfur Ásgeir Jóhannesson, "Leitað að mótsögnum: Um verklag í orðræðugreiningu," p. 182-183.

⁹ Ibid, p. 186.

2. Theoretical Approaches

International relations theories assist in simplifying reality and in understanding a complex entity like the EU and its functioning or policies. When scholars have tried to predict and theorise the actions of the EU, they have looked at theories of European integration. Since EU enlargement policy is one part of this integration, theories from this field will be utilised.

Theories of international relations should not be able to predict with certainty what will happen, but more about why states tend to act one way, rather than another way, as well as where historical patterns can be seen in their behaviour. Theories can then be tested through falsification of certain hypotheses by looking at examples.¹⁰ European integration theories have a few main purposes. Firstly, they have the essential role in helping to explain processes and results of integration through a theoretical lens, and to predict future developments. Secondly, the theories provide further encouragement for reflections on democratic reform and legitimacy of the EU. Thirdly, European integration theories highlight concerns about the nature of the EU and finality of the integration process.¹¹

Several schools have tried to explain the process of integration, although the debates have been dominated by two fields: neo-functionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism (LI). These theories will therefore be addressed as well as an increasingly popular theory within international relations or social constructivism, since it provides a different perspective and a structural view of things. This chapter will start by looking at the basic outline of the theories, before looking at their main criticisms and explanations on EU enlargement policy.

2.1 Neo-functionalism

Neo-functionalism has been influential in explaining the European integration process since the founding of the EU or European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) as its predecessor in the mid-1950's. The theory has strong connections with the strategy of the founding fathers, with a federal EU, as became clear in the work of the American

¹⁰ Thomas Diez & Antje Wiener: "Introducing the mosaic of Intergration theory", p. 43.

¹¹ Thomas Diez & Antje Wiener: "Introducing the mosaic of Intergration theory", p. 4.

scholars Ernst Haas and Leon Lindberg when explaining the development of ECSC.¹² The neo-functional approach was at its peak, during the 1950's until the mid-1960's or until the so-called, "empty chair crisis", a period where France with Charles De Gaulle as their President, effectively paralysed the European Community by boycotting European institutions due to issues he had with the Commission regarding European integration. The theory has since made several comebacks with various scholars, especially in periods of integration, who have restored and reviewed this approach throughout the years, but criticism has never been far away.

The fundamental starting point of the neo-functional approach is an underlying theory of process or integration as in the case of the EU, where the process evolves over time and takes on its own dynamics. It also contests the realist assumption that states are the only actors, but actually assumes that states are not restricted to their domestic region but interact and form bureaucracies over frontiers. A community can be established between states, which can take on a life of its own and escape control of the states and have its own agenda. After this establishment or community has been formed, it stumbles from one decision to another and becomes more integrated. According to the neo-functional approach, actions between states are not a zero-sum game¹³ like in the fundamental realist point of view, and decisions of actors are better defined as positive sum games or a supranational style of decision-making where the process of spill-over or integration would be almost automatic towards further integration.¹⁴ The process of spill-over then often sweeps government more than anticipated after taking some initial decisions in that direction. This explains the early years of the EU and the transformation in the sixties from the ECSC to the European Economic Community established in 1958.

Since neo-functionalism is one of the major theories of integration, scholars from all over the theoretical spectrum have heavily criticised it. As previously mentioned, it was the "empty chair crisis" in the mid-1960s, which enhanced the first wave of criticism. The main criticism that followed was because the theory could not explain stagnation in integration, since the concept of spill-over is more or less automatic and not dependent on the will of the states. In other words, it underestimates the sovereignty

¹² Elisabeth Bomber, John Peterson & Alexander Stubb: *The European Union: How Does it work?* p. 11

¹³ Zero sum game: a decision making approach bases on the idea of actors rationality and competition, what one actor gains the other loses.

¹⁴ Arnie Niemann & Philippe C. Schmitter : "Neofunctionalism", p. 48-49.

of states with the “empty chair crisis”, and now Brexit serving as good examples. Other criticism has come in the form that neo-functionalism does not provide a general theory on regional integration in all settings, but that it is only limited to questions regarding European integration. More economically minded critics have stated that the theory or spill-over is only likely to occur in economically favourable conditions, which can be explained taking examples throughout the history of the EU.¹⁵ In later years, Haas, as well as other scholars, from the neo-functionalist school, have tried to answer this criticism and retreated slightly from their original idea, and the concept of spill-back has emerged in their revision making a “slow down” period or stagnation of integration possible.¹⁶

If the neo-functionalist theory’s connection with the EU enlargement policy is considered, the theory was not closely connected with this policy because the first enlargement of then the European Economic Committee (EEC) was in 1973 when the neo-functionalist theory had already peaked and was on the downfall.¹⁷ The theory can still be used to explain EU geographic expansion, mainly from the point of view that due to the spill-over effect in various sections of the EU, the Commission creates a certain pressure on the member states to integrate or expand in certain circumstances. Enlargement then takes place because of outside effects and pressure and not necessarily because of the states willingness of states to expand EU borders.

On the other hand, the reason why countries queue up for membership is to some extent because of the high level of integration, which has made the EU an attractive choice. The EU is perceived as a success story; there is peace on the continent and economic well-being. Before the countries could join, there were many steps and agreements which ended up, as previously mentioned in geographic spill-over. These circumstances seem to fit well with the neo-functionalist ideology where all the states’ actions lead to one goal or more integration. Neo-functionalism can also help explain the work of the European Commission, a supranational organization, which plays an important role in the enlargement process in dealing with negotiations with the candidate state. Furthermore, interest groups can affect the enlargement policy and

¹⁵ Arnie Niemann & Philippe C. Scmitter : “Neofunctionalism”, p. 52

¹⁶ Sabine Saurugger: *Theoretical Approaches to European Integration*, p. 40.

¹⁷ Schimmelfenning & Sedelmeier, “Theorizing EU Enlargement: Reserach focus, Hypotheses, and the State of Research”, p. 501.

support it, which is something the neo-functional approach had also predicted, or that social groups would affect integration, not just states.¹⁸

Finally, it can be said that neo-functionalism helps to understand some parts of the EU enlargement policy. Of course, it has some problems; for instance, it is quite controversial to widen geographically and integrate internally at the same time, making the decision-making process and other functional actions become more complicated. Nevertheless, the theory provides a good understanding of certain aspects when expanding geographically.

2.2 Liberal Intergovernmentalism

With the decline of neo-functionalism in mid-1960, intergovernmentalism took over as the new mainstream theory of European integration. The theory started in the work of Stanley Hoffman and was later developed by Andrew Moravcsik to Liberal Intergovernmentalism (LI), both of whom were critics of neo-functionalism ideology from a realist point of view. The main underlying assumptions in the theory are two. Firstly, that states are the only actors in International Relations. This is opposite to neo-functionalism, where there can be no supranational or centralised authority; states therefore achieve their goals through international bargaining and negotiations according to their interests and try to maximise their gains. States are in control; they are the masters of international treaties and not the international organisation. The second assumption in LI is that states are rational actors in their nature. They calculate the best answers to a certain situation and choose a decision that maximises their gains. The creation of international institutions is therefore a result of rational state choice and intergovernmental negotiations.¹⁹

Cooperation within LI can occur and is set up in three stages, which can help understand the EU and its actions. The first stage is to define preferences, the second stage is to negotiate agreements, and the final stage is to create an institution to secure that outcomes from agreements become a reality. EU integration is then a series of rational choices made by states and their national leaders, which is according to the theory mainly influenced by economic interests.²⁰

¹⁸ Arnie Niemann & Philippe C. Schmitter : “Neofunctionalism”, p. 62

¹⁹ Moravcsik & Schimmelfenning : “Liberal Intergovernmentalism”, p. 68.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 68-69.

The theory has had some criticism, firstly that LI only covers certain decision-making. For instance, it cannot explain every day decision-making and is limited to a partial number of EU-policy making decisions in which institutions do not play a large part. These decisions are only the larger ones, such as treaty amendment decisions, and therefore the critics say that the theory overlooks many of the following consequences of those decisions.²¹ Other critics have said that for the LI theory to work, unanimity decision-making has to be the main form of decision making rather than majority voting or other kinds of pooled decision making since that could mean that a state vote could not make a difference. Critics have also used the work of the European Court of Justice as an example of something that LI cannot explain, which during the 1960's and 1970's increased its powers by interpreting law that was neither predicted nor accepted by governments.²²

When focusing on LI theory's connection with the enlargement policy, it can help to explain the decision-making process made to enlarge or widen the EU. This process is taken under unanimity, which means that every member state has a veto power. LI theory assumes that member states will calculate the costs and benefits of a new member state and what effect that would have for them and the EU. This type of decision making can be noticed in the past, for instance when the UK wanted to join the EEC in the 1960's and France was against its membership mainly because of the personal view of the French President, Charles De Gaulle, not wanting UK to join, as well as British opposition of the CAP (Common Agriculture Policy) which France thought was more vital than some other economic benefits. France then only dropped its opposition when CAP had a permanent funding arrangement as a condition for UK entry and De Gaulle had left his presidency.²³

When looking at recent Eastern EU enlargements, LI can explain quite rationally why there were different behaviours by member states prior to the enlargements. Some countries were in the driving force, while others were not as interested. Member states then made assessments according to LI and mainly countries with borders close to the potential candidate countries were more in the driving force. It was more in their interest to expand, having peaceful democratic states as their neighbours. Some countries though, like UK, did not have close borders to the eastern bloc but still

²¹ Ibid, p. 73.

²² Ibid, p. 75.

²³ Ibid, p. 80.

supported the enlargement, mainly because of economic benefits. LI implies that each member state looked closely at the situation and laid down the pros and cons of widening EU borders before their decision was made and LI does, therefore, make a rational explanation of states' behaviour in reference to these situations.

On the other hand, there are countries wanting to join the EU where similar assessment took place according to LI. The EU has throughout history, been perceived as an attractive option, with modern democratic states and high growth per capita for its citizens. Accession to its internal market is therefore a very popular route, especially for neighbouring countries and young democratic states on the road to progression after a communist regime. Some countries though, like Switzerland, Norway and Iceland, have made assessments and perceived their interest greater by not joining the EU due to their national interests.

To summarise, it can be perceived that LI can explain the enlargement process quite rationally; the main downfall however, is to explain the actions of member states like Spain, Italy and Portugal. These countries have not been so enthusiastic about EU's geographic expansion but have still decided to support it, possibly because of pressure from the EU and other member states.

2.3 Social Constructivism

Thirdly, there will be an overview of a younger theory of International Relations that started emerging after the cold war, or social constructivism. In the narrow sense it is not a theory on European integration, it is rather an ontological approach to social inquiry.²⁴ Traditional constructivism looks at norms, identity and values and how they shape international political outcomes. Communication between states is therefore historically and socially constructed, rather than consequences of systems or human nature like other theories have emphasised. The theory is often based on the work of Alexander Wendt in his book "Anarchy is what the states make of it," in other words, meaning that everything that happens between states is socially constructed. Human agents like the EU therefore, do not exist independently from their social environment but are collectively shared systems of meanings or culture.²⁵ The social environment defines the actors, which means that the theory focuses are more on ideational, cultural

²⁴ Ian Bache & Stephen George : *Politics in the European Union*, p. 43.

²⁵ Thomas Risse: "Social Constructivism", p. 145-6.

and discursive origins. These concepts are key parts of states decision to integrate and therefore if a state feels more “European,” it is more likely or willing to cooperate than not. This explanation has among others been used to describe the United Kingdom’s Eurosceptic view towards the EU.

Thomas Risse, a German scholar, has further set out three ways in which social constructivism can give us a better understanding of the EU, first of all by highlighting mutual constitutiveness of agency and structure for better understanding of the impact of the EU on its member states, and secondly, by emphasising the constitutive effect of European rules and policies that enable us to study how European integration shapes interest and identities of actors. Thirdly, it focuses on communicative practices highlighting both how the EU is constructed and how actors come to understand European integration.²⁶

If looking at the constructivist approach compared to the previously mentioned LI theory, where states take rational decisions based on their interest and calculations, constructivism would in those circumstances like in treaty ratifying situations rather base on on-going struggles, contestation and discourse.²⁷ It would be more difficult to distinguish the theory from neo-functionalism but where the automatic spill-over effect takes over towards further integration, it would not comply with the constructivist approach because according to constructivism, decisions are more prone to being changed by their social environment and not an automatic process like in neo-functionalism.

The theory has like others been under criticism from other parts of the theoretical spectrum. It has been criticised for over emphasising the role of structures rather than focusing on actors who help shape those structures. Other critics have claimed that the theory neglects important non-state actors and the theory’s tendency to identify good things as being socially constructed and the bad ones coming from somewhere else.²⁸

Mainly due to the fact that the theory emerged in the 1990’s, focus in this research will be on connecting it with EU enlargement policy through the recent eastern enlargements. Prior to the eastern enlargements, potential candidate states could become member states if they would adjust to the so-called Copenhagen criteria. They will be analysed closer later in this research, but there the EU established some common

²⁶ Thomas Risse: “Social Constructivism”, p. 151.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 146-7.

²⁸ Ian Bache & Stephen George : Politics in the European Union, p. 45.

values or a certain European identity, where countries that wanted to join the EU had to adapt to. These values, such as human rights, democracy, rule of law and market economy, are perceived European identities. The more countries identified with these European identities the more positive towards enlargement they became. The other side of the enlargement debate is then related to the negative influence of growing member states where European identity can be related to Europe with hostility to foreigners or immigrants compared to a hierarchical fortress Europe for those states outside the EU.²⁹ These opinions and views are socially constructed and shape the way actors behave, and they can therefore go both ways, but identity of the EU is then a fundamental reason why states join according to the constructivist approach and also why the Union looks to widen its borders.

After an overview of these theories, it is quite difficult to say with a clear conclusion which one is best suited to explain EU expansion through the enlargement policy and the current situation of enlargement fatigue. The theories have their strengths and limitations. What can be done is it to use them to explain certain periods with enlargement growth and stagnation. In the current situation of Brexit, where for the first time a state will leave the EU, it could be said that LI has the upper hand in the current discourse. Rational cost benefit calculations have been an essential part of why countries want to join the EU where they feel they would be economically and politically better off. Existing member states have then made assessments on allowing member states to join and strengthen the EU economic region while making it wider and more prosperous. Turkey for example, despite wanting to join the EU for decades, has not been able to join, due to lack of enthusiasm from member states. Neo-functionalism can still explain in a better way why a member state agrees to expand but is rather sceptical about the enlargement, where outside pressure and a high level of integration within the EU comes into a factor. In the current climate of enlargement fatigue, views of slowing down the enlargement process are becoming louder, due to the lack of enthusiasm from member states, which is better explained by LI. The view of social constructivism adds then another dimension to the discourse and especially when the social view of the EU is ever changing in the global context.

²⁹ Thomas Risse: "Social Constructivism", p. 154.

3. EU- Enlargement Policy

3.1. Introduction

After going through the theoretical approaches used in this research, this chapter will focus on the EU enlargement policy to answer the former hypothesis put forward. The hypothesis revolves around the recent eastern expansion and the main changes the EU has had to make to accommodate these new members and if that has or at least partly been the cause for why enlargement fatigue has emerged in the work of the Union when describing the current enlargement situation.

The EU and its predecessors have been ever evolving and making changes throughout history. Starting initially with six member states, the EU or the European Economic Community as it was called from 1958, has expanded its borders and functioning significantly, especially recently to the current 28 member states.

The EU enlargement policy goes in some way to the heart of the important questions regarding the nature and functioning of the Union. Questions, such as what determines the size of the EU, their relations with border countries and what does the future hold? When new countries join the EU, they bring in new ideas and cultures to the table, shape its development and have effect on the Union's collective identity.³⁰ It has especially been vital to the security of Europe since the EU is founded on common values and principles, with inspiring democratic change and economic liberalisation among countries willing to join. The EU wants, as part of its best interests, to have stability in the neighbourhood, which successive enlargements have contributed to over the years. The economic factor has then been beneficial for member states having access to the common market.³¹

In this chapter, initially there will be a historical overview of the main enlargements and under what conditions they took place with a special focus on the recent eastern enlargements. Secondly, there will be an assessment of the enlargement policy impact on the functioning of the EU, especially with the ratification of three new membership treaties in the recent era. Also, the working experience of a larger union in recent years will be explored and whether all these changes can help explain why enlargement fatigue has emerged.

³⁰ Elisabeth Bomber, John Peterson & Alexander Stubb: *The European Union: How Does it work?* p. 180

³¹ "Good to know about Enlargement", European Commission, p. 2-3.

3.2. Historical Overview

The question over European Economic Community (EEC) enlargement arose for the first time early in the 1960's, when the United Kingdom intended to become a member and applied to join. British fear of economic exclusion was the main driving force but still there was some internal division on the issue. The French government rejected the application with Charles de Gaulle as its President. The same thing happened again with the second attempt by the UK in 1967. Many reasons have been given for these actions by the French government; a debate regarding the common agriculture policy (CAP),³² UK's special relations with the USA has also been mentioned as a vital reason for their opposition, personal negative view of the French president and the French willingness to remain leaders of this new-found community, and finding their position in danger with the arrival of a new large member state.³³

However, after a decade of a working EEC, the first wave of enlargement took place. The UK had sorted out its main issues with France, mainly involving a change of French presidency,³⁴ and could join the Community. Denmark and Ireland were also part of the first enlargement. Norway applied at the same time but its membership was rejected in a national referendum. This first wave of enlargement occurred at a time when the EEC was considering its next steps and how to develop economically. A customs union had already been established, thus enlargement was seen as a logical step and the entry of those states was viewed as a good opportunity for the EEC to boost its economy.³⁵

The experience of the first enlargement became significant for the economic integration process and boosted the EEC's economy. In addition, there was an increase of member states by 50% from the six founding nations to nine, including a new large member state in the United Kingdom (UK), with Germany and France dominating the original landscape. Furthermore, two states in the UK and Denmark were a bit sceptical of the whole European or federalist idea and brought in new views to the discourse.³⁶

³² CAP- Debate: France feared that the United Kingdom's membership would block further progress within the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP). More information: Andrew Moravcsik: "Charles De Gaulle and Europe - The New Revisionism", p. 58.

³³ Desmond Dinan: *Ever Closer Union- An introduction to European Integration*, p. 54-56

³⁴ Ian Bache & Stephen George : *Politics in the European Union*, p. 541

³⁵ Amy Verdun: "The Challenges of the European Union: where are we today? How did we get here and what lies ahead", p. 10-11.

³⁶ Ian Bache & Stephen George : *Politics in the European Union*, p. 541

The second and third enlargements took place in 1980's, more precisely 1981 and 1986, and are often referred to as the Mediterranean enlargements, starting with the membership of Greece and later followed by Spain and Portugal. These countries had in the previous decade transformed from being military dictatorships to democratic states, in a similar fashion as to what later happened with Eastern European countries. They had a different political past and were weaker economies than the existing member states, with substantially lower growth per capita (GDP) and therefore needed more assistance if they were to catch up.³⁷ There were also some political reasons why existing member states accepted their applications with threats from extreme left wings groups in domestic politics to take over, especially in Spain and Portugal, which would have meant more emphasised relations with the then existing eastern bloc. Given their strategic positions in the Mediterranean, they were also of great importance to the NATO military alliance and an important ally to the Western European states.³⁸

The fourth enlargement took place in 1995, just after the European Union was established with the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, when Austria, Finland and Sweden joined. They were all members of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), an economic cooperation that is less ambitious but these countries wanted to have more to say in the integration and decision-making process and thus joined the EU. These countries had a higher income per capita than the existing EU members average, therefore the EU did not have to change much to accommodate these countries. In addition, they had a long history of democratic principles, were welfare states, and were not large membership countries.³⁹

3.2.1 Preparing for Eastern Enlargement

In the beginning of 1990's the EU had to face some challenges and answer questions regarding future enlargements after the fall of the Soviet Union, since there were many new democratic states emerging that would have an interest in becoming members. The fourth enlargement like as previously mentioned or the EFTA-expansion took place in 1995 but if there would be further widening to the east it was clear that more preparation had to take place.

³⁷ Amy Verdun: "The Challenges of the European Union: where are we today? How did we get here and what lies ahead", p. 11.

³⁸ Ian Bache & Stephen George: *Politics in the European Union*, p.150.

³⁹ Amy Verdun: "The Challenges of the European Union: where are we today? How did we get here and what lies ahead", p. 12.

First of all, states within the EU had different perspectives towards enlargement to the east and some had more interest than others. For Germany, enlargement to the east was seen as a priority, mostly built on its security issues since it has borders with Poland and Czech Republic, which meant that any instability in the region would be close to its borders. It also had some economic reasons for supporting German investments in central Europe after the fall of communism and taking advantage of emerging business opportunities. This German view was strongly supported by the United Kingdom and Scandinavian countries, while the southern European countries ones like France, Italy and Spain had some scepticism. These countries had various concerns about this large enlargement to the east of the continent, and were more worried about instability in North Africa than Eastern Europe and the fact that EU funds would be used to support the new member countries at a costly price for the existing member states.⁴⁰

After the Copenhagen Summit in 1993 or just before the fourth enlargement wave, member states came to a conclusion after some discussion and the European Council formed the so-called Copenhagen criteria, where it established some conditions for membership seeking countries and while doing so declared for the first time that enlargement to the east of the continent was part of its main goals.⁴¹ These criteria were minimum requirements that a European state must apply before becoming a member of the Union and are currently lying in article 2 and 49 of the Lisbon Treaty in categories such as rule of law and human rights, respect for minorities, democracy, equality and other values that the EU builds it work on. They were further strengthened by the European Council in 1995 where the Madrid criteria emerged, emphasising the need of the applicant country to meet requirements related to administrative capabilities.⁴²

The Copenhagen and Madrid criteria further acknowledged that the EU was ready to widen its borders and that if countries located in Europe could fulfil the previous mentioned requirements they could become members. Between 1990 and 1995, the EU made accession agreements with 12 countries taking their first steps towards membership. These agreements had the aim of helping countries to prepare for candidacy and eventual membership. The countries in the east of the continent were willing to join the EU for various reasons. First of all, the majority of them had been

⁴⁰ Ian Bache & Stephen George: *Politics in the European Union*, p.182.

⁴¹ Wichard Woyke: „European Union enlargement – Consequences and problems”, p. 387

⁴² Anes Makul: “Step Towards EU membership”, <http://eu-monitoring.ba/en/steps-towards-eu-membership/>

under influence of the Communist regime and wanted therefore to make sure that such possibility could not happen again, and establishing connections with the western part of the continent was important for that reason. Membership was also vital for economic reasons, since the countries saw their future under the single market and wanted the benefits from being part of that cooperation to boost their economy.⁴³ The eastern enlargement or fifth wave of enlargement of the EU further took place in three steps, in 2004 when 10 countries from east and central-Europe joined, in 2007 when Bulgaria and Romania became member states, and finally in 2013 when Croatia further added to the pool making the total number of countries twenty-eight.

3.3. Impact on Decision-Making and Internal Functioning

From a historical overview, it can be observed that prior to the eastern enlargements there were 15 member states in the EU. If the Union was to expand by ten or more countries, it was evident that some internal adjustments had to be made. Expanding from fifteen to twenty-five or more members is a huge expansion. The enlargements in the 21st century brought around 100 million new citizens⁴⁴ to the EU, adding to the 375 million citizens prior to the enlargements.⁴⁵ The enlargements were also special due to the fact that despite the large increase in citizens they only added around 5% to the EU GDP.⁴⁶ Countries that were joining had economically, socially and politically different backgrounds. Therefore, this round of enlargement would have a major impact on the EU and its role in the global economy, so preparation for the enlargement was therefore more important than ever before.

As previously mentioned, a decision was made by the European Council in 1993 that if countries were to fulfil the requirements put forward in the Copenhagen and later Madrid criteria they could become members of the EU. Already in 1991, there were some agreements made called “association agreements” between the EU and the candidate states located in Central and Eastern Europe.⁴⁷ These agreements laid a foundation for their memberships and gradually liberalised trade. Subsequently, there was an on-going process where candidate countries slowly reformed towards the

⁴³ Ian Bache & Stephen George: *Politics in the European Union*, p.549.

⁴⁴ John O'Brennan : The Eastern enlargement of the European Union, p. 172

⁴⁵ The 2004 enlargement: the challenge of a 25-member Eu, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/>

⁴⁶ John O'Brennan: The Eastern enlargement of the European Union, p. 172

⁴⁷ Deals with Cyprus and Malta had though been made in the 1970s.

criteria with formal negotiations starting with six candidate countries in 1998.⁴⁸ However, some institutional reforms had to be addressed first and three treaties agreed, before further widening could take place.

3.3.1 Amsterdam Treaty

The Amsterdam Treaty from 1997, had the main goal of resolving some institutional issues before the eastern enlargements, but has not been judged by history as a successful one. It made some necessary changes regarding decision-making processes, changing from an unanimity or co-decision process to a qualified majority voting, thus removing veto power of states in several policies. This had some positive effects, but in the end, only in limited fields and therefore did not have a sufficient impact. Further changes with the treaty were that the number of Members of European Parliament (MEP's) had a ceiling of 700 but other important issues, such as the composition of the Commission and the voting system of the Council, were not agreed upon by member states.⁴⁹

Various reasons have been given as to why the Amsterdam Treaty had such a limited result when dealing with institutional reforms prior to enlargements. Three main reasons have been given: first of all because of lack of vision or a main goal of the treaty from all member states, secondly, a lack of leadership in the matter, and thirdly, the timing of the treaty was not seen as an urgent task that needed to be solved at great speed since the expected enlargements were not in the near future.⁵⁰

3.3.2 Treaty of Nice

After the Amsterdam Treaty, there were still some major issues left for reform; voting in the European Council was always an issue that had to be addressed. This was an issue that was always going to be a challenging compromise between states since some of them would have to diminish their weight of votes especially when comparing themselves to other countries. France, for instance, wanted to retain the same voting weight as Germany and did not want population or size to have such a big effect as was

⁴⁸ Five years of an enlarged EU: Economic achievements and challenges”, *European Economy 1 2009*, p. 19.

⁴⁹ Finn Laursen: “The Amsterdam and Nice IGCs: from output failure to institutional choice” p. 163-164.

⁵⁰ Finn Laursen: “The Amsterdam and Nice IGCs: from output failure to institutional choice” p. 164.

suggested.⁵¹ Unanimous voting was also a process that had to be reduced, meaning that in some cases, each state had a veto power on legislation. This was workable with fifteen member states but after expanding to twenty-five or thirty, this form had to change.⁵² The negotiations prior to the Treaty of Nice were therefore quite intense, but the treaty still entered into force in 2003 after being agreed upon in 2000 only three years after Amsterdam and contained some fundamental changes.

The Treaty of Nice dealt with the Amsterdam leftovers, and while there was some criticism on the outcome, the main goals of the treaty were achieved. First of all, it made some changes to the size and composition of the Commission, agreeing that there would be one commissioner from each member states with a maximum number of 26, which meant that if there were to be more member states as in the current climate, a rotation system would take over, so that at some point a member state will not always have a commissioner of their own nationality.⁵³ More areas became part of the qualified majority voting, thus the veto power of member states was removed from around 35 of the 70 treaty articles. Some areas like maritime, taxation and social security were fields that certain member states were not ready to give up their veto power on, due to sensitivity of the matter, but overall this meant that decisions could pass through the system with more ease.⁵⁴

The re-weighting of voting in the Council was redistributed but only after some hard negotiations. There was for instance an intense relationship between Netherlands and Belgium where the latter did not want to have fewer votes than their neighbour but in the end had to accept having one less vote. The votes were then redistributed maybe a little in favour of the more popular member states but in the end, a compromise was negotiated that could be accepted.⁵⁵ Other changes included enhancing cooperation between member states where the treaty further supported an idea set forward in the Amsterdam Treaty where states that had common interests could enter into agreements without binding the EU as a whole.⁵⁶ The Treaty of Nice then changed again the number of MEP's to 732, for reasons not totally clear,⁵⁷ but the most likely explanation

⁵¹ Ian Bache & Stephen George: *Politics in the European Union*, p.196.

⁵² Peter Katz: „The Treaty if Nice and European Union enlargement: The political, economic, and social consequences of ratifying the treaty of Nice”, p. 245

⁵³ Dr. Edward Best: “Treaty of Nice: Not beautiful but it'll do”, p. 3.

⁵⁴ Ian Bache & Stephen George: *Politics in the European Union*, p.197

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Peter Katz: „The Treaty if Nice and European Union enlargement: The political, economic, and social consequences of ratifying the treaty of Nice”, p. 253.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 251

was adding representatives in connection with more member states, new interests and ideas.

Finally, it can be said that the Treaty of Nice achieved its goals of making the EU more democratic and prepared for the large enlargements of the 21st century. Still, the treaty was not lacking criticism. Criticism came in various forms but mainly in three parts: firstly that there was a lot of discussion about democratisation the EU with limited results and changes, secondly that the decision-making process became too complex, and thirdly, there was criticism revolving around the treaty raising tensions between states that could have effects on future negotiations.⁵⁸ This became clear as the treaty had some problems with ratification member states, particularly in Ireland where it only had success in the second referendum.⁵⁹ In the end, it was enough to make necessary changes prior to the enlargements, but some unresolved issues were still at stake that had to be resolved later.

3.3.3. *Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties*

Around the time the Treaty of Nice was ratified, EU leaders were still not happy with the result and declared that there were intentions to increase democratic legitimacy and encourage developments of the EU as a global actor and formed a Convention or a working group on the matter. In 2003, the same year the Treaty of Nice was ratified, this Convention drafted a 240-page Constitution for Europe, a Constitution which was signed a year later by EU leaders and sent to member states for acceptance and ratification.⁶⁰ The reception of this Constitutional Treaty was a big disappointment for the Union, where it was rejected in a referendum in two of the founding EU countries, Netherlands and France. Although many countries accepted the treaty, these rejections were too much to handle for the Union and ended its ratification process. Why exactly citizens of these established member states rejected the treaty is not totally clear but various aspects are thought to have been an influence, such as concerns that the treaty would place too much emphasis on liberal economic ideas at the expense of social protection. Other factors, such as an expression of protest against unpopular national

⁵⁸ Ian Bache & Stephen George: *Politics in the European Union*, p.198

⁵⁹ Peter Katz: „The Treaty of Nice and European Union enlargement: The political, economic, and social consequences of ratifying the treaty of Nice p. 254.

⁶⁰ Kristin Archick & Derek E. Mix: *The European Union's Reform Process: The Lisbon Treaty*, p. 2.

governments, too much EU bureaucracy and potential Turkey membership are also perceived as being contributing factors.⁶¹

After this period of disappointment which had taken a lot of time and effort for the EU, there came a period of reflection on what should be the next step. A sense of unhappiness was always underwhelming with the current set up after a large increase of members and it was clear that EU leaders still wanted some change and that the Treaty of Nice had obviously not done quite enough to settle those thoughts.

In June 2007, when Germany had just finished its presidency of the Council and France had elected their new President Sarkozy, an EU summit was held. This summit came to the conclusion that instead of reforming a new membership treaty and replacing the existing EU treaties, a better and more simplified solution would be only to amend the existing ones. The term “constitution” was also dropped from the amendments and because it only amended the existing treaties, no referendum was required from member states; only acceptance was required by the national parliaments. There was however an exception with Ireland, who was required to accept it by a referendum because of national law. These amendments formed a treaty, the so-called Lisbon Treaty, and were around 90% originated from the previous constitutional one. The referendum in Ireland did not run smoothly as it took two referendums and significant effort but in the end, it was accepted in the second referendum after small and mainly symbolic changes were made from the prior one. The Lisbon Treaty then came into effect December 1, 2009.⁶²

The treaty made a lot changes but here the focus will be on the main changes regarding the decision-making process and internal functioning of EU institutions in order to accommodate new states. In this context the treaty made various changes, created a new position as President of the European Council and modified the system of rotating presidency in the Council helping to ensure policy continuity. It also created a position of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in order to enhance the EU international visibility. The treaty further simplified the decision-making process within the Council of the EU and the use of qualified majority voting at the expense of unanimity in more areas, especially regarding judicial and police matters. In order for the EU to become more “democratic,” numerous changes

⁶¹ Ibid, p.2.

⁶² ibid, p. 2-3.

were made; first of all, the European Parliament became a stronger part of the legislation process and its acceptance over legislation was acquired in more areas like agriculture and home affairs issues. Other amendments involved adopting certain citizen initiatives and making the Charter of Fundamental Rights legally binding for all EU institutions and member states though some states negotiated an opting-out clause from it.⁶³ In addition, it changed the number of Commissioners from the Treaty of Nice to one Commissioner per member state.

In the Lisbon Treaty some symptoms of enlargement fatigue also came to the surface. Changes were made regarding the enlargement process and criteria for membership were narrowed with amendments on Article 49, the article, which specifies the basic procedures for accession of new members. These changes concerned promotion of EU values, better information flow to both national and European Parliaments, and clear reference to how states are complying with conditions laid down by the European Council.⁶⁴ In addition, there were changes made regarding institutional processes within making the European Parliament play a more vital role in the enlargement process and having to give its consent to a new member state.⁶⁵ To summarise, the Lisbon Treaty changed the EU's functioning in many ways and has been judged as quite a successful one, it made some democratic improvements, made the EU more visible and answered some of the criticisms it had faced. In the current era and especially after the Brexit vote, there have been talks regarding a new membership treaty, but there seem to be other matters higher on the agenda and thus not likely to happen in the near future.⁶⁶

⁶³ Ibid, p. 3.

⁶⁴ Sonia Piedrafita: The Treaty of Lisbon: New signals for future enlargements?, p. 33.

⁶⁵ André De Munter: "Fact Sheet on the European Union: The enlargement of the European Union", <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/>

⁶⁶ See for example: Henri Malosse: "Brexit: EU urgently needs new treaty" <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/blog/brexit-eu-urgently-needs-new-treaty> & Sarkozy calls for 'new European treaty' after Brexit vote, <http://www.euractiv.com/section/future-eu/news/sarkozy-calls-for-new-european-treaty-after-brexit-vote/>

3.4. Working experience of a larger Union

A lot has happened since the eastern enlargements started in 2004; some of the worries that doubters had prior to them have partially become true but overall it can be argued that the general functional experience of EU institutions has been quite successful.⁶⁷ The decision-making process was a big concern prior to the enlargements, especially in the Council of the EU, but experience has shown that it has not become paralysed and has been quite steady both before and after the arrival of new member states where new membership treaties have managed at least partially to face this challenge.⁶⁸ It is however always difficult to answer how it would have been without the arrival of new member states. Inevitably adjustments have occurred and for example negotiations in the legislation process have taken partly in closed-door meetings between the Council and Parliament and not in a public debate, mainly to save time and complications. This could of course become a negative factor if key decisions are formed in such a manner, since transparency would be lacking but could be an effective tool if used correctly.⁶⁹

Other worries like labour movement from the newer member states to the older ones have partially become true, despite some of them having temporary exemptions on restricted movement. Still, there is little evidence that the movement of people has had a negative effect in the “old” EU member states but rather enhanced their average GDP.⁷⁰ This movement has though caused some concerns as will be addressed in the next chapter. Implementation and compliance with EU law and regulations were another worry. This would of course have meant some problems for the EU, since more resources would have to be put into monitoring or assessment bodies as well as various negative effects of countries infringement of EU law. This has though not been the case: data on infringement has on the contrary even shown that newer member states perform slightly better on average than older ones.⁷¹

As discussed above, negative effects of eastern enlargement on the functioning of the EU have been fairly limited, nevertheless opinion of the public and governments of

⁶⁷ Ulrich Sedelmeier: “Europe after the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union: 2004-2014”, http://eu.boell.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2014/06/eastern_enlargement. p. 12.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.8.

⁶⁹ Ed. Graham Avery, Anne Faber and Anne Schmidt: *Enlarging the European Union: Effect on the new member states and the EU*, p. 120.

⁷⁰ László Andor: *Labour mobility in the EU: challenges and perspectives for a genuine European labour market*, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-14-491_en.htm

⁷¹ Ulrich Sedelmeier: “Europe after the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union: 2004-2014”, http://eu.boell.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2014/06/eastern_enlargement, p. 9-10.

member states is today more negative towards further widening than it was prior to the eastern enlargements.⁷² Why this is the case when there were limited negative effects on the overall functional experience of the EU is difficult to answer, but something that this research will explore further.

3.4.1 Free movement of Persons within the EU

While free movement of persons within the European Union is one of its key achievements as a fundamental freedom for a citizen of the Union, it has also brought in a number of challenges. This principal is closely connected to the enlargements and will therefore be given a special notice here as part of the working experience of a larger Union. The eastern enlargement has meant that more citizens enjoy freedom of movement within the EU area, which has not always been well received by the older member states. An example of this was in 2013, when four member states Austria, Germany, Netherlands and the United Kingdom wrote a letter to the Commission calling on restrictions on free movement.⁷³ Negative attitudes among citizens were also clearly expressed in Brexit, where one of the major factors in the referendum was a negative view towards immigration or free movement of persons within the EU.⁷⁴ If looking at the UK, the flow of immigrants into the UK after the eastern enlargement was higher than expected, especially from Poland. The government in response chose to close its labor markets when Bulgaria and Romania later joined for the maximum period possible of seven years.⁷⁵ Other member states had similar ideas when restricted movement was implemented in 10 states of the then 27 members at the same time, further stating the growing concern around migration flow connected to enlargements.⁷⁶

The worries that have emerged with the principle are first of all, so-called “benefit tourism,” or the fear that EU-migrants are mainly moving to other member states to collect social welfare and benefits.⁷⁷ Secondly, free movement has caused some

⁷² Ibid, p. 12.

⁷³ Philippe Delivet: “The Free Movement of People in the European Union: principle, stakes and challenges”, <http://www.robert-schuman.eu/en>

⁷⁴ Sascha O. Becker, Thimo Fetzer & Dennis Novy : “The fundamental factors behind Brexit”, <http://voxeu.org/article/fundamental-factors-behind-brexite-vote>

⁷⁵ Ulrich Sedelmeier: “Europe after the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union: 2004-2014”, <http://eu.boell.org> , p. 11.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 12.

⁷⁷ Philippe Delivet: “The Free Movement of People in the European Union: principle, stakes and challenges”, <http://www.robert-schuman.eu/en>

⁷⁷ Eurodiaconia: Briefing – Free movement in the EU: What rights for the EU mobile citizens, <https://eurodiaconia.org/>

concern since the older members are experiencing a rise in criminality. This has been indicated by Europol in countries like France, Austria and Germany, where they have suffered from some organised crime groups coming from Central and Eastern Europe.⁷⁸ Social dumping or use of cheap labour has then been another fear connected to the free movement principle since it provides opportunities for abusing the rules.⁷⁹

It is difficult to answer if these concerns have come true or not. Earlier in this chapter, it is mentioned that there has been significant of labour movement from newer members to the older ones after the eastern enlargement, where the conclusion is that those movements had an overall positive effect in their average GDP. From this review, it is however evident that the fundamental movement principle has caused some worries, especially following the eastern enlargement since many countries feel that this labour movement should be better managed. The growing concern in member states highlights a certain need for effective implementation and inspection in this sector. The main idea behind the fundamental freedom principle is to provide mutual benefits for all member states causing a positive effect for the host country in a way that it can fill vacant jobs and attract required competence for a smooth function of their national economy.⁸⁰ Some countries have though been feeling like this has not been the base and feel like they are bearing the burden compared to other members. The EU therefore needs to find a solution through dialogue and cooperation with member states without losing track on the main goal of the fundamental principle of free movement of people across borders.⁸¹

3.5 Has the Recent Eastern Enlargement and Adjustment Made to Accommodate New Members been the Cause of Enlargement Fatigue?

In this chapter, there has been an overview of previous enlargement rounds and the impact that they have had with a special focus on the recent eastern enlargements. Looking historically, the EU enlargement policy has contributed in a great way to mutual benefits of peace, security and prosperity in Europe. A lot of progress has been made since 2004 when the EU's largest expansion took place and the new membership

⁷⁸ David. G. Fogue, Nicole Schude Kehoskie: Enlargement Fatigue in the European Union, <http://www.barnesrichardson.com>

⁷⁹ Philippe Delivet: "The Free Movement of People in the European Union: principle, stakes and challenges", <http://www.robert-schuman.eu/>

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

countries have benefitted greatly from joining the Union. However, a lot of effort has gone on at the same time to discuss new membership treaties and how to improve the overall system, partly because of this large expansion. There have been difficulties in ratifying these treaties as national referendums in member states have become more unpredictable. The failure of the Constitutional Treaty was a large blow for the EU and even after taking up new methods in the Lisbon Treaty by making only amendments; it still had some difficulties in the Irish referendum, the only country that held one. The functional experience has mostly been a positive one, changes that had to be made regarding decision-making processes and voting systems have been effective, but some negative discourse and worries have emerged towards the free movement of people principle.

In order to explore whether these factors have influenced the emergence of enlargement fatigue, it is vital to look at some of the sources evolving around enlargement fatigue and to use a discourse analysis methodology in their assessment. First of all, if looking at what the President of the Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, stated prior to his election in 2014 that when it comes to enlargement, Europe needs to digest the addition of 13 new members in the past 10 years and that European citizens need a break from enlargements in order to consolidate what can be achieved among 28 member states.⁸² This statement implies that because of the rapid growth in member states, enlargement fatigue has emerged, and this coming from one of the most influential individuals within the EU institutions as the current President of the European Commission gives it more importance in this context.

Secondly, a study from the Commission in 2009, five years after the big expansion to the east, where economic achievement and challenges were discussed, it states that various benefits came with the fifth enlargement, but at the same time, that these benefits came at some cost in terms of adjustment, which converted into the current enlargement fatigue discourse.⁸³ From this information, which happened in the context of when the financial crisis was emerging, it can be observed that the focus here is that the fifth or eastern enlargement has caused enlargement fatigue and therefore supports the hypothesis.

⁸² "My priorities", Jean-Claude Juncker, <http://juncker.epp.eu>

⁸³ European Commission: Five years of enlarged EU- Economic achievements and challenges, p. 16.

Thirdly, it has been previously mentioned that with the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, criteria for membership was narrowed. This change has been considered reflecting in a way a less favourable climate on enlargement where two decades of EU's widening and deepening has had its effect, resulting in stricter criteria for membership and showing clear symptoms of enlargement fatigue.⁸⁴

Fourthly, when looking at some of the discussions within the European Parliament on the 2007 enlargement strategy paper, there are clear hints of enlargement fatigue within the discourse of the MEPs. For instance, one MEP states that now after all the states that were previously within the Soviet sphere have joined, the EU seems to be suffering from enlargement fatigue.⁸⁵ This points out quite obviously that the recent large expansion seems to be the main cause for enlargement fatigue.

Finally, if looking at recent discourse in the media, like the Irish Times from 2015, it states that after the EU absorbed 13 new member states in just 10 years, mostly from former communist countries, there is a sense of enlargement fatigue in the EU.⁸⁶ This article is quite recent and does not particularly mention the recent challenges the Union has faced but focuses more on the EU absorbing new states, hence supporting the former hypothesis put forward in this paper.

To summarise the fact that so many countries joined the EU in such a short period and that many changes were made to accommodate them can explain to some extent why enlargement fatigue has emerged. The enlargement policy has taken a lot of time and effort in negotiations with candidate states, negotiations over membership treaties, and various compromises have been made between members in the progress, which have to a certain point strained its institutional capabilities. The EU has recently been focusing on other issues, such as supporting investments, creating jobs, recovering and dealing with crisis situations and subsequently showing symptoms of being less enthusiastic about enlargement. Most of the sources stating this are a few years old, though other aspects have then possibly also had an influence or potentially further enhanced enlargement fatigue. Most notable aspects are some recent crises which will be explored in the following chapters.

⁸⁴ Sonia Piedrafita : „The treaty of Lisbon: New Signals for future enlargements?“, p. 34.

⁸⁵ Debates – The Commission's 2007 enlargement strategy paper, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu>

⁸⁶ Suzanne Lynch: Europe Letter: “EU may be suffering from ‘enlargement fatigue’”, <http://www.irishtimes.com>

4. Crises and Enlargement Fatigue

4.1. Crises in the EU

This chapter will be dedicated to exploring the second hypothesis put forward in this research that enlargement fatigue has emerged because of the recent crisis situation. Initially, this will be conducted by going over the challenges the EU has faced in recent years before exploring the closely connected term Euroscepticism, a view that has been growing in connection with some of these crises and consequently having some effect on the function of the EU. Finally, there will be coverage on how these factors have affected enlargement policy and if they can explain why enlargement fatigue has emerged in the work of the Union.

4.1.1 Eurozone Crisis

The Eurozone crisis is one of the most challenging and vulnerable situations the EU has faced since its foundation. The crisis, which started in 2008 as a financial crisis in the US, had a global effect, where the EU with the Euro as a common currency in most member states, was no exception. The Eurozone crisis meant that governments had to provide emergency loans for banks to prevent them from becoming bankrupt. Consequently, some governments did not have the capacity do this in the long term. The Eurozone policy meant that some hard decisions had to be made whether members should assist individual governments that were in need within the common currency zone. This crisis had never happened before and showed that the Eurozone system was not prepared for this kind of circumstance. There was, for instance no independent central bank with support from a government similar to one in domestic systems. The crisis also developed into a big debate where countries often located in the northern part of the continent had to pay money to support or loan countries in the southern part or else let them withdraw from the Eurozone, most notably with the example of Greece.⁸⁷ Because of this, member states were further divided into groups and showed that under these circumstances the Eurozone was vulnerable and relied on national governments to step in.

The EU realised that in order to prevent this situation from happening again, more integration was needed within the economic and financial sector and part of this was

⁸⁷ Andrew Glencross: *The Politics of European Integration*, p. 287-288.

the Fiscal Compact Treaty from 2012. The treaty was controversial and did not have the support of all member states, while the UK refused to sign it along with the Czech Republic.⁸⁸ In addition, it was not part of the membership treaties but was more of an intergovernmental treaty where leaders of the membership countries had to react, having the European institutions play a secondary role in stating the weakness of the EU handling of the situation. The Eurozone crisis raised many issues of solidarity and created a distinction between countries using the Euro and those who did not. Enthusiasm for adopting the Euro subsequently reduced both in the new membership countries in eastern and central Europe, which are normally legally obliged to do adopt the Euro within a certain time limit.⁸⁹

Since 2009 the situation in most of the Eurozone countries has largely stabilised, though unemployment, especially among young people, is still a concern as well as the slow economic growth in some member countries. Greece was not far away from leaving the Eurozone or the monetary union and still there are some uncertainties whether they might drop the Euro as a currency in the near future with the Greek economy continuing to struggle. However, most leaders of the EU membership countries have retained faith in the common currency in these difficult times and have wanted to keep Greece in the Eurozone. In other words, they have survived the hardest part of the crisis and have in the aftermath learned from the experience and tried to strengthen economic governance. However, these attempts have been in the shadow of other challenges the EU has had to face in a short period of time, such as the refugee crisis, Ukrainian conflict and Brexit.⁹⁰

4.1.2 Refugee Crisis

The current crisis the EU is facing is the growing number of refugees entering the EU membership countries, where there has been a drastic increase in the last two years with more than 1 (one) million refugees arriving in 2015 compared to 280,000 (two hundred and eighty thousand) the year before, and the number of immigrants does not seem to be reducing in the near future.⁹¹ This has mainly been due to the increased conflict zones and poverty areas in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Africa, South Asia and elsewhere.⁹²

⁸⁸ Andrew Glencross: *The Politics of European Integration*, p. 305-306.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 305-306.

⁹⁰ Kristin Archick: *The European Union: Current Challenges and Future Prospects*, p. 8-9.

⁹¹ "Why is EU struggling with migrants and asylum?", *bbc.com*,

⁹² Kristin Archick: *The European Union: Current Challenges and Future Prospects*, p. 9.

The two basic agreements that the EU countries have agreed upon in this field are on the one hand the Schengen Agreement and on the other hand the so-called Dublin Regulation. In the current climate these agreements are considered to be in danger since they do not deal with crisis situations and place an unfair burden on certain countries. The main goals of the Schengen Agreement are to reduce border control and support free movement of people within the Schengen member countries. It further applies to most EU countries (or 22 out of the 28) as well as the EFTA states, however the UK and Ireland are not included. The Dublin Regulation, on the other hand, determines which country is responsible for an application of asylum in the case of an asylum seeker applying in many countries, putting focus on where the refugee arrives for the first time within the Schengen area and making that country responsible for the asylum seeker's application. Countries having borders to the Mediterranean Sea have therefore had to deal with this situation on a greater scale than others, especially in Italy and Greece and these countries understandably have not been able to handle the situation. The burden has more often than not moved over to other member states that have had a more open policy for migration, as has been the case for countries like Germany and Sweden.⁹³

These circumstances can evidently not occur over a long period and has forced leaders of national governments within the EU to work together and come up with solutions, which has further aggravated debates within countries similar to the Eurozone one. The debate on immigration, which has not yet found a clear solution, can either lead to more integration and cooperation in the field of immigration or less where some countries are considering closing their borders. The EU has made some decisions, but it has been a very slow progress, relocation of 160,000 (one hundred and sixty thousand) refugees located in Italy and Greece and an agreement with Turkey has though shown that some progress can be made.⁹⁴ The EU's efforts to distribute and relocate immigrants or asylum seekers have been very controversial and have further exposed some problems or social attitudes of member states towards immigration where the newer member states in East and Central Europe have more often than not have shown a more restrained strategy toward immigration than the older western states. These countries have not had a long history of immigration and they often fear

⁹³ Stefan Lehne: "How the Refugee crisis will reshape Europe" <http://carnegieeurope.eu>

⁹⁴ Ibid.

the religious effect that can follow; immigrants are often from a Muslim background and their effects on their Christian and European identity are feared.⁹⁵ The relocation of refugees from Italy and Greece was based on a qualified majority voting rather than a consensus by member states with states often from the recent eastern enlargement voting against the relocation. Having such a sensitive matter handled by a qualified majority is an unprecedented act within the EU and shows further the division between member countries on the matter.⁹⁶ Hungary has for instance been heavily criticised for a harsh border policy.⁹⁷ The lack of agreement among member states has further meant that they are organising themselves into groups, which is not a good sign for the solidarity within the EU where common solutions have not yet been found. This has meant growing support for Eurosceptic groups and the fact the number of immigrants or refugees looks not to be diminishing in the near future, meaning that the EU must reach some solutions in a greater way than it has so far - the sooner, the better.

The immigration crisis also came in a context when the EU was at a certain low point of solidarity following the Eurozone crisis. This situation has strained the underlying contract and systems regarding immigration in the EU, like the Schengen Agreement and the Dublin Regulation. Both systems depend highly on member states participation on external borders, with some countries even putting up temporary border control within the system in response to this migration pressure. This is something that contradicts one of the fundamental views of EU ideology or free movement of people within the EU border and cannot be a long-term solution.⁹⁸

4.1.3 EU and Russia Relations- Ukrainian Conflict

Another vulnerable situation that has occurred in recent years is the growing tension between the EU and Russia, which has been highlighted in the so-called Ukrainian crisis. If looking briefly at what happened and the main reasons why the tension emerged, it is firstly important to mention that Ukraine is a country ethnically and politically divided into parts and regions from east to west. In the south-eastern part like Crimea, ethnic Russians are a majority, speaking Russian as their first language. Furthermore, the country has strong ties with Russia in trade, history and is

⁹⁵ Kristin Archick: *The European Union: Current Challenges and Future Prospects*, p. 11.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 11.

⁹⁷ Stefan Lehne: "How the Refugee crisis will reshape Europe" <http://carnegieeurope.eu/>

⁹⁸ Kristin Archick: *The European Union: Current Challenges and Future Prospects*, p. 11.

geographically very important for Russia in their security issues and when transporting resources to Europe. On the other hand, the EU has in recent years tried to establish a stronger connection with countries east of the continent outside the current candidate states, states like Armenia, Belarus and Ukraine. For this reason, the Eastern Partnership Program was established in 2009 and a part of this program was a controversial trade agreement made in 2013 with Ukraine, an agreement that had more effect than could be imagined for both parties.⁹⁹

When making this landmark political and trade agreement with the EU in a divided country like Ukraine, the then Ukrainian President, Victor Yanukovich suspended the deal because of opposition from Russia and the Russian part of the country. Immediately after this decision by the President a protest started, which escalated into violent conflicts and ended with Yanukovich being forced to flee and resign his presidency.¹⁰⁰ A more pro-western government followed and after new elections the trade deal was finally ratified. However, before it was ratified and due to these developments, Russia had sent troops into Crimea and completed annexation of the region under Russian territory with a referendum that was widely condemned by the international community and perceived as illegal.¹⁰¹ Russia continued this aggressive foreign policy and intervened in another region, the Donbass area, a Ukrainian territory, which is also known to have high Russian ethnic roots. The new Ukrainian government would not accept this and therefore began the bloodiest conflict on European territory since Yugoslavia in the 1990's.¹⁰²

This situation caused great tension between Russia and the international community with the EU playing a vital role, and a period followed that has been uncomfortably identical to the Cold War. The EU condemned Russian actions but also imposed economic sanctions among other countries on Russia, in order to promote a solution to the conflict. During the progress, ceasefire deals have been made between the countries with French and Germany's involvement referred to as the Minsk Agreements. Trade sanctions from the western states have still not been dropped and have had a significant effect on international trade, and Russia has also boycotted goods coming from countries that imposed sanctions.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Robert McMahon: "Ukraine in Crisis", *Council on Foreign Relations*, <http://www.cfr.org/>

¹⁰⁰ Nick Thompson: „Ukraine: Everything you need to know about how we got here”, cnn.com,

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Daniel Gros and Federica Mustilli: The effects of Sanctions and counter Sanctions on EU-Russian

If looking beyond the Ukrainian conflict in EU/Russia relations, there are various opinions on how to handle Russia in the long term. The main dilemmas being whether to have closer ties with the country and establish good relations, or rather to keep a harsh policy since Russia's actions on the international scene have become more unpredictable. It is then often countries with a history of Soviet domination that are more supportive of the latter option.¹⁰⁴ A lot can be learned from this tension period for the EU and its foreign policy. It shows that all actions must be very carefully considered in relation to countries around Russian territory. The EU when making a deal with Ukraine, miscalculated Russia's reaction of having a "buffer security zone" around its border as well as keeping close trade relations with countries such as Ukraine and their negative perception of western European cooperation of EU and NATO. The tensions within EU/Russia relations have had a negative effect for both actors and the EU must therefore rethink its strategy in relation to countries in this part of continent.¹⁰⁵ When looking at the enlargement policy it seems more of a distant possibility that countries like Ukraine could one day become a part of the EU. This experience has therefore had some effect and will be a learning curve in the future of the EU and its foreign policy, including the enlargement policy when looking further to the east.

4.1.4 Brexit

The fourth crisis or challenge the EU has faced recently is the situation of Brexit in the UK. This situation has of course been previously mentioned in this research since this is the first time a member state will leave the EU. If looking briefly at history, British national leaders have always been more skeptical towards further European integration, and this is evident in numerous ways; the UK does not participate in the common currency with the Euro, the Schengen border free movement agreement, or the Fiscal Compact Treaty, and the fact that the UK has had some exemptions from the membership treaties when concerning justice and home affair policies.¹⁰⁶ In the context already discussed, financial and immigrant crisis, Eurosceptic opinion in the UK reached its most intense point, which increased pressure from hard Eurosceptics¹⁰⁷

trade flow, <https://www.ceps.eu>

¹⁰⁴ Kristin Archick: *The European Union: Current Challenges and Future Prospects*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁵ Christopher Hartwell: "Economic Relation Between the EU and Russia: Sanctioning failure?" p. 73.

¹⁰⁶ Kristin Archick: *The European Union: Current Challenges and Future Prospects*, p. 10.

¹⁰⁷ Hard eurosceptic – someone who is against the whole project of European integration, compared to a soft eurosceptic who is more against one or more policy areas of the EU.

within the political scene to hold a referendum to reconsider its relationship with the EU. In response to this pressure Prime Minister, David Cameron, promised that if he would be elected in the 2015 election there would be a referendum. He was elected and on June 23rd, 2016, a referendum was held on whether to stay or leave the EU and subsequently invoke article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty.

The vote was always going to be close but in the end surprised most people when the final result was that 52% of UK citizens wanted to leave the EU, an outcome that had not been predicted by most surveys prior to the referendum. The campaign from both sides was quite intense, there was a turnout with 72% of people voting, and the resulting distribution of votes revealed that on this issue of EU membership, the society had become divided by social class, generation and geography. The subject of immigration was also a vital issue and a large focus by the leave campaign. Areas that tended to be less economically well off, had lower levels of education and where the local population tended to be majority white revealed to be more likely to vote for leaving. Age was also a contributor where the younger public tended to vote to remain and the older voters for leaving.¹⁰⁸

The aftermath of Brexit has caused a lot of discussion both within the UK and the EU, mainly because of the uncertainty the referendum has caused. Article 50 that was invoked with the referendum was an article that was only part of the EU treaties since the Lisbon treaty was ratified in 2009, but now for the first time it has been used in practice. The short-term effect in the UK has though been considerable with UK's currency of the Sterling pound falling in value around 30% with a domino effect on various other sectors. The UK's new Prime Minister, Teresa May invoked article 50 on the 29th of March 2017 and according to the article, the progress of withdrawal will take approximately two years in which time negotiations must take place to agree to the terms of withdrawal. These negotiations are occurring for the first time and it will be very interesting to see what kind of terms will be agreed upon, especially concerning UK accession to the internal market and immigration issues.¹⁰⁹

The UK's withdrawal from the EU is a historical event, and maybe even a certain highlight when concerning the growing Eurosceptic view in the public discourse. What effect the event will have on the function of the EU is then another uncertainty and

¹⁰⁸ Matthew J. Godwin & Oliver Heath: "The 2016 Referendum, Brexit and the Left Behind: An Aggregate-level Analysis of the Result", p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

many questions are unanswered, such as if other countries will follow in their footsteps and if there will be a decrease in number member states in the future. This is something that will be addressed in the following chapters. The event could also have a positive effect when looking to the future of EU integration since taking away UK opposition could make future progress easier.

4.1.5 Terrorism

Finally, in this chapter focusing on challenges the EU is facing, there will be some reflections regarding security matters on the continent. The security environment in Europe has been ever changing in recent years; the Ukrainian crisis, as previously addressed, is a part of this but another security threat in the continent is connected to increasing terrorist activity linked to the rise of the Islamic States organisation and its ability to attract European citizens to join its cause.¹¹⁰ In response to this, the first step the EU took was a mutually agreed definition of terrorism in 2002, an important first step for what followed, which was a counter terrorism strategy set by the European Council in 2005. However, recent events have caused great distress for the whole continent, especially given the number of attacks and the attacks that have been prevented by authorities at the same time.¹¹¹

This has been highlighted recently in the last two years with November 2015 attack in Paris and March 2016 bombings in Brussels. These are attacks that have been connected to the Islamic state and are a cause of great concern for EU member states. Furthermore, there are individuals who are European citizens and are motivated by the same cause even though they have not travelled abroad to fight like what authorities think happened in the Nice attack in July 2016 and recently in London, March 2017.¹¹²

The EU has implemented a range of tools to fight terrorism and has played a leading role, but at the same time the situation has shown some weaknesses connected to EU borders, having largely open borders according to the free movement principle within the membership countries making it easier for the perpetrators to move around. The immigration crisis also plays a large role in these circumstances where a lot of pressure has emerged on EU outer borders and some of the individuals responsible for these

¹¹⁰ Kristin Archick: *The European Union: Current Challenges and Future Prospects*, p.13.

¹¹¹ "EU fight against Terrorism", *European Council*, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/>

¹¹² Kristin Archick: *The European Union: Current Challenges and Future Prospects* p. 15

attacks have posed as refugees with fake passports.¹¹³ Fighting terrorism is therefore in current times a significant and very challenging threat; it is a borderless threat and the cooperation of all member states is required to fight it. Agreeing upon these measures has though been challenging, and slow progress, since security matters have been viewed as the problem of central state authorities and member states are therefore reluctant to give that power away within the EU framework and prefer bilateral agreements.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 15.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 16.

4.2 Euroscepticism

From the previous discussion, it is evident that the EU has faced numerous and quite severe challenges over a short period of time. In this chapter, there will be a focus on the term Euroscepticism. A Eurosceptic view is an opinion closely connected to some of the above mentioned crises, and a view that has had substantial effect on the work of the EU, especially in recent years and consequently, the enlargement policy.

The term Euroscepticism is a phrase that has been connected to the work of the EU for quite some time. EU integration has had mixed emotions in member states throughout history and the term can be traced back to the British media in the mid-1980's.¹¹⁵ The direct definition has been defined as an opinion that is not enthusiastic about increasing the power of the EU¹¹⁶ at the expense of the sovereignty of membership countries. The more increased level of European integration within the EU has further triggered this opinion, especially since the EU took its current form with the single European act in 1986 where it changed from not only being a market cooperation but to being a more political one as well. This term was then used frequently in the discourse regarding the Maastricht Treaty and has since grown in scholarly literature in the political discourse on the subject, especially recently in the crises climate, and in addition, it has become a common term within the discussion on further integration.¹¹⁷

Eurosceptic views have further been categorised into two types; on one hand there is a hard Eurosceptic view, which is more an opposition against the whole European project. This means that there is not a single policy the view is against more than another, just the whole idea and some would therefore not join or withdraw their membership from the EU. On the other hand, there is a soft Eurosceptic view, which focuses more on opposition against one or more policy areas of the EU.¹¹⁸ Subsequently, there will now be an overview on how the view has been growing both within EU institutions and in member state countries.

¹¹⁵ Robert Hamson & Menno Spiering: "Euroscepticisms and the evolution of European Political debate", *Euroscepticism: Party, Politics and National Identity*, p. 15.

¹¹⁶ *Oxford English dictionary*.

¹¹⁷ Robert Harmsen & Menno Spiering: "Euroscepticisms and the evolution of European Political debate," p. 17.

¹¹⁸ Szczerbiak & Taggart: *The Party politics of Euroscepticism in EU Member and candidate countries*, p.7.

4.2.1 *Within EU Institutions*

The most evident example of growing Euroscepticism has been within the European Parliament (EP). This institution, which has also been the largest growing one within the system, has today become an important figure in legislative and budgetary matters. The first elections were in 1979, and since then there have been Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) sharing opinions against the European project and its implementation. With time, political groups have formed against, or at least not supporting further integration.¹¹⁹

If exploring the current climate after the parliamentary elections in 2014, one can assume that roughly one-third (1/3) of the 751 (seven hundred and fifty one) MEPs could possibly fall under the term Eurosceptic.¹²⁰ This is quite a large group and has increased with every election in recent years. The question is then: how do these Eurosceptic MEPs act and how do they influence the work of the EP? Experience has shown us that most Eurosceptic MEPs try to have some control or influence, while having debates and respecting the rules of the game. Others though, often a small minority, try to do everything to disturb the functioning of the EU. This group can be seen as harder Eurosceptics, their influence does though remain marginal, where they have and will most likely only slow down proceedings.¹²¹

When focusing on the European Commission, the institution which has throughout the EU's history been the main driving force towards European integration, growing Euroscepticism has had some effect but on a more limited scale than that within the EP. It is quite challenging to have a clear view on how this has been changing within the Commission, but there have been some surveys conducted among the staff. The surveys have included asking questions about their views regarding European integration and their answers have been further categorised as a view as an inter-functionalist view, similar to the neo-functionalist approach as was discussed in the theory chapter of this research, or inter-governmentalism similar to liberal inter-governmentalism views from the same chapter. The former view is a more pro-integration or federal one, but the latter one favours the states to remain the main actors. The surveys show that there is a substantial group of inter-governmentalist views within the Commission at all levels of

¹¹⁹ Nathalie Brack: Euroscepticism in the European Parliament: "Exit or voice, Euroscepticism within the EU institutions", p. 51

¹²⁰ How Eurosceptic is the new European Parliament?, <http://www.bbc.com>

¹²¹ Nathalie Brack: Euroscepticism in the European Parliament: "Exit or voice, Euroscepticism within the EU institutions", p. 63

hierarchy.¹²² These surveys were made in 2008 and show that the inter-governmentalism view varies between countries and can go from 1-2% of the member nation staff up to 20-23%.¹²³ Since there has not been a similar survey recently conducted, it is difficult to draw conclusions if the inter-governmentalist view is growing. The Commission is an influential institution in the enlargement proceedings since it handles the negotiations with candidate states on behalf of the Union, and growing scepticism can therefore be more influential there than maybe elsewhere within the EU system. How a similar survey would appear today is uncertain but one can imagine that after recent crises, the inter-governmentalist view has at least not been decreasing.

Finally, the Council of the EU will be considered as to whether this institution has been feeling some effects of growing Euroscepticism. The Council is an influential institution in the enlargement policy as well as elsewhere since it has the task to vote on whether to start negotiations with an applicant state or not.¹²⁴ It consists of corresponding ministers from member states for each topic under consideration where they discuss legislative, budgetary and policy matters in particular fields. The Presidency of the Council is a rotating one, so each Member State country holds the presidency for six months. Subsequently, there is a question if a domestic soft Eurosceptic government holds the Presidency in the Council of the EU and what effect that could have on its functioning. This could be said to be the case when Hungary held the Presidency in the second half of 2011.¹²⁵ The influence that this kind of domestic government can have is however very limited, primarily because of the political culture within the Council, and institutional practices in the work of the Council means that it is difficult to change the underlying culture of how things work. This is also because of reforms from the Lisbon Treaty and formal/informal norms of expected behaviour in the presidency role.¹²⁶ A Eurosceptic government or Eurosceptic ministers can though have some influence in agenda settings, structuring and slowing down some agendas or

¹²² Renaud Dehousse & Andrew Thompson: "Intergovernmentalism in the Commission : Foxes in the henhouse?", *Euroscepticisms within the EU Institutions*", p. 29.

¹²³ Renaud Dehousse & Andrew Thompson: "Intergovernmentalism in the Commission : Foxes in the henhouse?", *Euroscepticisms within the EU Institutions*", p. 16-17.

¹²⁴ André De Munter: "Fact Sheet on the European Union: The enlargement of the European Union", <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/>

¹²⁵ Cecile Leconte: "Eurosceptics in the rotating presidency chair: Too much ado about nothing?", p. 33

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 40-41.

issues that are in process, meaning the integration process, which could involve future enlargements.¹²⁷

4.2.2 In Member States

There is no doubt that there has been growing Euroscepticism within member states where Eurosceptic parties have been getting more support by public voters in national elections. These circumstances are naturally closely connected with Eurosceptic views within the Council of the EU and the Parliament. Since it is the states ministers that represent each country at the Council and in the European Parliament through its elections.

Public opinion has always been an important matter in the work of the Union. The Eurobarometer was created for this purpose in 1973, being an organisation that holds regular surveys in member states. Part of the surveys is to find out public opinion on various matters of the EU and its policies.¹²⁸ Growing support for Eurosceptic parties in domestic politics with older member states is a special worry in the current climate where recent crisis like the financial and immigrant one have had a substantial effect. Eurosceptic parties have been growing in countries like France with the National Front, in Netherlands with the Party for Freedom, in Italy with the Five Star Movement and in the Scandinavian countries most noticeably in Finland and Denmark with the Finns and the Danish People's parties.¹²⁹ These parties have different emphasis, some of them wanting to replicate Brexit in their own country having a referendum on whether to withdraw from the EU or not, but others are only encouraging a further discussion about the future of the Union. These groups all have in common the fact that they have been enjoying growing support recently. It is not necessary to look further back than 2007 to see that at that time the United Kingdom was observed to be a sceptical outsider.¹³⁰

Growing Eurosceptic views have then been expressed recently in European Parliamentary elections, national elections and moments on treaties ratification. Also, the fact that countries increasingly hold referendums when coming to treaty ratification or other integration related issues gives a similar impression. These referendums are

¹²⁷ Ibid, p. 39

¹²⁸ Andrew Glencross: *The politics of European Integration*, p. 270

¹²⁹ Will Carter: "A guide to Europe's key eurosceptic parties, and how successful they are", <http://www.newstatesman.com>.

¹³⁰ "The remarkable rise of Euroscepticism", <https://www.theguardian.com/>

often hard to predict; different campaigns about a lot of issues regarding the EU are raised, issues that are often not the ones being decided upon in the referendums but more an expression of something else that the citizens are unhappy with.¹³¹ Referendums are often held because of pressure from the Eurosceptic parties and the part of the public that want more direct democratic methods, and enlargement or integration processes then become more complicated than before because of this pressure.

If finally a recent Eurobarometer survey from 2014 is considered, it shows that the overall public image of the EU is perceived as positive by 39% of EU citizens, 22% negative and 39% neutral or unsure. This opinion varies then between member states with the highest positive country being Poland with 61% and highest negative country being Greece with 44%. The positive responses have however grown from the previous two years when the EU public image hit a certain low point in 2012 partly because of EU facing the Eurozone crisis.¹³² These statistics show that public opinion is ever changing and is closely connected to outside circumstances such as recent crises. How the EU faces these challenges is vital for future integration in sections such as the enlargement policy. Recent times and rising Euroscepticism have shown that EU's support in member state countries cannot be taken for granted and is something that the Union must give more attention to in their future work.

¹³¹ Andrew Glencross: *The politics of European Integration*, p. 278-279

¹³² Public Opinion in the European Union, Standard Eurobarometer 82, Autumn 2014.

4.4. Crises - Causing Enlargement Fatigue?

In this chapter, recent challenges that the EU has faced have been examined in order to answer the second hypothesis put forward in this research, that the recent crisis situation has caused the emergence of enlargement fatigue.

It is evident from the analysis that recent times have been very difficult, starting with a financial crisis, almost immediately followed by an immigrant one while in between having to deal with a tense situation with Russia, increased terrorist attacks and one of the larger state member states in the UK, wanting to withdraw from the whole cooperation. Some of these crises have consequently been a part of why Eurosceptic views have been growing, both within the EU institutions and with the public in member states countries.¹³³ It can be further argued that within the EU system, the most influential institution in the enlargement process or the Commission relative power has diminished compared to other institutions. It has been the national leaders of member states through the European Council and not the Commission itself that have had to take the difficult decisions leaving the institution ineffective in certain issues.¹³⁴ The crises have also further divided member states, which has been highlighted with efforts to distribute refugees in the immigrant/refugee crisis and with the situation of Greece in the Eurozone crisis where member state countries literally had to “save” the Greek economy from becoming bankrupt. These circumstances have affected the EU enlargement policy where member states do not want to replicate these scenarios with new members and therefore possibly encouraged more scepticism on widening further.

In order to falsify this hypothesis, the discourse analysis methodology will be used to explore sources as in the previous chapter. The first source that will be analysed is the most recent enlargement strategy report by the Commission. In the report it states that recent challenges the EU has faced have had various consequences where the attractiveness of the EU has been partly affected by the economic downturn and scepticism regarding the European project.¹³⁵ Stating this in the enlargement report shows quite distinctly that the Commission is acknowledging the damaging effect of these factors with consequential influence on the enlargement policy, indirectly

¹³³ Kristin Archick: *The European Union: Current Challenges and Future Prospects*, p. 5-6.

¹³⁴ John O'Brennan : „Enlargement Fatigue and its Impact on the Enlargement Process in the Western Balkans”, p. 38.

¹³⁵ European Commission: *2016 Communication on the EU enlargement policy*, p. 2.

referring to enlargement fatigue. In this context, it is interesting to compare this report to the same one made by the Commission in 2007. There it states that when making the report, the Commission has considered the pace of enlargement seriously in order to avoid overstretch of commitments. It further declared that the Union will fulfil its existing commitments but is wary about assuming any new ones.¹³⁶ In this report the Commission is giving some signs that the speed of enlargement process has been rapid and shows symptoms of slowing down. When comparing the reports, it seems like the strategy report from 2016 is supporting the latter hypothesis put forward in this paper and the former report from 2007 as discussed in chapter three.

Secondly, if looking at a statement by the former deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, where she said that it is understandable that the EU does not want to admit “economically cripples” as members because it wants to avoid the repetition of crisis scenarios it has faced in the past.¹³⁷ Serbia has currently started negotiations with the EU regarding their membership and this statement shows that they are fully aware of the effect the recent financial crisis has had for the enlargement policy where she implies that the Union is more wary of expanding because of this recent experience.

Thirdly, there are many scholars who have addressed the topic. In an article regarding the factors affecting the enlargement policy towards the Western Balkans, there are four main reasons given for the emergence of enlargement fatigue. The reasons include: first of all because of experience with the last wave of enlargement, secondly because of institutional and political crisis in the EU, thirdly because of consequences of the world economic crisis and fourthly because of political issues within the West Balkan states.¹³⁸ This source from 2010 supports both the hypothesis put forward in this research, and it also puts it forward in a context when the financial crisis had just emerged. Other scholars have then gone further stating that the enlargement policy today is more presented as a bridge too far in the European project beset by crisis and incapability of repeating previous experiences, where enlargement fatigue has become a dominant feature of the EU relations with the West Balkan states.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ European Commission: Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006 – 2007 - Including annexed special report on the EU's capacity to integrate new members, p. 3.

¹³⁷ Maja Poznatov: “Serbia grudgingly accepts Juncker’s enlargement pause”, <http://www.euractiv.com/>

¹³⁸ Danijela Bozovic, Marko Vujacic & Nikola M. Zivkovic: Future of the European Union Enlargement: The case of Western Balkans, p. 20-21.

¹³⁹ John O’Brennan: “On the slow train to nowhere? The European Union, Enlargement fatigue and the Western Balkans.”, p. 239.

In summary, the recent crises the EU has faced have had a great effect on its functioning, which means that all subjects and policies have become more complicated within the EU system. This has especially been the case when discussing sensitive matters that are connected to recent challenges, including the enlargement policy. This conclusion is parallel to the conclusion in the third chapter, and has been a contributing factor for why the enlargement fatigue has been used to describe the current situation regarding future enlargements. As stated in chapter three, symptoms of enlargement fatigue were beginning to emerge shortly after the large expansion in the 20th century and from the discussion in this chapter it seems like recent crises have further enhanced these “fatigue” symptoms, making them last longer and become more severe.

5. EU Enlargement Policy - Current situation and Possible Future Developments

In previous chapters, two hypotheses have been explored in order to find answers to the main research question put forward in this research. In this chapter, the secondary or follow up questions will be examined and a closer look will be given to the current enlargement status, possible future developments within EU enlargement policy, and what effect Brexit could have on the enlargement policy.

As mentioned earlier, the current candidate states in the Balkan region might have a long road ahead before they become full members of the EU. There are today seven countries considered as candidate or potential candidate states, six in the West Balkan region plus Turkey. Within the Balkan states, they are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. In the most recent enlargement report from the Commission, it is clearly stated that prospect of EU membership in these countries is continuously reaffirmed by all member states, where there is willingness to drive transformation and further enhance stability and security in the region. It further states in the report that a credible enlargement process is needed, based on fair and strict conditionality, which is an important tool in supporting candidate countries on their transformation in line with the accession criteria. Enlargement is therefore a long-term process given the complex nature of the reforms, most notably in key areas such as economic reform and rule of law.¹⁴⁰

These remarks are in line with what has been explored so far, in other words that there is a willingness to expand parallel to EU values and ideology but at the same time willingness to slow down proceedings, learning from previous experiences, and not making any haste or irrational decisions where recent challenges the EU has faced have had some impact. The current candidate countries are in different places in the enlargement process. Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey have started negotiations with the Commission, whereas Albania and Macedonia have been given a candidate status but negotiations have not formally started. Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina are still further away having only been identified as potential candidate states by the EU.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ European Commission: 2016 Communication on the EU enlargement policy, policy, p. 2.

¹⁴¹ European Commission: "Check current status", <https://ec.europa.eu>

5.1.1 Turkey

Turkey's position in the enlargement process and in relations with the EU is a special one and is more complicated than with the Balkan states, especially in regard to recent events. Turkey has a long history of relations with the Union and the country applied to join what was then the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1987. Prior to their formal application, there have been links between the entities going back to the Association Agreement from 1964. Official negotiations involving Turkey's membership have though not been on the agenda until very recently. The country has never realistically been in a position where it could be considered a credible candidate state for a few reasons; most of its territory lies in Asia, Turkish citizens have a different culture and background as the majority are of Muslim religion and the country is in some ways politically different than their European counterparts.¹⁴²

Despite these differences, membership negotiations started in 2005 where 14 of the 33 chapters have been opened but since then, the progress has been very slow. The recent events that have occurred in Turkey, after the military coup attempt on 15th July 2016, have had severe effects on the negotiations for Turkey as a candidate state. In the aftermath, frequent human rights violations have been executed by the government where almost all sections that fall under the Copenhagen and Madrid criteria have been backsliding, giving no evidence that the country would like to join the EU at some stage and making Turkey's membership a very far and a near improbable conclusion as things stand today.¹⁴³ Turkey has and will remain an important partner for the EU, which is especially the case in the current migration flow and in the fight against terrorism where location of the country plays a vital role.

5.1.2 Balkan Countries

When focusing on the West Balkan states of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia, Kosovo and their potential membership, preparation has been on the agenda within the EU for quite some time. In 1999 the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) was established with the aim of supporting the EU and relations with the Balkan countries and again a few years later at the Thessaloniki European Council in 2003, the Council declared that the West Balkan countries would be part of the EU

¹⁴² "Arguments for and against Turkey's membership", <http://www.debatingeurope.eu/>

¹⁴³ European Commission: Commission staff working document – Turkey 2016 report, p. 5-8

once they fulfil the criteria for membership.¹⁴⁴ The EU has in the aftermath invested a lot financially in the area, assisting the states with building up infrastructure and operating several military operations in order to help keep peace and stability in the region.¹⁴⁵

At the same time, as has been discussed, a lot has happened in the work of the Union since 2003 and one of the consequences is enlargement fatigue where criteria for membership has been narrowed and willingness to increase the number of member states has been decreasing. The current candidate states in the Balkan region are in addition quite far from reaching the criteria for membership, since these are difficult times for West Balkan politics where the economic crisis in Greece has had a great effect on the area, causing financial instability in the region as well as some unresolved conflicts, which has meant that the speed of the enlargement process has been a slow one.¹⁴⁶ Montenegro and Serbia are the only countries that have officially started negotiations. This situation has further caused quite a dilemma for the EU, between two risks. One risk is that the accession of weak states with unresolved disputes might potentially damage the EU. The other is that postponing accession into the undefined future will undermine the process in the region and candidate states will start losing faith in their eventual membership. It is vital for states to believe that EU membership is a concrete solution and something that will deliver benefits should they be able to fulfil the criteria.¹⁴⁷

The accession of Croatia as a full member state in 2013 has changed the scenario to some extent. It was the first Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) country that became a full member of the EU and its accession occurred after the criteria of membership was narrowed with the Lisbon Treaty. Furthermore, it happened in the same period when the EU was facing challenging circumstances, therefore providing a concrete example that the West Balkan states could potentially fulfil the criteria. Croatia accession as a neighbouring country had in addition a strong stabilising effect on the region and is perceived as an encouragement for the others. It is vital for the

¹⁴⁴ Hrvoje Butkovic & Visnja Samardzija: „Challenges of a continued EU – enlargement of the Western Balkans – Croatia’s experience”, p. 93-95.

¹⁴⁵ Heather Grabbe, Gerald Knaus & Daniel Korski: “Beyond Wait and See: They way forward for EU Balkan Policy”, p. 1.

¹⁴⁶ Ritsa Panagiotou: “The New Environment of EU Enlargement: The Impact of Economic Crisis on the Western Balkans and their EU Accession Prospects”, p. 41.

¹⁴⁷ Heather Grabbe, Gerald Knaus & Daniel Korski: “Beyond Wait and See: They way forward for EU Balkan Policy”, p. 2.

West Balkan countries to learn from the experience of Croatia, where for example early opening of the most difficult negotiation chapters was important in their progress for membership. The West Balkan states need to show a clear intention and willingness to work with the Commission and implement reforms with a special focus on economic and judicial matters, if accession is to be successful.¹⁴⁸ It has already been stated by Mr. Juncker that next enlargement will not occur until at least 2020 but it seems like as though it will be necessary to look even later until the next expansion could take place, or around the mid-2020's. It seems as there will be no shortcuts given by the EU where multiple challenges and crises have had their effects on enlargement fatigue. It will mainly be up to the West Balkan states to identify their shortcomings and make plans to overcome them in close cooperation with the Commission. By doing so, the EU will fulfil its commitments made in the Thessaloniki Council from 2003 hopefully sooner rather than later so the candidate countries will not start to lose faith in the progress. If they start losing faith in the project, alternative possibilities could become attractive for the West Balkan states such as having closer ties with Russia, which is alleged to have interest in the area and would most likely would want to hamper the countries accession to all European cooperation in the form of EU and NATO, a result that would not be a desirable solution for the EU.¹⁴⁹

If looking back at the theories from the second chapter of this research, this conclusion shows a certain struggle between Neo-functionalism where spill-over is a driving force within the Commission towards further expansion and Liberal Intergovernmentalism (LI) in the form of member state countries being the restrain mechanism. Constructivism adds then another dimension to the dialogue but an important one since it is the candidate's social constructed view of the EU that plays an important part on their progress and effort to adopt the membership criteria. These theories can explain certain aspects of the enlargement policy better than others. Although LI seems to have the edge in the current climate of enlargement fatigue, other parts of theories like Neo-functionalism cannot be ignored, especially when looking at why the EU looks towards expanding despite maybe some member states not being very interested.

¹⁴⁸ Hrvoje Butkovic & Visnja Samardzija: „Challenges of a continued EU – enlargement of the Western Balkans – Croatia's experience”, p. 104.

¹⁴⁹ Robert Ledger: Is Russia winning a battle of hearts and minds in the Western Balkans?, <http://www.neweasterneurope.eu/>

5.1.3 Looking Beyond Candidate States – Alternative Solutions

When looking further than the current or potential candidate states, it becomes more of a challenge to try and predict future enlargements. According to the EU membership treaties, article 2 and 49, it is declared that a European state, which respects certain values and is committed in promoting them, could become a member of the EU. Technically all states that are located in Europe, 51 in total, could therefore become members of the EU. This is how things stand today and in the near future not a realistic possibility. In some cases, like with the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) states that could quite easily fulfill the criteria for membership, they perceive their better interests in staying out of the Union and would rather make deals with the EU, like the EEA agreement. There has then been some discussion as to after the UK's withdrawal from the EU, Scotland could gain independence and possibly join the EU, but this is quite far-fetched at the moment. The focus here will therefore be on looking at other possible countries, like Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia and Moldavia, which have been mentioned in this context since they are located either close to or around EU borders and their membership could have many advantages for the EU. These countries are still very far away in all sectors from membership criteria and are nowhere near the standards required even for a medium-term prospect of membership.¹⁵⁰ In addition, they all have close ties with Russia and like the Ukrainian crisis has shown, any steps towards enlargement or deals made in such areas must be considered and prepared very well. Even though there seems to be willingness within these countries to have closer ties to the EU, Ukraine for example has gone through great sacrifices with a civil war that that was triggered by their will to have closer relations with the EU. These countries cannot therefore be totally ignored as candidate states in the long term.

For now, there is the general consensus when looking beyond the current or potential candidate states, that other countries are too far away from membership and the question arises if the EU could have closer ties with these countries in an alternative way. This is could be a possibility under the already existing European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) framework. The ENP is an ambitious project that was established in 2003 by the Commission in a similar era when the big enlargements were taking place. The

¹⁵⁰ HM Government: Review of the Balance of Competences between the United Kingdom and the European Union EU – Enlargement, p. 89

ENP framework is used by the EU to influence 16 countries and is further organised into two different groups, southern and eastern neighbourhoods, and focuses on various countries having borders with EU countries and the Mediterranean. Its main goals are to share benefits of enlargement with neighbouring countries and use the EU's so-called "soft power" in these countries, export stability and security, and foster political association and economic integration around shared values such as human rights, democracy and rule of law.¹⁵¹ This aim would benefit the EU in many ways, since many issues emerge with new borders, such as organised crime, terrorism and environmental degradation.¹⁵²

There are however some problems that occur by using this framework since the most effective tool for EU foreign policy in transforming countries over the years has been to offer membership with the pre-accession criteria attached to it. Under the ENP framework, there is no reward of membership, so why should these countries therefore adopt to EU standards? There are numerous ways possible for the EU to answer this in this situation since they have quite a lot to offer. First of all, motive could be in the form of some kind of financial aid to support implementing reforms. A second motive could be more access to the EU internal market by removing tariffs and barriers and making trade deals. A third motive could evolve around visa liberalisation and offer citizen mobility.¹⁵³ These subjects are more often than not very sensitive matters within EU-politics, since budgetary issues are always a difficult topic, as is immigration, and trade deals can be a challenge as seen in the recent experience of Ukraine.

When focusing on ENP framework as a possible alternative to enlargement, it applies only to the eastern neighbourhood part of the program for countries like Ukraine, Georgia, Moldavia and Belarus. It could also apply for Turkey since as things stand today they look like they are growing further way from membership criteria. These countries are in Europe, or at least some part like the case of Turkey, and have a possibility in the long term to become members of the Union. In this era of enlargement fatigue, it is however not a realistic possibility for the time being and the ENP framework could therefore be an ideal solution for the Union when trying to influence the countries in a positive way without thinking about the possibility of enlargement.

¹⁵¹ David Cadler: "Is the European Neighbourhood Policy a substitute for enlargement", p. 52.

¹⁵² Sevilay Kahraman: The European Neighbourhood Policy: A critical assessment, p. 17.

¹⁵³ David Cadler: "Is the European Neighbourhood Policy a substitute for enlargement", p. 55-56.

5.2. Brexit and EU Enlargement Policy

Finally, in this chapter there will be some reflections regarding Brexit and if the situation can have any effect on the current enlargement proceedings. Brexit will mean as previously addressed that the UK will be the first country to invoke article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty and withdraw from the EU after a national referendum on the subject. The situation has caused many uncertainties both for the EU and the UK, especially surrounding the terms of the withdrawal. The terms between the entities will further be very important for all actors, as they will set a certain example on what can be expected in these surroundings. Article 50 was invoked at the end of March 2017, where the UK and EU will have two years to negotiate the terms of withdrawal unless the European Council in agreement with the member states decide to extend this period. This timeline means that in the first half of 2019, the conditions would have to be agreed upon.¹⁵⁴

Since many uncertainties characterise Brexit, the situation could have various effects on EU enlargement policy. Initially, as has already started in some way, the EU's focus will most likely be shifted in the short run while preparing and negotiating UK withdrawal, subsequently making the enlargement process suffer in the process and push it lower on the agenda. A rapid UK withdrawal would therefore be the ideal solution for the Balkan states, a solution that does not seem at this point in time a likely one considering the importance of the negotiations where all parties involved will carefully consider every step.¹⁵⁵ Slowing the pace of the enlargement process could have a damaging effect on the Balkan region as discussed in previous chapters where the Balkan region countries would start losing faith in the process and alternative options might gain attractiveness.¹⁵⁶ This might be the most likely effect of Brexit in this era of enlargement fatigue, making the enlargement suffer in the short term. This should though only occur on a small scale compared to what the potential candidate states in the Balkan region can do to speed up the process for themselves. Since many uncertainties surround Brexit, the situation could also have other effects. One prospect is that Brexit may have no significant effect whatsoever and the enlargement process will continue as usual. Another option would be that Brexit might have an encouraging

¹⁵⁴ Alex Hunt & Brian Wheeler: "All you need to know about the UK leaving the EU", bbc.com

¹⁵⁵ Eamonn Butler: "Brexit and the Balkans: Implications for Future EU Enlargement", <http://www.europeanfutures.ed.ac.uk/>

¹⁵⁶ Dr. Dorian Jano: Policy Brief - Brexit Implications on EU enlargement – Is it make of break time?, *EU Policy Hub – Communication Europe*, p. 2

effect on the enlargement process, where the EU would prefer to maintain momentum and reassure credibility for the European project by speeding up the progress.¹⁵⁷ These possibilities seem less likely for the time being and the most likely effect being that the EU will show less interest in the short term where enlargement proceeding are being pushed lower on the Union's agenda, at least while the terms of withdrawal are taking place.

Finally, the question arises around Brexit if other states could follow in their footsteps. This especially applies if the overall withdrawal will be a successful one. Previously there has been coverage on rising support for Eurosceptic parties in various EU member states. This has been the case in established EU countries like France, Austria and Netherlands where Eurosceptic political parties have been enjoying growing support calling for their own referendums. Other countries where governments have been considered overall Eurosceptic like Hungary have also been mentioned in this context.¹⁵⁸ Another member state invoking article 50 of the Lisbon treaty before UK finalises the terms of their withdrawal seems though unlikely. Eurosceptic parties in member states are only marginal and not all of them are calling for a referendum but more asking questions regarding the future of the EU relations with member states. The ones who are asking for a national referendum will most likely wait for the outcome of Brexit and use its conclusions to their advantages in their national political campaign.

Before leaving the discussion on Brexit, it is so far a certain highlight of a difficult period for the EU. The EU must therefore adapt in a certain way, improve and listen to its people and change to more democratic methods. In connection to the enlargement policy, the EU might have to listen more to surveys regarding enlargement strategy, which could become a greater factor in the post Brexit era.

6. Conclusion

The European cooperation which started in 1950s with six nations having the main goal to foster peace, values and prosperity in the continent has developed greatly into to what is now known as the 28 member state European Union. The enlargement policy has played an important role in this development where it has expanded these dimensions over a wider territory, making Europe a safer place, especially through the promotion

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, p.1-2.

¹⁵⁸ "More countries could follow UK out of the EU, says German finance ministry, as European leaders warn radical reform is needed", The Telegraph <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/25/european-leaders-fear-brexit-vote-could-herald-eu-collapse-unles/>

of democracy and fundamental freedom. Questions regarding the widening of this European cooperation have been a part of the discourse almost since its foundation, where it first emerged in the beginning of 1960's when the United Kingdom wanted to join. However, recent times have been quite difficult for the EU in which various outside and inside circumstances have had their effects. It has therefore been an interesting time to explore the topic where various factors have come into consideration since the EU enlargement policy is constantly in the public and political discourse.

The main objective of this study has been to answer the research questions put forward, the key question being to answer: What are the main factors causing the emergence of enlargement fatigue in the EU? In order to explore this, two hypotheses were addressed, the former one claiming the latest enlargement round that started in 2004 where the EU expanded from 15 to 28 members and the changes the EU made to accommodate these states has been the main cause. The second hypothesis states that the recent challenges and crises the EU has been facing have been the main cause.

When considering these combined factors, it should be acknowledged that they happened in different eras. There had been preparation for the eastern enlargement since the beginning of the 1990's, just after the fall of the Communist regime, which was confirmed with the Copenhagen criteria established in 1993. What followed was a transformation period both in candidate states and later the EU to accommodate these new members. Ratification of new membership treaties made some important progress but there were also some disappointing results for the EU as national referendums in member states were becoming increasingly unpredictable, with the failure of the Constitutional Treaty as the biggest disappointment. The fifth enlargement round then took place in a few steps but started in 2004 with the accession of ten new member states. Shortly after this, enlargement fatigue symptoms were beginning to emerge in the discourse. Various data supports this, such as the enlargement strategy report by the Commission in 2007, the achievement report from the same institution from 2009, a statement by the current President of the Commission prior to his election in 2014, a discussion by MEP's, regarding the enlargement strategy report in 2007, changes made to the Lisbon Treaty where criteria for membership was narrowed, and various other sources from scholars or in the media.

In 2009 when the Eurozone crisis started, a new period took over in the work of the EU where numerous challenges started to affect its work, the most recent ones being the current refugee crisis and the situation of Brexit. At the same time, growing

Euroscepticism has been evident both within EU institutions and in member states where Eurosceptic parties have been enjoying more support. These challenges have further divided member states when discussing sensitive matters, diminished the states solidarity and pushed discussion regarding further widening lower on the agenda. This has been addressed in various sources, such the Commission's most recent strategy report from 2016, a statement made by governmental leaders in the candidate states and by various scholars when addressing the topic.

What started therefore in connection with the eastern enlargement in 2004, where in the aftermath symptoms of enlargement fatigue began to emerge, has been enhanced by the recent challenges and crises the EU has been facing. This is evident especially when analysing the enlargement strategy report from the Commission from 2007 on the one hand and the 2016 report on the other. These reports are one of the most vital in this context since they summarise the main effect on the enlargement policy at each time by the institutions that is handling the enlargement process on behalf of the Union. After the analysis, having used critical discourse method when exploring the sources, the conclusion is that both factors have been contributing to the emergence of enlargement fatigue within the EU.

The secondary questions this research explored revolved around possible developments within the enlargement policy and what effect the situation of Brexit could have on these developments. When exploring the former topic, the enlargement process for the candidate or potentially candidate states in the West Balkan has and will remain quite slow. The states in the Balkan are quite far from reaching the criteria for membership, there have been difficult times for West Balkan politics where especially the economic crisis has had a negative effect. The accession of Croatia in 2013 is however a concrete example of a country in the region that fulfilled the membership criteria after it was narrowed by the Lisbon Treaty. Learning from Croatia's experience is therefore essential for the West Balkan states, as is identifying their shortcomings and making plans to overcome them in close cooperation with the Commission. If that happens, the next enlargement would not be earlier than around the mid-2020's, since it seems that there will be no shortcuts given by the EU where the emergence of enlargement fatigue has played an important part.

When looking beyond the candidate or potential candidate states in the West Balkan region, further enlargements seem at this point highly unlikely. Some countries perceive their interest better in staying outside of the EU, preferring a less ambitious

cooperation under the EEA agreement or bilateral agreements. Other countries located around EU borders that would potentially like to join the EU, such as Belarus, Ukraine, Moldavia and Georgia, are very far from the membership criteria in all areas of the spectrum. The same could be said regarding Turkey, given the recent events that have occurred where they have been backsliding in all sectors that fall under the membership criteria, giving no evidence that they would like to join the Union at some point. In this research, it has been argued that these countries, which all fall under what is the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) today, would remain there for the long term where the EU could use its “soft power” to influence these countries and promote common European values in exchange for trade deals or other kinds of benefits the Union can offer. This would mean that enlargement would not be on the agenda for these countries and the ENP framework would be used as an alternative for membership when trying to influence these countries in a positive way without considering possible enlargement.

The final topic in this research focused on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU and what impact that could have for the enlargement policy. This is a historical event, as a member state will, for the first time, withdraw from the EU, leaving many uncertainties surrounding the situation. In the short term, and especially when the negotiations are taking place concerning the terms of withdrawal, the most likely effect will be that EU’s focus will be shifted until 2019, if the time limits are respected, placing the enlargement proceedings lower on the agenda. This should though, only happen on a small scale in comparison to what the candidate states can do to speed up progress at the same time. Finally, when exploring if a referendum like Brexit in the UK will happen in another member state is, for the time being, unlikely, or at least not until the terms of UK’s withdrawal have been agreed upon where Eurosceptic parties and possibly governments would know more what to expect under these kind of circumstances.

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