

The EU Enlargements of 1995 and 2007

Written by Alex Campbell

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ALEX CAMPBELL, APR 23 2010

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Compare and contrast the EU enlargements of 1995 and 2007

The EU's central aim of widening and deepening has been fulfilled in a series of enlargements since its conception. Those in 1995 and 2007 are similar in that few countries joined in each, however this does not mean each was without stumbling blocks and persistent issues. The accession processes were vastly different due to the nature of the countries joining, and each enlargement gave the EU a contrasting image and corresponding future challenges.

The 1995 enlargement was a natural progression of logical and practical integration following the Cold War. During the conflict, neutrality prevented Austria, Finland, Sweden and Norway committing to full membership because participation in the CFSP was impossible. After the USSR collapsed, the EU felt pressure to welcome these countries as it was "hoisted by its own petard, a victim of a long-standing rhetorical claim to pan-European inclusiveness" (Dinan 2004, p.267), though in Norway a referendum rejected membership, mirroring events in 1972. The countries were all members of EFTA, thus far an alternative organisation to the EU. Completion of the SEM created "not merely a fear of 'Fortress Europe'" (Redmond 1997, p.2), but also a deep desire to be included. National economic downturns intensified this, partly by loss of investment to the internal market. In Sweden, industrial export companies began transferring production abroad during the 1980s. The internal market offered a "means of injecting more competitiveness into the economy" (Bache and George 2006, p.544) returning to government, or more accurately the EU, power over domestic policy objectives from the corporations.

Contrastingly, Romania and Bulgaria's accession raised fears relating both to the gap in democratic and human rights standards from the rest of the EU's membership and of "absorption capacity...[and] public scepticism" (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2007, p.144). The atmosphere was characterised by EU wariness, rather than the favourable approach experienced in 1995. The candidates were generally positive about the prospect of joining, similar to 1995 when national referendums endorsed membership by 66% in Austria, 60% in Finland and 52% in Sweden (Dinan 2004, p.269). In Romania there was "widespread feeling in the country that Romania had been excluded from its rightful place in Europe after the Second World War" (Pridham 2007, p.169) and indeed the geographical location of the two countries corresponds to the widening EU borders, now extending Southeastwards. The EU's fundamental aim of spreading its liberal democratic values logically extends to these countries in the process of recovery from Communist rule, as it did to the 1995 countries who had had pressure from the USSR's influence lifted.

EU values were easily implemented in 1995 as the countries' EFTA membership meant they were democratically developed, of similar sizes to EU member states, rich enough to become net contributors and already well integrated economically. In fact, they excelled in this respect, being more integrated than such peripheral members as Greece (Redmond 1997, p.4). Only minor issues such as candidate's high agricultural subsidies incompatible with EU reductions to CAP costs arose. A major factor was the EEA which had been extended to bring the EFTA countries closer to the EU via the Luxembourg Process in 1984. For the candidates this was not enough; Austria believed its strong economic ties to Germany, central position and high trade dependence on the EU meant only full membership

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would secure its economic interests (Preston 1997, p.21). Nevertheless, the EEA eased accession as the *acquis communautaire* governing the free movement of goods, services, capital and people had been adopted. This created the internal market association as it removed all non-tariff barriers to trade and thus acted as a “waiting room” (Phinnemore 1999, p.48) whilst the SEM was completed. Delors proposed an EEA agreement, but Austria, Finland and Sweden all applied for full membership before this was signed. They were prepared for the challenges of membership as “the EEA required the EFTA states to set up cross-ministerial groups to coordinate policy and to reorientate their domestic policy processes to comply with EU norms” (Preston 1997, p.30). Consequently “only minor technical and quantitative adaptations” were necessary (Granell 1997, p.38). Despite this, negotiations were still lengthy where policy differed and this enlargement was to be the last of the ‘classical’ type characterised by minimal adaptations.

Subsequent enlargements were to be ‘adaptive’ and 2007 is the most extreme example of this to date. Conditionality is “the process of laying down and monitoring the conditions for new states to become members of the EU” (Barnes and Barnes 2007, p.433) used in 2004, but intensified and developed for Romania and Bulgaria. In particular, negative conditionality involving sanctions was used more than positive conditionality where incentives produce reform. Indeed, “stricter conditions would be applied to them than on any other candidate country before” (Trauner 2009, p.2). Arguably this was necessary as weaker administrative capacities made reforms harder to implement, and the pre-accession political reforms had only created “‘islands of excellence’ within an ‘archipelago of incompetence’” (Pridham 2007, p.176). Uncertainty over the ability to continue with reforms meant ‘safeguard clauses’ were introduced which could “withhold the benefits of membership before accession...if serious shortcomings were observed” (Trauner 2009, p.5). This contrasts to previous enlargements as it “amounted to an unprecedented extension of conditionality beyond the end of the negotiations” (Pridham 2007, p.173) but allowed the EU leniency in giving “both countries another chance to fulfil its demands by the final monitoring report” (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2007, p.146) when pre-accession reforms in the judiciary and reductions in organised crime and corruption were progressing slower than anticipated.

Such corruption, dysfunctional judiciaries characterised by bribery and ‘reserve domains’ of secret organisations necessitated this unprecedented use of conditionality. In Bulgaria “the revelations about sleaze have led to the temporary stopping of practically all pre-accession funds by the European Commission in early spring 2008” (Andreev 2009, p.378). Sanctions were less necessary in Romania due to the election of Basescu in December 2004 who wanted to “pull Romania out of the hands of the mafia” (Pridham 2007, p.178), though this also coincided with the introduction of the safeguard clause which propelled reform. The financial pressures of reform have been harsh due to their lagging behind other members, demanding threats to ensure progress. This would suggest the countries are not undergoing genuine transformation, merely complying because they have to. This highlights the underlying incompatibility of the two nations.

Ongoing issues in 1995 were institutional, such as calls for reform in the Council of Ministers. The UK and Spain wanted to keep the blocking minority at 23 instead of raising it to the mathematically correct 27, but this was met with opposition from other members of the EP (Granell 1997, p.58). A resultant compromise was made at the Ionnina conference in 1994, however it was argued this just papered over the problem. The issue of reform was then delegated by the Corfu EC in June 1994 to the IGC of 1996 (Sedelmeier 2000, p.222). In this respect, there are similarities with the accession of Romania and Bulgaria because it was decided that “there should be institutional reform (i.e. resolution of the deadlock over the EU Constitution) before any more enlargements could take place” (Pridham 2007, p.169) because of worry the EU had reached its ‘absorption capacity’ in 2007. However, questions of wider institutional reform put the new members of 1995 in a unique position of retrospectively determining much of the *acquis* they had signed up to and thus measures of protecting smaller states such as the Benelux countries, supporting subsidiarity and promoting a single tier EU were brought to the agenda (Redmond 1997, p.175).

Geographically, the 2007 enlargement was unique in expanding EU borders to meet Russia, meaning “the EU has now become a Black Sea Power...further drawn into closer involvement in the area of the former Soviet Union” (Flenley 2008, p.189). This has necessitated the umbrella organisation of the ENP and the Eastern Partnership, specifically catering to developing relations to new neighbours in the east. Similarities can be drawn with the 1995 enlargement where the inclusion of Finland and Sweden posed a new ‘Nordic dimension’ which both brought into

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question the Baltic states whose interests Scandinavia wished to champion, and a predilection for intergovernmentalism within the EU (Redmond 1997, p.177).

The enlargements of 1995 and 2007 demonstrate that even a small number of additions to the EU require deeper alterations to its institutions. The future is also brought into sharp focus at the prospect of further deepening and widening and new dimensions brought to the agenda. The enlargements themselves are in stark contrast however in terms of ease of accession and necessary measures to ensure smooth transition. Romania and Bulgaria both lagged in terms of democracy and basic rights, thus forcing unparalleled conditionality governing their entry and extending beyond this. The 1995 countries already resembled existing members, allowing them to slot into place relatively easily and without the need for excessive reform.

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