

Analysis of Policy Debate on the European Future of Turkey and Ukraine in Four Central European States

REPORT ON HUNGARY

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Key points

- public opinion is moderately supportive of further enlargement to include both Turkey and Ukraine;
- the prospect of Turkish EU membership is subject to some discussion among opinion formers, but the issue is not yet salient for the public;
- the two smaller parliamentary parties explicitly support or reject Turkish membership, while the two major parties (the Socialists in government and Fidesz currently in opposition, but with reasonable chance of governmental status after the 2006 elections) have not politicised the issue;
- opinion formation within the parties is driven by developments on the European level;
- Ukrainian EU membership is seen as a distant possibility at best and therefore subject to little controversy.

1. Introduction

Towards the end of 2004, two events took place that have the potential fundamentally to change the European Union as we know it today. The first of these was the decision by the European Council in December 2004 to open accession negotiations with Turkey, a country that applied for full membership in 1987, but one without any realistic prospect or timetable for actually being allowed to join until this time. The other event became known as the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, leading to a new government with an explicit European commitment taking office in January

2005. While the prospect of Ukrainian EU membership is a relatively distant one, these changes presented European policy-makers with both an opportunity and a challenge to help stabilising the EU's immediate neighbourhood by offering some sort of European perspective to Ukraine.

Common to the question of both Turkey's and Ukraine's future relationship with the Union is that their incorporation is unlikely to be feasible without radically altering the shape and course of European integration for the visible future. Integrating the ten new member states – mostly small countries in the immediate geographical proximity of the pre-2004 EU, with strong political and economic ties and cultural affinities with Western Europe – was already a strain for both EU institutions and (Western) European public opinion. Yet the challenge of making the 2004 enlargement work pales into insignificance when compared with the difficulties involved in, and the long-term opportunities presented by, the accession of either Turkey or, most likely following a number of South East European countries, Ukraine. Both Turkey and Ukraine are large and relatively poor and populous countries: Turkey has a population of 70 million currently, with approximately 36% of the labour force employed in agriculture, and GDP per capita (ppp) only slightly above one quarter of the EU average. Ukraine, a country of 47 million, with 24% of employees in the agricultural sector, is even less prosperous.¹ In terms of the demographic forecasts, while Ukraine's population has been contracting sharply since the early 1990s, Turkey is set to expand rapidly and is expected to overtake Germany – currently the most populous member state - by 2025.

Where do Europe's boundaries lie? And what holds the community of EU member states together? Answers to these questions are inextricably linked with further expansion to Turkey and/or Ukraine. While Turkey is a NATO member and long-standing ally of the US and Western Europe, it is also the first secularised Muslim country, geographically largely outside Europe, to seek to enter, calling into question the very notion of a European identity. Ukrainian membership, on the other hand, would expand the EU into the heart of the former Soviet Union – presenting a far greater change than the incorporation of the Baltic countries (formerly also Soviet republics) – highlighting the question of common political values underlying European integration. Added to this – although certainly not independent of the question of

¹ See Eurostat, Structural Indicators (2005), http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/pdf/statistical_annex_2005_en.pdf and CIA World Fact Book at <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/> both accessed on 9 August 2005.

Turkey in particular – is the Union’s own internal impasse. The Constitutional Treaty, intended to reinforce the EU’s legitimacy, has suffered a perhaps fatal blow by the French and Dutch electorates’ refusal to endorse it in recent referendums. This outcome was due, at least in part, to perceived linkages between the constitutional process and enlargement, highlighting the absence of any consensus regarding the future direction of Europe.

Against this background, the importance of deliberations on the future of European integration can hardly be overstated, contrasting, or finding ways to combine, the vision of ever closer Union with that of ever expanding Europe. It is with this in mind that a consortium of four research institutes in four new EU member states (Slovenia, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland) set out to analyse the domestic discourse in these countries on potential or future further EU enlargement to Turkey and Ukraine.² Ukraine was selected alongside Turkey -- undoubtedly the single most important country on the current enlargement agenda -- due to its geopolitical importance for the new member states in Central and Eastern Europe, and its particular significance to Poland and Hungary that border on this country.

This report is a preliminary and limited exploration of the subject with regards to the policy debate in Hungary. The report is limited, firstly, as it serves as merely one contribution, alongside with similar reports from Polish, Czech and Slovenian researchers, towards a comparative paper to be compiled by the Institute of Public Affairs in Warsaw. Secondly, the timeframe and methodology of the fieldwork – based on a qualitative analysis of party and policy statements reported in the (quality) press, a review of on-line sources, and a small number of interviews – only allowed for a somewhat sketchy mapping of the most significant strands of the discourse. Any conclusions the report puts forward are therefore likely to be tentative. Finally, the findings of this report are preliminary as it reflects the state of affairs as of summer 2005, when both potential Ukrainian and, to a lesser extent, Turkish accession were seen to be far away prospects in Hungary. In the absence of any specific issue or event focusing the attention of public opinion or the political class on these questions, the discourse was of low intensity and general in nature, with some of the principal actors failing to voice any definite position on either Turkey or Ukraine.

² The consortium includes: Europeum Institute for European Policy, Czech Republic, the Center for Policy Studies at Central European University, Hungary, the Institute of Public Affairs, Poland, and the

2. Public opinion

As in the ten new member states (NMS) generally, Hungarian public opinion is more supportive of further enlargement than the public in the EU15.³ According to Eurobarometer 63, 66% of Hungarian respondents were in favour of this, well above the EU average at 50%, but somewhat below an average of 72% in the NMS. Hungarians are, for instance, less supportive than Poles or Slovenes (79 and 76%, respectively), but considerably more enthusiastic than the public in neighbouring Austria where less than one third of respondents (31%) said they were in favour of further enlargement.

As for support for individual countries' future EU membership, neighbouring Croatia was the most accepted among Hungarians, with almost three out of four respondents (73%) welcoming the idea of that country joining the Union. Romania and Bulgaria, next in line for EU membership according to the official EU enlargement agenda, scored considerably less at 59 and 55% in favour, respectively. The relatively small majority for Romanian membership is especially remarkable given a 1.5 million-strong Hungarian-speaking minority in northern Romania and strong support from the Hungarian government for this country's accession. These differences between levels of support for neighbouring countries probably have to do with the fact that common positive experiences in Croatia (a popular holiday destination) contrast sharply with widespread popular perceptions of Romania and Ukraine as economically 'backward' countries. Moreover, historical and cultural affinities, going back to the times of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, together with the fact Croatia is a predominantly Catholic country may have had a resonance with Hungarian public opinion.

Finally, only a slight majority (51%) of Hungarian respondents was for Turkish accession, with 38% against and 11% undecided. This puts Hungary on par with the EU average at 52%, considerably above levels of support in the old member states (32%) and somewhat below that of the NMSs (48%). Ukraine's EU membership was supported by 50%, and opposed by 40%, which are remarkably similar proportions to

Peace Institute, Slovenia. The project is funded by the Local Governance Initiative of the Open Society Institute, Budapest.

³ The following figures all from Eurobarometer 63, accessed at http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63.4_en_first.pdf.

those expressed about Turkey – a country considerably further away from Hungary than Ukraine.⁴

In the absence of previous comparable Eurobarometer data trends in Hungarian public opinion are unfortunately difficult to establish. However, a February national poll found considerably higher support (59%?) for Turkish membership than Eurobarometer fieldwork undertaken in May-June, in fact higher than the corresponding proportion for Romania (58%).⁵ The winner of that popularity contest was also Croatia. Ukraine was not included in the poll.

It is difficult to indicate how informed public opinion on further enlargement and the accession of particular countries is. It is reasonable to assume that the electorate is more knowledgeable about countries in Hungary's immediate geographical proximity, such as Romania, Croatia and Ukraine, in relation to which they are more likely to have personal experiences (family ties with Hungarian minorities in the neighbouring countries, tourism, business contacts etc), than about Turkey. However, support for any of the neighbouring countries' accession is also likely to have as much, or more, to do with national stereotypes, historical enmities, or personal commercial interests than the given country's perceived preparedness or suitability for EU membership, of which the public may not be particularly well-informed.

In relation to Turkey, even this basic knowledge is likely to be limited. Anecdotal evidence (in the absence of suitable polling data) suggests that the public has very little information on Turkey's aspirations to join the EU, and that perceptions of whether this is desirable are therefore far from stable. Activists of the Hungarian member of the transnational CSO coalition 'Voice for Europe' (see below) reported that the most common comments they encountered while collecting signatures for a petition included references to the Ottoman occupation of medieval Hungary and shopping trips to Istanbul, rather than anything to do with contemporary Turkey or Turkish-EU relations.⁶ The same NGO activists found that providing relatively basic information on this resulted in a shift of perceptions and positions on Turkish membership. The cultural/historical reference points – primarily the Ottoman occupation – are relatively faded and therefore unlikely to invoke strong reactions of any kind. Overall, public opinion on Turkey in Europe is perhaps best characterised

⁴ Poll in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, [date from IPA]

⁵ Median poll reported in *Nepszabadsag*, online, 18 February 2005.

as shallow (uninformed) and in a state of flux, while the possibility of future Ukrainian EU membership has not even appeared on people's political radar screens.

3. The Hungarian Government's position

The current Hungarian government, in office since 2002, is made up of the Hungarian Socialist Party and the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats as junior coalition partner. The Socialists have a far greater weight in Parliament, and consequently influence within the coalition, than the latter, with key actors shaping Hungarian EU and foreign policy also belonging to this party: the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Minister for European Union Affairs. Both coalition partners have been strong supporters of EU accession and a policy of extending the benefits of European integration to countries of political significance to Hungary. The track record of Hungary as an EU member state has so far shown the government to be a reliable if somewhat passive player on the European level, and one tending to rely on EU frameworks and the Europeanisation of foreign policy. The perception is of Hungary as a medium-sized or even small country, with correspondingly limited influence in the EU, at least in comparison with the 'big players' that are expected, and accepted, to take the lead. There is consequently little sign, apart from a few isolated incidents, of strong governmental ambitions to leave a mark on the Union's political agenda.

With regards to enlargement as a policy area, there are some exceptions to this pattern. The Hungarian government has been a vocal proponent of Croatia's accession, and is also a champion of Ukraine's European aspirations. Unlike Poland, which took a pro-active bilateral approach, the Hungarian government relied almost exclusively on the EU framework for the resolution of the Ukrainian electoral impasse and subsequent events culminating in the 'Orange Revolution' and the administration of Viktor Yushchenko coming to power in January 2005. However, the policy of 'wait and see' then quickly gave way to an enthusiastic endorsement of the new Ukrainian government, with a January 2005 meeting between the Hungarian foreign minister and his Ukrainian counterpart and Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany visiting Kiev in February as the first head of government from the EU. As a result of this meeting, the Prime Minister declared his strong support for Ukraine's aspirations for European

⁶ Interview with Nikoletta Incze, chairperson, Foundation for European Values (Hungarian member of

integration, stating that the country 'only needs 24 more votes' in the EU.⁷ With this the Hungarian government in fact joined earlier support and a more pro-active approach from the Polish government's side (although no reference was made to this fact). Indicative of close diplomatic ties between the two Prime Ministers at this time are also reports of an 'unscheduled' and informal visit by Julia Timosenko at Ferenc Gyurcsány's study in Parliament a few weeks later.⁸

With regards to Turkey, the government's approach has been even more reactive than in the case of Ukraine. Prior to the European Commission's recommendation in October 2004 to open accession negotiations with the country, the Hungarian government had no formal position on Turkish entry, merely a general policy that no country that meets the Copenhagen criteria can be denied membership.⁹ Subsequently, the government endorsed EU level decisions giving Turkey a green light without any apparent reservation, or in fact without any sign that the issue would (or could) be controversial for Hungary. On the occasion of the Turkish Prime Minister's May 2005 visit to Budapest, Ferenc Gyurcsány confirmed that Turkey could count on Hungary's support.¹⁰ It remains to be seen whether this support, as well as verbal support for Ukraine in spring 2005, is expressed in practical terms or stays on the level of diplomatic rhetoric in the future.

4. Supporters and opponents of Turkish and/or Ukrainian EU membership

4.1 Civil society and the media

Further enlargement, whether to include Turkey, Ukraine or any other country, does not visibly polarise civil society apart from a number of small groupings (described below). Media coverage of the issue (in the quality press) tends to be factual, subject to little comment or analysis, and is largely confined to a reporting of EU level decisions or controversy in the larger member states in Western Europe. For instance, the question of Turkish membership often featured with a focus not on Turkey per se, but rather on scepticism or opposition to the country's entry in Germany or France presented as relatively reasonable concerns. Opening accession

CSO coalition 'Voice for Europe'), 5 August 2005.

⁷ 'Hungary Ukraine's first ally', 10 February 2005, www.index.hu, accessed on 22 June 2005.

⁸ Péter Dunai, 'What did Timoshenko say to Gyurcsány?', 7 March 2005, *Népszabadság*.

⁹ 'Gottfried [state secretary for European integration]: No Hungarian position on Turkey yet', 22 September 2004, MTI, <http://www.eu2004.hu/index.php?op=hirek&id=1321>

negotiations with Turkey in October 2005 similarly received neutral, factual coverage, mainly in connection with neighbouring Austria's efforts to derail the process. Coverage of the French and Dutch referendums, rejecting the Constitutional Treaty, followed this pattern earlier in the year. Diplomatic events, such as the Turkish Prime Minister's visit to Budapest, or that of the Hungarian Prime Minister to Kiev, receive a some attention in the press, but any discussion of related issues drops again as the news-value of the event decreases. The appearance of op eds on Turkey in the comment & analysis sections of some of the broadsheets is relatively recent, but seems to be gaining momentum gradually. Whether Turkey should be allowed to join was also debated at a number of academic conferences and/or open forums organised by universities, and think tanks and youth organisations associated with political parties.

Turkey and Europe is an issue that seems to have mobilised a small but vocal part of civil society that campaigns against Turkey's entry (there is no corresponding mobilisation in relation to Ukraine, or for or against any other issue of further enlargement). Perhaps the most active group is the Foundation for European Values (EU (www.euert.hu), the Hungarian member organisation of the international CSO coalition Voice for Europe. Formed by a small group of activists, this coalition has a website with content updated in several European languages (the Hungarian language site is at www.hangeuropaert.org), and launched a campaign involving a tour of several EU countries for mobilising public support against opening accession negotiations with Turkey. Campaigning with the general slogan 'Be tolerant but not naïve', the group argues that the country's membership would 'burst' the EU and is therefore irresponsible.¹¹ At the same time, the Hungarian CSO emphasises that it does not object to a 'special partnership' with Turkey, and that its campaign – which, according to its website, continued even after accession negotiations with Turkey were opened – is against Turkey as an EU member but not 'Turkish people'.¹²

The group employs sophisticated political marketing methods and has been successful in securing media coverage on a number of occasions, thereby influencing the public discourse perhaps more than its mere size would suggest. The Foundation also has the potential to spearhead a broader Turkey-sceptic CSO

¹⁰ 'Hungary for Turkey's accession', Magyar Nemzet Online, 12 May 2005.

¹¹ Voice for Europe leaflet, 'International petition against Turkey's accession to the EU', www.hangeuropaert.org.

¹² Interview with Nikoletta Incze, chairperson, Foundation for European Values, 5 August 2005 and news item on <http://www.voiceforeurope.org/index.php?lang=HUN> accessed on 1 December, 2005.

coalition in the future as it actively, although selectively, seeks to build contacts with like-minded organisations in Hungary. One example of such activity is the Foundation securing the formal support of the Armenian Self Government (the organisation of the Armenian minority in Hungary) for a petition delivered in the name of Voice for Europe to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Until 13 July 2005, the petition was signed by 4,600 people in Hungary¹³ – a small but not insignificant number given the limited resources at the group's disposal for engaging the electorate in direct, face-to-face discussions.

Other Turko-sceptic voices include i) Movement for a Better Hungary (a small extreme-right grouping), that demanded that the foreign minister vetoes the accession of this 'Muslim Asian country' (to no avail), ii) an on-line group, 'European Women for Liberty' (<http://europainok.uw.hu/>) that claimed that the country's track record in gender equality disqualified it for EU membership, and iii) a website 'Islam in Europe' that warned against Turkey described as a nominally secular but in practice Islamic country.¹⁴ While 'European Women' did at least once achieve some publicity through a campaign in which they dressed statues in public places in burkas on International Women's Day, others remained practically unnoticeable. It is generally difficult to assess the real size and organisation of groupings of this kind. Their existence may be indicative of a potential for the further politicisation of Turkish accession, but so far their impact on the public discourse has been limited.

4.2 Political parties

Political parties have a far greater potential for engaging the public in a discussion on the future of Europe than any of the civil society organisations described above. However, until now only the two smaller parliamentary parties, the Alliance of Free Democrats and the Hungarian Democratic Forum, has attempted to communicate principled positions, and these attempts can be linked to a small number of politicians – most often MEPs – taking a personal interest in the subject.

The Socialist Party's official line is that of the government – i.e., supporting both Turkish membership and Ukraine's European aspirations. At the same time, there is some indication that opinion is divided in the party or at least among the 9 Socialist

¹³ News item on www.voiceforeurope.org, accessed on 4 August 2005.

MEPs. In a December 2004 op-ed, Gyula Hegyi MEP, for instance, argued that while Turkey is too important a country to say 'no' to, the creation of a special partnership category (falling short of full membership) would be a more appropriate response on the EU's behalf. Hegyi made it clear in the article that he believed that 'the integration of populous and underdeveloped countries into the Union in the visible future [was] not in Hungary's interest,' as they would create competitors for EU transfers to the NMSs. Hegyi also warned that Turkish membership would create a dangerous precedent which would then make it difficult to put a stop to further enlargement to Ukraine or even Russia.¹⁵ In the EP debate of 13 December 2004 on Turkey's progress towards accession, another Socialist MEP made the party's support for the country's membership conditional on the creation by Turkey of territorial autonomy for the Kurds.¹⁶ The Socialists' other politicians in Brussels/Strasbourg or Budapest have however remained largely silent on the issue, and the party line remains to be a lacklustre pro-Turkey position.

The position of Fidesz Hungarian Civic Alliance, the main national-conservative opposition party, is the most ambivalent of the four parliamentary parties. In a January interview, the head of the Fidesz delegation in the EP (members of the European People's Party) argued that Turkish membership would present 'enormous, almost insurmountable problems' for the Union, and that Fidesz consequently 'would have preferred' a special partnership with the country. The indication was nonetheless that the party accepted the Commission recommendation and Council decision to open membership talks in the hope that the negotiations would take very long.¹⁷ Another Fidesz MEP, the political scientist György Schöpflin, also voiced reservations, questioning whether Turkey's political system was sufficiently democratic to qualify the country for membership, without actually ruling out the possibility.¹⁸ Given the secret ballot in the EP on parliament's resolution on Turkey there is no information as to how Fidesz MEPs actually voted. However, Fidesz's current reluctant support for official EU policy on Turkey may well be a policy of 'wait and see'. As a party with a reasonable chance to win the elections of

¹⁴ 'Veto Turkish accession!', Movement for a Better Hungary, 30 September 2005, accessed at <http://www.nemnemsoha.hu/egycikk.php?cikkszam=2072> on 1 December, 2005; <http://www.iszlameuropaban.info/index.html>; accessed on 28 June, 2005.

¹⁵ Gyula Hegyi, 'Enlargement without limits?', *Népszabadság*, 6 December 2004.

¹⁶ Csaba Tabajdi MEP. Official records of the debate at http://www.euoparl.eu.int/plenary/default_en.htm.

¹⁷ Interview with Pal Schmidt, 15 January 2005; http://www.eppfrakcio.hu/http://www.szabad-europa.hu/online/menu/hirlap/interju/scmitt_interju_050114.html, accessed on 28 June 2005.

¹⁸ György Schöpflin, 'The Turkish dilemma', *Heti Valasz*, No. 5/31, 4 August 2005, and interview, 8 July 2005.

2006, it needs to balance an inclination towards a Turko-sceptic position with that of the role it may play on the European level if it is returned to office.

The two smaller parliamentary parties, the junior coalition partner Alliance of Free Democrats and the Christian-democratic Hungarian Democratic Forum in opposition have already taken clear positions, the former strongly for, the latter strongly against Turkey's membership. Istvan Szent-Ivanyi, one of the two Free Democrat MEPs, is a vocal proponent in the domestic debate and is also the only Hungarian MEP, other than the Socialist Csaba Tabajdi, who contributed to the EP debate in December 2004, arguing that the EU has an 'indispensable need' for Turkey.¹⁹ In contrast, the Democratic Forum's Presidium issued a formal statement in December 2004, explicitly declaring its opposition to Turkish EU membership, but not excluding the possibility of the creation of an (unspecified) 'special status' for the country.²⁰ This position seems largely to have been a reflection of influential sister parties', particularly CDU's, stance on the issue.

5. Arguments for and against Turkish and/or Ukrainian EU membership

5.1 Turkey

As many of the same facts/arguments are used both to support and to reject Turkish membership by several actors in the debate it may be best to present them in a schematic form:²¹

- Turkey's political system

Opponents commonly argue that Turkey is not sufficiently democratic for EU membership. They point to the country's human rights record, the situation of women, the Kurdish question, and the influence of the army in the Turkish political regime. The EU's influence, in contrast, is seen to be insufficient for counterbalancing

¹⁹ Official records of the debate at http://www.europarl.eu.int/plenary/default_en.htm.

²⁰ Hungarian Democratic Forum, Statement of the Presidium (email communication with Péter Olajos MEP).

²¹ This section draws on a large number of newspaper articles and a number of policy statements/ 'manifestos', in particular, on the opponents' side, the statement of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (see footnote 20 above), the campaign leaflet of Voice for Europe, and the op eds published by MEPs as referred to above. On the proponents' side, István Szent-Iványi's article, 'Turkey in front of the gates', *Népszabadság*, 1 October 2004, remains the most comprehensive account to date.

these tendencies and keeping the Turkish government 'in line'.²² Proponents feel that while the country does have problems in this respect the government is genuinely committed to dealing with them and meeting the Copenhagen political criteria. They argue that the EU's role would be partly to help anchoring Turkish democracy rather than to watch from the sidelines. The 'allure' of membership is seen to be strong enough to pull Turkey towards and through structural reforms.

- Turkey, Islam and the cohesion of Europe

Opponents, most notably the Democratic Forum, argue that secularisation in Turkey was pushed through by anti-democratic means, and constitutes nothing more than a thin veil of 'modernity' on a society that is still governed by Islamic laws and values, including the subordinate situation of women. They also point to the fact that the Turkish government's leading force is an 'Islamic party organised on religious grounds',²³ implying that division between state and church in the country is somewhat tenuous. Islam, in turn, is perhaps the most important – but by no means the only – factor suggesting that Turkey is culturally too different from, and incompatible with, Europe. In the case of the Democratic Forum – a Christian-Democratic party - this is reinforced by the Vatican's lack of enthusiasm for Turkey's entry. The party's statement explicitly refers to Joseph Ratzinger's warning that Turkey's 'whole existence contradicts Europe' and that tying the country to 'us' – a community based on common Christian roots and cultural heritage in Europe – would be a grave mistake.²⁴

In contrast, proponents claim that Turkey is a secular state and a working parliamentary democracy. The Free Democrats' most vocal spokesperson on the issue also argues that, irrespective of Turkey, the EU is evolving into a 'community of common political objectives', and has already ceased to be exclusively defined by a common past, cultural or religious traditions.²⁵ Turkish accession therefore would not present a threat to the EU's cohesion. Turkey's Islamic traditions would, on the other hand, represent a great opportunity for bridging the schism, accentuated by 9/11, between 'Islam and the West' by signalling that the division is not between 'civilisations' but between 'good' and 'bad' regimes.

²² Schöpflin, 'The Turkish dilemma'.

²³ Hungarian Democratic Forum, Statement on Turkey.

²⁴ Ibid.

- Turkey and the boundaries of Europe

A common objection to Turkish entry is the fact that only a small part of the country is geographically on the European continent. A concern in this respect, as mentioned above, that the inclusion of this country would create a dangerous precedent for (other) non-European countries to seek membership, and therefore that the EU would face pressure to expand until it becomes obsolete. Proponents argue that no country meeting the Copenhagen criteria can be refused entry – in other words, that the Union should not apply double standards. What was acceptable in relation to the new entrants of Central and Eastern Europe should also be considered sufficient in relation to Turkey

- Turkey and the European economy

Proponents point to the enormous potential Turkey would add to the European economy, and the fact that currently the Turkish economy is growing very dynamically in contrast with sluggish performance in some of the current member states. Turkey's most important trade partner is already the EU. Opponents argue that Turkey is a large and underdeveloped country the incorporation of which would put a strain on the current EU budget. Turkey would also increase regional disparities within the EU, it being considerably poorer than any of the NMS, not to mention the EU25.

- Turkey and financial transfers within the EU

A variation of the argument above is that the EU should first focus on absorbing and assisting the NMS before any further burden is taken on, particularly one of the magnitude of a poor country of (soon) 80 million. It is argued that the current system of agricultural and cohesion/regional policy payments would be impossible to maintain with Turkey's entry, and that it is not in the interest of NMSs like Hungary to increase competition for available funds.²⁶ Proponents agree on the potential impact, but view Turkey's entry as providing welcome and productive pressure on the EU for reforming its current inefficient and wasteful re-distributive policies, the reforms they consider necessary in any case. As it is currently unforeseeable how CAP, structural and cohesion funds would be reformed, it is also impossible to see whether Hungary

²⁵ Szent-Iványi, 'Turkey in front of the gates'.

and other NMSs would be better or worse off. Equally importantly, there is a sense that as the NMSs have benefited, and are likely to continue to benefit, from EU support, solidarity dictates that as their own need for this assistance decreases other countries like Turkey should be given the chance.

- Turkish accession and migration to the EU

A commonly perceived threat is that of Turkish migrant workers flooding the EU in general, including Hungary. Opponents point to the costs and social tensions they believe this would generate, and refer to (perceived) difficulties in Germany dealing with its Turkish community as an illustration of a situation to be avoided. Proponents in contrast argue that the volume of expected economic migration is vastly overestimated, pointing to earlier unfounded fears of cheap Eastern European labour flooding Western Europe. Moreover, they argue that ageing European societies should welcome migrant workers to help them finance expensive social security systems by increasing the proportion of active population. They view the EU's (and by extension Hungary's) access to cheap labour markets, such as that of Turkey, essential for competitiveness vis-à-vis the US.

- Turkey and European security

Opponents argue that Turkish EU membership would not contribute to European security, but rather threaten it by upsetting the status quo near the EU's borders and by bringing the Union into closer contact with various hot spots in the Middle East and potentially unstable countries in Central Asia. While they recognise the importance of Turkey's geo-strategic position, they believe that the country is already firmly anchored in the Euro-Atlantic security system by its membership of Nato. In other words, Turkish accession could import conflicts but not necessarily help dealing with them. In contrast, those supporting Turkey's membership argue that the country is crucial for the EU's ability to effectively deal with threats most likely coming from the Middle East and the Caucasus and Central Asia. Turkey is seen key to the EU's ability to develop a more assertive foreign and security policy - one which could establish the Union as a counterweight to US influence in regions around Europe, and therefore a global actor with its political might corresponding to its economic power.

²⁶ Hegyi, 'Enlargement without limits'.

- Turkey as a member state

A common argument against Turkey's entry is that the country, given representation that is proportional to its population, would become overly influential within the EU's decision making bodies and institutions. They point out that Turkey would become a key player in the EU, which they object to on grounds listed above: that it is not Christian, that it does not have a European identity, that it is too poor to contribute to common resources, that it is unfamiliar with the internal workings of the EU. Proponents do not voice reservations of this kind.

5.2 Ukraine

Ukraine tends to be discussed in the context of 'if yes to Turkey, why not Ukraine?'. The general position seems to be that while it would be desirable to anchor Ukraine in Europe, given particularly the interest in closer links with the Hungarian minority in Ukraine, the country has a long way to go in terms of domestic reforms before membership is seriously considered. Comments and analyses dealing with Ukraine in the Hungarian press generally portray a country where public services do not work, a large part of the population lives below the poverty line, corruption and organised crime are rife, and the legal system and government are barely able to contain local 'barons'. From this point of view, the EU's reluctance to offer the perspective of membership to Ukraine is seen to be reasonable.

The Hungarian Prime Minister's (at least verbal) commitment to support the Ukrainian government's European aspirations has, so far, remained relatively uncontroversial. It seems reasonable to expect that no mainstream Hungarian political party would rule out Ukraine's membership given the benefits European integration could bring to the Hungarian minority in that country. At the same time, arguments put forward to suggest that further enlargement to include large, poor countries is not in Hungary's interest (presumably) also pertain to Ukraine. However, Ukraine is not considered as a serious candidate for membership before Turkey's entry, and since the latter is also seen to be a long term prospect, there is no urgency in dealing with the issue. This also means that opinion has not crystallised as to whether Ukrainian membership would be more beneficial for Hungary than that of Turkey, or what Hungary's policy would be in case Brussels' agenda changes regarding the time order of candidates and accessions.

6. Analysis and outlook

Incentives from a 'national' point of view – focussing on Hungary and Hungary's interests only – are weak for investing too much political capital in the issue of Turkey. The volume of trade and investment between the two countries is relatively low (albeit increasing) and trade in industrial products is already subject to a customs free regime (given the Turkish-EU customs union in this area).²⁷ Migration from Turkey to Hungary has been insignificant, and there are a number of EU aspirant countries primarily in South East Europe that Hungary has considerably stronger links with. Turkish accession on the other hand could result in Hungary and other NMSs getting a smaller slice of the EU pie. Dissenting voices within the Socialist Party seem to be taking this position, without divisions having become too apparent, at least so far. With the party in government, it seems reasonable to conclude that the Socialists will continue to follow what they consider 'Brussels' lead' in the matter.

In contrast, Ukraine is a neighbouring country with a Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia and a potentially important market for Hungary. Political instability in the country would have immediate consequences for both Hungary and the Central Eastern European region as a whole. These factors explain the government's efforts to maintain close relations with the new Ukrainian administration and support it in its European aspirations. Currently, however, Ukraine is lagging behind other potential candidate countries on the Union's political agenda, and the consensus in Hungary too seems to be that the country needs to undertake comprehensive reforms to reinforce political institutions, the rule of law, and market economy before membership becomes a serious prospect.

The (more) controversial of the two issues is clearly Turkey's membership – until the resolution of which Ukraine is likely to kept waiting in line. As an interviewee from the Democratic Forum put it: 'Ukraine is not timely now. Turkey never will be.'²⁸ This is also to say that positions on Turkey are inextricably linked with different ideas of Europe and visions of the future of the EU, in a way in which Ukraine – a Christian European country, albeit a large and underdeveloped one – is unlikely to be. Where does Europe end, both geographically and culturally? And what degree of heterogeneity can the EU tolerate? The EU, seen as an entity culturally defined by a

²⁷ Attila Torok, 'Turkey's full membership and the Hungarian position', Europeum.org.hu accessed on 1 December, 2005.

common heritage, religious roots, and a 'European identity', is fundamentally challenged by Turkish entry. This is accentuated, in the case of Hungary, by historical experiences. While it is recognised that modern Turkey is distinct from the Ottoman Empire, historical parallels are drawn with Hungary (and earlier other countries in South East Europe) as 'the last bastion of (Western) Christendom', seen as the equivalent to medieval European civilisation, vis-à-vis invading armies from the South/East. From this perspective, Turkey is the historical 'other' in relation to which European identity is construed. This idea of a civilisational fault-line is strongly held by political forces of a national-Christian ideological colouring.

This is already apparent in the position taken by the Democratic Forum, and may find resonance with Fidesz at a later stage. The latter party was vocal in demanding a reference in the Constitutional Treaty to Europe's Christian roots, and it seems only a question of time that a connection with the accession of Turkey is made. Paradoxically, from this point of view, Turkey could be objectionable both as a secular country and as a religious one. On the first count, Turkish membership could reinforce a tendency of European identity slowly divorcing, or drifting away from, its cultural and religious roots, which conservatives do not welcome. On the latter, Turkey would fall prey to a history of conflict between Islam and Christianity (or Islam and Christian states) played out on the boundaries of Europe. However, for the time being the assumption that as future government party Fidesz will take part in EU policy formation has counteracted these ideological considerations, and confined the party to a rather ambiguous stance.

For supporters, like Hungary's Free Democrats – a consistently Europhile party - this issue is something to be seen from a European, rather than narrowly defined Hungarian, perspective. For this strand of the debate, the EU is (or should be) an 'open political and economic community that rests on common ideals and objectives, and not a closed club organised along cultural or religious roots'.²⁹ With this vision the accession of Turkey is perfectly acceptable and in fact presents an opportunity for, and healthy pressure on, the EU to mould itself to something that is more competitive economically and more assertive in global politics. In other words, the prospect of Turkish accession is a stimulus for reforms that anyway need to be undertaken. This camp also feels that the EU has a responsibility towards its less

²⁸ Interview with László Nádasi, International Relations and European Affairs Secretary, Hungarian Democratic Forum, 5 August 2005.

²⁹ Szent-Iványi, 'Turkey in front of the gates'.

fortunate neighbours and needs to encourage internal processes pushing countries like Turkey towards prosperity and liberal democratic political systems. The same strategy is dictated by enlightened self-interest: the EU can only remain secure and prosperous if its neighbourhood is stable and neighbouring countries are given strong incentives to maintain friendly relations with Europe. This approach, however, leaves open where the boundaries of Europe lie and how far the EU can enlarge without losing its essential 'Europeanness', without becoming all-inclusive – the question that is key to opponents of Turkey's EU membership.

The crux of the matter for Turko-sceptics, like Voice for Europe, is that if Turkey joins, the EU may cease to be the entity they themselves want to belong to. They fear that Turkey would bring too much cultural heterogeneity for the Union to successfully absorb without losing its cohesion and a sense of solidarity among its members, and therefore put an end to further, or reverse, integration itself. Principled or ideological opponents thus believe the Union needs to be saved from its own mistaken, or even suicidal, policy of 'limitless' further enlargement. As the Voice for Europe campaign claimed, if blown any further the EU balloon will explode. On these grounds, there is little room for compromise: the question is Turkey OR Europe.

As for Hungary, there is little sign that the debate would intensify in the foreseeable future. European integration is seen as too abstract and too far removed from people's everyday concerns to spark any real controversy involving the public. This is perhaps best seen in the relative ease, and corresponding lack of engagement with the issue by the public, with which the Constitutional Treaty was ratified in the country. The situation may change if one or both of the major parties decide to politicise the issue. This is more likely on the political right, if Fidesz strategists decide to 'package' Turkey together with an anti-immigration card, combined with a religious antagonism along the lines of 'Christianity (or more specifically Catholicism) vs Islam'. While ideologically this would fit with the party's profile – as with that of the Democratic Forum – politicisation in this manner would need to be balanced with the party's need to remain 'respectable' and accepted as a governing alternative. The Socialists may have stronger incentives to remain silent on the issue, particularly as opinion within the party has not crystallised and internal divisions may emerge with time. On both the political left and right and on the level of public opinion, considerations of a geopolitical and cultural nature may well prove to decisively structure attitudes to further enlargement in the future.