

The New Borders of the Enlarged EU: Between Exclusion and Neighbourhood

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The fifth enlargement of the European Union, which will take place in May 2004 with the incorporation of ten new states, has opened a veritable Pandora's box. Indeed, it has obliged the current fifteen members to answer, from a practical point of view and for reasons of stability, a question which involves a great deal of philosophical debate: what are the limits of Europe? Given that the Union has become the definer of the «European area», and faced with the danger of being overcome by limitless enlargement, everything points at the need for a more precise definition of Europeaness, or simply of the borders of the European Union. But every time a limit is defined, as we know all too well, we again come to the logic of inclusion and exclusion. This has been one of the concerns which has accompanied the current enlargement process: the existence of new neighbours and the fact that, considering the decisions adopted by the Copenhagen European Council (December 2002), the European Union may be limited to a club of twenty-seven and a half states. To the twenty-five states that will form the EU from May 2004, providing negotiations are concluded satisfactorily, in 2007 Romania and Bulgaria will be added, and beyond that, if the European Council of December 2004 considers it appropriate, Turkey will be given a date for the initiation of its accession negotiations (which is why we speak, at least in the medium

term, of a half member). This Europe of twenty-seven and a half members, however, would make an island of the Western Balkans (which since 1999 has enjoyed the category of potential candidates), and would form two borderlines (along the east, with Moldova, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, and to the south with the neighbours from the Southern Mediterranean).

It is well known that the enlargement of the EU to include central and eastern European countries has both a domestic (specific to any enlargement) and a foreign dimension. In fact, in the latter case, the enlargement becomes a strategy of the foreign policy of the European Union for the prevention of conflict at its doors. The Yugoslavian experience has a great deal to do with the activation of the enlargement process. If the enlargement indeed constitutes the privileged mechanism to obtain stability in Europe, as it has deactivated the conflict of domestic and interstate order in central and eastern Europe, by the same rule the process should be extended to all those countries which may potentially generate instability at the doors of the Union, and to those where the current enlargement has generated feelings of exclusion. In short, we are faced with the convergence of two problems: the definition of the limits of Europe and the effects that the enlargement will have on Euro-Mediterranean relations.

The debate within the structure of the European Union on the effects of this feeling of exclusion amongst neighbours (Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean) has been parallel to the final stages of the enlargement process. The will to provide a response for those countries which fear exclusion from the

EU, despite regarding themselves as European, and to the Southern Mediterranean countries where expectations were raised of a «special relationship» with the EU within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, has involved the appearance of a new category in community life: the category of neighbour. The wish to differentiate such a category from the traditional one of third country has resulted in its constitutionalisation. Such a category is summarised in the project of the Constitutional Treaty issued from the Convention. The notion of neighbourhood is the backbone of the communication submitted by the European Commission in March 2003 (*Wider Europe - Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*), which under the denomination of «Wider Europe» pursues the blurring of the limits of the Union as it aims toward the creation of a «ring of friends», in Prodi's words, with which to create high levels of interdependence, with which it may advance beyond the traditional relations held with third countries, but without finalising the accession. The experience is not so new: the case exists of the European Economic Space, and we should not forget that Norway, for instance, is in the EES and not in the Union at the wish of its society and not through a community strategy.

Thus, the concept of Wider Europe, put in circulation from a joint effort from Solana and Patten in the second half of 2002, endeavoured to start a reflection on the dual challenge that the EU will face from 2004: to avoid new division lines in Europe and to meet the needs deriving from the new borderlines of the Union. This *food for thought*, as Patten and Solana qualified their pro-

posal, has not fallen on deaf ears (as we can see from the inclusion of the concept of neighbourhood in the constitutional project, and the references to the neighbours in the conclusions of the Copenhagen European Council, which focused on the enlargement). The most palpable result of this has been the aforementioned Commission communication, which constitutes the first notable effect of the enlargement, even before its materialisation, in the EU's foreign policy.

The concept of neighbour, and therefore participant in the whole of the Wider Europe, involves the identification, on the part of the Commission, of groups of countries in the east (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova) and in the south (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Syria and the Palestinian National Authority), which are offered a medium-term policy (one decade or longer) through which they would be able to belong to community areas, but

which would implicate no expectations of accession. The possibility therefore exists, considering each case separately, and depending on the fulfilment of the political and economic reforms required by the EU's action plans, that the countries could participate in the community *acquis* (with a single market, free circulation of citizens, integration into energy and telecommunication networks, new schemes for the protection of investment, cooperation in matters of security, European research area, among other measures). The idea has been put forward of a policy allowing the neighbours, each according to provisions and over a period of time, to participate in the community life, though with no presence in the institutional machinery (*Everything but institutions*).

In short, the idea has already been launched by the EU. The logic of the «flexible border» that inspires the proposal, which aims at overcoming the feelings of exclusion created with

the construction of a new identity (neighbourhood) opens new questions in a Europe where questions of future and frustrated expectations have been abundant in the recent past (with the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership). To what extent will the eastern and southern neighbours be ready to submit to a strategy that is almost pre-accession without the final award of accession? To what extent will the new EU partners be ready to fund a neighbourhood policy provided with appropriate funds when they themselves will demand important resources from the community funds? We are in fact faced with an opportune proposal, for the obvious reason of European stability. The passage of time must make it credible. This is the great challenge of the European Union, which in the next decade will be developed from a totally new concept, both from a domestic point of view (with at least twenty-seven members), and the management of its new borderlines.

DOCUMENTATION ON THE ENLARGEMENT

Towards the Enlarged Union. Strategy Paper and Report of the European Commission on the progress towards accession by each of the candidate countries, Brussels (9-10-02) COM (2002) 700 final:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/report2002/strategy_en.pdf

The Treaty of Accession signed in Athens (16-04-03)

http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/negotiations/treaty_of_accession_2003/table_of_content_en.htm

Accession Partnership (Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey)

http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/bulgaria/pdf/apbg_0303_en.pdf

http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/romania/council_decision_08_05_03_en.pdf

http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/turkey/pdf/revisted_ap_en.pdf

Euroactive. Information on the EU. Section on the enlargement

<http://www.euractiv.com/cgi-bin/cgint.exe/715160-218?1&1000=1&1011=focelne>

Documentation on Wider Europe

Wider Europe. Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. (11-03-03)

http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2003/com2003_0104en01.pdf

Council's conclusions on the Communication (16-06-03)

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/we/doc/cc06_03.pdf

Paving the way for a New Neighbourhood Instrument, Commission's communication. (01-08-03)

http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2003/com2003_0393en01.pdf

Report on the Communication from the Commission *Wider Europe*, European Parliament (09-11-03)

http://www.europarl.eu.int/plenary/default_en.htm