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## 'The 'old' and the 'new' Europeans: Analyses of public opinion on EU enlargement in review'

Toshkov, D.; Kortenska, E.G.; Dimitrova, A.L.; Fagan, A.

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## The 'Old' and the 'New' Europeans: Analyses of Public Opinion on EU Enlargement in Review

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Dimiter Toshkov, Elitsa Kortenska, Antoaneta Dimitrova and Adam Fagan  
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# THE 'OLD' AND THE 'NEW' EUROPEANS: ANALYSES OF PUBLIC OPINION ON EU ENLARGEMENT IN REVIEW

Dimiter Toshkov, Elitsa Kortenska, Antoaneta Dimitrova and Adam Fagan

## Abstract

In this contribution we take stock of what existing public surveys and academic studies reveal about the state and about the determinants of the opinions, attitudes and evaluations of EU citizens about past and future enlargements of the EU.

Our first conclusion from this overview is that EU public opinion is getting increasingly hostile towards the possibility of EU enlargement in the future. With regard to the Eastern enlargement, a plurality of EU citizens expressed a positive rather than a negative evaluation the last time they were polled in a EU-wide representative survey during 2008. Yet this weak net positive assessment already concealed a considerable dissatisfaction in many of the old member states.

As of 2012, a majority of the European population expressed opposition towards future enlargements of the EU. Practically in all member states, and in some official candidates for membership as well, support has eroded since the early 2000s. It is quite significant that countries which had already low levels of net support in 2002 have found potential for additional decreases (e.g. France, Austria, Germany) and those starting from high levels have similarly followed the trend. Still, some of the prospective candidates for EU membership (e.g. Turkey, Albania) receive systematically lower levels of support than others, although the EU public has very low awareness of which countries are actually in the accession process. Altogether, the most recent surveys of EU public opinion outline a considerable "enlargement fatigue" among the EU citizens.

Surveying the growing academic literatures which try to explain public attitudes towards enlargement, we find that both utilitarian (interest-based) and identity factors are considered influential. Furthermore, the influence of structural variables is complemented by the potential impact of media framing and cues provided by political parties. Determinants of public opinion do not appear to differ consistently between old and new member states although they are usually analyzed separately: a point the scholarship needs to be improved upon.

The existing studies also find a significant gap in EU enlargement attitudes and evaluations between the elites and the general public. Several key findings which may partly explain the elite-public gap can be found in research on national and EU level media discourses. In particular, recent work has discovered a discontinuity between utilitarian national-level justifications of the last EU enlargement and common norms and values based EU-level justifications. This leads us to conclude that citizens' opinions and perceptions of enlargement should be studied in the context of the discourses which influence them – a task we will undertake in the next stage of research for Work Package 3 of MAXCAP.

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## Contents

1. Introduction	6
2. Public Opinion and Evaluations of EU Enlargements	7
2.1 <i>Assessing the Public Opinion Response to the Eastern Enlargement</i>	7
2.2 <i>The Prospects for Future Enlargements</i>	10
2.3 <i>The Candidate Matters</i>	14
2.4 <i>Attitudes in (Potential) Candidates for EU Accession from the Western Balkans</i>	16
3. Explaining Attitudes towards EU Enlargement	20
3.1 <i>Background</i>	20
3.2 <i>Individual-Level Factors</i>	21
3.3 <i>The Mediating Role of Political Context</i>	25
3.4 <i>The Effect of Media and Framing</i>	27
3.5 <i>Determinants of Attitudes towards Enlargement in the New Member States</i>	28
3.6 <i>Determinants of Attitudes towards Enlargement in Current and Potential Candidates</i>	32
4. Conclusion	33
5. References	36

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the history of the European Union, decisions on accession of new members, just like other major steps in integration, have been made by political elites represented by the governments of the member states and, in recent decades, the European Parliament. In the past, such decisions on enlargement, be it the famous informal veto of French President de Gaulle on UK membership (Moravcsik 1998; Preston 1997), or the Council of Ministers' decision to go ahead with Greek accession negotiations despite a negative opinion by the European Commission (Preston 1997), have relied on the existence of "permissive consensus" (Hooghe/Marks 2005; Lindberg/Scheingold. 1970; Marks/Steenbergen 2004). Even today, when the institutional rules governing enlargement ensure a multitude of veto points, the opportunities to stop the process are mostly for constitutional veto players such as governments in office (during negotiations) and the European and national parliaments (during the ratification of accession treaties).

EU enlargements have hardly ever been subject to referenda in the existing member states (the exception is France in 1972). Nevertheless, the obligation for ratification of accession treaties by national parliaments and the politicization of European integration debates in general impel political parties and executives to pay closer attention to public opinion on the accession of particular states. Candidate countries, in their turn, have held referenda for accession when constitutionally obliged or politically urged to do so. The Norwegian referenda on accession held in 1972 and again in 1994 have arguably played the most significant role among all such popular votes by preventing accession of this country to the EU on two occasions.<sup>2</sup>

In recent decades, a shift in public opinion from "permissive consensus" to "constraining dissensus" has been affecting European integration in general and leading to increasing politicization of integration debates and decisions (Eichenberg/Dalton 2007; Hooghe/Marks 2008). The institutional veto points associated with the ratification of accession treaties as well as the politicization of European integration in general present compelling reasons to argue that further enlargements of the Union will be constrained directly and indirectly by the opinions and attitudes of the citizens in existing member states and in candidate countries. We therefore argue that understanding the links between public opinion and enlargement is indispensable for assessing the integration capacity of the EU.

Given the potential constraining role public opinion is likely to play for future EU enlargement, in this paper we pay closer attention to three aspects in particular: public opinion in various member states towards the Eastern enlargement, determinants of public opinion as analyzed in various studies and ways to analyze and understand perceptions of the last enlargement among citizens of the older member states.

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1 The authors gratefully acknowledge the helpful and inspiring comments and suggestions by Thomas Risse, Georgi Dimitrov, Tanja Börzel and the two anonymous referees of this working paper. We are also grateful for the comments of the participants of the MAXCAP Kick-off Conference held in Berlin, April 2013.

2 On referenda related to European integration, see Hobolt (2009) and Hug (2002). On the Norwegian referenda in particular see Bjorklund (1996), Pettersen et al. (1996) and Pierce et al. (1983).

We present our overview of existing data and academic studies of the attitudes and predispositions towards possible future accessions and evaluations of recent enlargements in two parts.<sup>3</sup> The first part of the working paper offers a **descriptive overview** of the current state and recent trends in public opinions and evaluations of EU enlargements on the basis of existing national and cross-national surveys. We rely on Eurobarometer mass surveys for various years to track citizens' opinions with regards to the Eastern enlargement and the countries in its scope. To evaluate public opinion in Western Balkan candidate and aspiring states, we use data from the Gallup Balkan Monitor (various years). For some countries, we use additional surveys, such as the ones provided by the Serbian European Integration Office (SEIO). The second part of the working paper presents a **review of the state of the art** of the academic literature studying the determinants of opinions and attitudes towards EU enlargement. The two parts taken together summarize what we know about opinions and attitudes towards EU enlargements, outline some of the limitations of existing scholarship, and suggest directions for future research to be undertaken in the framework of the MAXCAP project.

An important caveat is in order: the Eastern enlargement, which took place in 2004 and 2007, did not immediately end Europe's division even if this was its overarching goal. As freedom of movement and labor mobility are becoming a reality more than a decade after enlargement, it is clear that new stereotypes and old perceptions from the Cold War have had a longer life than political divisions. More importantly for us here, research designs and choices in studying public opinion have mirrored the old divisions between "old" and "new" Europe. The overview of existing studies that we present in the second part of this paper shows there are very few studies analyzing determinants of public opinion across the EU-28. Thus, the division in the literature between analyses of factors in Western and Eastern Europe reifies the division between new and old member states. However, based on our examination of public opinion studies in old, new and candidate member states, we have no reason to believe that fundamental determinants of public opinion differ consistently between East and West.

## 2. Public Opinion and Evaluations of EU Enlargements

### 2.1 *Assessing the Public Opinion Response to the Eastern Enlargement*

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, thirteen countries have joined the EU: eight post-communist states from Central and Eastern Europe (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia), the two small Mediterranean islands Cyprus and Malta in 2004, Bulgaria

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3 Since public opinion and attitudes towards the accession of Turkey and Turkish attitudes towards the EU are the subject of a different working paper to be produced under the MAXCAP framework, for the most part we do not deal with these issues in the current working paper.



and Romania in 2007, and Croatia in 2013. Taken together, these accessions represent by far the greatest expansion of the Union in terms of population and territory in its history.<sup>4</sup> But the Eastern enlargement can still be regarded as unfinished in certain key aspects: because of the number of transitional arrangements still in place and in terms of its acceptance and societal absorption by public opinion in the “old” member states.<sup>5</sup> To illustrate this, in the following section of the paper, we will explore the reactions of the European citizens to the Eastern enlargement on the basis of data provided by the Eurobarometer.

We start with an important general finding, namely that on the eve of the EU’s enlargement to the East in 2004, a majority of the EU citizens were in favor of it. Although the public felt that it was not very well informed about the process and harbored some fears about its impact, in most EU member states there was general support for the accession of the post-communist countries (including Bulgaria and Romania), Cyprus and Malta (European Commission 2002, 2003).

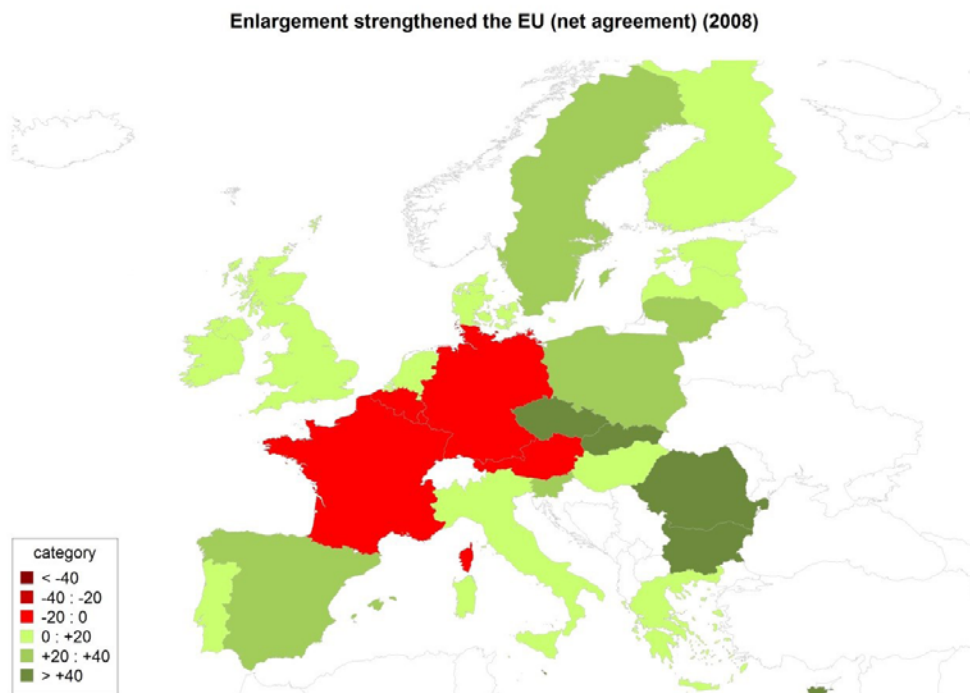
Have citizens’ opinions changed after the Eastern enlargement took place and the short-term effects of the expansion of the Union have been gradually revealed? The most recent comparative data we have, from 2008, indicates that a plurality of EU citizens feel that the Eastern enlargement has altogether strengthened rather than weakened the Union (European Commission 2008) (QC2). The EU-27 averages are as follows: 48 percent think that all things considered the enlargement strengthened the EU vs. 36 percent who think that it weakened the EU. However, the new member states have been much more positive in their assessment than the old member states (EU15). In fact, in Belgium, Germany, France, Luxembourg, and Austria, more people find that the EU has been weakened rather than strengthened. The division in opinion is noteworthy and we will see that it resurfaces with regard to opinions about possible future enlargements as well. Figure 1 maps the distribution of net positive evaluation across the continent.

A Flash Eurobarometer survey from 2009 explores in some detail views towards EU enlargement, but it does not include a general item which could capture the overall assessment of the people about the effects of the accession of the post-communist countries from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), Cyprus and Malta (European Commission 2009). The 2009 survey, however, indicates that a majority of the EU citizens agree that the enlargement has contributed to the free movement of people on the continent, offered good business opportunities for Western companies in CEE, and better living standards in CEE (European Commission 2009). Interestingly, Eastern and Western Europeans agree on these assessments, although they disagree how these individual effects combine to influence the EU as a whole. EU citizens throughout the continent also share the opinion that the weight of the EU on the world stage has increased and the spread of democratic values has benefitted due to the enlargement (European Commission 2009).

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4 While the first twelve countries fall into the scope of the Eastern enlargement, the accession of Croatia can be regarded as the beginning of a process of full integration of the Western Balkans in the EU.

5 For reasons of convenience in this paper we use the expression “old” member states to refer to the 15 members of the EU prior to the 2004 enlargement.



*Figure 1*

The survey also shows that there are considerable differences in the assessments of the effects of enlargement between citizens in the old and in the new member states. For example, 69 percent in the EU15 agree with the statement that the EU has become more difficult to manage (vs. 51 percent in CEE), 57 percent in the EU15 agree that cultural diversity has increased (vs. 42 percent in CEE), and 52 percent in the EU15 agree that feelings of insecurity have increased (vs. 44 percent in CEE) (European Commission 2009).

It is worth highlighting that there are no large differences in how East and West Europeans perceive the economic effects of enlargement – majorities in both parts of the continent find them negative! In Western and Eastern Europe alike significant shares of the citizens feel that the Eastern enlargement has contributed to job losses (55 percent in the EU15 vs. 58 percent in CEE) and lowered social standards in the EU as a whole (39 percent in the EU15 vs. 38 percent in CEE) (Eurobarometer 2009). These results invite some reflection in the light of the positive expectations associated with the increase of the size of the internal market with enlargement.

Based on this overview of the available Eurobarometer data till 2009, we can claim that several years after the Eastern enlargement the majority of EU citizens have an altogether moderately positive assessment of the overall impact of the Eastern enlargement. But this assessment, based on the average results, is 1) only very weakly positive, 2) conceals a considerable dissatisfaction in many of the old member states, 3) is the result of a complex assessment of the positive and negative effects on values, like freedom and security, but also on the economy and social standards. Having discussed the public evaluations of the recent enlargements, we now turn towards an overview of the attitudes towards future enlargements that the European public has expressed over the last decade.

## 2.2 *The Prospects for Future Enlargements*

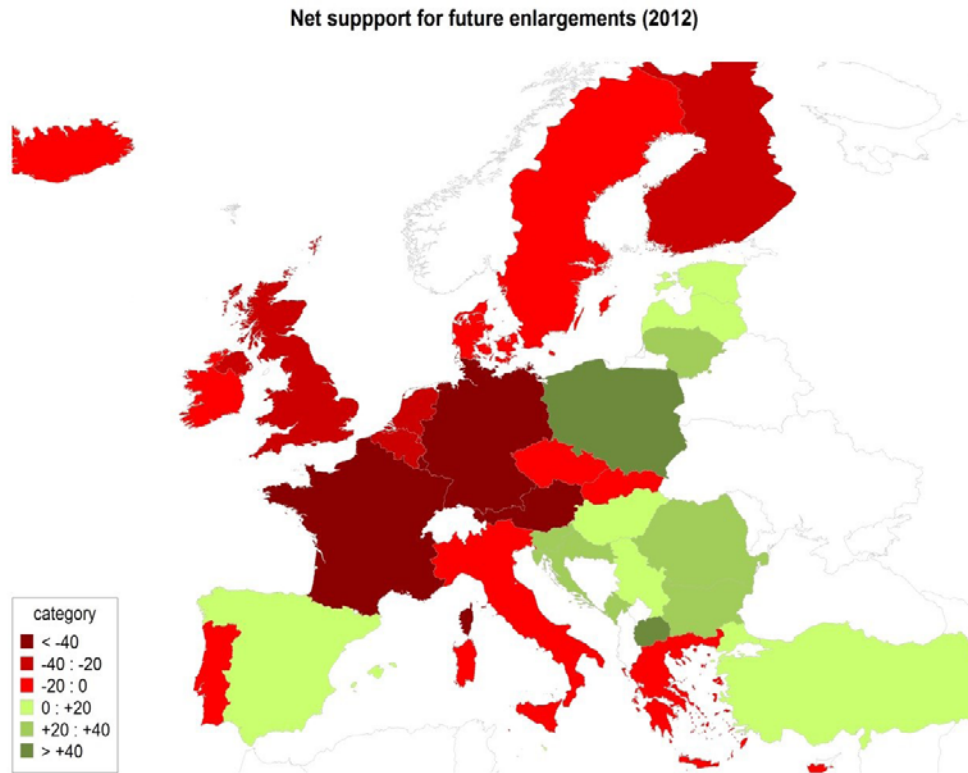
The question whether EU citizens approve of future enlargement has been included on a regular basis in the standard Eurobarometer survey at least once a year. This provides for a long uninterrupted time series allowing us to examine trends and developments over time. The precise wording of the question used in the survey is: „What is your opinion on each of the following statements? Please tell me for each statement, whether you are for it or against it:... Further enlargement of the EU to include other countries in future years“.

Difficulties for interpretation of the trend, however, arise from the fact that the meaning and scope of “enlargement” changes over time, while the questions remain the same. In 2002, it refers mostly to the ten countries from Central and Eastern Europe which were about to join; in 2006 to Bulgaria and Romania; in 2012 to the forthcoming accession of Croatia, and throughout the entire period to the uncertain prospects of Turkey and the ups and downs in the hopes of Ukraine and the Western Balkan countries. Furthermore, even at the same point of time the citizens of different member states have different candidates for membership in mind when they answer the questions. Polish people might think above all of Ukraine, Austrians of Turkey, Romanians of Serbia, and Greeks of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Inevitably, support for future enlargements is colored by this local and geopolitical context, which we cannot control for.<sup>6</sup> Interpretation of the results is further complicated by the fact that EU citizens are quite unsure which countries are in process of negotiating for accession (see below). With these disclaimers in mind, let us look at the most recent data first.

As of 2012, a majority of the European population expresses opposition towards a future enlargement of the EU. The average for the 27 current member states is 52 percent in opposition and only 38 percent in favor (European Commission 2012) (QA18.3). The average conceals quite substantial cross-country variation: in ten member states there are more people who are in favor of future enlargements than against – all of these are new member states with the exception of Spain; in two countries – Sweden and Slovakia – the ,for‘ and ,against‘ camps are dead even; in the rest a majority is against.

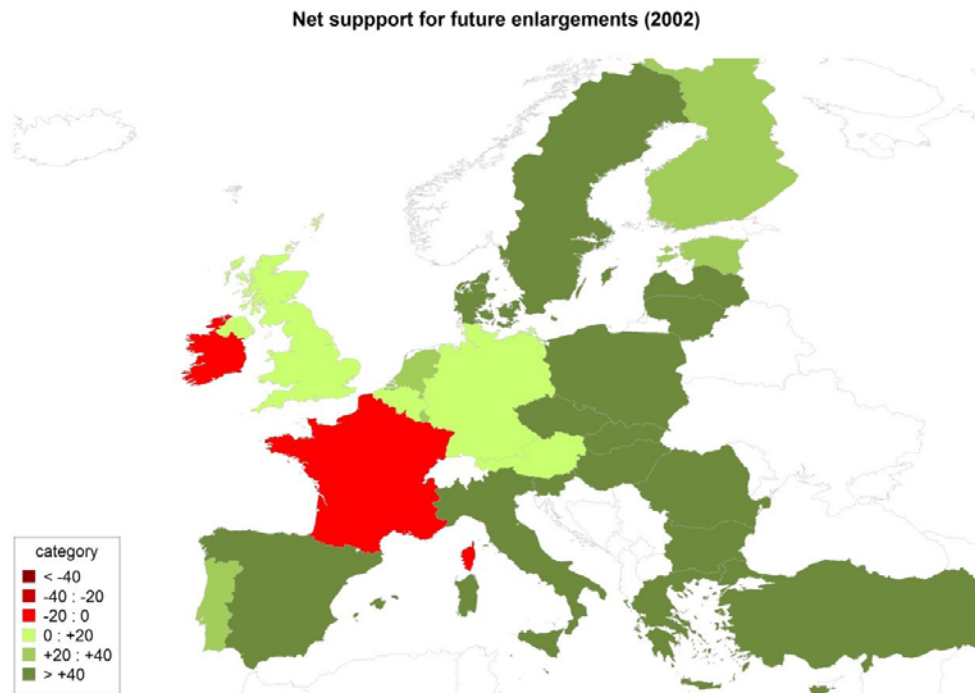
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<sup>6</sup> In order to partly address this issue, we will discuss public opinion towards the accession of specific countries in the next section of the paper.



*Figure 2*

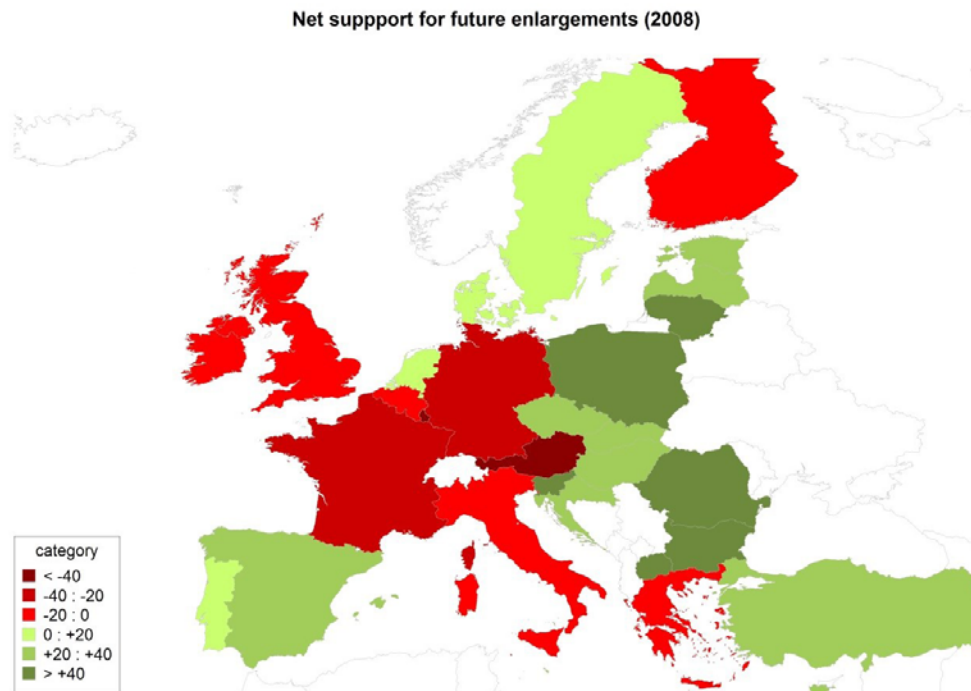
The map in Figure 2 presents visually the net support for future enlargements throughout the continent as of November 2012. Darker shades of green indicate stronger prevalence of the ,for' camp, while darker shades of red indicate stronger prevalence of the one ,against'. Support is greatest in Poland (+47; 69 percent pro and 22 percent against) and lowest in Austria (-49; 23 percent pro and 72 percent against). In most of the potential member states surveyed, there is no huge enthusiasm for future enlargements (presumably including the country of the respondents): support is feeble in Turkey (+16) and Serbia (+11), and opposition is actually stronger than support in Iceland (-6).



*Figure 3*

Support for future enlargements has significantly eroded over the last ten years. As recently as 2010 (European Commission 2010) the EU-27 average was 43 percent 'for' and 45 percent 'against' (the difference falls within the sampling error). The declining trends are not surprising news. Although in all member states support for future enlargements has been on the decrease, it is the decline in the new member states in particular which has brought the average down over the last couple of years.

If we look back to 2002 (see Figure 3) only France and Ireland had negative net support (a higher percentage of respondents opposing rather than supporting future enlargements) (European Commission 2002b). As mentioned above, unlike the situation in 2012, these attitudes probably refer to the forthcoming Eastern enlargement. As a result, the erosion of support could be due to a real transformation of attitudes towards EU expansion in general or to the fact that there are different countries standing at the door of the EU in 2012 compared to 2002. Most likely, the decline in support is due to both.



*Figure 4*

Already in 2008, when the scope of the potential expansion of the EU would have been the same as in 2012, a majority of the old member states citizens expressed opposition towards future enlargements (Eurobarometer 2008). In fact, only in the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Portugal and Spain there were more people in favor than against. Since, the Dutch, Danish, Swedish and Portuguese have joined the ,against' camp (see Figure 4).

The data seems to suggest a rather clear picture, but a methodological note is in order. It could be that the support for future enlargements expressed in the standard Eurobarometer survey is quite sensitive to the exact wording of the question. A special Eurobarometer survey on the EU Neighborhood Policy (European Commission 2006b) asked a similar question: "Do you agree with the statement: The EU could invite other countries to join in the future but should not enlarge too fast" (QA5.1). The different phrasing produced a much higher level of agreement (72 percent), which is not likely to be due to sampling variability only. The discrepancy is possibly due to the addition of "not too fast". Perhaps people are not worried about enlargement too much once they get sufficient time to adapt to the idea. In any case, if small changes in the wording can produce such big differences, we have to take the inferences from the standard Eurobarometer survey question with a healthy degree of concern about how stable of an attitude it captures. The investigation of discourses on enlargement, which we will conduct later in the context of this project and which attempts to capture interpretations of certain events in a communicative context should be able to address this problem in a different way.

The conclusion we reach based on the most recent data available is that there has been a shared, substantive and general decline in appetite for future enlargements (see Figures 5 for the old member states and 6 new and potential member states for which there is data available). Practically in all countries support has eroded no matter the starting level, the membership status and accession date. It is quite significant that countries, which had already low levels of net support in 2002 have found potential for additional decreases (e.g. France, Austria, Germany) and those starting from high levels have similarly followed the trend. These findings give a new meaning to the term “enlargement fatigue” which so far we have used to refer to elite statements and attitudes only (Rehn 2006), but clearly relates to the broader public in the EU.

### 2.3 *The Candidate Matters*

The general decline we noted above might obscure potential differences in attitudes towards the accession of specific countries: after all, EU enlargement is a prospect, although to a different degree, for Norway and for Turkey, for Switzerland and for Albania. Indeed, when we look at the data, we can confirm that there are huge differences in support for accession of different countries. The literature review presented below provides also some possible explanations behind these observations.

The latest survey available that probes opinions with respect to specific candidates is from 2006 (European Commission 2006c). First, let us look at the estimates provided by the 2006 standard Eurobarometer, which asked “For each of the following countries, would you be in favor or against it becoming part of the European Union in the future?” (QA33). In the old EU15 member states, highest support was expressed for the accession of Switzerland (77 percent), Norway (76 percent) and Iceland (67 percent). The countries due to join next in 2007 and 2013 followed next with 46 percent support (Croatia), 42 percent (Bulgaria), and 38 percent (Romania). Ukraine, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia marshaled support between 37 and 32 percent. At the bottom of the table one finds Turkey (30 percent) and Albania (26 percent).

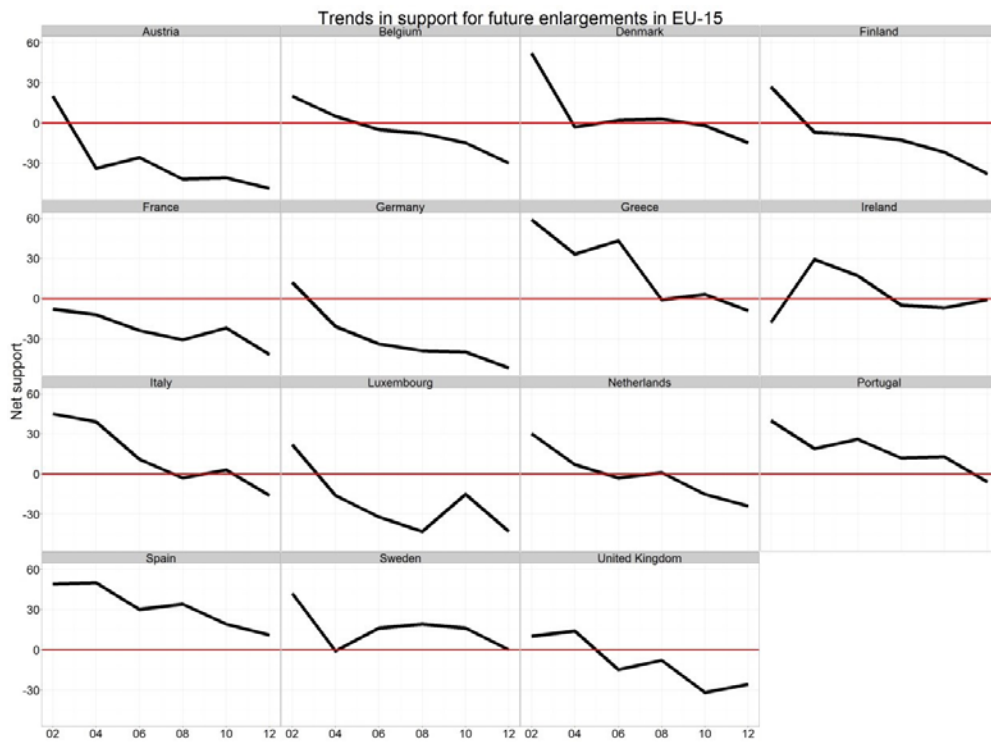


Figure 5

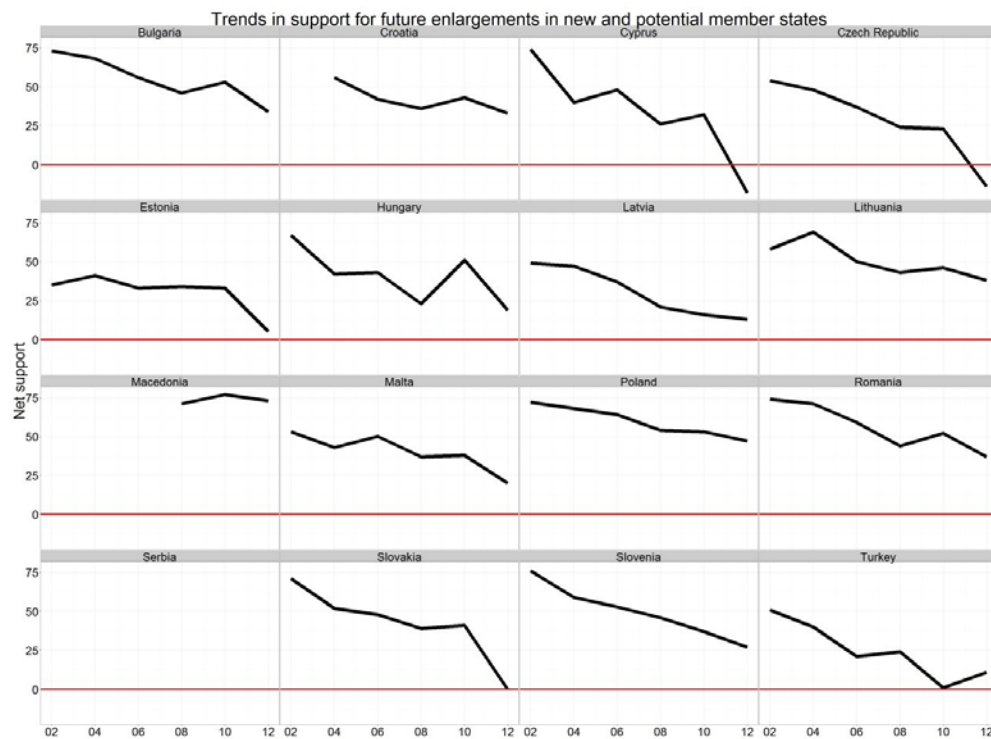


Figure 6



It is important to keep in mind that a different wording of the question can produce quite different results. A survey contemporary to the one cited above asked a similar question but with the addition that accession should happen once the candidate “complies with all the conditions set by the European Union” (Eurobarometer 2006b).<sup>7</sup> Of those asked, 49 percent declare that they would support the accession of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (36 percent opposed), 48 percent of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 47 percent of Serbia, 41 percent of Albania, and 39 percent of Turkey. While the ranking is the same, the absolute values of support are quite higher (note that opposition can still be more numerous than support).

Altogether, the EU public’s awareness of the issue of enlargement and the EU policy towards its neighbors has been minimal. People have difficulty pointing out the right countries that are in the accession process: in 2007 (European Commission 2007) (QC1), 34 percent guessed correctly that Turkey was an official candidate, but only 12 percent knew about Croatia, and only 5 percent about the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Finally, it is instructive to see how the support or opposition for particular countries has changed over time. When we compare 2006 with 1996, we find similar levels of support and a similar ranking of the potential candidates – Croatia and Ukraine (31 percent), Bosnia and Herzegovina (29 percent), Albania (26 percent) – with one important exception: Turkey, the support for which has dropped from a relatively high level of 36 percent (European Commission 1996).

#### 2.4 *Attitudes in (Potential) Candidates for EU Accession from the Western Balkans*

The paper so far presented available studies of attitudes and predispositions towards enlargement in the current members of the EU. In this section we will explore support for accession in candidates and potential candidates from the Western Balkans.<sup>8</sup> Because of the specificity of each context in the Western Balkans, it is instructive to consider each case separately.

In Albania, public attitudes about EU accession were gleaned using two questions from the Gallup Balkan Monitor between 2006 and 2011 (Gallup Balkan Monitor 2011). These questions were also asked in the

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7 The exact wording of the questions is QD16.1 “Once each of the following countries complies with all conditions set by the European Union, would you be strongly in favour, fairly in favour, fairly opposed or strongly opposed to the accession of each of them to the European Union? Once (INSERT COUNTRY) complies with all the conditions set by the European Union, would you be... to the accession of (INSERT COUNTRY) to the European Union?”

8 For this summary, public attitude data regarding EU integration and accession amongst citizens in the Western Balkans were drawn from a number of sources. The Balkan Monitor polls conducted by Gallup are the most systematic across the region for cross-country and time-series analyses, though country-specific data, such as those collected by the Serbian European Integration Office (SEIO) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) in Macedonia go further back (to 2002).

other places in the Western Balkans.<sup>9</sup> In each of the polls, over 80 percent of Albanian respondents believed that EU accession was “a good thing”. The lowest level of support was 81 percent (in 2010). The overall positive response has been quite stable since 2006, but the slight dip in 2010 could be due to the EU delay in awarding candidate status to Albania. The response to the other Gallup question, about whether the rest of the EU wants Albania to join, has fluctuated significantly. Again, this may be due to the ongoing process of integration. In 2010, 69 percent believed that most EU citizens wanted Albania to join, while this decreased to 55 percent in 2011. The reason could be as above. Albanians were granted visa-free travel in the EU in 2008, and the SAA was signed in 2009, leading to higher levels of enthusiasm. On the other hand, the European Commission did not give candidacy to Albania in December 2010, which may explain the less positive response in 2011.

Data on Bosnia-Herzegovina are best understood if they are split between the two entities: the Bosniak and Croat Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (FBiH); and the Serb-dominated Republika Srpska (RS). EU conditionality has mainly pushed the centralization of governance, which is welcomed by the majority Bosniaks in FBiH and resisted by Serbs in RS, so there is a significant difference in levels of EU support in the two entities. Moreover, issues such as the indictment of suspects for war crimes and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) genocide case brought by BiH against Serbia further divided the two entities. In FBiH, levels of support for the EU according to the Gallup poll have been over 70 percent, whereas it has been over ten points lower in RS on average. However, in both places, support dipped in 2008, probably due to the ongoing constitutional impasse between leaders of the three main ethnic groups, which was finally partially resolved during 2008 (leading to the SAA between BiH and the EU). A recent poll by the NDI also acknowledges that there is lower support in RS compared with FBiH (National Democratic Institute 2010). The Foreign Policy Initiative BH (VPI) carried out a series of public opinion surveys between 2009 and 2012, and found that although citizens in FBiH are more optimistic about the progress of accession, respondents in RS are becoming gradually less negative towards the progress of integration (Foreign Policy Initiative BH n.d.). Worryingly, however, a far greater proportion of respondents in both entities replied that they do not know or refused to answer. In the VPI poll, respondents in both entities identified local politicians as the main obstacle to progress, though the proportion of those doing so was higher in FBiH. The Gallup question about whether EU citizens wanted BiH accession was not disaggregated by entity, but again, the levels dipped in 2008 due to the deadlock during negotiations about constitutional reform.

Kosovo, the disputed province that declared independence in February 2008, owes much of the stabilization and normalization within its territory to support from the EU. Although five of the Member States still do not recognize it as an independent country (Spain, Cyprus, Slovakia, Romania, and Greece), the EU has been important for Kosovo, especially in pushing Serbia and Kosovo to normalize relations in exchange for EU integration. As with Albania, public opinion was measured only using the questions from the Gallup Balkan Monitor. The levels of positivity about EU accession was nearly 90 percent in all polls (reaching 90

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9 “Generally speaking, do you think that [COUNTRY]’s membership of the European Union would be a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good or bad? (‘a good thing’); “Do you think that the people in the European Union want [COUNTRY] to join the European Union? (‘mostly yes’)”

percent in 2011), perhaps due to the realization that EU integration will push other countries (particularly Serbia) to recognize Kosovo independence. Regarding the second question (belief that the EU wanted Kosovo to join) there was a more positive response in 2008 as compared to 2006 with independence being declared and recognized by most EU countries. Perhaps the continued role of the EU in normalization of EU-Serbia relations and further integration has pushed levels of support higher, peaking at 82 percent in 2011.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the levels of positive responses to the two Gallup Balkan Monitor questions encompasses a majority of Macedonians, the percentage of those feeling that EU accession would be “a good thing” has fallen from 76 percent in 2006 to 60 percent in 2011. The Eurobarometer poll asking the same question (Q4) has had similar levels of decline, from 76 percent in October 2007 to 57 percent in November 2012. Interestingly, the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA) of the Macedonian Government has its own periodic polls carried out by the IRI, which show that levels of support for former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia joining the EU have waned, but starting at higher levels – going from 93 percent in June 2002 to 84 percent in November 2012 (Government of Republic of Macedonia - Secretariat for European Affairs 2013).<sup>10</sup> In another poll for the SEA carried out by the IDSCS (Institute for Democracy, Solidarity and Civil Society), levels of support for a hypothetical referendum on Macedonian accession hovered around 90 percent between 2003 and 2007 (Government of Republic of Macedonia - Secretariat for European Affairs 2013).<sup>11</sup> For the second Gallup question about perceived levels of support from existing EU citizens, after a low positive response in 2006 of 44 percent, levels have decreased from 57 percent in 2008 to 48 percent in 2011. In addition, another Eurobarometer question (Q5) asked whether Macedonians have benefitted from the EU, and levels answering positively have fallen from 82 percent in October 2007 to 66 percent in November 2012. Members of the Opposition have blamed the waning support on an anti-European campaign by the VMRO–DPMNE Government (Jovanovska 2010). However, the most obvious conflict is the so-called naming dispute, whereby Greece has claimed that the name “Republic of Macedonia” would be ambiguous (since “Macedonia” is also the name of a region in Greece) and thus may imply territorial aspirations by the former Yugoslav Republic. The placeholder former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will be used in international organizations until a resolution is found, which is a precondition for EU accession. Local Macedonian commentators believe that levels of support for EU accession will rebound if the naming dispute is solved (Marusic 2010).

The levels of support for EU accession, unlike some of its neighbors, had been growing in Montenegro between 2008 and 2010 (as evidenced by the Gallup poll), but then started to wane in 2011. The same Eurobarometer question (Q4) asked in 2012 continued this trend, with 50 percent feeling that accession would be “a good thing”. In 2011, the Gallup poll question about whether the EU wanted Montenegro to join dipped below 50 percent for the first time (at 47 percent).

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10 The question asked was “Do you support Macedonia becoming a member of the EU?”

11 The question asked was “If a referendum on accession of the Republic of Macedonia in the EU were held next week, how would you vote?”

In Serbia, the percentage of citizens believing that EU accession would be “a good thing” has steadily declined from 61 percent in 2006 to 36 percent in 2011 (Gallup poll). In 2012, the same question (Q4) in the Eurobarometer survey yielded a figure of 35 percent. The proportion of those believing that EU citizens wanted Serbia to join has also waned over the past few years, going from 52 percent in 2006 to a mere 30 percent in 2011. The Serbian European Integration Office (SEIO) has also collected public opinion data on these issues since 2002, though it included Montenegro until 2006, so the information is only comparable from that year (Government of the Republic of Serbia - European Integration Office n.d). The SEIO data show the same general decline in support for accession to the EU. Moreover, the main reason for the slow pace of EU integration cited by respondents in the latest poll (July 2013) is the “policy of constant blackmail and condition setting by the European Union towards our country”, with 47 percent answering with that option in December 2012 (Government of the Republic of Serbia – European Integration Office 2013). Support in Serbia for the EU and the international community has been strained since the wars in the 1990s due to a number of post-conflict issues that are tied to conditionality, particularly co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY) and normalization/recognition of the Kosovo. Although there have been difficulties over many years, there have been some positive news over the past year. After a number of failed attempts, officials from Pristina and from Belgrade concluded an agreement in April 2013 to normalize relations between the two governments and to advance EU integration in both places. This was followed by a European Council conclusion in June 2013 to set a date to commence accession negotiations (European Council 2013). These recent developments seem to have a positive effect on public opinion (in the July 2013 SEIO poll), with an increase from 41 percent to 50 percent supporting accession, and a drop from 47 percent to 31 percent believing that the EU has a “policy of constant blackmail”.

The above sections show that the overall trends differ in each context, and depend on the perception of the severity of conditionality by the EU and the international community. As we already discussed in the previous section, perceptions of the EU and enlargement depend on the geopolitical context, and also change with regional developments. Thus, Serbian citizens, who may feel that the West is “against them”, have a lower level of support compared with other places, and Kosovo, which owes its status to international intervention, is highly supportive of the international community. The above summary did not explore whether support for the EU, as in non-Western-Balkan contexts, acts as a second-order measure of government approval or overall satisfaction with the current socio-political situation. The polls in BiH suggest that respondents blame local politicians for the slow pace of reforms, whilst those in Serbia blame the international community. The gradual decrease in support in Montenegro may be due to inertia in the political system, with the same parties controlling the presidency and parliament after each post-independence election. The situation in Macedonia may be blocked by local anti-European political discourse, but also by the inflexibility of Greece on the naming dispute. To get a more robust picture of the complex evolution of public opinion within the Western Balkans, it is necessary to conduct further analyses of such discourses that take EU actions and local political contexts into account.

The discussion so far has outlined the major trends in public assessment of the last enlargement and attitudes towards potential future accessions. The developments over time and the differences between countries are suggestive of certain patterns and possible explanations, but to understand what moves public opinion we need to consider in more detail the considerable theoretical and empirical research devoted to this topic.

### **3. Explaining Attitudes towards EU Enlargement**

#### *3.1 Background*

Having demonstrated that there is important cross-national and temporal variation in the assessments of past enlargements and attitudes towards future expansion of the EU, the second part of the paper presents an overview of the existing literature aiming to analyze and explain mass attitudes towards EU enlargement.

Research on public opinion towards enlargement has relied on the major theoretical models explaining public opinion towards EU integration as a whole. More specifically, studies of public attitudes towards enlargement in old and new member states take into account factors derived from the major frameworks advanced for explaining attitudes towards the EU – the rational utilitarian, political, identity and value-based frameworks. As mentioned in the introduction, scholars have found consistently that public opinion towards European integration as a whole has undergone a transition from “permissive consensus” to “constraining dissensus” especially in the founding member states (Boomgaarden et al. 2011; Dixon 2010; Eichenberg/Dalton 2007; Hooghe/Marks 2005, 2008; Kemmerling 2008). The first part of the paper illustrates that this trend has been mirrored with regards to enlargement attitudes as well.

So far the literature has concentrated predominantly on explaining citizens’ opinion towards enlargement in the EU15. Hence, our overview below is informed primarily from studies of public attitudes, evaluations and opinions in Western and Southern Europe. Studies of public opinion in the new member states, and in current and potential candidates are discussed separately largely because of the divisions in existing literature. This is not to say that the determinants of these attitudes and opinions towards enlargements are fundamentally different. The studies which we will discuss with regards to new member states measure support for enlargement, based on support for EU membership. This mirrors the early studies of public opinion towards EU membership in Western European countries.

### 3.2 Individual-Level Factors

A voluminous literature has investigated the factors shaping public opinion on European integration and aimed to explain their dynamics from a variety of **theoretical perspectives**. Here, we will summarize individual-level characteristics highlighted in existing literature analyzing public attitudes in the EU15.

A number of studies falling broadly into a group using a utilitarian or (narrowly defined) rational approach for explaining public opinion towards EU integration have demonstrated the significant and robust effect of instrumental factors shaping citizens' support or opposition (Dixon 2010; Hooghe/Marks 2005; Jones/van der Bijl 2004; Karp/Bowler 2006; McLaren 2007; Tillman 2013). According to this logic citizens evaluate rationally the economic costs and benefits the EU provides to them personally or to their "community" (region/country). Both objective socio-economic factors, as well as subjective evaluations of collective or individual material interests are found to be consistent predictors of EU mass opinion (Eichenberg/Dalton 2007; Gabel 1998; Hooghe/Marks 2005; Jones/van der Bijl 2004; Karp/Bowler 2006; McLaren 2002; McLaren 2007). Among the most significant objective socio-economic factors, documented to influence individuals' stance on EU integration, are *employment status*, *economic wealth* and *education*. Low-skilled, low-income, and unemployed citizens, as well as those perceiving a deterioration of their economic situation and those relying on redistributive EU policies, like farmers, tend to have negative attitudes towards the EU (Gabel 1998; Jones/van der Bijl 2004; Karp/Bowler 2006; McLaren 2002; McLaren 2007).

Karp and Bowler (2006: 381) find that among EU15 citizens, those who are pessimistic about the national economy and citizens fearing the cost of EU expansion also express more negative attitudes towards EU enlargement. Similarly, in the context of Central and Eastern European countries' accession, individuals within older member states who are more likely to benefit from EU membership also hold positive opinion towards the entry of the 2004-2007 accession countries (Dixon 2010; Jones/van der Bijl 2004; Karp/Bowler 2006). These reflect the subjective evaluation of citizens of their economic status and well-being as well as their perceptions of the economic situation in their community.

In contrast to the economic approach, another major branch of the literature is dedicated to investigating determinants of public opinion derived from cultural identification and build-in values perspectives. Symbolic politics theories provide the grounds for this line of inquiry by introducing *perceived cultural threat* and *national identity*<sup>12</sup> as potential determinants of attitudes towards enlargement. The emphasis falls on these characteristics of EU and its governing institutions which endanger the unity and integrity of the nation-states and thus contribute to forming a negative opinion towards EU.

National identities define the characteristics of an in-group (us) in relation to "others" (them) (Dixon 2010; Luedtke 2005; McLaren 2002; McLaren 2007; Tillman 2013). Identities are as much defined by the characteristics of "we" as they are defined by the characteristics of the "other" (Risse 2010). Approaches that focus

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<sup>12</sup> Boomgaarden et al. (2011); de Vreese/Boomgaarden (2005); Dixon (2010); Hooghe/Marks (2005, 2008); McLaren (2002; McLaren (2007); Tillman (2013).

on the importance of identity factors are clearly also relevant to the study of perceptions of the Eastern enlargement. Cold War divisions have meant that Eastern and Western parts of the continent were subjected to negative propaganda about the other for decades. Indeed, studies find that the Eastern enlargement has further exacerbated already existing feelings of threat to cultural unity (de Vreese/Boomgaarden 2005; Dixon 2010; Tillman 2013).

Following this approach, studies point out that citizens exhibiting *exclusive national identity* (Hooghe/Marks 2005, 2008), feelings of *cultural/ethnic threat* (Azrout et al. 2013: 14; McLaren 2002; McLaren 2007), *religious intolerance* (Azrout et al. 2012; de Vreese/Boomgaarden 2005; Hobolt et al. 2011) *anti-immigration attitudes* (Boomgaarden et al. 2011; de Vreese/Boomgaarden 2005) or *fears of loss of national identity* (Karp/Bowler 2006) tend to oppose EU enlargement. On the contrary, individuals subscribing to multicultural values and those subscribing to European identity and democratic views express support for enlargement (Azrout et al. 2013; Boomgaarden et al. 2011).

The effects of national and European identity on public opinion towards EU integration are a major focus of research in the field and a vast body of literature has been dedicated to the topic. Thomas Risse (2010) delves deeper into the construction and shape of multiple national and European identities and public spheres in five Western member states.

Risse (2010) devotes special attention to the Europeanization of identities and public spheres in the process of EU integration, developing social constructivist theories to account for the formation and transformation of European identity. He makes a distinction between European and EU identity and the way those affect an emerging European public sphere. Thomas Risse's (2010) work also demonstrates the important role of political elites in shaping and constructing both national and EU or European identity and the transformations multiple identities undergo in the process.

While Risse's (2010) analysis is quite optimistic, Checkel and Katzenstein (2009) present a rather pessimistic view of European identities and the negative effects of EU integration on the emergence of the "modern" European citizen. Both books stress the dynamic, multifaceted and contested nature of European and national identities, their construction and transformations and how it affects the prospects of European integration in the future (Checkel/Katzenstein 2009).

How the holding of inclusive European versus exclusively national identity will influence citizens' attitudes towards future European integration is still under debate, but is a question that has dominated the research agenda during the last decade. Risse (2010) and Checkel and Katzenstein (2009) stress that the Europeanization of national identities of political and economic elites is not necessarily matched by a similar process affecting ordinary citizens. They suggest that elites' multiple identities are a result of their active socialization in the EU. This is also evident in the fact that only a minority of individuals in EU member states exclusively define themselves as European (Risse 2010: 92). The link between citizens' and elites' opinions and the public sphere is discussed in more depth in the following sections.

In addition to the above cited books, Robyn (2005) employs a Q-methodological approach to find and compare (supranational) European and national identities within and across seven countries (Denmark, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden). The study confirms the existence of multiple identities and that European and national identities are more often intertwined, rather than clear-cut or prioritized. Importantly, the extent to which either European or national identity prevails in this mixture of identities varies across countries.

This multiple country study further finds that Danish and French citizens express the strongest affiliation towards European identity, while citizens in Germany and England held the most mixed identities, with a stronger national identification (Robyn 2005: 13). England is the only country where a shared nationalistic identity was found. However, the scholars do not find evidence for the existence of pure nationalists in Europe “whose opinion in-depth corresponds even roughly to the coherent philosophy of nationalism described in the literature” (Robyn 2005: 8). These findings in Germany, Netherlands and France in particular may be the result of social bias on behalf of the respondents or at least partly due to the long and steady process of European integration in these countries (Robyn 2005: 10-3 ). They are in line with the empirical results discussed by Risse (2010).

More recently, Tillman (2013: 2) provides a different and original analysis of authoritarianism as a prominent theoretical link between the factors related to social and cultural identity – religious hostility, national pride and negative perceptions of immigrants – and Euroscepticism, including opposition to enlargement. The author demonstrates that authoritarian values and beliefs of order and social cohesion have both direct and indirect negative effects on mass EU opinion, in all 27 EU member states (Tillman 2013). By linking exclusionary social identity to authoritarianism, Tillman (2013) presents an innovative explanation for public opinion attitudes, which combines a variety of existing determinants under a broader theoretical framework. His analysis confirms the positive effect of European identity on support for EU and is in line with previous contributions with regards to the negative effects of cultural and national identity factors, mentioned earlier.<sup>13</sup> Tillman (2013: 18f) suggests that hostility towards other ethnicities and national pride are “partially endogenous to authoritarianism”.

Research so far has shown that factors derived from the utilitarian, identity and cultural approaches have varying effects on public opinion towards enlargement, depending on the candidate under examination (Azrout et al. 2013; Dixon 2010; Jones/van der Bijl 2004; McLaren 2002; McLaren 2007) . Dixon (2010: 142) reveals a difference in the levels of support with regards to Turkey’s entrance as compared to Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania. While opinion towards the latter three is largely shaped by material interests, negative attitudes towards Turkey’s entry are better explained by identity-related factors. The author suggests that EU member states publics adopt a mechanism of “group defense” in a hierarchy of “European-ness” of member countries (Dixon 2010: 135f). Furthermore, he finds that citizens in Central European countries that joined the EU in 2004 are more supportive towards accession of Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia than

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13 Azrout et al. (2012, 2013); Boomgaarden et al. (2011); de Vreese/Boomgaarden (2005); Dixon (2010); McLaren (2002; McLaren (2007).



the EU15. The levels of support towards Turkey among 2004 entrant countries is much less compared to their support for the 2007 entrants and Croatia (Dixon 2010: 145). These results are consistent with the overview of Eurobarometer data presented earlier, which emphasizes that candidate countries themselves are the cause of the greatest variation in public opinion (See sections 1.3 and 1.4). Furthermore, Dixon's (2010) study suggests that not only the levels of support differ but also the factors determining support.

The core of social constructivist theories focuses on the formation and building of common knowledge and frames of reality in the minds of individuals (Risse 2010). The role of education is revealed as particularly important in several crucial aspects shaping responses to European integration. On the one hand, citizens with higher education are better suited to benefit from EU integration. On the other hand, political party 'cues' or media 'frames' have less effect on citizens with higher educational background. The importance of education for the formation of public opinion towards European integration has been also established by a considerable body of empirical studies starting with Inglehart (1970). According to Inglehart's theory of cognitive mobilization citizens acquire political knowledge not only through education, but also through the presence of communicative networks that reinforce certain messages and attitudes. Testing his theory in Western Europe, Inglehart (1970: 47-54) established education as an important determinant of public opinion, which can lead to negative or positive attitudes depending on the communicative environment of the individuals. A number of studies on attitudes towards enlargement build on this work.

Dixon (2010: 142) finds that knowledge about the EU and citizens' political affiliations are among the major factors explaining citizens' attitudes towards further EU widening (Boomgaarden et al. 2011; de Vreese/Boomgaarden 2005; Dixon 2010; Hooghe/Marks 2005; Karp/Bowler 2006). Boomgaarden et al. (2011: 254) also point out that political interest and political knowledge are among the determinants of public attitudes towards EU. Self-association with *right political ideology*, some studies point out, contributes to opposition to EU enlargement (Boomgaarden et al. 2011; Dixon 2010; Hooghe/Marks 2005; Karp/Bowler 2006; McLaren 2002; McLaren 2007).

Karp and Bowler (2006), as well as Dixon (2010) find persistent effect of citizens' concerns about the potential effects of enlargement on the EU institutions and functioning. This is particularly relevant for those who express dissatisfaction with EU democracy, lack of confidence in EU institutions, and concerns about the effectiveness of EU decision making (Dixon 2010; Karp/Bowler 2006). However, due to low interest and knowledge among EU publics about the institutions of the EU and enlargement in particular, they rely on political "cues" or shortcuts provided in the domestic arena (Hooghe/Marks 2005; Ray 2003; Steenbergen et al. 2007). Following the above logic, a great number of empirical studies of public opinion have established that evaluations and perceptions towards *incumbent government* and *domestic political elites* affect strongly attitudes towards EU enlargement (Boomgaarden et al. 2011; de Vreese/Boomgaarden 2005; Gabel 1998; Hooghe/Marks 2005). Incumbent government support leads either to more positive or to more negative attitudes towards EU integration and also enlargement, but the direction of its effect depends on the country or region-specific contexts.

Departing from Inglehart's 'cognitive mobilization through media messages' theory (1970), a number of recent studies establish the importance of political cues for the activation of specific attitudes and identities (Hooghe/Marks 2005, 2008; Steenbergen et al. 2007). These studies show that attitudes cannot be understood in isolation, but rather must be put in the context of societal discourses, political cues and frames provided by elites. This finding has important implications for our further research on the societal acceptance of enlargement. Moving from the individual to the institutional and societal level in the next section we discuss the findings of studies dealing with the mediating role of political parties and elites.

### 3.3 *The Mediating Role of Political Context*

Even though the link between the individual factors discussed above and support for enlargement has been shown to be stable, at the aggregate level evaluations of past enlargements and support for future ones have changed considerably over time. Hence, in addition to the "structural" determinants of enlargement support, there must be more dynamic factors at play to account for the observed trend over time. Scholars have looked into the mediating role of political parties and the media as potential explanations for the variation of EU (enlargement) attitudes over time.

The domestic political arena is an important source of attitudes towards enlargements and EU integration as a whole, since it is there where EU issues are debated and become politicized, and this is where knowledge about EU is generated on national level. The stances of political formations and actors on EU enlargement, their evaluation of the risks or benefits of further widening, as well as their ideological affiliation influence citizens' opinion and attitudes towards enlargements. However, whether political elites cue citizens or vice-versa is still under debate, but evidence suggests an interactive and reiterative process (Hooghe/Marks 2005, 2008; Steenbergen et al. 2007).

Even though studies of the public-elite dynamics draw predominantly on EU referenda results rather than Eurobarometer data, it is important to discuss their findings, as they are highly relevant for public opinion towards EU enlargements. In general, higher polarization and division between domestic political elites on EU issues leads to more negative public opinion among citizens, as they are exposed to more intensive debate upon EU policies, features and functioning (Hooghe/Marks 2005; Ray 2003; Steenbergen et al. 2007). The mass-elite linkage works in two directions: bottom-up and top-down approaches (Guerra 2013; Steunenberg et al. 2011). A "process of representation" facilitates the communication of opinions between public and elites in the logic of the bottom-up approach, in which citizens' opinion is adopted by political leaders (Hooghe/Marks 2005, 2008; Ray 2003; Steenbergen et al. 2007). The top-down approach, which is in opposite direction – political elites cue citizens' opinion – happens through a "process of information and persuasion" (Steenbergen et al. 2007). Steenbergen et al. (2007: 14) claim that "the breakdown of either process could cause a disconnection" between the attitudes of political elites and the masses. Some referendum studies in Western member states have pointed to a "party-following" voting behavior on behalf of citizens with regards to EU questions (Lubbers 2008). Scholars find evidence for both approaches working

simultaneously, but the bottom-up direction, in which citizens' opinion on EU shape political actors' EU stance has a stronger influence (Steenbergen et al. 2007: 25; Lubbers 2008). Previous studies have also revealed that electoral context, party (system) attributes and attributes of supporters are among the factors that further condition the mass-elite linkage and its direction (Lubbers 2008; Ray 2003; Steenbergen et al. 2007). However, more recent studies are increasingly concerned with a widening gap between the opinions of elites and their constituencies regarding EU enlargement (Herranz-Surrallés 2012).

Herranz-Surrallés' (2012) case study on Germany has investigated the divergence between the debates on justifying enlargements at the EU and at the national level. The public remains increasingly isolated from the EU debate on enlargement. This isolation, in its turn, contributes to widening the gap between public and elite attitudes towards the process. The latter can be observed to hold in the founding and older member states, but is also evident in some CEE countries, as we will see in subsequent paragraphs. Herranz-Surrallés (2012 : 388) examines all previous enlargements (including Turkey's ongoing accession process) through the lenses of discursive institutionalism, emphasizing the emerging disconnection between coordinative (EU level) and communicative (national level) discourses in Germany. The first focuses on the development of ideas, their acceptance and challenging in the world of EU policy-makers, while the latter pays particular attention to political communication developed within the public sphere. Herranz-Surrallés (2012: 391) demonstrates two predominant aspects of justification of EU enlargement among political elites and actors involved in policy formulation on EU level: utilitarian and normative. The communicative discourse characterizes the public space as underlying the aspects of Eastern enlargement in terms of *benefits*, while Turkey's accession has been communicated in terms of *risks* (Herranz-Surrallés 2012: 394-396). Thus, she argues that the emphasis on the normative aspects of justifying EU enlargement, which underline EU responsibilities for peace, democracy and security, was the major driving force behind the consensus among political elites and the pro-enlargement decisions at EU level (Herranz-Surrallés 2012: 399). This argument lends further support for the notion that elites have resorted to 'rhetorical action' to open the way for enlargement in the face of opposition (Schimmelfennig 2001).

The normative aspects of justifying EU enlargement could not be found on the national level where communication to the public appealed only to the utilitarian cost/benefit arguments for enlargement (Herranz-Surrallés 2012). Díez Medrano (2008) points to the varying ways in which citizens and political elites shape a sense of European or EU identity. This process results in the diverging opinions between political leaders and citizens. Political elites maintain and develop multiple identities more easily than their constituencies and they are directly involved in the social construction of not only EU or European, but also national identities. The widening gap between political elites and their publics stances on EU in general and enlargement policy, in particular, has been well documented within CEE countries (see section 2.5) (Bielasiak 2002; Kemmerling 2008; Ott 2006; Pace 2011; Pridham 2007).

As already highlighted in the previous section, a number of studies since Inglehart (1970) show that citizens' political knowledge and opinions cannot be formed in a vacuum but are constructed and exposed to a variety of information and communication channels, which define the surrounding public sphere. Mass media is therefore a major tool for building-up knowledge on EU issues and a factor directing citizens' positive or

negative attitudes towards EU enlargement.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the next section focuses on research studying the effects of information exposure.

### 3.4 *The Effect of Media and Framing*

In line with the theory of cognitive mobilization developed by Inglehart (1970) the effects of mass media on individuals' opinion on future enlargements within the EU15 have been explored by an increasing number of scholars.<sup>15</sup> Azrout et al. (2012) conducted a cross-national study of media and public opinion towards enlargement in 21 EU countries, which is by now one of a kind.<sup>16</sup> The authors (Azrout, Van Spanje et al. 2012: 698, 700) find that not individual exposure to information, but rather the *information environment*, in which citizens find themselves, contributes to increasing effects of the media in shaping public opinion towards EU enlargement.

In the UK media context, Dursun-Ozkanca (2011: 153f) concludes that “[t]he British press coverage increasingly sets the public attribute agenda on enlargement, bringing some characteristics of enlargement to the forefront while minimizing others.” Her study on public opinion towards enlargement provides further evidence of the impact of media output on issue salience among the EU public (Dursun-Ozkanca 2011). These findings are based on an analysis combining Standard and Flash Eurobarometer data as well as major UK newspapers' content analysis in the eve of Eastern enlargement (2002 and 2004).

Lecheler and De Vreese (2010) and Maier and Rittberger (2008) develop experimental research designs to study the effects of media exposure on public opinion towards the accession of Serbia and the accession of the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, respectively. The studies reveal “framing” and “priming” effects of media and point to the possibility of media shaping how a person thinks of an issue and if a person considers an issue important (Lecheler/De Vreese 2010; Maier/Rittberger 2008). From a methodological point of view, however, these studies suffer from a potential external validity problem, as they are conducted among small groups of non-randomly selected individuals and, as a result, their findings might be not generalizable beyond the sample studied. This is problematic for a convincing argument about the extent to which the media and its messages explain negative or positive public opinions towards enlargement in general.

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14 Azrout et al. (2012); de Vreese/Boomgaarden (2006); de Vreese et al. (2008); De Vries/Edwards (2009); Dursun-Ozkanca (2011); Lecheler/De Vreese (2010); Maier/Rittberger (2008); Schuck/De Vreese (2011).

15 Azrout et al. (2012); de Vreese/Boomgaarden (2006); de Vreese et al. (2008); De Vries/Edwards (2009); Dursun-Ozkanca (2011); Lecheler/De Vreese (2010); Maier/Rittberger (2008); Schuck/De Vreese (2011).

16 The countries included are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

In an earlier analysis of the effects of mass media, De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2006) conducted a comparative study of media content and public opinion within the Netherlands and Denmark in a natural setting, using two-wave panel surveys before and after the 2002 European Council Copenhagen meeting. The study concludes that even though news media do play a role in changes of public opinion, this change depends further on the consistent *one-sided tone of news coverage* (either negative or positive) (de Vreese/Boomgaarden 2006: 430). De Vreese and Boomgaarden's (2006: 430) study confirms the findings in earlier literature in that "economic considerations, anti-immigration attitudes and political sophistication emerged as the most important factors", shaping public opinion, but adds to these factors media exposure.

The effects of media and exposure to political "cues" or information frames can be undermined or strengthened by other individual level characteristics, for example education, post-materialistic values and/or place of residence.<sup>17</sup> It must be noted, however, that studies of public opinion on enlargement within CEE paying attention to media exposure are few and far between. Other factors discussed in the previous sections have received much more scrutiny in the newer member states. The following discussion reflects those. Again, we emphasize that determinants of public opinion are not essentially very different in the East and West of the EU, so our separate treatment is justified by the different sets of studies, rather than by any substantial differences and considerations are based predominantly on methodological rather than theoretical differences.

### 3.5 *Determinants of Attitudes towards Enlargement in the New Member States*

In the contexts of the Eastern enlargement, research on public opinion has focused on the factors determining CEE countries citizens' support for their own country's *membership* (Bielasiak 2002; Doyle/Fidrmuc 2006; Elgün/Tillman 2007; Hobolt et al. 2011; Kemmerling 2008; Ott 2006; Pridham 2007; Rohrschneider/Whitefield 2006; Tanasoiu/Colonescu 2008). Researchers investigating citizens' opinions in all twelve new member states and Turkey aimed at testing the major theoretical frameworks developed to explain citizens' support for membership among the EU15. In particular, studies have focused on the effects of economic factors and especially perceived benefits of trade liberalization (Doyle/Fidrmuc 2006; Guerra 2012), identity considerations and conservative or liberal values (Rohrschneider/Whitefield 2006; Elgün/Tillman 2007; Pridham 2007; Kemmerling 2008). The EU membership referenda that took place among most of the EU 2004 accession countries allowed researchers to compare intentions to vote in the referenda with the actual voting turnouts.<sup>18</sup> Referenda increase the salience and visibility of the debate over the EU among different political, media, and societal actors across 2004/07 accession states (Pridham 2007).

Focusing on individual and regional economic factors, Doyle and Fidrmuc (2006) identify some of the economic "winners and losers" among CEE citizens and their support for EU accession. However, the study

17 Azrout et al. (2012); de Vreese/Boomgaarden (2006); de Vreese et al. (2008); De Vries/Edwards (2009); Dursun-Ozkanca (2011); Elgün/Tillman (2007); Guerra (2013); Lecheler/De Vreese (2010); Maier/Rittberger (2008).

18 Referenda were held in Malta, Slovenia, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia, Poland, Czech Republic, Estonia and Latvia.

demonstrates that support for EU entry was “far from overwhelming” and that in half of the countries a failure of the referenda was, at the time, a feasible outcome (Doyle/Fidrmuc 2006: 540). The major new finding, and an intriguing point of divergence with studies in Western Europe, is that citizens opposing the EU are those who should be “winning” from redistribution benefits – unemployed, less educated, elderly and citizens living in agricultural regions. Following from this finding, the authors (Doyle/Fidrmuc 2006: 539f) argue that Central and Eastern Europeans’ opinion is more a function of *expectations* of trade liberalization benefits in the future, rather than the acquiring of *immediate gains* from redistributive EU policies. Citizens of the new member states are more appreciative of the gains in terms of new opportunities and the functioning of democratic institutions and they “discount the potential gains from receiving subsidies” (Doyle/Fidrmuc 2006: 541). This is one of the major differences found in the effects of instrumental factors on public support in new and old member states.

Another study from 2007, conducted by Elgün and Tillman (2007: 397f) reveals that *domestic political* and *social identity* factors have a consistently stronger effect on EU support for membership in Central and Eastern Europe than economic/utilitarian factors. In contrast to personal expectations of perceived loss or gain and economic factors shaping Western Europeans opinion towards the EU, Elgün and Tillman (2007:397) find that for Eastern European citizens identity matters more than income, at least in the early years of enlargement. Income was found to have only a weak positive effect, but employment status, low-skilled labor and education were not found to impact individuals’ opinion (Elgün/Tillman 2007: 396f). However, the authors contend that the higher exposure to EU integration and its domestic consequences trigger changes in human capital over time and thus also in citizens’ utilitarian judgments about EU membership (Elgün/Tillman 2007). Moreover, we could further interpret these findings as an effect of anticipation of benefits or perceived erosion of identity. The actual benefits or costs could be expected to become clear to citizens after a longer experience of membership.

The study suggests that “the divergence between [our] findings and those of West Europeans studies can be explained by the role of exposure to EU policies and their effects on domestic economies” (Elgün/Tillman 2007: 396f). At the same time, the empirical evidence gives most weight to negative effects of xenophobia, on the one hand, and positive effects of EU knowledge and political trust, on the other. A striking similarity in determinants of public opinion among new member states and between them and older ones is the highly significant and negative effect of xenophobic attitudes (Elgün/Tillman 2007). These findings suggest that hostility to out-groups and values of cultural unity decrease support also among the generally more positive CEE citizens (Christin 2005; Ott 2006; Tanasoiu/Colonescu 2008; Vetik 2003). The higher exposure to EU policies, may be one of the reasons for the more negative view adopted by citizens in new member states over the last few years and for the drop of those countries overall supportive public opinion (see Part I).

Single case studies within CEE countries have contributed also to explaining some of the further differences and similarities in the economic, domestic political and value/identity-based determinants of public opinion prior to accession or shortly after it (Bielasiak 2002; Kemmerling 2008; Ott 2006; Pace 2011; Pridham 2007). These studies reveal not only some of the individual characteristics shaping citizens’ opinion, but also some of the more specific contextual and regional characteristics. They also contribute to the possible

explanations of the general dip in public support among the new member states after their accession, which the review of Eurobarometer data highlighted in section one.

A major difference between research within the EU15 and within CEE countries is the significance of personal domestic and EU *political and economic values* in shaping public opinion, which is much higher across the 2004 and 2007 accession countries (Bielasiak 2002; Kemmerling 2008; Ott 2006; Pace 2011; Pridham 2007). The latter is connected to the fact that EU membership is seen as a completion of the political and economic transition, undergone by most new member states. Thus, such values rooted in the EU democratic and liberal market principles have been significant for shaping citizens' opinion in CEE. The "unconditional support" for enlargement is most often explained by the idea of a symbolic "return to Europe" for post-communist countries to acknowledge their belonging to the community of European nation-states (Bielasiak 2002; Christin 2005; Guerra 2013; Kemmerling 2008; Ott 2006; Tanasoiu/Colonescu 2008; Vetik 2003).

Comparing Polish public opinion towards the EU before and after accession, Guerra's (2013) recent analysis concentrates predominantly on the use of domestic "proxies" or shortcuts. The latter can be observed in the cases where individuals' EU knowledge is lacking or is very low as is much the situation in CEE prior to accession. In line with Doyle/Fidrmuc (2006), the study reveals that economic factors, representing collective benefits, are more significant in shaping citizens' opinion prior to accession. Individual self-interests shift to hold significant negative effect only after accession date in 2005 (Guerra 2013: 44f). This confirms Elgün/Tillman's (2007) argument that human capital gains importance with increasing exposure to EU integration.

The national political proxy factor does not affect Poles either before or after accession date, according to Guerra (2013: 39f). He contends that the mass-elite linkage observed in the EU15, is unlikely to hold explanatory power in most post-communist countries' context. The region is characterized by high levels of mistrust in national institutions and political parties and the direction of cueing is likely to follow the logic of the bottom-up approach, discussed earlier. In addition, the gap between public and party EU stances is well observed among CEE countries. This, in Guerra's (2013) view, makes the mass-elite linkage logic not fully applicable when studying public opinion in the region prior to EU accession. Guerra's (2013) results confirm the contention that with time, citizens become more realistic about the EU and this weakens positive opinions based on general symbolic attachment to the Union. This is also shown by Kemmerling (2008) and Bielasiak's (2002) earlier studies on the Polish case. All of these emphasize the decrease of support for EU membership with the approach of accession (Bielasiak 2002; Kemmerling 2008) and after it (Guerra 2013). In his contribution Bielasiak (2002: 1262) concludes that:

"Public opinion has turned away from the overwhelming consensus of the early and mid-1990s, when 'one Europe' was perceived as a panacea for the democratic and market projects. Over the years, many Poles have become more cautious about the meaning of integration, and certainly have adopted a more realistic perspective that has moved them away from being Euro-enthusiasts to Euro-realists and even Euro-sceptics."



Kemmerling's (2008: 293) contribution reveals the effects of media-use, party affiliation and locality on voting intentions of Polish citizens. More specifically, he finds that "voters of anti-EU parties, rural voters and well informed voters" are more likely to either have negative voting intentions or to abstain from voting (Kemmerling 2008). Being well informed is common also among supporters of the EU, but Eurosceptics are based predominantly within the Polish anti-EU parties' electorates (Kemmerling 2008: 294f). This study also contradicts the literature by emphasizing the relatively strong public-elite linkage affecting the "no" vote. It points to such a relationship between elites and masses that allows simultaneously for leaders to mobilize public opinion and still be "receptive towards the preferences of pivotal voters" (Kemmerling 2008: 296).

Political elites within new member states have taken an extensively pro-EU stance while their publics express increasingly negative opinions. Case studies on Latvia (Pridham 2007), Malta (Pace 2011) and Estonia (Vetik 2003) however, present somewhat conflicting findings and explanations of mass-elite differences in opinion towards EU enlargement. In the Maltese case, for example, Pace (2011: 135f) has focused on the characteristics of the political party system on the one hand and citizens' Catholic values, on the other, to explain the elite-citizen gap.

Turning to the effects of national and social identity factors on citizens' pro- or anti-EU opinions, the Polish case does not provide concrete evidence to support identity based explanations. In Poland, Kemmerling (2008: 295) finds that religion plays only a marginal role for negative voting intentions. Kemmerling's (2008) analysis claims that prior to entry date, the frequency of visiting church is more related to Eurosceptic opinion. Guerra's (2013: 45) findings differ by revealing a strong positive effect of Catholic religion on Polish public opinion after the accession and no effect prior. However, case studies on Estonia (Vetik 2003) and Croatia (Ott 2006) pay more attention to the identity-related determinants of public opinion.

More evidence is found of the role played by identity issues or perception of threats towards national identity and sovereignty in those countries where ethnic minorities are more visible (Guerra 2013). In Estonia (Vetik 2003: 261-265), the symbolic perceptions on EU and nation-state values play a dominant role in negative opinions. Vetik (2003: 265-267) argues that the gap evident between the views of Estonian elites and their constituencies on enlargement results from the role of elites in the construction of an European identity coupled with popular distrust in political institutions. Citizens' modest knowledge on the EU as well as the high level of social polarization further contributes to the public-elite opinions disconnection (Vetik 2003). In Estonia, internal and external security questions also stand out as relevant factors for shaping public and elite EU positions (Vetik 2003). A similar pattern emerges in Stulhofer's (Ott 2006) trend study of Croatia in the period from 1995 to 2005, which reveals that both the rational utilitarian and the symbolic factors of national and ethnic identities equally affect the Eurosceptic opinions of Croatian citizens.<sup>19</sup> Stulhofer (Ott 2006: 149f) finds that exclusive national identity is one of the major explanations of negative public opinion in Croatia towards its EU membership. He claims that exclusive national identity

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<sup>19</sup> Croatia became the newest member state while working on this paper. Hence, we include it in our discussion on the determinants of public opinion towards enlargement within new EU member states. However, as it also has the most recent experience with change of status from candidate country to member, it is also included in some studies mentioned in the next section.



also underlies and affects both the economic and the political evaluations of the EU (Ott 2006). The ethnic diversity picture and the call for security can also be observed to an even higher degree in the candidate countries that are next in line for accession (see Section 2.4).

To summarize, the existing literature has contributed to testing empirically a long list of possible predictors explaining public opinion towards EU enlargement derived from a variety of theoretical frameworks. One group of researchers have focused on individual level objective and subjective characteristics<sup>20</sup>, while others have explored national and regional level contextual determinants (Doyle/Fidrmuc 2006; Jones/van der Bijl 2004), and yet others have examined the dynamics at the EU level (Herranz-Surrallés 2012). Some have found evidence of different effects of some determinants in Western and Eastern EU member states (Christin 2005; Dixon 2010; Karp/Bowler 2006; Ott 2006; Pridham 2007; Tanasoiu/Colonescu 2008; Vetik 2003), but on the whole this differentiation remains inconclusive.

Tillman (2013) original model stands out among recent contributions by exploring authoritarianism as a link between many previously examined factors. Tillman (2013) suggests authoritarianism is an important and overlooked determinant of public opinion towards EU integration among all EU27 member states. He calls for future work to examine the link between social identity factors, authoritarianism and EU public opinion in different political contexts (Tillman 2013: 20).

### 3.6 *Determinants of Attitudes towards Enlargement in Current and Potential Candidates*

The analyses of public opinion we have reviewed here share a common conviction that public opinion has played and will play an even more important role in future decisions on European integration, be it deepening or widening.<sup>21</sup> It is important to note in this context that pro-enlargement voices at EU level are rarely heard within the domestic political arena (Herranz-Surrallés 2012). This conclusion is in line with the findings of other studies of enlargement that have focused on the process itself and the approach chosen by the EU institutions and by member states governments to present the previous enlargement in the domestic arena (Dimitrova 2011).

The contributions examining public opinion in the EU in its current shape of 27 (and as of July 2013, 28) members are still scarce, with few exceptions such as Tillman (2013) and Gerhards and Hans (2011). This is especially true when it comes to citizens' opinion towards EU enlargement in respect to its current scope of countries (Azrout et al. 2013; Dixon 2010). This review can therefore confidently claim that there is space for more analyses of public opinion and perceptions of the Eastern enlargement in the EU-27.

20 de Vreese/Boomgaarden (2005); Dixon (2010); Gabel (1998); Hooghe/Marks (2005); Karp/Bowler (2006); McLaren (2002); McLaren (2007).

21 Azrout et al. (2013); de Vreese/Boomgaarden (2005); Dixon (2010); Gabel (1998); Hooghe/Marks (2005, 2008); Karp et al. (2003); McLaren (2002); McLaren (2007); Ray (2003); Steenbergen et al. (2007); Tillman (2013).

Even less research has been conducted to establish determinants of public opinion towards the accession of Western Balkans countries, some of which are official candidates.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, there has been scarcely any research in public opinion towards the potential accession of Serbia, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina or even Switzerland and Iceland. Turkey is the only candidate country attitudes towards which have been studied more rigorously and systematically.<sup>23</sup>

A rare two country study investigating the interaction between public opinion dynamics, political party platforms and EU conditionality in Western Balkan states has been conducted by Konitzer (2011). Departing from Vachudova's (2005) theoretical framework, Konitzer (2011) focuses on anti-EU parties and shows that EU conditionality in combination with domestic public opinion affects their stances on EU accession (Konitzer 2011: 1856-1859). The study reveals "the gradual development of a pro-EU party consensus [...] that was achieved amongst all major parties in Croatia by 2003 and in Serbia by 2008–2009" (Konitzer 2011: 1859). High public support towards EU membership and the high cost of non-membership contribute to lowering levels of electoral support for Euro-sceptic parties (Konitzer 2011). Members of these parties are faced with a choice either to change their party platform (an "extrovert" strategy) or to be loyal to their party's ideological line (an "introvert" strategy). These different choices generate intra-party clashes between introverts and extroverts, in which victory of one over the other is crucial for the programmatic direction followed by the party. Such clashes might also result in a breakup with one group starting a new political formation (Konitzer 2011: 1858). Following Konitzer's (2011) logic, public support is an independent variable significant both at the beginning and at the end of the political party transformation process, when they need to secure electoral support.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper we showed that EU public opinion on the issue of enlargement cannot be charted and understood in simple terms. In a certain sense, we cannot even speak of a stable EU-wide public opinion on enlargement, since mass attitudes, evaluations and dispositions towards EU expansion are rather sensitive to the exact wording of surveys as well as to the national and geopolitical context. Public attitudes and opinions differ significantly per country, change rapidly over time, and a significant part of the EU citizens do not even express an opinion on the matter or do not possess the minimum of factual information on enlargement (e.g. which countries are in the process of accession negotiations at the moment).

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22 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Iceland, Montenegro and Turkey have an official candidate country status (negotiating or waiting to start), while Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are in the list of potential candidate countries (EC Enlargement, online at: [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/check-current-status/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/check-current-status/index_en.htm) ).

23 Azrout et al. (2012); de Vreese/Boomgaarden (2006); de Vreese et al. (2008); De Vries/Edwards (2009); Dixon (2010); Lecheler/De Vreese (2010); Maier/Rittberger (2008); McLaren (2007).

That being said, it appears from the comparative data collected by Eurobarometer that appetite for future enlargements of the EU is **declining over the last decade**. Indeed, although support for future accessions is still on average higher in the CEE countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007, the public in practically all EU member states has turned more hostile towards future expansion of the Union. Again, aggregate support or hostility towards enlargement changes considerably depending on which (potential) candidate country is mentioned, and whether some qualifiers are attached to the prospect of accession (e.g. ‘once the candidate is ready’).

The variability and sensitivity of mass attitudes towards enlargement suggest that these attitudes are influenced by more than structural factors like identities, socio-economic positions, occupations, or general political orientations. While the importance of these factors is undeniable (although it is less clear how they complement or combine at the individual level), mass opinions, evaluations and dispositions towards EU enlargement are also amenable to the impact of cues provided by elites and political parties, and the framing of information on the subject.

The overview of data and existing studies shows that the differences in attitudes between old and new member states publics appear to be an artefact of research design and choices rather than a real divide between East and West. There is not much evidence to suggest that the fundamental determinants of attitudes towards enlargement are different in East and West: empirical studies which include old and new member states seem to show similarities in attitudes and determinants.

Perceived cultural threat appears to drive the increasingly negative citizens’ opinion towards enlargement throughout Europe – Western and Eastern.<sup>24</sup> Individual level public opinion determinants related to national identity and anti-immigration attitudes are important across East and West and also North and South.

Another common feature of public opinion in both new and old member states is the increasing gap between elites’ and their constituencies’ opinion towards EU enlargement. Such a gap is revealed in old member states like Germany (Herranz-Surrallés 2012; Hooghe/Marks 2008), but also in Poland (Bielasiak 2002), Estonia (Vetik 2003), Malta (Pace 2011) and Latvia (Pridham 2007). Citizens’ generally low knowledge of the EU means they resort to cultural or political “proxies” or “cues” taken from their immediate context to determine their opinions (Hooghe/Marks 2005, 2008; Steenbergen et al. 2007). This is quite worrying, as rising nationalist parties are proving to be a new source of anti-EU or anti-immigrant rhetoric (Hooghe/Marks 2008; Maier et al. 2012) in both old and new EU members (Maier et al. 2012).

The role of media is especially relevant for the construction of information flows or stimuli to which citizens are exposed and increases the salience of EU issues in the public debate in member states (de Vreese/Boomgaarden 2006; Dursun-Ozkanca 2011). Mass media provide the tools (mechanisms) for domestic po-

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24 Azrout et al. (2013); Boomgaarden et al. (2011); de Vreese/Boomgaarden (2005); Dixon (2010); Elgün/Tillman (2007); Gerhards/Hans (2011); Hobolt et al. (2011); Ott (2006); Tillman (2013); Vetik (2003).

litical elites to communicate their stances on EU integration and construct the social reality in a specific manner and frame.<sup>25</sup>

While the determinants of mass opinions *in* different states might be similar, there is important variation in opinion *about* the enlargement prospects of specific candidates. Support or opposition for enlargement are determined above all by the candidate country itself, as are the specific factors affecting public opinion, be they utilitarian or identity considerations.

The public in the older EU member states may persist in focusing on the “otherness” of newcomers or alternatively, accept them as equal citizens of the new Europe depending on cues provided by politicians and media. To understand country level diversity of public opinion towards enlargement, we need to put citizens’ attitudes and opinions in the context of the domestic political discourses that influence them.

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<sup>25</sup> Azrout et al. (2012); de Vreese/Boomgaarden (2005); de Vreese/Boomgaarden (2006); Hooghe/Marks (2005, 2008); Lecheler/De Vreese (2010).

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**“Maximizing the integration capacity of the European Union: Lessons of and prospects for enlargement and beyond”**

The ‘big bang enlargement’ of the European Union (EU) has nurtured vivid debates among both academics and practitioners about the consequences of ‘an ever larger Union’ for the EU’s integration capacity. The research project MAXCAP will start with a critical analysis of the effects of the 2004-2007 enlargement on stability, democracy and prosperity of candidate countries, on the one hand, and the EU’s institutions, on the other. We will then investigate how the EU can maximize its integration capacity for current and future enlargements. Featuring a nine-partner consortium of academic, policy, dissemination and management excellence, MAXCAP will create new and strengthen existing links within and between the academic and the policy world on matters relating to the current and future enlargement of the EU.

