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**The Impact of Enlargement on the
Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
(with special reference to Slovenia)**

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The question of impact of the Eastern Enlargement of the EU on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) has to be addressed by differentiating between the process of Enlargement, *i.e.* the process that had been taking place for over a decade now and is coming to its final stages for the eight, respectively ten Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) and Malta and Cyprus; and the impact of the actual accession of these countries to the Union on the future of the EMP.

After the Fall of the Berlin Wall in the 1989 the EU's (EC's at the time) top priority became sorting out the relationship with the countries of the former communist bloc. The project, often referred to as »the historic reunification« of Europe, has begun. The amount of attention paid to these countries and the efforts taken to prepare them for membership in the Union are indisputably justified. Not only in historic and political terms, but also in economic sense and, probably the most important, with a view to security on the continent. The CEEC represent an immediate neighbourhood to the EU,¹ a neighbourhood that was not seen as stable and secure after the breakdown of communism. And a neighbourhood with a vast economic potential.

When the first Association Agreements were signed with Poland and Hungary, without giving any explicit prospect of the membership, these countries were already considering applying for the membership. Article 49 of the Treaty on the European Union has to be read in this context. It says that any democratic European country can apply for the membership. The "Europeanness" of the CEEC was never questioned, and when the Copenhagen criteria set out the conditions for the membership, the process of Enlargement could begin. Undoubtedly the process that took considerable efforts as well as resources on the EU side.² Often perceived by the Mediterranean countries that the resources they could or should have received.

Not all the member states saw the Eastern Enlargement as their immediate priority, neither the advantages it would bring them. That some countries would profit more than others by integration of the CEEC in the internal market of the Union and that the geopolitical centre of the EU would move Eastward with the new members, became a concern of countries without the immediate borders with the CEEC and they sought to balance what they perceived as predominantly German interest in and gain from assisting the CEEC in their transformation. In addition, it needs to be recognised that the EU has been reminded continuously from the beginning of the nineties that its new focus to the East should not let its Southern relations to a neglect. The Moroccan wishes for closer economic ties with the EU, the Gulf War, the political crisis in Algeria and the re-opened Middle East Peace Process that led to the signing of the Oslo Treaty in October 1993 are only the most significant issues present at the time, which acted as an impetus for Mediterranean member states to pursue a more active Mediterranean policy in the EU. Spain used its 1995 Presidency to the best of its potentials, by bringing the Mediterranean issue back to the European agenda and by launching the Barcelona process. The EMP so replaced and qualitatively upgraded the previous Global Mediterranean Policy.

How can the impact of the process of the Eastern Enlargement upon the EMP be assessed? I can conclude that on one side the Eastern Enlargement took some resources and focus away from the Mediterranean, but on the other

¹ Even if at the time of the fall of the iron curtain only two member states of the EC, Italy and Germany, had immediate border with the CEECs. With the 1995 enlargement the number of EU member states directly bordering to the CEECs has more than doubled, with all the then new members bordering on the CEECs, making it to a third of the member states bordering to the CEECs.

² However, the efforts and resources put into the transformation process and preparation for membership taken by applicant countries should not be overseen.

side, it acted as a strong incentive for the Mediterranean EU-member states to launch a more coherent and all-embracing policy towards the Southern Mediterranean. Though it needs to be noted here that Partnership is not the same as accession and that the difference in focus placed on the CEEC and the Mediterranean partners is largely a consequence of this qualitative difference as well.

Another point needs to be mentioned here on the role of the process of Enlargement on the . The decade of preparations for Enlargement was also a decade in which the EU became increasingly aware of its role as a global actor. A primarily economic orientation of the EU's external policy began increasingly to be accompanied by political actorness in the global affairs that also had an impact on the structure of the Barcelona process.

What will be the impact of the "big bang" Enlargement on the EMP? How will the enlarged Union act towards its Southern neighbours?

Three aspects necessarily need to be considered here: (a) the changes at the European level brought about by Enlargement, which are relevant to the Southern policy of the EU, (b) the attitudes of the new member states towards the Mediterranean policy, and (c) the fact that the present enlargement also includes Mediterranean countries, Malta and Cyprus, as well as Slovenia. I shall briefly outline these aspects, however, I will concentrate on the impact of the accession of the CEEC to the EU and I will leave Malta's and Cyprus' accession out of consideration here.

At the EU level there is a change in political, economic as well as in cultural aspects, which will influence the EU-Mediterranean policy. Politically, the first change to be observed is a decrease in the weight of the Mediterranean countries in the EU decision-making process. Malta, Cyprus and Slovenia are among the smallest old and new members, correspondingly with a small weight in the decision/making process in the Council of ministers as well as in the European Parliament. As a consequence of the size of countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic or Hungary, the geopolitical weight will be moved towards East and North. The question also arises whether the enlarged EU shall free its resources that were bound to the process of the Eastern Enlargement or will it turn more introspect (as it happened with previous enlargements). The Wider Europe – New Neighbourhood Policy partly brings an answer to this question. Thirdly, it is yet to be seen whether the enlarged EU will be more or less cohesive. In the case of the former that would mean a significant delay in taking decisions, in case of the latter a political opportunity structure could be born for the new outsiders to actively co-shape the policies of their concern. I think it is too soon to give any guesses on which of these alternatives are more likely, not just due to some uncertainties about the directions of the EU after Enlargement, but also due to the ongoing European Convention and the IGC that will follow it, which shall result in a new Treaty.

In terms of economics, following aspects should be considered:

- (a) trade dependence of the Mediterranean Non/Member Countries (MNM) to the EU will increase only slightly. The new CEEC have a very poor record of economic ties with the countries of Southern Mediterranean.
- (b) energy dependence of the EU on the outside world will increase, but into direction East and not South, since the new members largely depend on energy sources, like gas supplies, from the countries of the former Soviet Union. However, a greater energy dependence on New Independent States and Russia is not a particularly desirable situation and steps towards diversification of this dependence can be envisaged (*e.g.* extending present pipelines originating in the MNM to Cyprus, Hungary and Slovenia should be thought upon in this context).
- (c) the substantial increase in agricultural land, without a major reform of the CAP, will lead to an increased role of the EU as a food supplier to the outside world and even to a production of some farm products which might compete with MNM exports to the EU (*e.g.* in potatoes, vegetables and flowers).
- (d) inclusion of Cyprus in the common fisheries policy and the EU backing it would change the efficiency of the agreements on fishing in Cyprus' exclusive economic zone. The same applies to exploitation of sea-bed resources such as gas or oil.
- (e) regarding the foreign direct investment the trend observed in the CEEC will not change much by the accession itself³ and, last but not least
- (f) the envisaged migration flows from the new member states to the old member states do not amount to numbers that would imply an even stricter policy of legal and legitimate migration to the EU from the MNM.

³ It should be noted that in terms of the FDI, the comparison between or competition for the FDI from the EU into the both regions, the CEEC and the MNM, is not relevant. The prospect of accession influences the FDI flow in the CEEC.

In addition, the relatively smooth, fast and successful transformation of the formerly planned economies into the functioning market economies could be viewed as a model and as an incentive for the Southern Mediterranean economies.

Finally, there is a socio-cultural aspect that should be thought upon. The new member states are to a greater extent than the old member states homogenous and relatively closed societies in which stereotypes on much that is different are still very much alive. A lack of contact between the CEEC and the MNMC resulted in a situation, where we can almost talk of the oblivion. Different programmes, such as student exchange programmes, would help these two regions to slowly get familiar with each other.

Turning to the attitudes of the new member states towards the Mediterranean, the first observation would be that they are fairly silent about their intentions concerning the post-Enlargement external agenda. They are not against further enlargement to include 27, 28 or 29 countries. But their focus will most surely be in the South Eastern Europe and in Russia, Moldova, Ukraine and Byelorussia. Many of the candidates until recently did not have a Mediterranean policy of their own (with the exception of Malta, Cyprus, Poland, Bulgaria and Romania). However, of importance to the EMP are their stands on issues such as:

- (a) foreign trade – the candidates are split among those who might be pursuing a more liberal approach (*e.g.*, Estonia, Poland and the Czech Republic),
- (b) agriculture – the issue on which they might as a whole press for a liberalization of the CAP at least for the products they themselves do not produce, which is an attitude very much in contrast with that of Spain, Portugal and Greece,
- (c) development aid – the new members will fulfil their obligations, but they to a large extent still perceive themselves as developing countries and therefore can not be expected to be major partners in development policy, and
- (d) migration – the new members are likely to push for a more liberal approach on border controls and visa policy, especially in light with their immediate members, but this could have an indirect impact on the migration policy towards at least some countries of the Mediterranean (*e.g.*, Slovenia has no visa requirements for citizens of Turkey and Tunisia), as well as their attitudes towards the accession of Turkey to the EU and the attitude on Israel – EU relations.

Time does not allow me to go into details on attitudes of particular new member states, maybe our colleagues here from these countries could add these perspectives, however, I will try to bring Slovenia into this picture.

Slovenia, though being considered a Mediterranean country, does not have an immediate border with any of the countries of the Southern Mediterranean and it has not been affected by problems in the region, such as migration. Consequently, it does not have any kind of a Mediterranean policy and vision developed. The years of its independence have been marked by the process of accession to the EU and of becoming a member of NATO, further they were marked by bilateral issues with the neighbouring countries and by an active role played in the Western Balkans. But once being a member of the EU, this might change. The perspective on the proximity might change, and a sense of interdependence, even if primarily that of vulnerability, will be brought in.

Slovenia is a small country, which has almost through all the years of its independence lived with crises practically on its borders and was affected economically and by the refugees from the region. It is therefore very much aware of the importance of good relations with the neighbours and political stability and economic interdependence of the wider neighbourhood. I think this might be an asset Slovenia could bring into the EMP and become an active promoter and supporter of the Mediterranean agenda. It is a small country, building its international recognition and trying to depart from only being the stabilizing moment for the Western Balkans. I think active involvement in the Mediterranean designs seems like a natural way to pursue internationally recognisable foreign policy. As long as those who shape the foreign policy in the country will see the forest and the trees, I think there is a potential. And I hope that a representative from the Slovenian foreign ministry will be taking part at the next EMP Seminar.

Thank you very much for your attention.