
TURKEY AND UKRAINE: WANTED OR NOT?

**Central European Reflections of Their
EU Membership Perspectives**

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THE CZECH DEBATE ON THE EU MEMBERSHIP PERSPECTIVES OF TURKEY AND UKRAINE

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1. INTRODUCTION

The question of further EU enlargement is an issue that has remained very much on the agenda even after the ‘Big Bang’ expansion of the Union in May 2004. While in the ten countries that recently acceded all the efforts thus far have focused on the rules and conditions of entering this exclusive club, not much space in the public debate has been devoted to discussing the next steps in EU enlargement, i.e. which countries should be considered for joining and what the stakes of the new Member States, including the Czech Republic, in the whole process are.

This chapter will examine the Czech attitudes towards the EU membership prospects of two countries: Turkey and Ukraine. It will deal with the attitudes of the political representation, including the political parties, government and diplomatic service (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and other governmental stakeholders. Furthermore, it will try to give an account of how the issue has been treated in the media, especially in the major opinion-shaping newspapers. In addition, it will try to assess who the other stakeholders in the process are, especially within the ranks of the civil society, and how they are likely to shape the public debate.

In terms of methodology, the chapter builds on several major sources of information. The first are various governmental and non-governmental documents dealing with or relevant to the issue of further enlargement in general and in relation to Turkey and Ukraine in particular. Along with these, public statements and interviews of various stakeholders presented in the major media (press, television, and radio) were accounted for and analysed. Secondly, face-to-face interviews with those who were identified as crucial stakeholders in the process were conducted. Thirdly, an important source of information was the media coverage of the issue, especially in the major opinion-shaping newspapers and magazines.

2. A GENERAL ACCOUNT OF THE CZECH ATTITUDES TOWARDS EU ENLARGEMENT

In general, it can be argued that the Czech political representation (as well as public opinion) is in favour of further enlargement of the EU. And in this respect, there is a consensus between the current centre-left government, composed of the Social Democrats (CSSD) and two smaller parties, i.e. the Christian Democrats (KDU-CSL) and the Freedom Union (US, liberals), and the opposition, composed of the conservative Civic Democrats (ODS) and the Communists (KSCM). This is due to several factors.

Firstly, the Czech Republic is a newcomer to the EU. Until recently, the country was only in a position to knock on the EU door. Now, once inside, it does not feel it has not been inside long enough to be able to tell its fellow inhabitants that the door should remain closed for the others who want to come in. Generally, there is still an idealistic feeling (especially in the current government) that the driving force behind the EU integration project is European reunification, starting with the Franco-German reconciliation after WWII but continuing after the end of the Cold War with bringing the former Communist countries into the EU. There is a feeling of solidarity with countries outside the EU aspiring to join the club, who should be given the right to prosperity and well-being as well.

The incentive of EU membership is also seen as crucial for the stability of the neighbourhood of the EU. The deep-rooted feeling of Central Europe as being the buffer zone is still present. However, since the Czech Republic shares borders only with EU Member States, the problems of the EU neighbourhood seem a bit more distant from Prague than from Warsaw or Riga.

Another motive stems from the country's own transformation experience. It is generally acknowledged that it was the vision of EU membership that helped the country undertake many internal reforms at a much quicker pace

than would have been the case otherwise. The ‘carrot and stick’ soft power of the EU used to drive the reform process in the neighbouring countries is recognised as an extremely powerful tool for creating a friendly neighbourhood for the EU and changing the countries to be more like the members of the club. However, at this point there is already far less consensus. While on the one hand this argument is accepted by the current centre-left government, the dominant opposition party (the ODS) can be marked as much more ‘souverainist’. Although generally in favour of the EU (not only because of its strongly pro-European electorate), especially during the accession negotiations it was accusing the EU of dominating and treating candidate countries unequally, over-regulating, trying to impose red ‘socialist’ tape on countries that are striving to develop in a more liberal direction, etc. Much of this might, however, have to do with the fact that the ODS was in opposition in the whole course of accession talks (from 1998 onwards). To what extent this souverainist rhetoric will prevail once the ODS comes to power again (likely in 2006) remains to be seen. As far as the Communists are concerned, their attitudes towards further enlargement are not known very well, as they are hardly ever publicly articulated. From some statements of prominent party members it can be assumed that the EU is viewed in a very opposite way than by the ODS, i.e. as a capitalist project, serving as a channel through which the globalisation forces will eventually ‘swallow up’ Europe.

It is also worth examining the motives of the major parties for supporting further enlargement of the EU. For the Social Democrats (and to a large extent also Christian Democrats), their support goes along with the mainstream argumentation of European social democratic attitudes: it remains associated mainly with the above described idealistic goals of European reunification, spreading stability and prosperity across the continent, and thus creating a safe home for everyone (Robert Kagan would probably refer to the Kantian idea of eternal peace). However, there is one potential concern there as well: as the Czech Social Democrats are quite concerned with the further deepening of European integration and pushing it in the political direction as well, there is a risk that further enlargement might imperil political integration, because it will be more difficult to keep the pace with more countries on board. This idea has already been transposed into the “Concept Paper of Czech Priorities in the EU” (an internal document of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), which says that the Czech Republic supports further enlargement of the EU under the condition that it does not hinder further progress in European integration. This issue is becoming particularly relevant with

recent developments leading to a failure of referenda on the Constitutional Treaty in France and the Netherlands, and there is a certain anxiety that it will actually be the first time that the EU has failed to enlarge and deepen simultaneously. Therefore, the enthusiasm of the CSSD for further enlargement might diminish if there is an enduring internal crisis in the EU.

The attitude of the Civic Democrats (ODS) towards enlargement is very much similar to the attitude of British Conservatives. They view enlargement as a way of watering down the project of European integration. Thus, what might potentially diminish the enthusiasm of the CSSD for enlargement is exactly why the ODS is supporting it so vigorously. For the ODS, with more countries on board, especially with large and relatively poor countries such as Turkey or Ukraine, political integration will become impossible. The EU will have to remain merely an economic union, perhaps in a much looser form than it is these days, or at least find more flexibility with groups of countries integrating in different policy areas (*‘cirques concentriques’* in EU integration theory).

Last but not least, an account should also be made of the attitude of Václav Klaus, the current president of the Czech Republic. Although he has very little or no leverage in influencing the Czech governmental position on further EU enlargement, his impact on public opinion cannot be underestimated. He remains the politician that the Czechs tend to trust the most, with 74% of public support in July 2005. He is extremely skilful in provoking public debate on many issues in a very controversial manner. He did so also with the enlargement, having stated that the European Union should encompass countries such as Morocco or Kazakhstan. His opinion on enlargement is very much in line with ODS thinking (Klaus is still a honorary chairman of the ODS, although he does not interfere in party business anymore). Klaus’s ideas, derived from Thatcherite discourse would be to turn Europe into an area without internal borders but also without a supranational regulatory and institutional framework.

The positions of the CSSD, the KDU-CSL and the ODS are likely to determine the future ‘official’ Czech position on further EU enlargement. The attitudes of the two other parliamentary parties – the Freedom Union (US) and the Communists (KSCM) – are more difficult to predict because they are generally not articulated. However, according to the current polls, the Freedom Union will not even get into the parliament in June 2006 elections¹, and it is not sure whether it will survive on the Czech political scene at all. As for the Communists, they are in permanent isolation, and it

1) STEM: Party preference, July 2005 – the support for the Freedom Union is listed at 1%, http://www.stem.cz/index.php?anotace_nah=1&id=951&tisk=1&url=source_danky/951/index.php

is highly unlikely they will join any future government. Moreover, according to recent polls they seem to be in decline, with Social Democrats luring some of their voters².

To summarise, the attitude of the Czech political representation towards EU enlargement seems to be a ‘fragile consensus’. The major political players support enlargement, but with very different motives, which stems from the fact that they see the EU and its *‘finalité politique’* through completely different optics. Depending on the internal developments in the EU, the current consensus on further enlargement might deteriorate very easily.

One issue that should also be acknowledged is that the concept of EU enlargement is geographically prioritised in the Czech case. As there is a general political will to enlarge, the strategy of enlargement is driven mainly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For Czech diplomacy, one priority is the membership of Western Balkan countries, namely Croatia (whose membership is most ‘on the table’), but potentially all the others (Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Albania). The Czech Republic did not take such a strong stance on opening accession negotiations with Croatia as it did with Slovakia, Hungary or Austria, but this was based on the conviction that Croatia is actually not co-operating fully with the Hague Tribunal, and this demonstrates that idealism is still a strong element in Czech diplomacy (as can be seen from other issues, such as Cuba). The interest in Western Balkans stems from several factors: historical and cultural links to Southern Slavs (which are much stronger than links to Ukraine or to Turkey), historical reminiscences of ‘Little Entente’³, tourism (Croatia is by far the most popular summer destination for the Czechs)⁴, but also the activity of Czech diplomacy for which the Western Balkans has been a traditional playground⁵. Thus on the issue of enlargement, very close co-operation can be expected with countries who have similar geographic priorities, i.e. Slovakia, Hungary, Austria and Slovenia. Both Turkey and Ukraine, which are the subject matter of this report, are less important in terms of enlargement, but ultimately Ukraine is more of a priority for Czech diplomacy than Turkey.

2) Ibid. The poll shows the support for the CSSD at 20.9%, while for the Communist party it is only 16.6%. This is the first time since October 2004 when the CSSD received higher support than the Communists.

3) The agreement among Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia made after the First World War to face the possible Austro-Hungarian (especially Hungarian) revisionism.

4) It is estimated that in 2005, about 800,000 Czechs travelled to Croatia during the summer.

5) Here a brief mentioning can be made of the appointment of Mr Jiří Dienstbier, former minister of foreign affairs, as UN special envoy for human rights in the former Yugoslavia, or the Czech-Greek peace initiative prior to the Kosovo air campaign in 1999.

A limiting factor for the stronger involvement of Czech diplomacy vis-à-vis Ukraine stems from several factors. The first is the relative Polish strength on the issue, which makes the Czech Republic rather reluctant to follow Poland’s lead automatically, as it is not seen as its ‘own’ initiative. It prefers to create coalitions with small Member States with similar geographic preferences, such as Slovakia, Austria, Hungary or Slovenia. Secondly, it might occasionally seem that Poland is not very interested in having the Visegrád partners on board. Poland was for instance reproached for the fact that President Kwaśniewski did not consult with his Visegrád partners regarding his involvement during the electoral crisis in Ukraine (while he apparently did so with some Western European leaders). On the other hand, it must be noted that Poland did not receive a lot of support from its Visegrád partners regarding earlier initiatives, including the non-paper for European Neighbourhood Policy (see further details in the Ukraine section).

As the issue of further EU enlargement has not been a significant part of the Czech discourse yet, all the assessments relating to the public support for further EU enlargement should be examined cautiously. The discourse about the enlargement is very much driven by the political class. The best source of public opinion on the enlargement across the EU is the Eurobarometer⁶. Looking at the three most recent polls (December 2004, July and December 2005), we can see that the Czech Republic ranks very high in terms of public support for EU enlargement, with a constant figure of around 65-66%, making it the sixth Member State out of the EU-25 with the highest support for this phenomenon. Generally, the overall results show that it is mainly the new Member States (NMSs) which demonstrate the highest support for enlargement – in the cases of all the ten countries that acceded in May 2004, the support is higher than the EU average (which in the EU-25 dropped from 53% in December 2004 to 49% in December 2005). For instance, in the case of Croatia, 70% is in favour in the NMSs, compared to only 47% in the EU-15. In the case of Ukraine, 57% is in favour in the NMSs, while only 38% is in the case of the EU-15, and in the case of Bulgaria, 64% is in favour in the NMSs compared to only 45% in the EU-15. Another interesting observation is the fact that Croatia enjoys greater support for EU membership (51%) than countries that already signed the accession treaties, i.e. Bulgaria (48%) and Romania (43%). Ukraine closely follows Romania (with support standing at

6) Please refer to Eurobarometer 62 (December 2004), Eurobarometer 63 (July 2005) and Eurobarometer 64 (November 2005) for the latest data on the support for enlargement.

42%)⁷. The perception of Turkey, which is especially relevant for this chapter, is also worth noting. It remains the least popular candidate for potential EU accession across the EU-25, although the support for its accession in the NMSs is again higher (38%) than in the EU-15 (29%). According to this poll, 55% of EU citizens oppose Turkish accession in contrast to 31% who are in favour of it.

Thus, a cleavage in public opinion between the new Member States and the EU-15 is evident. In this respect, the Czech Republic is a 'typical' new Member State, but there is a sharp contrast between the support for accession of rich or relatively prosperous countries (such as those in the European Economic Area or Croatia) as opposed to for instance Turkey, Ukraine or Albania. One of the motives for higher public support for further enlargement can probably be explained by the desire of the citizens of the NMSs not to be on the outskirts of the EU, not to have to guard the external borders and not to be exposed to various risks such as trans-border crime, illegal migration, or even military and environmental threats. However, it is also worth noting that these arguments might be less relevant in the Czech case, because the Czech Republic does not have an external border and is surrounded by EU Member States only. Furthermore, this argument can be twofold – it can be perceived that the accession of poorer and less well-governed countries in the East can further undermine the stability of the current EU, an argument which was apparently present in the EU-15 prior to (and after) May 2004.

It is also not unreasonable to expect that the attitude will change over time, when the potential accession of countries such as Ukraine and Turkey will become closer to reality and the Czechs will realise that these countries, with an even cheaper labour force and underdeveloped regions, will become direct competitors with the Czech Republic for jobs and structural transfers from the EU budget. The Czechs, one year after accession, tend to view the EU rather pragmatically, as bringing tangible economic merits, and if these disappear with even poorer countries joining, we might see the same kind of debate on 'delocalisation' and 'labour dumping' as we have recently seen in some old Member States in relation to the 2004 enlargement. However, all these scenarios so far remain at a level of speculation, and it seems that the idealistic arguments about giving the EU neighbours the right to join the club, adapt to its rules and thus reach prosperity and higher living standards will prevail for some time to come.

7) The countries considered as potential candidates for accession in this survey included the following: Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Albania and Turkey.

3. THE CZECH DEBATE ON TURKEY

3.1. General Remarks

It is beyond doubt that the debate on Turkey is mainly EU-driven by the simple fact that Turkey was on the EU agenda soon after the Czech Republic joined in May 2004. The strategic decision to grant candidate status to Turkey was made in December 1999 at the Helsinki European Council. In Copenhagen in December 2002, the EU leaders decided that the European Council would re-evaluate the progress of Turkey towards meeting the Copenhagen criteria in 2004, and if the avis was to be positive, the accession negotiations should start without unnecessary delay⁸. The Czech government was not represented at any of these two key European Council meetings as the country was not a Member State yet. However, it had to start tackling the issue soon after its accession because it needed to take a position on whether the accession talks should be started or not.

Just like in the old Member States, in the Czech case there is a broader debate (both among politicians and in the public/civil society) whether Turkey is actually eligible to join the EU for various reasons, i.e. whether it is European in a geographical sense, whether it complies with European values, whether it is part of European culture and civilisation, etc. This debate came somewhat later and became an issue only after accession. The issue of Turkey being an Islamic country also plays a role in the Czech Republic, but this is perhaps less influential than in the EU-15 due to several factors: namely, there is no Turkish minority in the Czech Republic (which plays a role e.g. in Germany, Austria or the Netherlands), there is no (negative) experience with political Islam in the Czech Republic, including its radical forms, and the influence of the Catholic Church is very limited.

8) Presidency Conclusions, December 2002, Copenhagen.

3.2. The Position of the Political Representation

The issue of opening the accession negotiations with Turkey is undoubtedly a matter of political choice relating to the realm of foreign policy, which according to the Czech constitutional system is a responsibility of the government (*vláda*). From the logic of the electoral system of proportional representation (to the Chamber of Deputies to which the government is answerable), the governments are normally coalitions (except for the period 1998-2002 when there was a minority government), which makes cabinet decision making a matter of bargaining and compromising.

The issue of opening accession negotiations, and ultimately the issue of Turkish membership in the EU as such, is one of the points on which it was not possible to reach an immediate consensus, given the composition of the current Czech coalition government. For this reason, we have to carefully examine the positions of the parties composing the government and the formation of their arguments.

There is another phenomenon worth mentioning which might be relevant in this respect. After EU accession, there seems to be a trend of shifting more co-ordinating powers regarding the EU-related issues directly to the prime minister, or to the so-called Cabinet office, which is directly subordinated to him. Because the issue of Turkish membership in the EU is also a matter of EU policy, a stronger involvement of the prime minister could be expected than if this was just any other issue of foreign policy that is not of a vital interest to the government (which in the case of Turkey is not). As the prime minister and foreign minister often come from different coalition parties in the Czech system, a potential clash could appear, which has been demonstrated on several occasions recently, mostly on Iraq, but to some extent on Turkey as well.

The Czech government adopted a position for the December 2004 Brussels European Council on 10 November 2004, stating that the Czech government supports the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey. However, the governmental position was a result of intra-governmental negotiations and a compromise. It was this very issue where the stances of the two larger coalition partners – the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats – were diverging. The government therefore officially supported the launch of accession negotiations but with some reservations, arguing that this will not be an open-ended process and that the negotiations will not automatically guarantee an outcome in the form of full membership.

3.3. The Positions of the Political Parties

*The CSSD (Czech Social Democratic Party)*⁹

The Social Democrats, as the dominant coalition party, obviously has the strongest say and negotiating position in shaping the position of the Czech government. The position of the CSSD seems to be to a large extent determined by the position of fellow Social Democratic parties in the EU, especially in the larger Member States, notably in Germany. The German SPD is clearly in favour of Turkey joining the EU. The main arguments entail the necessity to embrace Turkey and ensure that it becomes a democratic country which respects human rights and the rule of law. The image of Turkey as a potential bridge to the Middle East and to the Islamic world in general is also often articulated. The potential pitfalls of the Turkish accession relate to the fact that the process of European integration, especially a political one, might become increasingly difficult with a huge, largely agricultural country on board. It is thus a question of the absorption capacity of the EU, and this might be further exacerbated if the EU fails to ratify the Constitutional Treaty, which is viewed as a means of deepening further European integration and a pre-condition for any further enlargement. Some concerns have also been voiced about the image of Turkey being the largest Member State by or very soon after its accession, which would probably radically change the balance of power in the EU.

The first prominent figure to speak in favour of Turkish accession and the launch of accession negotiations was Prime Minister Vladimír Špidla. Worth noting is his official visit to Turkey in October 2003, which was the first official visit of any Czech prime minister to the country and which took place before the Czech accession to the EU. Although the visit was focused – perhaps primarily – on fostering economic ties between the two countries, the issue of the Czech position on Turkey arose as well. Špidla clearly articulated that the Czech Republic supports the Turkish bid, however, he refused to speculate about the date of possible Turkish accession. Another argument mentioned by Špidla at a later stage was the fear of the ‘orientalisation’ of Turkey, meaning that by not opening the accession negotiations there is a risk that the country might turn towards radical Islamism and leave the pro-European course started by Kemal Mustafa

9) In Czech: Česká strana sociálně- demokratická.

in the 1920s. Špidla's impact on the Czech debate, and indeed the debate within the CSSD, however, seems to be rather marginal after his departure for Brussels as the commissioner for employment, social affairs and equal opportunities in the Barroso Commission. He took a very low profile on Turkey in the Commission, and even when he was questioned on the issue of women's rights in Turkey in the European Parliament, his response was somewhat ambiguous.

Prime Minister Stanislav Gross, who succeeded Špidla in this capacity, took a rather similar positive approach on Turkey joining the EU. He articulated it very clearly soon after his appointment in August 2004 at a regular meeting of ambassadors in Prague, where he repeatedly underlined the necessity for recognising the "European future" of Turkey, which is in the interest of the Czech Republic, and the wish for "more interconnection or perhaps anchoring of Turkey in Europe". The role of Stanislav Gross was also instrumental in brokering the final governmental position for the December 2004 European Council, especially in making a compromise with Foreign Minister Svoboda (KDU-CSL) who expressed some stronger reservations (see further). Gross argued that the governmental position should follow the recommendation of the European Commission, published on 6 October 2004, and which was favourable in respect to opening the accession negotiations. However, Gross' impact on the Czech debate on Turkish accession is likely to follow the same scenario as in case of Špidla. After the government crisis of spring 2005, Gross resigned as prime minister (although he nominally remains the party leader) and he has rarely interfered with party business since then. It is likely that he will not be re-elected at the next party congress, which is expected in spring 2006.

The next prominent figure entering into the debate is the current prime minister, Jiří Paroubek. He has not made any public or media statements regarding the issue of Turkey, and there is no evidence to suggest that there should be a dramatic change in his position. When the issue came up during the official launch of the accession negotiations in October 2005, he did not raise any objections. Understandably, the primary concern of Mr Paroubek has been to restore the people's trust in the CSSD, whose preferences dropped drastically (it seems he has been quite successful in this), to tackle the issue of the EU constitutional crisis and to send clear signals of the Czech position on the 2007-2013 budgetary negotiations. Thus, the issue of Turkey is not at the top of his agenda.

As for the other figures likely to interfere in the debate on the part of the CSSD, the following are worth mentioning: the two Czech MEPs for the CSSD – Mr Falbr and Mr Rouček. Both social democratic MEPs voted in favour of opening the accession negotiations in the European Parliament. Their views towards Turkey are not too outspoken. Only Mr Falbr commented on Turkish PM Erdogan's remarks that nothing but full membership is an acceptable option for Turkey, calling these remarks "unfortunate". On the Czech political scene, Mr Zaorálek, chairman of the Chamber of Deputies and one of the foreign policy specialists in the CSSD, and Mr Laštůvka, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies are worth mentioning.

The KDU-CSL (Christian-Democratic Union – The Czechoslovak Peoples' Party)¹⁰

The Christian Democrats are probably the most outspoken critics of the Turkish accession to the EU, although their approach is rather a 'reservation' than an 'opposition'. The KDU-CSL is a smaller coalition partner, and this somewhat decreases its bargaining power in the government. On the other hand, it has quite a stable electorate, and recently it even fared better in some elections (e.g. in the European Parliament or in the Senate) than the senior coalition partner – the CSSD.

The position of the party is also influenced or inspired by Christian Democratic parties in the EU, especially by the position of the CDU/CSU in Germany. The confession-based parties in Europe are generally opposed to Turkish accession. The KDU-CSL recognises the importance of Turkey for Europe (strategically, militarily, as an energy hub and a bridge to the Middle East, etc.), but it would prefer an arrangement different from full membership, which is seen as being rather incompatible with the foundations of the EU. Regarding the position of the KDU-CSL, not many innovative arguments can be found. The existing ones are as follows:

- Turkey is not European in a cultural and civilisational sense – European identity is based on a Judeo-Christian heritage, Roman law, Greek philosophy and the age of Enlightenment, which is something that ultimately does not fit with the Turkish case.

¹⁰ In Czech: Křesťansko-demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová.

- Turkey would be the only Muslim country in the EU¹¹, which might change the identity of the EU as a club based on Christian roots, especially since soon after the accession it will be the most populous Member State.
- Turkey still does not comply with the Copenhagen criteria, and it is still not fully democratic in the sense that the EU views democracy – there is no clear separation of powers (an argument relating to the exercise of power by the army), and the country’s track record in human rights, especially the rights of women and religious minorities (Christian Churches), is often criticised.
- Turkey would become by far too powerful by the time it joins the EU, because it would be the largest Member State in terms of voting power. This might change the current fragile balance in the EU.

It is interesting to note that the arguments related to Turkey being a relatively poor country whose accession to the EU would become an unbearable burden for some EU policies, such as agricultural or regional policies, generally do not appear in the KDU-CSL discourse. Also the fact that the majority of the EU population is opposed to the Turkish accession is not raised by the prominent Christian Democrats.

The most prominent figure to express the opinions on Turkey is the minister of foreign affairs, Cyril Svoboda. However, his position in the government has to be distinguished from his rank in the party (he is not a party leader). For this reason, his arguments are more moderate, because he has to accept the position of the CSSD. In communicating the governmental position towards opening the negotiations with Turkey, Svoboda repeatedly underlined that the process is open, the outcome cannot be guaranteed beforehand, and that it does not necessarily have to lead to full membership. Another interesting point made by Svoboda was the connection between Turkey and Iraq. As there was quite strong pressure in the government during the course of 2004 to pull out of Iraq¹², Svoboda argued that if the EU starts accession negotiations and the Czech Republic gives a green light to this, it cannot pull out of Iraq, because the security and stability in Iraq is indispensable for the EU, as it might – due to the Turkish accession – become a neighbouring country (this position is very much supported by the opposition, the ODS).

11) It is necessary to underline that in this case the argument is factually ill-founded – there are European countries which are predominantly Muslim, such as Bosnia or Albania. Still, their eligibility to aspire for EU membership has not been disputed even by the KDU-CSL.

12) The Czech presence in Iraq entails a police unit training the local Iraqi police and some experts working mainly on infrastructure reconstruction. There are no military troops.

Also Svoboda lobbied very intensively for a strong involvement of the Czech Republic in Iraq during the military strike (which at the end was refused by the government) and was instrumental in putting Iraq among the priority countries for Czech diplomacy.

Other prominent KDU-CSL figures commenting on the feasibility of Turkey joining the EU encompass namely two Czech MEPs, Jan Březina and Zuzana Roithová, who both voted against the opening of accession talks in the European Parliament. Březina articulated his views namely in an article published in *Hospodářské noviny* on 5 October 2004. He argues that the decision to grant candidate status to Turkey in Helsinki in December 1999 was premature and taken under emotional circumstances. He is also critical of Turkish political representation and diplomacy, which is very skilful in lobbying the EU governments and playing down the state of democracy and human rights in Turkey. He then argues that the state of human rights in Turkey is the main reason the negotiations should not be launched, and he makes parallels with Slovakia which during Mečiar’s regime was unable to move forward in fostering links with the EU and starting the accession talks.

Zuzana Roithová, a member of the EP Committee for Women’s Rights and Gender Equality, published an extensive article which criticises the European Council Decision to open the negotiations in 2005. The main message of the article points out the incompatibility between the Turkish and European politics (allegedly based on the opinion of Belgian Islamist Urbain Vermeulen), the state of democracy and human rights in Turkey as well as the fact that Turkey is an Asian and Muslim country. She also supports the idea of a ‘strategic partnership’ with Turkey (very close to Angela Merkel’s visions), which might be more suitable for both the EU and Turkey, arguing that the decision of the EU is not sincere (the EU leaders actually do not want Turkey but are afraid to say no) and that if the negotiations proceed badly, there might be a negative backlash on the Turkish society.

The party leader Miroslav Kalousek hardly ever speaks about matters of foreign policy, however, on Turkey he commented¹³ in a sense that the KDU-CSL would prefer a partnership with Turkey in the European Economic Area, i.e. an arrangement similar to the one of Norway or Iceland. Recently, the KDU-CSL chairman surprised many political stakeholders with a statement in which he called for the Czech Republic to hold a referendum on

13) Radko Hokovský, “Czechia and Slovakia in the Debate on the Turkish Membership in the EU”.

Turkish accession. No matter how unrealistic this proposal was, given the general absence of a framework law on referenda (each referendum thus far has to be passed as a Constitutional Act by the Parliament) and the fact that two major parties (the CSSD and the ODS) are likely to oppose this, it indicates in which direction the position of the KDU-CSL might evolve in the upcoming years.

The US (The Freedom Union)¹⁴

The smallest coalition party, the Freedom Union, has never made a public statement on the desirability of the Turkish membership in the EU. The references in the Czech press say that the position of the party has not been shaped yet¹⁵. Although the party leader Pavel Němec (currently the minister of justice) claimed to be in favour of opening the accession negotiations, the party spokesman Patrik Nacher said the party leadership would have to discuss the issue further. However, it can be assumed that the party will rather align itself with the senior coalition partner, the CSSD. The party takes on a liberal profile following the liberal stream of EU politics (although the US is not represented in the European Parliament), thus it will probably be in favour of eventual accession. Karel Kühnl (the minister of defence), holding the only 'heavyweight' portfolio for the US, which might have a stake in Turkish accession, has never publicly spoken on the issue either.

The ODS (The Civic Democratic Party)¹⁶

The Civic Democratic Party is in many ways the most vociferous proponent of the Turkish accession to the EU. Its position has to be taken very seriously, as it is likely to be at the heart of any future government for some years after 2006, i.e. in the period which will be in many ways crucial for the negotiations with Turkey. Also, it seems to be the party with most internal cohesion on this issue.

Strong support for the Turkish accession to the EU stems from several broader arguments, some of which relate to the desirability of EU enlargement in general and some to the Turkish case in particular. They are the following:

14) In Czech: Unie Svobody.

15) "The Czech Politicians Say a Lukewarm Yes to the Turks", *Hospodářské noviny*, 26 October 2004.

16) In Czech: Občanská demokratická strana.

- The ODS, as a party very much opposed the deepening of European integration, sees the enlargement as a way of watering down this process, because with more countries in it is more difficult to proceed with integration at the same pace. The ODS would welcome much more flexibility in the integration process, giving the Member States the right to choose in which policy areas they want to integrate into and in which they want to keep more national power. As it was put by a prominent ODS figure on EU issues, Jan Zahradil (the MEP for the ODS): "...the enlargement brings in certain flexibility and the unification template, i.e. the desire to squeeze all the European countries into one format, gets weaker with enlargement..."¹⁷.
- Turkey, in its current form, i.e. a large, populous, and relatively poor country, is seen as "unabsorbable" by the EU, also in its current form. The ODS perceives this as an advantage, and tends to view accession negotiations with Turkey as potentially precipitating reforms on both sides. While further efforts will be certainly needed on the Turkish part to meet the EU standards, this process would also force some internal reforms in the EU, especially in relation to its most costly policies – i.e. agricultural policy and regional/structural policy (and the ODS hopes that this process has already been started by the 2004 enlargement). This idea was especially expressed by Miroslav Ouzký, the vice president of the European Parliament.¹⁸
- Turkey is largely seen as an Atlanticist country, due to its strong role in NATO (the largest number of troops in the European pillar of NATO). It is also very much in focus of US foreign policy, and George Bush or other prominent administration figures have spoken clearly in favour of Turkish accession, which is important for the ODS. As it is a very Atlanticist¹⁹ party, it believes that Turkey, as a large and important player in defence, will strengthen the Atlanticist bloc in the EU.
- In relation to Turkey being a Muslim country, the ODS (namely Jan Zahradil) argues against the perception of Europe as being based on Christian values only, but underlines the important role of Islam in European history and culture (the Balkans, Spain, and Italy)²⁰. At the same time, the ODS refuses to perceive the EU as a Christian club, but argues for its greater engagement in the Muslim world as a natural neighbourhood for Europe, and Turkey is seen as the first step.

17) An interview with BBC Czech.

18) "Reformed EU does not have to be afraid", *Lidové noviny*, 13 October 2004.

19) By referring to Atlanticism hereby I mean the tendency to act in line with the United States rather than adopt a different policy.

20) "Stýkáni a potýkáni" ["Touching and Clashing"], *Euro Magazine*, 7 March 2003.

■ Some idealistic arguments, which are present in the CSSD discourse, can be found also in ODS thinking. The ODS believes that the EU should remain an open club, with those who fulfil the rules of the club allowed to join, naturally with some reasonable geographical limits. The positive incentive of the EU membership or economic aid and close engagement in general is seen as a much more useful tool in tackling issues such as illegal migration, organised crime or terrorism, and this should apply especially to countries that border on the EU or in its close vicinity (e.g. Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, the Caucasus, the Middle East and North Africa/Southern Mediterranean)²¹.

This is, however, not to give an impression that the ODS support for Turkey is unconditional. ODS leading figures were very careful in underlining that Turkey must obviously continue on the reform track to meet the EU-set criteria. Also it was voiced mainly by Jan Zahradil that the Turkish accession brings certain risks, however, it was not clearly articulated what these risks are.

What can be recently observed is a certain internal division within the ODS on foreign policy issues, and on EU-related issues in particular. In relation to Turkey, this division can play a role as well. It was confirmed by a high-ranking foreign policy party expert that Jan Zahradil's enthusiasm about Turkey joining the EU does not reflect the mainstream attitude of the ODS, and he suggested that if in government, the ODS would rather take a more cautious approach, based on strict EU conditionality when assessing the progress towards the accession.

However, it seems that the general attitude of the ODS on foreign policy, and EU-related issues in particular, within the ODS is voiced by several leading experts, or more precisely, one dominant figure which is Jan Zahradil. He is an ex-member of the Convention, currently an MEP and the leader of the ODS group in the European Parliament, but he is also a shadow minister of foreign affairs. It is quite possible that if the ODS wins the elections in 2006, he would resume this post. The other party personalities intervene or speak on the foreign policy issues very rarely, or not at all, apart from the party leader, Mirek Topolánek (but he has not made any statements on Turkey). In the case of Turkey, a more active stance was taken by Miroslav Ouzký, and this is perhaps due to the fact that he was elected vice president of the European Parliament. However, Zahradil's activism in the case of Turkey goes beyond

21) Ibid

that. He was appointed a member of the EU-Turkey association committee. Together with the assistance of the Turkish Embassy in Prague, he launched a project called "Turkey and the EU" with the aim of opening up the debate on Turkish accession. A crucial part of this project was a competition for university students (namely political scientists and economists) for the best essay on the impact of the full integration of Turkey into the EU, evaluating political, economic and social aspects and striving to suggest alternative solutions in case that full membership proves not to be viable. The project was evaluated by a joint Czech-Turkish commission. Altogether, 44 students participated in the contest. The best papers (about 20–24) were published on the Internet in September 2005.

3.4. Other Political Stakeholders

The rest of the political stakeholders on the Turkish issue are included in one joint section. This is because their position in the Czech political process is considered as less important for the official position of the country. However, they can still play a role in directing the public debate on this issue, including their activism in the major media.

The first one to mention is the Communist party – the KSČM²². The Communist party (largely unreformed) still enjoys considerable support among the Czech electorate, ranging between 15 % and 20 %. However, its coalition potential is next to none, and it is unlikely to be included in any future government. The Communist party keeps a rather low profile on the issues of foreign policy in general, except that it clearly articulated its opposition to the NATO and EU accessions. In relation to Turkey, it has never made public statements. However, certain attitudes could be deduced from the fact that all the Communist MEPs voted in favour of opening the accession negotiations. Also in the Czech press it was reported that the Communist party is in favour of Turkish accession²³. It is, however, more difficult to judge the motives behind this stance as they were never explained.

The other stakeholder who can have a substantive impact on public opinion and debate (less so on the official position) is President Václav Klaus. His general attitudes towards enlargement were already mentioned – they go very much in line with the ODS argument about preventing deeper integration. In relation to Turkey he argues that its request is legitimate, because it is

22) Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy (The Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia).

23) For instance *Hospodářské noviny*, 26 October 2004.

a result of a long-term process of rapprochement which took 40 years. It will be up to the EU to evaluate the preparedness of Turkey in terms of political freedoms, socio-economic principles, independent justice, etc. At the same time, he points out that Turkey is still considerably different from “standard” EU countries and the process will still take quite a long time²⁴.

Also the attitude of ex-president Václav Havel should be mentioned. Havel has been known as a proponent of both NATO and EU enlargements, arguing for the necessity of making both organisations as open as possible to countries that fulfil certain standards and respect certain values. In the case of Turkey he makes some interesting and original arguments²⁵. Firstly, he argues that it would be hypocritical having accepted Turkey to NATO (during the Cold War period) but not accepting it in the EU just on basis of civilisation or value arguments, because he views both NATO and EU as a community of values in the first place. Secondly, he positively evaluates the progress that Turkey has achieved to adjust to Western traditions and values, and that is why EU membership should be a natural culmination of this process. Interestingly enough, Havel as a strong proponent of human rights and democracy does not seem to have made any comments relating to Turkey in this respect. It is necessary to underline that these statements were made in his official capacity as a head of state. After he stepped down from the office (the end of January 2003), his presence in the public debate has been very limited, and it is uncertain whether and to what extent this might change in the future.

The last two political stakeholders that deserve some attention in relation to Turkey are two MEPs, elected for a new platform the ED-SNK (Evropští demokraté – Sdružení nezávislých kandidátů, the European Democrats – Association of Independent Candidates). This relatively new party emerged shortly before the European Parliament elections as a pro-European centre-right force (established to create an alternative to the ODS) and did very well, having defeated all the government parties.

The number one elected for the platform is Josef Zieleniec, ex-minister of foreign affairs and ex-member of the Convention. His attitude is worth noting because he is perhaps the most outspoken critic of the Turkish accession on the Czech political scene. His main argument is that Turkey is very different from the rest of the EU, and that its inclusion would further imperil progress in European integration (in which he is quite influenced by European federalist circles, especially Alain Lamassoure) but also the common European iden-

24) An interview with *Týden* weekly magazine, 7 December 2004.

25) An interview with *Respekt* weekly magazine, 13 January 2003.

tity on which he sees the EU based. In his opinion it is hypocritical to make false promises to Turkey at a stage when the majority of the EU population is opposed to Turkish membership. He believes there is actually no political will to accept Turkey nor enough courage to say no, and this is the reason the decision is being postponed, or actually to put the burden of the decision on the citizens²⁶ (apparently referring to intended referenda on Turkish accession in France and Austria).

Jana Hybášková, the number two elected for the ED-SNK and the chairwoman of the EU-Israel joint parliamentary committee, is an interesting case. Originally an Arabist and Orientalist, she became well known for her outspoken criticism of the Czech government during the Iraqi crisis when she was the Czech ambassador to Kuwait (after which she was dismissed). Her attitude towards Turkey is very much opposite to Zieleniec. She argues that Turkey is ultimately connected to Europe, by virtue of history. The inclusion of Turkey is indispensable for engaging the EU in the Middle East (and in the Muslim world in general), for encompassing European Islam in a peaceful form and for starting the badly needed process of the democratisation of the Muslim world. She also claims that the accession negotiations should have started already in the 1990s, perhaps along with the other candidate countries. Her arguments are based on a very thorough knowledge of the history and reality of the Middle East and the Muslim world in general. The question is to what extent this very sophisticated level of argumentation can play a role in the political discourse, given the fact that Hybášková was originally a career diplomat, and this way of thinking still reflects her alignment with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs rather than with her post as an MEP.

3.5. The Position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Diplomatic Service

As for Czech diplomacy (i.e. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), although it is run by a Christian Democratic minister at the moment (Cyril Svoboda), for most it is an expert institution as the whole of the Czech public administration. Although deputy ministers/state secretaries are political appointees, all the ranks below them, including section directors (*vrchní ředitelé*) and department directors (*ředitelé*), are apolitical. Moreover, the deputy minister for the matters relating to the EU, Mr Vladimír Müller, who has an important say on Turkey in relation to the EU (including the Czech position on the negotia-

26) BBC Czech.

tions) is a Social Democrat. This means that although one could expect a more lukewarm approach from the Foreign Ministry on Turkey, this has actually not been the case. The position of Czech diplomacy is very much based on the in-house expertise of the individual desk officers and also on inter-departmental co-ordination.

The position of Czech diplomacy on Turkish accession is so far determined by the co-ordination between two departments: the Department of Southern and Eastern Europe (which includes the desk officer for Turkey), which is responsible mainly for bilateral relations with Turkey, and the European Union Section-Department of EU Co-ordination and Institutions (OKIEU), which oversees EU-related business, including the issue of Turkey at the level of EU institutions.

Generally speaking, Turkey is not a priority for Czech diplomacy. Bilateral relations with Turkey are fine and not marked by any particular constraints, despite the fact that the official visits are not very frequent. In October 2003, the Prime Minister Vladimír Špidla and Minister of Trade and Industry Urban paid an official visit to Turkey; in January 2005, the Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Güll visited Prague, and in May 2005, President Václav Klaus visited Turkey. A sign of the smoothness of bilateral relations is the fact that Turkey lifted the visa requirements for Czech citizens as of 1 January 2005, including the so-called ‘sticker’ visas which Turkey still applies to most of the countries in Europe. Turkey is quite an important trading partner, ranking 19th place in terms of volume of mutual trade exchange²⁷.

As was already said, the issue of Turkish membership in the EU is mainly EU-driven. Perhaps for this reason the Analysis and Planning Unit has already held an internal roundtable to assess the potential impact of Turkish accession²⁸. Apart from that, in 2004 the aforesaid unit conducted an external study to analyse the potential risks and opportunities of Turkey joining the EU²⁹. Therefore, the position of the Foreign Ministry on the eventual Turkish membership is still being shaped. From the information provided by high ranking officials it can be assumed that the Foreign Ministry might accept the alternative of Turkey having some sort of special status in relation to the EU (or strategic/privileged partnership) rather than full membership. The attitude of the Czech Foreign Ministry towards the Turkish accession

27) Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, <http://www.mzv.cz>

28) The round-table method has been introduced fairly recently. The aim is to summon the relevant experts from the Foreign Ministry as well as from other parts of the public administration and to discuss the position papers developed within the Foreign Ministry.

29) This is done within the framework of research tenders, regularly announced by Foreign Ministry, examining the external input/expertise on issues considered to be important for Czech diplomacy.

can be expected to be somewhat relaxed, because Turkey is not a priority country. It is rather likely that the Czech Republic will follow the European mainstream.

One point that might potentially play a role is the activity of the Czech diplomacy in the Middle East peace process and in the reconstruction of Iraq after Saddam’s regime was overthrown. As was already mentioned, Iraq is one of the priorities of Czech diplomacy, and the link between Turkey and Iraq was already acknowledged by Foreign Minister Svoboda. This would rather speak in favour of the Czech Republic’s activism on the issue. On the other hand, there is the issue of human rights, which has become one of the focal points of Czech foreign policy in recent years. A newly established Unit of Transformation Co-operation focuses on promoting human rights and running or assisting projects that would help improve democracy, human rights and rule of law as well as help political dissidents and politically persecuted people. Although it focuses on clearly authoritarian countries, namely Myanmar, Cuba and Belarus, if human rights prove to be an issue in Turkish accession talks, that might shape the position of Foreign Ministry to a somewhat more lukewarm approach to the Turkish membership bid.

3.6. Public Attitudes, Media and Civil Society

Turkey is still largely perceived within the Czech society as a distant and exotic country, and most of the people would still know it mainly as an increasingly popular tourist destination during the summer season. The points that play a role in perceiving Turkey as a potential Member State of the EU that are relevant in EU-15 discourse are likely not to have a strong resonance within the Czech society, at least for the time being.

To evaluate the overall attitudes of the Czech public towards the Turkish accession is quite difficult, although some patterns can be identified. Firstly, the fact that Turkey is a Muslim country should not be very relevant. The influence of the Catholic Church (and in fact any other Christian church) in the Czech Republic is very limited, compared to some other countries in the region (notably Poland) due to historical factors, and the Czech Republic is one of the countries in Europe where people consider themselves mostly non-confessional. Thus, the reservations expressed towards Turkish membership in the EU, articulated by some prominent Vatican figures (notably Cardinal Ratzinger – the current Pope) are not likely to find any strong resonance in this country. This claim is based on the assumption that Czechs, unlike other

Europeans, tend to describe themselves as non-confessional, without an attachment to a particular church or faith³⁰. Also, there is no direct experience with Islam, including its radical forms. The country has never been exposed to a serious threat of a terrorist attack or any other form of Islamic violence. On the other hand, there have been some cases associated with the intention to build mosques (notably in Orlová – a region of Northern Moravia/Silesia and the spa town of Teplice in Northern Bohemia), which caused some public debate and raised some opposition, especially from local inhabitants who feared that the mosques could become centres of Islamic radicalism. Thus it is difficult to assess to what extent the Czech public can link the issue of Islamic radicalism to possible Turkish accession. According to experts, the Czechs can clearly distinguish between the two issues. As it will be explained further, some initiatives are attempting to link the two issues and promote them among the Czech public. However, it is equally difficult to assess the impact of such initiatives, at least at this stage.

The fact that there is no Turkish minority in the Czech Republic also plays a role. In fact, there is no strong Muslim minority in general, and most of the Muslims living in the Czech Republic come from countries other than Turkey³¹. The typical image of Turks among the Czechs would probably be the one from neighbouring Germany, associated with ‘gastarbeiter’. This does not have to invoke negative connotations; it is rather possible to argue that this image is less negative than that of other Muslims (notably Arabs), and the prevailing image might be that the Turks are more easily adaptable to the Western way of life than the Muslims of other ethnicities. However, there is no empirical evidence to purport this thesis, although it might be shared among the experts.

As for the public opinion polls on Turkey, the only opinion poll relating directly to the issue of the desirability of Turkish membership in the EU is Eurobarometer 63, where the collection of data was undertaken for the Czech Republic by the TNS Aisa agency. The poll shows that in the spring of 2005, 51% of Czechs opposed Turkish accession, while 37% was in favour

30) The figures of the 2001 census suggest that only 32.2% of Czechs describe themselves as “confessional”, 59% as “non-confessional” and 8.8% is unidentified. Out of those claiming to be confessional, 26.8% is Roman Catholics. Source: Czech Statistical Office, figures for the 2001 census, http://www.czso.cz/csu/edicniplan.nsf/o/4110-03--obyvatelstvo_hlasici_se_k_jednotlivym_cirkvim_a_nabozenskym_spolecnostem

31) The overall number of Muslims in the Czech Republic according to Muhammad Ali Šilhavý, president of the Centre of Muslim Communities in the Czech Republic, is about 20,000, out of which about 400 are of Czech origin (interview at BBC Czech, 20 September 2001). However, he admits that the estimates are very rough as there is no official evidence. According to the Czech Statistical Office the figure of Muslims is much lower (ca. 3700), based on the last census in 2001 (source: CSU, http://www.czso.cz/csu/edicniplan.nsf/o/4110-03--obyvatelstvo_hlasici_se_k_jednotlivym_cirkvim_a_nabozenskym_spolecnostem).

and 12% was undecided.³² While this support is higher than in some old-EU Member States (notably Austria where only 10% was in favour while 80% was against), it seems to be considerably lower than in other Central European states, where the trend was the opposite. For example, in Poland 54% was in favour and 31% was against, in Slovenia 53% was in favour and 40% was against, and in Hungary 51% was for and 38% was against. Only Slovakia exhibited a similar trend to the Czech Republic (50% against, 37% for, and 13% undecided). While the public opinion might have some impact on the position of some political parties who might use it as an argument, generally its impact on foreign policy is rather limited.

The Eurobarometer 63 survey went into more detail regarding some particular aspects/stakes in possible Turkish accession, and it is possible to compare some of the data with the average of the EU-25 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Results of Eurobarometer 63 in the Czech Republic and EU-25

Question/issues	Czech Republic		EU – 25	
	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Turkey will systematically have to respect human rights if it is to join in a 10-year horizon	85	5	84	7
Turkey will have to improve substantially the state of its economy if it is to join in a 10-year horizon	78	8	76	10
The accession of Turkey would risk an influx of immigrants into richer EU countries	69	22	63	23
Turkey partially belongs to Europe geographically	67	26	55	33
The cultural differences between Turkey and the EU are far too significant to justify its accession	55	35	54	33
Turkey partially belongs to Europe historically	42	49	42	42
The accession of Turkey would contribute to the mutual understanding of European and Muslim values	38	51	41	44
The accession of Turkey would enhance security in this region	37	51	38	45
The accession of Turkey would positively influence the ageing European population	25	58	29	50

Source: Eurobarometer 63.4, Report on the Czech Republic

32) Standard Eurobarometer 63, http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63.4_en_first.pdf

The outcomes of the survey and the comparison suggest that the Czechs generally tend to agree with most of the suggestions more than the EU average. However, the differences are in no way significant compared to the EU average and they exhibit a similar line of thinking.

As for the media coverage of the issue of Turkish accession, it was rather intensive during the period from autumn 2004 onwards, despite the fact that Turkey is not a focal country for the Czech Republic and thus for international reporting in the media either. Generally, the Czech media tend to focus on catchy topics rather than looking for balanced information on the international scene. The information on Turkey was provided mainly by the major opinion-shaping newspapers (such as *Hospodářské noviny*, *MF Dnes*, *Lidové noviny*, *Právo*), weeklies/magazines (*Týden*, *Respekt*), the radio (BBC Czech, Radiožurnál, Czech Radio 6) and public television (CT1).

The attention paid to the Turkish issue in the media varied as well. The periods when the issue was covered intensively relate to important dates in EU-Turkey relations. In this sense, the focus was also EU-driven, and not only by the developments in Brussels. Also, the influence of foreign media and debates in other countries was evident in the Czech reporting by publishing interviews with or articles by various EU politicians and foreign experts³³. The positions and statements of politicians in some Member States, notably Germany, Austria, France and Britain, were often reported on³⁴. Thus, the most comprehensive coverage of Turkey was around the publication of the regular report of the European Commission (6 October 2004), and in December 2004 around the vote in the European Parliament on the opening of accession negotiations, as well as the key European Council meeting in Brussels. Other issues that particularly raised the media's attention was the issue of the controversial reform of the Turkish penal code (proposing to criminalise adultery), the issue of the recognition of Cyprus by Turkey, the petition against the commencement of accession negotiations (see further) and more recently (March 2005) information of the suppression of a women's demonstration in Istanbul, putting the issue of human rights at stake again.

33) These include for example: Yves Mersch (chairman of the Central Bank of Luxembourg), Josep Borrell (president of the European Parliament), Graham Watson (leader of ALDE in the European Parliament), Kemal Dervis (former Turkish minister of economy, now in opposition), Ahtisaari, Rocard, Rohan (authors of the wise men report on Turkey), Christoph Bertram (SWP Berlin-based think tank) and others.

34) The attitudes of Schröder and Merkel were particularly in focus, but also for example the fact that Austria was intending to hold a referendum on the accession of Turkey (*Lidové noviny*, December 2004).

As for the public debate, it is not very structured and it remains dominated by the political stakeholders, i.e. representatives of political parties. Most of the activity of non-governmental actors is confined to publishing the respective opinions in the form of articles or op-eds in the major opinion-shaping newspapers and magazines. Occasionally, public debates on this issue appear, such as the recent debate on whether Turkey should become a member of the European Union, organised by the Association for European Values (and even there, the main speakers were political representatives, one speaking clearly in favour, Jan Zahradil, and one ultimately opposed – Josef Zieleniec). Thus, it is quite difficult to distinguish the voices for and against the Turkish accession. Most of the actors publishing in the major media bring in a balanced set of arguments assessing the risks and opportunities of Turkey joining the EU, such as Jiří Pehe, the director of the New York University in Prague (a political scientist), or the Association for International Affairs (a think tank focused on foreign policy issues). Pehe presents seven arguments in favour and seven arguments against Turkish membership, which are basically a summary of the existing arguments used by both the proponents and opponents, although Pehe seems to rather take a stand of a proponent, seeing the possible advantages as outweighing the pitfalls, and presents the Turkish accession as a challenge for the EU as well as for Western civilisation as such.

From the group of non-governmental stakeholders arguing in favour of Turkish accession, the visible ones include some think tanks close to the ODS, such as CEVRO (the Liberal-Conservative Academy), where Magdalena Frischova published an article arguing in favour, or Lukáš Pachta from EUROPEUM, who published an op-ed in favour of Turkey on Integrate, an on-line portal focused on EU policy issues.

One of the most structured civil society stances comes from the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic. It is necessary to underline that the Council's statement does not directly articulate the opposition to the mutual improvement of relations with Turkey and not even to accepting a Muslim country – on the contrary, it argues that this might be beneficial in terms of improving religious tolerance and bridge-building between the Christian and Muslim worlds. The public statement points out several factors that might at the moment make the launch of accession negotiations undesirable, notably the situation concerning human rights in Turkey, problems with implementing the measures aimed at improving human rights and the situation of Christian minorities in Turkey, and it warns the EU about applying

any double-standard method in this respect. It also points out serious public opposition to this move in the EU, which might lead to further alienation of European citizens from the EU. Thus, the problem is put in a wider perspective which needs to be tackled in the framework of the overall development in the EU, and in any case this purports that the EU must remain strictly conditional in this sense. The public outreach of this statement remains dubious, due to the low influence of the Church in general, and it might have some resonance among the more religiously oriented part of population of KDU-CSL voters.

A prime example of co-ordinated voices speaking against the Turkish accession has to do with the existence of trans-border initiatives that appeared recently in Europe, striving to block the Turkish accession. The first petition in the Czech Republic appeared in the autumn of 2004 (between the Commission report and the December EU summit), appealing to the Czech government to vote against the opening of negotiations³⁵. It was organised by a small group of people and headed by David Grešák³⁶, and it was not considering any activities beyond trying to influence the cabinet decision. The petition was signed by about 3400 people in three cities (Prague, Brno and Olomouc) and included some public figures, such as Alexander Tomský, the publishing director of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. Another petition appeared in May 2005, this time already in a more structured form under the umbrella of the Voice for Europe³⁷ platform, which was held simultaneously in Prague, Warsaw, Budapest, Bratislava, Vienna and Berlin³⁸. In the Czech Republic, this platform is organised by the Association for European Values, one of whose founders is the above-mentioned David Grešák. The petition continued in nine cities in the Czech Republic throughout the summer of 2005 where the volunteers gathered signatures for this initiative.

The arguments put forward by the Association of European Values are two-fold. The first argument is that the EU at the moment lacks clarity concerning its 'finalité politique'. If it is to remain a merely economically-integrated area, there is no problem with having Turkey in. However, if it is to develop into a political union, then it is impossible to accept Turkey. The reasons

35) This petition manager summoned around 3400 signatures in a week. Source: interview with David Grešák, one of the co-organisers.

36) EU.iHNed.cz, 15 November 2004.

37) Voice for Europe is a Europe-wide petition campaign against the accession of Turkey to the EU. For more information refer to <http://www.eu-turkey.info/>

38) Euractiv.cz, 9 May 2005.

are confined mainly to a different perception of political rights (including human rights and freedoms and the treatment of women, individuals) and a different political culture.

The opposing public voices to the Turkish accession are sometimes quite difficult to identify due to their 'hidden' identity. For instance, the existence of a platform that links the Turkish accession issue with the peril of Islamic radicalism in Europe should be acknowledged. The platform called the "Future of Europe"³⁹ maintains a website, in which it points out increased problems associated with Muslim immigration in Europe, and based on this argues against Turkish membership. However, it is very difficult to identify what kind of platform this is, as on the website it only states that it "encompasses a broad range of persons from all the levels of society", however, no structure, form or background are described. On the website this initiative argues that in the future institutionalisation is planned (civic association), but the authors claim they want to remain anonymous thus far, because of the fear of revenge from Muslims.

Therefore, the public debate is going to remain most likely among what can be described as the 'expert public', including the think tanks, academics, or various advocacy groups (such as human rights activists, although these groups have kept a very low profile on the Turkish case so far). The opposing voices are likely to continue their effort to penetrate even non-expert levels of public awareness. However, the resonance of these moves is likely to remain rather limited due to the fact that this issue is not something that would touch the everyday lives of the Czechs, unlike many citizens in Western Europe for whom the issue links much more to the problems of European Islam and the co-existence with Muslim communities.

39) http://home.graffiti.net/budoucnost-evropy:graffiti.net/roz/islam_cr.html

4. THE CZECH DEBATE ON UKRAINE

4.1. General Remarks

If it was acknowledged that the Czech debate on the perspectives on Turkey is not very much present, it is even less so in the case of Ukraine. While in the case of Turkey the debate (at least the political one) is EU-driven, this cannot even be claimed to be true in the case of Ukraine. Until the developments in Ukraine took a radically different turn after the repeated second round of the presidential elections in December 2004, the issue of Ukrainian membership was almost absent in the Czech discourse. Even given the fact that this issue is very much in the focus of Poland, being one of the neighbouring countries, this did not find any strong resonance in the Czech debate, not even in the media who are much more influenced by the reporting on foreign policy issues in Western Europe. Also due to the fact that the issue does not entail as many controversial arguments as in case of Turkey, it is not as ‘catchy’ for the media. Thus it was only the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and some think tanks that posed this question even before the Orange Revolution. Because the political debate on the European choice of Ukraine is quite underdeveloped, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is likely to have the most pro-active role at this stage, with its expertise in the whole region of CIS/NIS.

However, potentially, it must be recognised that the accession of Ukraine is going to have a greater impact on the country, as the historical, cultural and even economic links are greater than in the case of Turkey. Ukraine is, unlike Turkey, not viewed as such a distant topic, also in terms of quite a large and visible Ukrainian migrant community in the Czech Republic.

4.2. The Position of the Political Representation

As it was already mentioned, the positions of the political parties towards the EU membership perspectives of Ukraine are not something that would be a substantial matter of internal policy debates within the major politi-

cal parties. Thus, the attitudes towards this issue are largely shaped by the general attitudes and arguments of respective parties towards enlargement, as highlighted in the first section of this chapter, or towards European integration and the future of Europe in general. Some points particularly relevant to the Ukrainian case can be identified, but the overall picture is not very clear yet.

The CSSD

For the Social Democrats, the issue of Ukrainian accession is mainly driven by the general support for EU enlargement. However, this assumption has to be balanced with the concerns about further progress in European integration, which the accession of Ukraine might slow down or hinder considerably. As the position of the CSSD on enlargement issues is very much determined by the position of its fellow socialist parties, especially in Germany, a wait-and-see tactic in this sense could be expected as the position of the SPD evolves as well. Furthermore, a rather cautious approach of the SPD can be seen, given the recent rapprochement between Germany and Russia, which diminished Schröder's enthusiasm for recognising the European choice of Ukraine. This is further complicated by an impasse following the German elections in September 2005 resulting in a grand coalition, so no dramatic change in this respect can be expected, even if the CDU/CSU takes over the Foreign Ministry as currently envisaged. One issue that would probably speak in favour of Ukraine within the CSSD is the fact that the cultural closeness of Ukraine is clearly recognised. Ukraine is one of the countries on the list of 'managed migration', a Czech government programme launched by the ex-socialist Minister of Labour and Social Affairs Vladimír Špidla, although it was added on this list only at a later stage.⁴⁰ At the same time, the issue of Ukrainian labour migration is something that particularly the electorate of the CSSD might become vulnerable to, because it can be interpreted as a danger for the Czech labour market, social welfare, etc. A lot will depend how the CSSD is able to sell this issue, but this is rather a matter of the more distant future.

⁴⁰ The programme of managed migration strives to attract a qualified labour force with a view of providing the migrants with work and residence permits. Originally it was intended for four countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Kazakhstan and Moldova; Ukraine was added at a later stage.

The KDU-CSL

Unlike the issue of Turkey, which the Christian Democrats rather oppose, the issue of Ukrainian accession will not pose such problems for this party. The KDU-CSL has a profile of a pro-European force, including a positive attitude towards enlargement. Thus, it is likely to pull along the other major parties determining the enlargement political discourse, i.e. the CSSD and the ODS. However, the value argument can play a role in the KDU-CSL stance – the party might be inclined to link the issue of the two countries, i.e. Turkey and Ukraine, arguing that Ukraine is actually more 'European' than Turkey in a historical, geographical or cultural sense, which can be used as a further argument for slowing down or even blocking the accession of Turkey. So far, there is no evidence of this in the public statements of the party leaders.

The ODS

The same arguments which apply to Turkey in terms of its projected accession to the EU would apply to the ODS attitude towards Ukraine. This means accepting more countries which fulfil the accession criteria and in this way hindering further political integration and ensuring more flexibility in the whole process. There is no evidence thus far that there is a link between the two countries. In other words, it cannot be assumed that the ODS would prioritise any of the two countries in terms of EU accession, but the picture might change as the attitude of the ODS evolves further. Some journalists for instance argue that the ODS might be tempted in the future to align more with the position of the CDU/CSU if both parties get into government soon. In any case, so far the strongest ODS voices on foreign policy/enlargement are rather silent on Ukraine, which is in strong contrast to especially Zahradil's activism on Turkey.

One point that might potentially play a role in the attitude of the ODS is the fact that Ukraine is an important country for US foreign policy for various reasons – for instance for the stakes in the Black Sea region or for the importance of Ukraine for both Poland and Russia. ODS Atlanticism is an important element in shaping the foreign policy stances of the party, which also plays a role – as it was already acknowledged – in its position on Turkey. If the US administration is going to send out strong signals in terms of the desirability of Ukraine joining the EU (as it did several times on Turkey), this will probably have an impact on a more supportive attitude of the ODS.

The President

One of the few Czech politicians making explicit statements relating to the European/Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Ukraine was recently the President of the Czech Republic Václav Klaus. During his official visit to Kyiv in June 2005, he claimed that “the Czech Republic takes into account and fully respects the Ukrainian ambitions to become part of European and Euro-Atlantic structures in the shortest possible time” and expressed the desire that this process will not take very long. More generally, he expressed support for recent developments in Ukraine and his official visit was a signal of recognising this⁴¹. An interesting point to be noted is that he also argued against the accusations that he is a Eurosceptic, but on the contrary he highlighted that a serious debate about the intensity of the EU integration process must be started, and this is what Ukraine will come to realise and begin to address as well.

Apart from this statement, Klaus and Yushchenko also acknowledged the necessity to tackle the legalisation of the status of Ukrainian migrants in the Czech Republic. This was seen as one of the first political steps to address the issue. The statement of the president was welcomed by the Czech Foreign Ministry, however, according to the spokesman of the Foreign Ministry, Vít Kolář, this process is just in the very initial stage⁴².

4.3. The Position of the Foreign Ministry/ Diplomatic Service/Public Administration

As it was already suggested, as long as there are no clear political stances of the three major political parties on Ukraine, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the diplomatic service will probably remain the most pro-active actor vis-à-vis Ukraine and its European aspirations on the Czech scene.

The pro-active attitude of the Foreign Ministry can be demonstrated by the fact that already before the events of December 2004, which brought Ukraine closer to the EU track, the Analysis and Planning Unit was analysing scenarios about how to respond when the political representation in Ukraine takes a clearly pro-EU course. However, it seems that the Foreign Ministry did very little to support for example Polish proposals for the

41) Source: Ukrainian Initiative in the Czech Republic, <http://www.ukrajinci.cz/index.php?!=cz&ids=1&idsub=2&0.86212300%201123670842>

42) *Lidové noviny*, 15 June 2005.

New Neighbourhood Policy of the EU, circulated in January 2003. Also the internal roundtable on Ukraine, which was already organised on Turkey (and on the Western Balkan countries), bringing in various stakeholders and striving to devise an expert, apolitical solution still has not taken place but it is being planned.

The Ukrainian portfolio in relation to the EU still rests mainly with the Department of Eastern and Southern Europe, unlike in case of Turkey where the Department of Co-ordination and EU institutions is responsible. This reflects the belief that Ukraine is not seen as a part of the EU agenda and is treated in a bilateral focus, but also that it is considered in broader terms as a part of the ‘Eastern’ policy of the Czech Republic, which is not as clear cut as in case of Poland (or the Baltic countries) and also not so much of a Czech priority (see further).

From looking at the official documents of the Czech foreign policy, namely the Foreign Policy Concept for 2003-2006 (adopted under Špidla’s government), we can see that Ukraine is singled out in the document, but always as a second country after the Russian Federation⁴³. Therefore, no privileged approach to Ukraine can be assumed. However, one has to be aware that the document was adopted before the crucial changes in Ukraine, and as it has not been amended, the implementation will probably change. However, this would reflect that Ukraine is still perceived by the Foreign Ministry as an agenda inseparable from the Russian dossier.

Thus the position of Czech diplomacy on Ukraine is likely to take into account EU policy vis-à-vis Russia. On the other hand, the Foreign Ministry would like to play a constructive role in regional co-operation (including Visegrád) and show understanding and support for Poland to steer the EU policy towards Ukraine. Therefore, it seems that Czech diplomacy is oscillating between teaming up with Poland, which is trying to develop a very active approach to Ukraine and bring it from the Russian orbit to the European one, and some of the old-EU countries who are not ready to be too active towards Ukraine because of particular concerns of intimidating Russia (among other considerations). Even the statements of Foreign Minister Svoboda in this respect are rather lukewarm: “the Czech Republic welcomes the integration ambitions of Ukraine in relation to Euro-Atlantic structures.”⁴⁴

43) The Foreign Policy Concept mentions Ukraine in relation to NATO and in a bilateral framework (relations with the Russian Federation and Ukraine).

44) A statement in relation to the NATO-Ukrainian Commission meeting in Lithuania, 21 April 2005. Source: iDNES.cz

Furthermore, the Eastern policy of the Czech Republic became less of a priority of Czech diplomacy than it was at the beginning of 1990s. The focus has certainly shifted to the Western Balkans, where there was quite a lot of activism⁴⁵. The priority of the Czech Republic is to help Croatia join the EU in the first stage (by recognising that this is at the moment actually the fittest country for EU accession among all the candidates), which would have a positive impact especially on Bosnia and Serbia in their EU-related efforts. Therefore, the priority is to develop a consistent EU policy towards the Western Balkans, with the aim of including them all in the EU (which is politically less controversial than Turkey or Ukraine). This somewhat diminishes the enthusiasm for the support of the Polish endeavour to direct EU policy more towards the East (Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova), and Czech diplomacy is rather teaming up with Slovakia (which is also very active vis-à-vis Serbia and Montenegro), Hungary, Slovenia, and also Austria.

However, the Czech Foreign Ministry recognises the importance of Ukraine for the country even at this stage, and that is why it attaches more priority to it than to Turkey. The argument of “if yes to Turkey, why not Ukraine?” can be encountered in the couloirs of Cerninsky Palace (the seat of the Czech Foreign Ministry) as well. Ukraine is recognised as a historically and culturally close country (one should not forget that the Westernmost part of Ukraine was a part of Czechoslovakia prior to WW II).

One of the practical outcomes of the recognition of the importance of Ukraine was the mutual facilitation of visa policies between the two countries, which came to the fore after the Orange Revolution and during the visit of the President of the Ukrainian Parliament Lytvyn in February 2005⁴⁶ and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Tarasyuk in May 2005⁴⁷, who both raised the issue of the necessity of easing the visa regime, especially for students and entrepreneurs. While the visa requirements for Czech citizens were originally lifted only for a limited period (from 1 May 2005 to 1 September 2005, which was a measure that applied to the whole EU plus Switzerland), it was subsequently prolonged for an indefinite period (as of August 2005). On the contrary, as the Czech Republic could not lift visa requirements because of the EU regulation (Ukraine being on the ‘black list’), it at least abolished the fees that Ukrainians applying for short-term visas needed to pay. How-

45) For instance the appointment of ex-foreign minister Jiří Dienstbier as a special UN envoy for human rights in the former Yugoslavia or the Czech-Greek peace initiative in 1999 prior to the Kosovo air campaign.

46) An interview with V.M. Lytvyn, *Hospodářské noviny*, 11 February 2005.

47) iDNES internet portal, 10 May 2005.

ever, this move was a reaction to the gesture from the Ukrainian part and was not an outcome of pro-active Czech policy in this respect, and similar moves were made by some other countries in the region, such as Slovakia or the Baltic states.

Still, Czech diplomacy is not thinking much ahead about the eventual shape of EU-Ukraine relations. It seems that as in case of Turkey, a privileged partnership could be an optimum scenario, given the recent developments in the EU interpreted as unwillingness to enlarge further. However, equally important is the uncertainty about what progress Ukraine will make and how durable and deep the changes started by the Orange Revolution will be. The inclusion of Ukraine is also not viewed as crucial for the geopolitical stability of the country, which again is different from the Polish/Baltic case. The most optimistic voices close to Cerninsky Palace speak of recognising the candidate status towards the end of Yushchenko’s mandate.

Ukraine is extremely important for the Czech Republic in terms of internal security (including organised crime and trafficking) and migration, despite the absence of a common border, because the Czech Republic is very much a target country for Ukrainians. It is estimated that the overall number of Ukrainians working and/or residing in the Czech Republic is around 200,000, making the Czech Republic one of the most important targets for Ukrainian migration in Europe⁴⁸. The migration is fostered by the massive Czech demand for low-qualified jobs, especially in the construction sector, household and cleaning, retail, etc. Because the issue of Ukrainian migration to the Czech Republic is so dominant in the bilateral relations between the two countries, this gives important stakes in the process of Ukrainian integration to other parts of public administration, namely the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior. The issue has been on the agenda since the end of the 1990s, when the Czech Republic became a target of a massive influx of asylum seekers from Ukraine, who used the liberal Czech legislation to work in the country while their asylum application was being processed. This happened mainly after the visa obligation was imposed on Ukraine as part of the harmonisation with the Justice and Home Affairs acquis in the accession negotiations. After the subsequent amendment the number of Ukrainian asylum seekers dropped considerably, however, the problem of Ukrainian migration remained very much on the agenda. The problem of Ukrainian migration rests mainly in the fact that it

48) Pavel Máša, “The Czech Republic Would Benefit from the Legalization of Ukrainians”. *Lidové Noviny*, 25 June 2005. The official number of Ukrainians with a residence permit is around 60,000.

becomes a breeding ground for corruption (the procedure is very bureaucratic) and organised crime, known as ‘clientelism’, with Ukrainian ‘clients’ hiring the potential labour force, arranging all the formalities (often in the form of bribes to the Czech officials) and at the same time collecting money from the people who want to migrate, thus making enormous profits on this but also keeping control over the ‘zarobitčany’ (i.e. labour migrants) once they are in the Czech Republic. This system is often referred to as a modern form of serfdom.

It seems that the Czech public administration was for a long-time unable to tackle this issue, and if it attempted to do so, it was through adopting more restrictive measures. It was firstly the issue of visas, which were imposed in 2000, and subsequently amendments of various pieces of legislation, such as the Asylum Act, the Foreign Citizens’ Residence Act or the Employment Act⁴⁹, which were clearly a response to the Ukrainian problem. The Czech administration tried to address this issue also at the bilateral level. For instance, in April 2003, a joint Czech-Ukrainian round table was summoned, comprising representatives of the ministries of interior, labour and social affairs and foreign affairs (as well as others, such as the Foreigners and Border Police or Organised crime and anti-corruption authority), which was supposed to start a structured dialogue on issues concerning illegal and legal migration, border control, visas and asylum⁵⁰. All these initiatives were discussed partly due to the fact that no managed migration policy was in place. There was a slight turn in 2001, when the first pilot project of managed immigration was launched⁵¹ under Minister V. Špidla (currently the EU commissioner for social policy, employment and equal opportunities). The project is aimed at attracting qualified labour force from particular countries, which are considered as culturally close enough not to pose a problem with adapting to the Czech society. The project was launched for Bulgaria, Croatia and Kazakhstan, and later extended to Belarus and Moldova (October 2004), Serbia and Montenegro and Canada (July 2005) and as of 1 January 2006 also to Ukraine. However, it is doubtful whether this programme can address the issue of Ukrainian migration. The Ukrainian labour migrants in The Czech Republic usually work in unskilled professions, which are not covered by this pilot programme. That is why the issue of legalising the status of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians residing in the Czech Republic

49) iDNES, “The State Will Make Life More Difficult for the Ukrainians”. 30 September 2004, <http://www.idnes.cz>

50) Interview with Serhij Ustych, Ukrainian ambassador to the Czech Republic, <http://www.integrace.cz>

51) For more information on the project, please refer to <http://www.imigracecz.org>

comes to the fore, as was recognised by Klaus and Yushchenko in Kyiv and after some of the Czech media published some very strong criticism of the current state (see further).

4.4. Public Attitudes, Media and Civil Society

There are some opinion polls which can shed some light on how the European aspirations of Ukraine, and indeed Ukraine or the Ukrainians in general, are viewed by the Czechs. At first we refer again to the Eurobarometer 63 survey, assessing the public attitudes towards Ukraine as an EU Member State. With 46% of respondents in favour and 45% against⁵², we can clearly see that the Czech Republic is by far the most lukewarm of all the new EU Member States towards Ukrainian membership. With an almost equal number of proponents and opponents, the outcome of the survey brings the Czech Republic very much in line with the opinions in some old-EU Member States (such as Belgium, Denmark or France) rather than with the enthusiasm demonstrated by the citizens of the other newcomers to the EU. This trend is further supported by some other polls recently carried out in the Czech Republic. According to the Trend 2005/4 survey⁵³, undertaken by the STEM polling agency, the respondents were supposed to classify the relations with 13 countries⁵⁴. Out of these 13 countries, Ukraine was ranked last, even after Russia and China. Only 17% of respondents gave the country the best marks, while 37% mediocre and 46% the worst. A similar trend was encountered by another STEM poll in the Trend 2005/4 survey, in which the respondents were supposed to assess which nationalities they would welcome as neighbours. Out of the 16 nationalities surveyed, the Ukrainians rank 11th place in terms of desirability, with 30% of respondents seeing no problem in having a Ukrainian neighbour, 38% marking this fact as “unpleasant”, 22% as “hard to accept” and 10% as “unacceptable”. The nationalities considered as worse were Vietnamese, Arabs, Afghanis, Chechens and the Roma.

The basic issue thus is to what extent the rather negative image of Ukraine as a rather poor country with serious economic and social problems is formed by the Ukrainian labour migration in the Czech Republic or reporting on the operation of criminal groups both within Ukraine and elsewhere (includ-

52) Source: Gazeta Wyborcza, <http://bi.gazeta.pl/im/6/2827/m2827366.jpg>

53) The data for this survey were collected during the period 4-10 April 2005.

54) In terms of popularity/good relations, the countries were ranked in the following order (from most positive to most negative): Slovakia, France, the UK, Italy, Poland, Austria, Hungary, Japan, Germany, the USA, Russia, China and Ukraine.

ing the Czech Republic). This perception might be further fostered by the fact that Ukraine is not a typical destination for Czech holidaymakers (thus limiting the first-hand experience with the country) and business ties are less intensive than in case of neighbouring countries (including small cross-border trade).

The rather negative image of Ukraine and Ukrainians was for some time fostered by the media, when the reports related to Ukraine referred mainly to the problems encountered in connection with Ukrainian illegal migration, organised crime, trafficking, and in terms of the internal developments in Ukraine to the political, economic and social problems. This probably evoked a feeling that the country is very far away from Central Europe, which was on a track towards EU membership.

The situation regarding the reporting on Ukraine changed dramatically in autumn 2004, when the major opinion-shaping newspapers, television and radio started to follow the developments surrounding the presidential election. On a daily basis, Ukraine was the main topic in the foreign sections and in the editorials of major dailies. After the victory of Yushchenko, the trend continued, and although Ukraine was not covered with such intensity, the style of reporting changed considerably. Many more articles referring to Ukraine as a country that has taken the first steps to approach the EU appeared, and of course the amazing diplomatic activity of the new Ukrainian president was emphasised as well, including the comprehensive coverage his visits to crucial EU Member States and Brussels. However, the issue of Ukrainian rapprochement to the EU remained at the level of reporting, and the Czech media resorted to reprinting the press releases of the major press agencies, while there were virtually no in-depth analysis or op-eds on this issue, unlike in the Turkish case.

The attention of the media regarding bilateral relations remained focused on what seems to be the most relevant issue between the Czech Republic and Ukraine, i.e. issues relating to migration, internal security and visas. The necessity for easing the visa regime was raised several times, as it was already highlighted, by some prominent Ukrainian figures (Foreign Minister Tarasyuk, the President of the parliament Lytvyn, or even before that by the Ukrainian ambassador Ustych) in the Czech media.⁵⁵ However, the most controversial issue relates to the legalisation of the residence of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians working in the Czech Republic. This was recently most comprehensively articulated by a provocative and frequently

55) An interview published on the Integratec policy portal, <http://www.integratec.cz>

cited article by Pavel Máša in *Lidové noviny*⁵⁶. In the article, he strongly criticises the government practice by allowing the system of managing (or rather mismanaging) Ukrainian migration to operate in the current form, which fosters corruption as well as organised crime as explained previously. Máša also criticises Václav Klaus for his attitudes during a recent visit to Kyiv, in which he excluded the possibility of any possible “general pardon” for Ukrainians residing illegally or quasi-illegally in the Czech Republic (like the one that appeared recently in Spain), which is in a strange contrast to most of the other reports on this issue which actually purport that Klaus and Yushchenko agreed on a need to tackle this issue. This falls in line with the general discourse present in the Czech media so far, which suggests that Ukrainians are actually treated badly, both by the Czech authorities and also by employers (those employed legally) or by the ‘clients’. Although the representatives of the Ukrainian community in the Czech Republic, such as Oleksa Livinsky, the editor-in-chief of *Porohy* magazine⁵⁷, claim that the situation has improved recently, they suggest that some time will still be required for Ukrainians to adapt to the mainstream Czech society. Also Dušan Drbohlav, one of the main Czech experts on migration from Charles University, argues that the treatment of Ukrainians is bad, and the Czechs tend to view the Ukrainians as second-class citizens.⁵⁸ These claims fall in line with the previously cited polls on the perception of Ukrainians within the Czech society.

The relevance of the perception of Ukrainians in the examined phenomenon of Ukraine as a potential EU Member State is that they can actually be very strong in influencing the general public opinion. If a parallel is to be drawn with what we see in the case of Turkey, in countries such as Germany, Austria or the Netherlands, the acculturation and adoption to the host society is crucial in determining public attitudes. If this integration is successful, and the overall image of Ukrainians improves, we should not expect any major opposition to Ukrainian accession. If, on the other hand, some of the current trends continue to prevail, it is possible that the accession of Ukraine will be seen as a threat. In the Czech case it is closely associated with the migration issue, and therefore it is possible that in a few years we will see similar arguments about the threat of cheap labour or delocalisation that we have seen in some EU-15 Member States in relation to the 2004 enlargement.

56) Pavel Máša, “The Czech Republic Would Benefit from the Legalization of Ukrainians”.

57) This magazine has been published by the Ukrainian Initiative in the Czech Republic for 12 years.

58) “The Ukrainians in Czechia Want More Rights”. *IDNES*, 30 September 2004.

Some civil society organisations representing the Ukrainian minority in the Czech Republic are trying to improve the negative image of Ukrainians. Examples of such organisations are the Ukrainian Initiative or the Forum of Ukrainians. Although their activity is focused mainly on Ukrainians residing in the Czech Republic, by providing assistance in tackling the issue of legal status, adapting to the Czech milieu and fostering the feeling of Ukrainian identity, they started to be more active in relation to the Czech media and point out to the problems relating to the obstacles concerning Ukrainians who want to come and work in the Czech Republic. They also organise various cultural and educational events designed to introduce the largely unknown Ukrainian culture to the Czech public.

Ukraine is also increasingly in the focus of some other NGOs and think tanks. Notably the Association for International Issues (AMO) has initiated an Eastern European project, focusing *inter alia* on promoting the debate with the EU new neighbours. However, the focus of the programme seems to be more on Belarus. Apart from this, it also published a report on the Visegrád group and tackling illegal migration (December 2004)⁵⁹. The paper contains some explicit references to Ukraine and some specific recommendations, *inter alia*, such as placing Ukraine on a priority list of the Czech government for developing co-operation or sending the representatives of labour authorities to Ukraine, as one of the most important countries in terms of the origins of migration. Other think tanks (such as the Centre for Strategic Studies or EUROPEUM) published papers and organised seminars on the topic of the EU prospects of Ukraine. It cannot be, however, assumed that these institutions would be either advocates or opponents of Ukrainian accession. It is rather the case that they are trying to open this as a topic of debate.

More activism can also be expected from NGOs dealing with migration, and some research institutes have focused particularly on the migration issues, such as the Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs (under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs) or the Multi-Cultural Centre in Prague (which maintains a portal on migration, the www.migraceonline.cz). They do not have stances on the prospects of Ukrainian membership in the EU yet, and their arguments tend to focus on the impact of Ukrainian migration and problems arising thereof. If the membership of Ukraine becomes closer to a reality, they are likely to start articulating their positions more clearly, based on the analysis of the probable impact of Ukrainian migration in connection with the EU accession.

59) <http://www.amo.cz/publikacefiles/AMO%20-%20Migration%20ENG.doc>

5. CONCLUSIONS

The Czech discourse on further EU enlargement is very much politically driven. Although there seems to be a consensus among the main political parties on the desirability of enlargement, this consensus is very fragile. The fragility of the support of enlargement is also an expression of oscillating between idealism and pragmatism in foreign policy. While idealist arguments are still deeply rooted (“we have no right to prevent others to join the club, if they respect the rules”), it is obvious that the newcomers might become competitors to the new Member States in many respects, which might make it increasingly difficult to ‘sell’ the enlargement to the electorate.

The enlargement is also politically perceived very much as part of the broader future of the EU debate, including its ‘finalité politique’, as well as the shape of some of its major policies. On this issue the political representation is sharply polarised (ranging from Euro-federalists to strong Eurosceptics), and the positions of the political parties are not clearly defined either. Thus, it is very difficult to determine at this stage the Czech political attitude when any sort of enlargement is put on the table. The dynamics of enlargement is inseparable for the dynamics of the internal developments in the EU. This is something that the Czech political representation is starting to realise already at this stage.

This can also partially explain why Czech diplomacy is mostly supportive of the enlargement to Western Balkans in the first place. Apart from specific considerations relevant to the Czech case (historical, cultural, economic links, idealism related to the ‘debt’ the EU has in Bosnia and Kosovo), it is viewed that the Western Balkans are actually in many ways the fittest for EU membership (particularly Croatia). Also, the fact that the Western Balkan countries are rather small, the Czechs might not be so concerned with disrupting the power balance that might appear with the accession of Turkey or Ukraine. In connection to the internal dynamics in the EU, it is assumed that the Union might not need to make such far-reaching adjustments to absorb the Western Balkan countries.

The political stances on Turkey are mainly EU driven, given the low priority of the country for the Czech Republic. The Czech political representation mainly adopts the rhetoric that we see in the EU-15 (where the debate is much more developed and structured), especially in ‘sister’ parties, with bringing in very few innovative arguments. Just like in Western Europe, we see the opposition of a confession-based party (the KDU-CSL), albeit a more moderate one due to its presence in the government. The two major parties – the CSSD and the ODS – are in favour, but for different motives, which is what makes the compromise on Turkish membership a fragile one.

Regarding Ukraine, the issue of EU membership rarely comes to the fore in politics. Ukraine is not in the main focus of the Czech foreign policy agenda either, given the diminishing importance of the Eastern policy compared to the 1990s. Most of the political parties do not have a clear vision on this, and if so, it is more determined by the general party discourse on enlargement. Thus, unlike in case of Turkey, the issue is much more apolitical and provides – at least at this stage – for a greater role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and public administration in general.

There are some clearly distinctive issues marking the difference on the debate of Turkey and Ukraine which are likely to intensify as time passes. Unlike in case of Turkey, an important element determining the direction of debate will be the issue of Ukrainian migration, which in the case of Turkey does not play a role. On the other hand, Ukrainian accession is far less in focus in terms of civilisation and value arguments, which has largely to do with Turkey being a Muslim country and with negative reporting on the state of human rights.

The public opinion is quite lukewarm in terms of the accession of both countries to the EU – while in case of Turkey, opponents prevail, in case of Ukraine the population is almost equally divided. The impact of public opinion on the position of political representation cannot be overestimated, as the political class is hardly ever scrutinised on foreign policy issues. However, it is likely to be stronger in the case of Ukraine, because the potential Ukrainian accession to the EU is expected to have more direct consequences for the Czech society than the Turkish one.

The debate on Turkey is more intensive than on Ukraine, and it is much easier to identify the proponents and opponents. This can be explained by several factors: Turkey is higher on the EU agenda than Ukraine, there is much more focus on Turkey in Western Europe (which the Czech debate and media tend to follow) and the issue of Turkey is more controversial, which is why it attracts more attention from the media than in case of Ukraine.

As the accession of Turkey and Ukraine are still perceived as very distant events, the position of the political class, public opinion as well as the general debate are likely to evolve dynamically, depending on many variables. Much will depend on the internal developments in both countries, as well as those in the EU and self-perception of the Czech Republic as an EU member. In terms of points particularly relevant to both countries, these will determine the overall direction of the debate as well. In the case of Turkey it is likely to be the link between the compatibility of Islam with Western civilisation, which is very much influenced by the experience of EU Member States with large Muslim communities, and the issue of human rights. In the case of Ukraine it will be the success (or failure) of integrating the Ukrainian migrant community into the Czech society and the overall management of the Czech migration policy, leading either to an enduring negative perception of Ukraine or to its substantial improvement.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN DEBATES ON FURTHER EU ENLARGEMENT

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1. AN OVERVIEW OF THE TREND

1.1. The Cleavage Between ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Europe Over Further Enlargement

Even despite the cooling of the support in the new Member States (NMSs), this group of states still demonstrates the highest support for enlargement among all EU members, remaining significantly higher than the EU average (which in the EU-25 fell from 53% in November 2004 to 49% in November 2005). The contrasts are particularly striking when the figures for neighbouring states are considered: while Austria exhibits the highest levels of scepticism (with only 29% of the population in favour of further enlargement), Slovenia recorded the top indicator of support (standing at 74%). Poland follows closely with 72% of supporters of enlargement, which contrasts with Germany, where only half as many of the respondents expressed such support.¹ Even the Czech Republic and Hungary, which show considerably lower support levels than either Poland or Slovenia, are much more open to the idea of continuing enlargement of the Union than Germany or Austria.

Greater majorities of the societies and political elites from the new EU Member States from Central Europe (represented in this study by the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia) are more in favour of further enlargement than their counterparts from Western Europe (see Table 1 for a summary of results given in the autumn of 2005 in various EU Member States).

1) Based on Eurobarometer 64 (October-November 2005)
http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb64/eb64_en.htm

Table 1. New Member States Generally More in Favour of Further Enlargement

EU Member State	Support for further enlargement	Support for accession of Turkey		Support for accession of Ukraine	
	For	For	Against	For	Against
EU-25	49	31	55	42	43
EU-15	44	29	57	38	46
New Members	69	38	44	57	27
Austria	29	11	80	19	70
Germany	36	21	74	30	63
<i>Czech Republic</i>	65	30	57	40	49
<i>Hungary</i>	66	41	43	44	41
<i>Poland</i>	72	42	37	65	19
<i>Slovenia</i>	74	49	45	66	27

Source: Eurobarometer 63 (October-November 2005)
http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb64/eb64_en.pdf

Reasons for this general support for enlargement may be divided into two categories: those that reflect certain distinctive characteristics of those societies and states and others which follow elements of various discourses used in the EU. These two groups of factors split the discussions of enlargement into separate categories: one of them relates to the chances for integration of other states that are considered to share the countries' historical and cultural heritage (such as Western CIS or the Balkans), while the other refers to the other states (e.g. Turkey or the Maghreb).

The first group of arguments is deeply rooted in the historical experiences and self-perceptions that underlie the foreign policy orientations of each of those states. It is significant that these convictions need not appear in the statements targeting the international, EU audience, while they are crucial for building a consensus within the societies. At the same time, they block the consideration of other arguments if the latter conflict with the underlying assumptions of those root beliefs. The European integration of countries of Eastern Europe (in particular of the immediate neighbours of the Central

European states, such as Ukraine for Poland, Romania for Hungary or Croatia for Slovenia) is not subject to a separate debate about enlargement as it may be considered to be a component of earlier debates related to the European choice held in the Central European countries themselves. Once the societies decided that the Euroatlantic integration represented an asset in terms of enhanced security, accelerated economic growth and sustained state reform agenda, the extension of those benefits to neighbours could be seen as a natural extrapolation of this thinking.

Statements supporting the 'continued process of enlargement in the region' from the governments of new Member States appear also to build on recent experiences of their own completed accession negotiations. These states stress the principle according to which the EU ought to fulfil its earlier obligations. This may reflect these states' sensitivity to fair treatment in accession negotiations and some states' (especially Poland and Hungary's) resentment of the alleged EU's tactic of differentiation. When seen in this light, further enlargement would continue the process of the 'return to Europe' and overcoming the Cold War isolation of the eastern part of the continent.

Moreover, to some of these states, the promise of membership offered by the EU to their neighbours may represent an effective 'continuation of their national foreign policies by other means.' Countries such as Poland and Hungary developed their foreign policies in the 1990s on the principles of good neighbourly relations in the Central and Eastern European region, which involved commitment to avoiding the 'dividing lines'. The wish to see as many of one's neighbours follow the same principles of political and economic organisation may be certainly explained by geopolitics (as the concerns over Meciar's government in Slovakia and Milosevic's in Serbia were evident in the Czech Republic and Hungary). However, cases in which the states became involved in issues that resulted in conflicts with important partners (e.g. Russia in the case of Poland's mediation in Ukraine in late 2004) indicate that other, broader considerations were at play, too. The Polish involvement was widely interpreted as Warsaw's wish to assume a more prominent role in international affairs and its assertion of the need to redefine the EU's policies in the eastern neighbourhood.

Enthusiastic attitudes of successive governments in Central European capitals towards further enlargement of Euroatlantic institutions (NATO and the EU) to their east and south do not indicate the wish to weaken or incapacitate these bodies. On the contrary, their expressions of support for including their neighbours reflect a wish to overcome the Cold-War regional

security dilemma by providing assurances that none of the states of the region would be left outside of the trust-building institutional network.

The Eurobarometer results demonstrate a significant gap in public support for further EU enlargement between the old and new Member States. Multiple explanations may be offered, correlating with the differences in assessments of the enlargement of 2004 and the peculiar positions of the new members within the EU. On the one hand, the societies of the new Member States have predominantly considered themselves to be the ‘winners’ of the enlargement process, and they are convinced of the positive impact of accession on their states. On the other hand, they are keen to remove the remaining disadvantages stemming either from their exposed geopolitical position or the actual status of less than full beneficiaries of various EU policies (such as the free movement of labour or the common currency). Moreover, the citizens of Poland, Hungary or Slovenia are well aware that the entry of their states into the EU has not eliminated the sources of trans-border threats such as illegal migration, organised crime or political instability, which are associated with the EU neighbourhood.

1.2. Prospects for Convergence

This cleavage between the old and new Member States does not need to be permanent. In particular, the crises in the internal progress of integration have taken their toll on the support levels to the idea of enlargement both to Turkey and Ukraine as the comparison of public opinion polls on the support to enlargement in the six largest states of the EU (including Poland) demonstrates (see Table 2). Public support for enlargement in the four new Member States has declined over the past year, following the general EU-wide trend. The societies of the ten accession states initially demonstrated a far higher level of enthusiasm towards enlargement than the citizens of the EU-15 did (Eurobarometer No. 62 December 2004). However, one year later the gap between the two halves of the EU narrowed.

Table 2. Support for Enlargement on the Decline With Results Converging in Large EU Member States

EU Member State	Support for accession of Turkey		Support for accession of Ukraine	
	III 2005	XI 2005	III 2005	XI 2005
Average of 6 MS	45	40	55	51
France	37	36	58	54
Germany	36	33	41	40
Italy	49	42	62	54
Spain	49	49	60	59
United Kingdom	50	43	49	44
<i>Poland</i>	55	44	77	64

Source: TNS Sofres, <http://www.yes-ukraine.org/en/survey/november.html>

Issues of national interest aside, the new Member States are increasingly drawn into the current terms of European debates on enlargement. The Central European governments have acknowledged the ‘enlargement fatigue’ and the more sceptical attitudes inside the EU. Contrary to expectations, the new Member States do not necessarily form a solid bloc but instead have sought to adopt positions on the basis of sectoral interests, government coalition parties’ platforms or regional alliances. The first year and a half of membership has predictably not brought along a clear and permanent alignment of those states on various issues, with enlargement being no exception. Factors such as the lack of experience in building coalitions, an uncertain position within the EU (in terms of political weight, budgetary outlays, participation in policies e.g. Schengen or the euro) or domestic political shifts (ranging from changes of PMs to parliamentary and presidential elections) have all impeded the development of clear positions of the newcomers on key issues on the EU agenda. In the long run, this process of ‘Europeanising’ may affect the foreign policy orientations of especially the smaller Member States in the areas that are not seen as vital to national interests.

2. DIFFERENTIATION OF SUPPORT FOR VARIOUS GEOGRAPHIC AREAS

Support for enlargement varies by the geographic area of Europe (Table 3). Several groups of countries may be identified—the greatest scepticism is found in the core, while enthusiasm is located on the geographic peripheries. The countries in the centre of the continent (France, Germany and Austria) are prone to oppose enlargement or restrict it severely – the distribution of the opinions is around 10% of supporters of general enlargement and a balance of 40% of those in favour of selective enlargement and another 40% against the idea altogether. Northern Europeans (the UK, Sweden) are evenly split among the three options, while the Southerners (Spain or Italy) are half as likely to oppose enlargement in general. Notably, the new Member States are not greater enthusiasts of unlimited enlargement than the Southern Europeans are, but they are even less opposed to the idea in principle. The opposition to enlargement in general is equally small among the Turks, who, however, are more open towards unrestricted enlargement.

Table 3. Support for Enlargement in Selected EU Member States and Turkey

	EU 25	EU 15	NewMS	Germany	France	Austria	UK	Sweden	Spain	Italy	Hungary	Czech R	Lithuania	Slovenia	Poland	Turkey
EU should include all interested states	23	21	35	11	10	10	26	35	34	31	19	32	27	38	41	49
EU should include only some states	42	41	49	44	40	40	34	34	33	41	59	48	52	43	45	33
EU should not enlarge to any states	25	28	9	40	43	44	28	27	12	15	14	13	8	12	6	7

Source: Eurobarometer 63, July 2005.

The option of ‘selective enlargement’ is surprisingly stable in all the groups of countries (Table 3). Strikingly, the ranking in the EU-25, EU-15, new Member States and Poland is virtually the same: the support varies according to the candidates’ wealth and ‘European credentials’. Basically, the richer the country is in per-capita terms, the higher the support is for its accession to the EU (which would strengthen the idea that the current Member States, both old and new, resist a major reallocation of funds) (cf. Table 4). However, the fact that the poorer Ukraine is ahead of all the states containing a Muslim population (such as Turkey, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro) indicates the importance of the cultural argument.

Table 4. GDP (PPP) Per Capita of Selected European States (USD)

Norway	40 005
Iceland	33 269
Switzerland	31 690
EU-25	26 900
Poland	12 452
Croatia	11 568
Bulgaria	8 500
Romania	7 641
Turkey	7 503
Macedonia	7 237
Ukraine	6 554
Bosnia	5 504
Albania	4 937
Serbia and Montenegro	4 858

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_\(PPP\)_per_capita](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(PPP)_per_capita)

The distribution of the candidates makes it possible to group them in four major clusters according to the strength of the opposition to their potential candidacies in the EU at large (cf. Table 5). Group A of the three countries of Western and Northern Europe with a GDP per capita above that of the EU-25 (Switzerland, Norway and Iceland) evokes 13-18% of opposition. The resistance is twice as high against Group B of the most favoured states of Southeastern Europe (Croatia and Bulgaria), standing at 35-37%. The next group is the largest one, where the opposition rises to 42-44% comprising five states.

Table 5. Support for Various Potential Candidates in Old and New EU Member States

	For			Against		
	EU 25	EU 15	New MS	EU 25	EU 15	New MS
Switzerland	77	76	83	13	14	6
Norway	77	76	82	12	13	6
Iceland	68	67	72	18	20	11
Croatia	51	47	70	35	39	15
Bulgaria	48	45	64	37	41	20
Romania	43	41	53	42	45	31
Ukraine	42	38	57	43	46	27
Macedonia	41	39	51	42	45	28
Bosnia	40	39	50	43	46	30
Serbia	39	36	50	44	47	30
Albania	33	32	40	50	52	40
Turkey	31	29	38	55	57	44

Source: Eurobarometer 64, December 2005

The two states with predominantly Muslim populations (Albania and Turkey) are the only ones generating opposition at the level of 50% or more, which is interesting given that their GDP per capita figures are higher than some other comparable candidates that enjoy greater support (Albania's is slightly higher than that of Serbia, and Turkey's is significantly higher than that of Ukraine). A look at the population figures for the candidates (Table 4) indicates that this variable alone is not sufficient for explaining the opposition: support for Ukraine (48 million) or Romania (22 million) is higher than for Bosnia or Albania (4 million each).

Although the new Member States follow the 'established' EU members in their rankings of preference for individual states, the intensity of their support is higher. According to the latest Eurobarometer data (No. 64), Croatia's candidacy received the backing of 70% of the respondents in the NMSs as opposed to only 47% in the EU-15. In this case, the official status of the country in the accession negotiations is not a primary factor as Romania received significantly lower support among the respondents from the NMSs (50% on average). What is significant is that Ukraine, which is not even considered a candidate by the EU, enjoys support comparable to that extended to Romania or Macedonia, which are recognised candidates. Slovenians and the Poles are the strongest supporters of further EU expansion, and nearly half of the Eurobarometer respondents in Slovenia are in favour of the accession of Turkey, which is typically the candidate evoking the least support. Generally, the opposition to Turkey is lower in the new Member States than it is in the old ones. National public opinion polls conducted in early 2005 in Hungary and Slovenia also indicate that the majority supports the enlargement to include Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Turkey.²

However, some signs of the convergence with the traditional members of the EU may already be observed in individual cases. Already in the Eurobarometer 63 survey, the Czech support for future accession of Ukraine was close to the levels found in some 'old' EU countries (with a nearly even split of 46% of respondents in favour and 45% against). Hungarian respondents prove to be among the most sceptical about integrating Ukraine – in fact, Hungary is unique among the new Member States as the candidacy of Turkey is more welcome there than that of Ukraine.

2) The polls were published by *Nepszabadsag* (Hungary) in February 2005, *Delo* (Slovenia) in March 2005 and Slovenian *Radiotelevision* in April 2005.

3. A GENERAL EXPLANATION OF THE SPLIT IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE TOWARDS INDIVIDUAL DIRECTIONS OF ENLARGEMENT

3.1. Discourse on Further Eastward Expansion

Further EU enlargement has interestingly been a non-issue in these states since May 2004 and, with the exception of those states for which particular candidates represent important bilateral partners (such as Croatia for Slovenia or Ukraine for Poland), it received limited coverage in the national media in the context of the EU's decisions. This silence may be understandable with reference to a country at a comparable level of economic development and similar cultural and historical traditions, such as Croatia. However, the prospect of the entry of poorer states of Southeastern Europe, starting with Bulgaria and Romania, has raised virtually no questions in the national debates. Perhaps the silence in the public discourse coupled with official support from the governments may be interpreted as an expression of the belief that all Eastern European states are entitled to integration into the EU, and that the community owes solidarity to the countries with undoubtable European credentials. To a limited extent (since the issue is a potential area of conflict with Russia), this discourse on the unity of Eastern Europe may explain the absence of Ukraine from the debates on enlargement, indicating that for the Central Europeans, Belarus, Ukraine or Moldova could potentially be integrated as part of the reunification of the region and annulling the division of the Yalta conference.

Poland is a special case here as the issue of the pro-Western orientation of Ukraine, and eventual integration of Kyiv into the Euroatlantic

structures, is perceived as vital to Warsaw's own security and broader regional security. From the Polish perspective, Ukraine's entry into NATO and the EU is a foreign-policy priority for which support needs to be sought from other Member States and on which there is little room for compromise: here, the real source of tension is the place given to Russia in the EU's policies – while Poland is likely to disregard Russia's opposition to engaging Ukraine, some of the other larger EU Member States are not.

3.2. Factors Influencing the Position on Turkish Accession

In contrast to the issues of future integration of neighbours from Eastern and Southeastern Europe, the terms of the Central European debates on Turkey are much more dependent on those found in Western Europe, although in a highly selective manner. There are some good reasons for this. Firstly, Turkey did not feature as high in the foreign policies of most Central European states that were more preoccupied with their own neighbourhoods (here, Slovenia could be an exception), and its accession could not be interpreted in terms of either bridging the Cold War divides or achieving stability in the region of Central and Eastern Europe (as for instance the Yugoslav conflict was). Thus, the issue of Turkey's relationship to the EU was 'inherited' with accession as a new point on these states' agenda.

Secondly, the issue had to be read through the lenses of the experiences and positions of important partners in the EU (such as France or Germany): these states lack sizable Turkish diasporas and since the issue had few domestic reverberations and was low on the states' own agendas, it could be an important bargaining chip on other essential issues (e.g. the budget). Finally, given that none of these states enjoyed privileged relations with Turkey and three of them were small or medium members of the EU, an entry of a large state with potentially different policy priorities could undermine the balance of power.

The national debates on the issue of future Turkish accession in new Member States also remain dependent on the shifting EU agenda. The issuing of the European Commission's opinion followed by the discussion in the European Parliament were the circumstances under which the question was also raised in the public media in these states. The key position of correspondents to Brussels and to Paris and Berlin became evident as they presented (and at times commented on) the terms of the Western European debate.

On the other hand, the issue of Turkish accession did not draw major dividing lines in domestic politics in the first months after accession. For instance, the issue of further enlargement did not feature in the campaigns of the candidates for MEP positions or in the party platforms in the first European elections. In the vote held in the European Parliament in December 2004 on accepting the proposal to start negotiations with Turkey, the European parliamentarians were in majority bound by the disciplines imposed in the respective clubs of the EP, and only single individuals chose to breach the regime. Thus, the MEPs' position was not directly driven by the domestic political considerations – all the more so as the vote itself was not a subject of controversy at home.

4. ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC ATTITUDES IN INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES

4.1. The Role of Domestic Factors

The case of the Czech Republic which has fewer incentives for enlargement of the EU to the neighbourhood (as it lacks external borders with non-EU states) indicates that over time the Central European states may come to differentiate between the candidacies of various states, based on some domestic considerations. Unlike the Poles who until recently demonstrated high levels of support for countries on various levels of socioeconomic development (from Ukraine and Serbia and Montenegro to Turkey and Croatia), the Czechs proved to be far more agreeable to the prospects of accession of richer countries (such as Croatia, Norway, Iceland or Switzerland) as opposed to the relatively poorer Turkey, Ukraine or Albania. The Czechs, who are already geographical insiders, may also take on comparable attitudes fearing the inclusion of the states seen as potential liabilities in terms of finance and governance.

Some factors explaining the shift of the populations of the new Member States towards more scepticism may be domestic. Support or opposition to the integration of countries coincides with the public attitudes towards particular nationals. Lower levels of enthusiasm about Ukraine's prospects for EU membership in the Czech Republic and Hungary relative to Poland reflect the strikingly different perceptions of the Ukrainians as a distinct group, especially those visiting or residing in their countries. The Czech view of the Ukrainians is shaped by the presence of around 200,000 workers of that nationality and the association with criminality that is made in the public discourse. As this impression is not counterbalanced by the positive experience of neighbourhood or tourism, the negative outlook

should not be a surprise. In two polls conducted as part of the Trend 2005/4 survey in the Czech Republic, relations with Ukraine received the worst marks, and the Ukrainians were considered as the least liked among the European nationalities.³ Although no comparable data are available in the case of Hungary, media references to the supposed economic ‘backwardness’ of Ukraine might fuel negative attitudes towards the integration of the country into the EU.

On the other side of the spectrum is Poland, which is the only country that has consistently supported Ukraine’s aspirations for EU integration. Societal attitudes towards Ukrainians were originally quite negative – two-thirds of the Poles harboured negative emotions towards this ethnic group in 1993 and nearly half were unfavourably disposed a decade earlier. However, a clear growth in positive attitudes may be noticed over time as in 2004 the share of the Poles that had negative opinions of Ukrainians as a recognisable group dropped to 34%.⁴

However, general feelings of empathy towards the country may prevail over the negative stereotypes of its nationals. For instance, despite the dominance of mistrust towards the Ukrainians in the Polish society, as early as in 2002 nearly three-quarters of the Poles believed in the possibility of reconciling with the Ukrainians.⁵ This process is being helped by the growing appreciation of the Ukrainian labour force, which is increasingly filling the gaps in the Polish job market (child care, construction, and recently education and health care).

Slovenia is another country with high support for Ukraine’s EU accession, yet the Slovenian image of the individual Ukrainians remains coloured by negative associations with criminality. Unlike in Poland, where the female labour migrants are primarily connoted positively as reliable and cost-competitive babysitters and house cleaners, the stereotype of ‘Ukrainians’ in Slovenia is restricted to prostitutes and illegal migrants, reflecting negatively on the image of the country. Thus the sources of the support for the integration of Ukraine into the EU must lie elsewhere, and perhaps certain features of the Ukrainian state and culture may be used as references in this regard. The shared experience of gaining recent independence in the wake of the break-up of a multinational federation and Slavic linguistic and cultural heritage can be cited.

3) Conducted in April 2005 by STEM.

4) Regular surveys administered by CBOS (the Centre for Public Opinion Research, Warsaw).

5) *Ibid.*

This raises an issue of the extent to which the historical memory and personal experience of hosting a diaspora may induce empathy for the particular nationality or state. Certainly, the experience of coexisting in a single state structure with the Ukrainians makes the Poles acutely aware of the neighbourhood, but the recent influx of Ukrainians into the Czech Republic has already turned the issue of interethnic relations into a matter of domestic policy. The fact that the Czech Republic was the first Central European state to develop a state integration policy for the labour migrants from Ukraine indicates the high salience of the issue. Some observers already point out that in the case of the failed integration of this relatively large group, the issue of Ukraine’s accession into the EU might be linked to the possible threats of uncontrolled labour immigration and organised crime. If that were to pass, the Czech Republic might follow the path of some West European countries in which the question of the protection of the native job market was a crucial consideration in weighing the support for EU enlargement.

For states where the relationship with a given state is less intense, the preference for other geographical areas may weigh more heavily. For instance, both Ukraine and Turkey are not the objects of public attention to the extent Southeastern Europe is for either Hungary or Slovenia. The candidacies of the large states extending far beyond the traditional horizons of foreign policies of Budapest or Ljubljana may thus be only considered to the extent that they form analogies to the more salient issues in public discourse. Hungarian views of Ukraine are closely tied with the issue of the diaspora in Transcarpathia, while the Slovenians may find the geopolitical situation of Ukraine comparable to their own. Also, for the two countries the memory of the Ottoman rule in the Balkan peninsula may represent a background to the discussion of relative ‘otherness’ of Turkey against which the candidacy of Ukraine may be viewed more favourably. However, Hungary and Slovenia’s focus is on Croatia and the Western Balkans, which makes the discussions of Turkey or Ukraine seem relatively ‘external’. Finally, as opposed to the Czech Republic or Poland, which host larger numbers of Ukrainian workers, the question of integrating the workforce from this country has so far not been of enough significance to warrant a domestic debate.

One indicator of the relative salience of the issue of enlarging in a particular geographical direction is the inclusion of a given state or nationality in the national opinion polls. Neither Slovenian nor Hungarian polling agencies have tested the support for potential Ukrainian accession and the

pioneer studies of the Eurobarometer 63 and 64 remain the only sources of information. In turn, no cross-country comparison of the attitudes to both Turks and Ukrainians is possible on the basis of the available national polls, as for instance the Polish surveys fail to include the Turks among the listed nationalities, while the Slovenian research omits the Ukrainians.

In the absence of reliable multi-year surveys, there is a danger that the public debates in the new Member States on enlargement to states such as Turkey or Ukraine will be based on preconceived notions and deep-seated historical images. In contrast, where public attitudes towards a given nationality were systematically tracked, the results could be analysed and some of the prejudices exposed and tackled by reference to facts. As it will be shown below, the campaign against Turkey's accession to the EU conducted by the transnational coalition Voice for Europe referred to some clichés already imprinted in the popular discourse. Insufficient exposure to current information on the developments taking place in Turkey and Ukraine may make the Central European societies willing to follow the 'mainstream' trends found throughout the EU or to associate the issue of enlargement with other, more prominent questions on the EU agenda (such as the Constitution or immigration).

4.2. The Media Debate

The public in some of the states does not have adequate exposure to the materials presenting the point of view from Turkey or Ukraine. For instance, neither the public Slovenian Radiotelevision nor major national newspapers have correspondents in Ankara, Istanbul or Kyiv, thus they rely on reporters from either Brussels or Moscow or on the services of press agencies. Not only does this lower the amount of regular coverage so that reporters are sent only to the events that are deemed newsworthy, but it also presents a potentially distorted perspective. For instance, the Orange Revolution was covered by correspondents from Moscow, while the decision to open negotiations with Turkey was presented from the Brussels perspective. It was noted that the dilemmas involved in the inclusion of Turkey into the EU focused on the internal EU debates in Brussels or referred to the terms of debates common in some larger EU Member States (such as Germany or France). The absence of regular coverage of the domestic situation in countries like Ukraine or Turkey also limits the interest in issues that are found newsworthy by major world or European press agencies.

Turkey

The perspective of the Turkish accession in the Central European media is closely linked to its visibility on the EU level and in the national debates in major EU countries. The press featured the opinions of foreign politicians and experts, focusing on Germany and Austria as well as France and Britain. The arguments used in the domestic debates of those states were frequently cited verbatim and were not complemented with any in-depth analyses. The issue was clearly related to key points in the EU agenda, such as the publication of the Commission report in October or the Parliament's vote in December 2004 on the commencement of accession negotiations. The state visits of officials evoked temporary interest in the major press titles but were similarly treated as news items and reported in a factual manner, receiving little commentary.

The generally low priority assigned to the coverage of the Turkish politics and society may explain the focus on the international-scale news or echoes of the current discourse in Western European states. Thus, the country was present in the news in the context of either tragic events (such as terrorist attacks) or criticisms of the human rights situation. The press rarely took a specific line on the more general issue of Turkey's European orientation, and instead of devoting editorials to the matter, experts' contributions and/or interviews with politicians on both sides of the debate were featured. When we consider the fact that the readers had little exposure to sustained comprehensive coverage of the evolution in Turkey's domestic politics and economy, it appears that mere lists of pro and con arguments do little to inform the debate. Occasional exchanges of views (e.g. on the topic of recognising the Armenian genocide) were limited to passionate manifestos and rarely provided a deeper context.

Ukraine

The possibility of Ukrainian EU accession is not featured in the media of the Central European states except in rare guest contributions by experts or politicians who point out the imbalance between the status of Ukraine and Turkey vis-à-vis the EU. As the reporting of the domestic developments in Ukraine during the electoral crisis and the eventual victory of the Orange Revolution increased the profile of the country in the media, on some occasions questions were raised as to the desired response of the EU to

the democratic changes in Ukraine. While these individual voices did not put the issue of Ukraine's future accession on the agenda, which remained dependent on the EU's overall position, the images of the peaceful resolution of a domestic conflict allowed the Central European public to conceive of Ukraine as separate from the rest of the CIS.

The coverage of the Ukrainian developments in the autumn of 2004 was not equally large in the four countries, yet it represented a marked change to the earlier climate in the national media. The Polish media paid far more attention to the events than their counterparts in the Czech Republic, Hungary or Slovenia; however, it must be borne in mind that the relations with Ukraine and the country's political course had been the object of continuing coverage since the early 1990s. But even in Poland, a distinct shift could be observed: firstly, the Ukrainian civil society was portrayed as an independent actor, and the political culture of the country was described in 'European' rather than 'post-Soviet' terms; secondly, the coverage included interviews with the Polish observers at the elections and the members of a significant contingent of the Polish students, NGO activists and politicians who supported the democratic transition. The vitality and genuineness of the Orange Revolution made a deep impression on the Polish participants, who for the first time concluded that the peaceful conflict resolution and mobilisation of the civil society inspired them, and that the Ukrainian democracy had matured and could develop thanks to its own societal resources.

The other Central European media references to the Orange Revolution were less concerned with the involvement of their countries in the resolution of the electoral crisis. However, the sheer increase in the space devoted to the domestic situation in Ukraine had an impact on the hitherto rather shallow and one-sided portrayal of the Ukrainian people. Prior to the events of late 2004, the Czech media fuelled the image of illegal migration, criminality and trafficking in people, associating these phenomena with the poverty and political instability of the country. Since the elections of autumn 2004, the coverage of bilateral relations shifted from stressing problematic areas to the solutions of those problems, among which the most immediate was the issue of easing the visa regime, in force since 2000, and of the legalisation of the status of Ukrainian labour migrants. The more sympathetic portrayal of the Ukrainians also helped highlight the plight of this migrant group, and a number of references were made to their everyday problems.

Slovenia represents a country whose media refer the least to the Ukrainian people and state. This is also reflected in the fact that the major press titles and electronic media lack a correspondent in Kyiv, and that the situation in Ukraine is covered from Moscow or on the basis of agency reports. The references to Ukraine have been more numerous since the Orange Revolution, but the coverage remains closely bound with the mainstream view taken in the EU, which at the moment fails to extend the prospects of membership. Unlike the Polish media, which took a generally critical view of the EU's refusal to move towards association arrangements with Ukraine, the Slovenian journalists noted Brussels' attitude but did not present a particular national perspective on the issue.

Overall, with the exception of Poland, the debate in the Central European media on the enlargement prospects did not go beyond the bounds delimited by the current EU agenda. This explains why the major milestones accompanying the opening of negotiations with Turkey sparked a flurry of op-eds, analytical reports and exchanges of views in the columns of major newspapers, while the progress of EU-Ukraine talks was merely recorded. The contrast in the treatment of the Turkish and Ukrainian cases in the context of enlargement had been particularly stark prior to the Orange Revolution (until December 2004), and the question of Ukraine's potential membership was not even raised in the Czech, Hungarian or Slovenian media. The extent to which the issue of accession prospects was dependent on the mainstream EU position could be demonstrated by the fact that the repeated Polish initiatives for stimulating the EU thinking on the relations with Ukraine were virtually unnoticed by its partners from Central Europe. Only the success in attracting the attention of EU actors (in particular Javier Solana and later the European Parliament) for engagement on behalf of the transformation process in Ukraine brought about a considerable shift in the media discourse in the smaller Central European states.

4.3. Civil Society Actors in the Public Debate

Among the signs of relative disinterest of the public in the issue of further enlargement are the concentration of the debate in the expert circles and the low profile of the civil society organisations (CSOs) in the controversy. The cases of the Czech Republic and Poland, where the issue of the relations with Ukraine has taken on a domestic character, are exceptional; however, the activities of local NGOs focus on those questions that are otherwise current

in the national discourse (status of migrants, promotion of democracy) and as such do not constitute a part of the debate on the EU accession prospects. Interestingly, the issue of possible accession of Turkey found resonance in some countries (especially the Czech Republic and Hungary) where it fed into the human rights discourse, and even led to the formation of transnational civic initiatives (Voice for Europe). In contrast, apart from individual bishops' statements, the churches (among which the Roman Catholic Church) officially made no reservations to Turkey's accession and issued moderately supportive declarations, seeing the possible enlargement as a bridge across the Christian-Muslim divide.

Think Tanks and Experts

Since the public debate on further enlargement has not been generally picked up by the national media in the four countries and has been dependent on the developments in the EU's relations with Turkey and Ukraine, for the most part the discourse has been kept alive by think tanks and research institutes. Conferences and op-eds remain the primary vehicles for the communication of positions presented by academics, activists and politicians, and their timing coincides with the official agenda of the European institutions.

Civil society actors present their views to the public primarily through op-eds and longer articles in the broadsheets, opinion-making weeklies or analytical journals. However, their resonance is limited as the controversies involve a small number of participants, typically drawn from political parties, think tanks or specialised research units. The events that are at times organised by the major press titles or think tanks also are staged as panel discussions among politicians and experts. In most of the countries under investigation, the press and public debates were taking place between October and December 2004 when the question of opening accession negotiations with Turkey was on the table.⁶

In the countries with long-standing interest in good neighbourly relations with the post-Soviet states (and especially Ukraine), such as Poland and increasingly the Czech Republic, the Orange Revolution helped put the regular project activities of non-governmental organisations into the limelight and a series of events were staged in the wake of the second round of elections and around the time of the European Parliament's resolution

6) See e.g. the panel discussion, "Should the EU start the accession negotiations with Turkey" organised on 8-9 November 2004 by Poland's leading daily, *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

on the relations with Ukraine. Polish organisations and research institutes (e.g. the Batory Foundation, the Institute of Public Affairs or the Centre for Eastern Studies) used the positive climate around Ukraine's European future to issue statements, make recommendations and build coalitions with parallel organisations in other states (involving the other research centres taking part in the present study).

The think tanks and NGOs in countries where there had been little or no debate on the EU accession prospects for eastern neighbours used the renewed interest in Ukraine to cast light on some domestic issues related to Ukrainians (such as illegal migration in the Czech Republic) or on promoting democracy and human rights in third countries (such as Belarus).⁷ However, in light of relatively low interest in the relations with the eastern neighbours, the debates did not present the issue in terms of the possible accession of Ukraine into the EU.

Trans-Border Initiatives

The limited appeal of the issue of further enlargement has contributed to the dependence of the Central European debate on the West European model for its terms as well as strategies. To achieve a greater impact, small groups of activists have begun to co-ordinate their campaigns in opposition to the prospects of Turkish accession. It is notable that transnational initiatives in the new Member States target solely the issue of enlargement to Turkey, which is a controversial issue throughout Europe, and do not protest against the inclusion of Eastern European states or the Western Balkans.

The actions of various groups striving to block the Turkish accession were timed in accordance with the EU agenda: the first petition to the Czech government was released in the period after the publication of the Commission report and prior to the EU summit in December 2004. That initiative was initially planned to be a one-off move attempting to influence the national government. However, as the date for opening negotiations was being agreed upon, a platform called the Voice for Europe⁸ was launched and signatures were collected in six capitals of both the 'old' and 'new' EU⁹. In the countries under study, the Czech and Hungarian organisations have

7) See e.g. the Association for International Issues (AMO), the Centre for Strategic Studies, EUROPEUM or the Multi-cultural Centre in the Czech Republic.

8) For more information refer to www.voiceforeurope.org

9) Prague, Warsaw, Budapest, Bratislava, Vienna and Berlin. Source: Euractiv.cz, 9 May 2005.

been among the most active¹⁰. Their websites target the EU citizens, arguing against enlargement to a large country with a different political culture and values and calling for the delineation of the final institutional shape of the Union. As the platform members conclude that the debate on the desired architecture of the EU has not taken place, they believe that the Union is not ready to accept Turkey as a member and should rather consider according it a 'special partnership'.¹¹

The salience of the human rights concerns in the Czech and Hungarian media coverage of Turkey offers an opportunity for a small number of activists to attract the public attention and shape the discourse that otherwise would continue to be the domain of experts. The activists were able to comment on the media references to the controversies surrounding the reform of a penal code, women's rights or freedom of speech. The member organisations were also able to reach partner CSOs interested in blocking Turkey's accession, such as the Armenian Self-Government (the representation of the Armenian minority in Hungary). While still small and relatively marginal, the NGOs taking a clear stand on value-laden issues represent potential stakeholders when the question of Turkish accession is put on the general national and European agenda. Thus, it may be worthwhile to watch for the first signs of tying the issue of Turkish accession with the question of political Islam and Muslim immigration, a link that has not been usually exploited in the national debates in Central Europe so far.¹²

10) Association for European Values in the Czech Republic (www.evropskehodnoty.cz) and the Foundation for European Values in Hungary (www.hangeuropaert.org).

11) Interview with Nikoletta Incze, chairperson of the Foundation for European Values, Hungary, 5 August 2005.

12) For the link to anti-immigration discourse see the Czech organisation Future of Europe (http://home.graffiti.net/budoucnost-evropy:graffiti.net/roz/islam_cr.html), the issue of Islam in Turkey has been addressed on the Hungarian website, Islam in Europe (<http://www.iszlameuropaban.info/index.html>) and for the gender issue in Turkey, see the Hungarian initiative European Women for Liberty (<http://europainok.uw.hu/>).

5. THE POSITIONS OF POLITICAL ACTORS

5.1. An EU-Driven Enlargement Agenda for Smaller Central European States

As it is the case with public opinion, the governments in the new Member States generally favour further enlargement. However, it may be noted that the NMSs from Central Europe have maintained a low profile on the question of opening accession negotiations with Turkey. Generally remaining silent until the issue went on the EU agenda, they endorsed the consensus in the Council. Their reluctance to take a strong position on the issue continues as the governments have taken a 'wait and see' attitude, and statements have been made by some leaders (e.g. the Slovenian Prime Minister) that the outcome of the negotiations is 'open-ended'. Although some of the sceptical opinions of the politicians from the governing parties might be interpreted as favouring a 'privileged partnership', the governments of these states are unlikely to take an official position before the EU determines its stance. One reason for caution in their official positions can be the wish to maintain good relations with Turkey, which is an important partner for the new NATO members.

The low profile that these states take on the issue of enlargement reflects their self-perception of being small countries (with the exception of Poland). The question of the European integration of countries from outside the traditionally conceived neighbourhood is a new dilemma for many of those states. For instance, in Slovenia a common view is that the country is too small to affect the European-level foreign policy decisions. This conviction underlies the country's Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel's insistence that the "Slovenian policy has to be and definitely is in line with the EU policy".¹³ For

13) Dimitrij Rupel, "Po zmagi: ... Slovenska zunanja politika po članstvu v EU in NATO" ["Slovenian Foreign Policy after the Membership in the EU and NATO"], Delo, 30 April 2005.

this reason, the country's policy-makers prefer to abstain from taking strong positions on the issue that currently divides the Union.

The reluctance to assert their national interests and shape the EU agenda on divisive issues, which could pit them against major players in the Union, can also be seen in the official rationale for their position on enlargement. With the exception of the Czech and Polish discourses on Ukraine, the statements on the enlargement, especially to Turkey, focus on the benefits and costs at the European, not the national level. Particularly striking is the issue of identity whose understanding differs when transplanted from the German or French to Central European discourses. The issue of the compatibility of values or customs is no longer a concrete question of the coexistence of ethnic and religious communities within a single state but a vague dilemma of defining a 'European identity'.

5.2. Governments' Geographic Preferences: Turkey vs. Ukraine?

Central European states except Poland have clearly preferred to see further enlargement primarily reaching into all of Southeastern Europe (first Croatia and then Serbia and Montenegro). Possible alliances in support of the candidacy of Croatia include the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia as well as Austria and Slovakia, while Serbia and Montenegro has been the object of particular attention of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. This prioritisation reflects not only the EU's likely path, which recognises the earlier involvement in Bosnia, Kosovo and FYROM, but also the countries' genuine ties with some of those states (such as those of Slovenia with Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and of Hungary with Serbia) or the record of national foreign policy activism (as that of the Czech Republic or Slovakia) based on humanitarian or ideological reasons. As new members of the EU and as smaller states, the three Central European countries may also choose to invest their limited capabilities into the support of candidates that do not raise objections of major EU Member States. For this reason, they may be less likely to support Poland's focused (but so far relatively unpopular) bid for the integration of Ukraine.

In the period since accession, these states have also paid attention to the general EU enlargement agenda when prioritising the enlargement to other states. This is shown in the way in which the question of the EU accession of Turkey and Ukraine is dealt with by their Foreign Ministries. In the

Czech and Slovenian Foreign Ministries, Turkey is allocated to the division concerned with the EU initiatives, including all the candidate states. On the other hand, Ukraine is not seen as a part of the EU agenda as it is placed in the East European division (in the Czech case, extending to the Caucasus and Central Asia). This distinction has been confirmed by the remarks of the Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel who noted that as opposed to Turkey, which had been in the waiting room for over four decades, Ukraine has not been granted a candidate status yet. From this point of view, the Slovenian government clearly sticks to the current EU agenda making the discussion of the European prospects for Ukraine conditional on its status of relations with the EU.

Nonetheless, despite the current acknowledgement of the primacy of Turkish candidacy on the EU agenda, all the Central European states do not conceal that their bilateral ties with Ukraine are more substantial. The slogan 'if yes to Turkey, why not Ukraine?', which was commonly adopted by the Polish MEPs and government officials, has met with understanding from the other diplomacies (especially the Czech and Hungarian ones). Although currently not recognised as a candidate state, Ukraine's historical ties (Transcarpathia was a part of Hungary until 1918 and of Czechoslovakia until 1938) and its 'European identity' have been invoked in bilateral relations. The other diplomacies also stress the common features shared with Ukraine (such as the Slavic identity in Slovenia or the positive record of the diaspora's treatment in Hungary).

The distinction in the status of Turkey and Ukraine vis-à-vis the EU leaves the relations with Ukraine to be still managed bilaterally. Here the major divide separates the national approaches of Poland and the three other countries. Poland has been willing to treat the relationship with Ukraine independently of its bilateral ties with Russia or of the EU-Russian relations. The other countries are more cautious as the example of Czech diplomacy shows. Prague's latest formulation of national foreign policy puts an emphasis on the relations with Russia while Ukraine is relegated to a lesser position¹⁴. The Czech Republic's restraint during the electoral crisis in Kyiv contrasted sharply with the activism displayed by Poland, which decided to engage the EU in finding a solution. This difference in approach is likely to continue as the 'eastern dimension' of the national policy is of far lower importance in Czech diplomacy than, for instance, that of the Western Balkans where

14) The Foreign Policy Concept mentions Ukraine in relation to NATO and in a bilateral framework (relations with the Russian Federation and Ukraine).

Prague has invested a lot of effort. Countries further south, such as Hungary or Slovenia, are also likely to focus on their direct neighbourhood, with particular attention being paid to Croatia and the Western Balkan states.

As the enlargement agenda has become less prominent at the EU level due to the internal dynamics (the ‘enlargement fatigue’ after May 1, 2004 and the non-acceptance of the Constitutional Treaty in the referenda), the role of individual diplomatic actions and building coalitions is taking on additional importance. This avenue is moreover most relevant given the record of activity of foreign ministries in a number of policy fields. It should be admitted that the Polish Foreign Ministry failed to win support for its ‘eastern dimension’ of the EU’s foreign policy, envisioning a gradual path towards the association of Ukraine and other eastern neighbours with the EU among its Visegrad partners in 2003. However, both the Czech and Hungarian diplomacies worked out their own strategies for supporting a possible pro-European course of Ukraine. Another area in which the foreign ministries gradually produced solutions for facilitating the contacts with Ukraine were the Visegrad states’ visa policies: although initially only Poland and Hungary decided to introduce visas free of charge to Ukrainian nationals, similar solutions became standard following the Orange Revolution as the Czech Republic and Slovakia responded with a comparable move to President Yushchenko’s visa waiver for EU citizens.

Nonetheless, as the issue of further enlargement is not on the top of these countries’ agenda (again with the possible exception of Poland focusing its efforts on strengthening the EU’s relations with Ukraine), shifts in the relations of the EU as a whole with particular potential candidates may affect the way in which their own positions are formulated. For instance, some statements of the Polish President Kaczyński or Slovenian Prime Minister Janša imply attachment to the idea of ‘open-ended negotiations’ with Turkey while stressing the merits of enlargement to other countries considered to be national priority areas (such as Ukraine for Poland or Croatia for Slovenia)¹⁵.

5.3. The Role of the Presidents

Presidents may play a significant role in maintaining interest in the enlargement agenda as they are highly visible as ceremonial heads of states, embodying the foreign policies of their countries. Their limited formal powers are augmented by the high trust levels that they enjoy. Their engagement

15) The prime minister’s statement at a press conference on 21 December 2004, [http://193.2.236.95/mma-upv.nsf/OC/0412211808292/\\$file/dato3_tiskovna_21_12_2004_48a.doc](http://193.2.236.95/mma-upv.nsf/OC/0412211808292/$file/dato3_tiskovna_21_12_2004_48a.doc)

can take different forms. Some presidents have presided over a general consensus on foreign policy goals. For instance, the Slovenian President Janez Drnovšek has upheld the government’s position by reaffirming his support for continued enlargement of the EU and calling for the integration of Southeastern Europe.¹⁶ Drnovšek’s approach includes expert consultations in crucial periods (e.g. the Ukrainian electoral crisis) and consistent support for the enlargement both to Ukraine and to Turkey, although he acknowledges the opposing arguments. For instance, while he poses the question of the integration of a predominantly Muslim country, he claims that the successful integration of Turkey would be a key for Europe’s relations with the world of Islam as a whole.¹⁷

Former Polish president Kwaśniewski has also played a far more significant role in foreign policy than that indicated by his formal powers. Given Poland’s higher ambitions in regional politics, Kwaśniewski not only verbally encouraged the pro-Western orientation of Ukraine throughout the Kuchma presidency but also became directly involved in attempting to solve the crisis in Kyiv (first by organising a round-table with the participation of the opposition parties from Ukraine and then by taking part in collaboration with Javier Solana and the Lithuanian President Adamkus in the negotiations to pave the way for a re-run of the presidential vote). Kwaśniewski enjoyed support for his actions from nearly the entire spectrum of political parties (with the exception of the populist League of Polish Families and Self-Defence). Remarkably, Kwaśniewski conducted multilateral diplomacy in the process, involving both the EU institutions and a number of states (both in the region and with such global players as the U.S., France and Germany)

Two right-wing presidents in Central Europe, Kwaśniewski’s successor, Lech Kaczyński, and the Czech president, Vaclav Klaus, are less in favour of strengthening the role of EU institutions in foreign policy (such as the proposed post of a common foreign minister). Instead, they have pursued changing coalitions based more on specific interests than on ideological grounds. Their own rapprochement may be considered an achievement in itself as their visions both in terms of values (Kaczyński being associated more with the strong Catholic background as opposed to Klaus downplaying the role of religion) and attitudes to enlargement (Klaus strongly

16) Dr Drnovšek’s Address to the Foreign Diplomatic Corps, Brdo by Kranj, 2 February 2005, <http://www.up-rs.si/up-rs/uprs-ang.nsf/dokumentiweb/>

17) Bojan Veselinović, Talk with the President of the Republic, Radio Slovenia, 17 December 2004, <http://www.up-rs.si/up-rs/uprs.nsf/>

favouring Turkey's inclusion in contrast to Kaczyński's explicit statement that Ukraine, not Turkey is a priority for Poland). However, their avowed defence of national sovereignty and opposition to deepened EU integration could result in a sort of compromise on the issue between them. The position of the presidents depends, however, on their parties' (ODS and PiS) ability to command a stable majority and form a lasting government.

5.4. The Positions of Political Parties

The Socialist Group in the European Parliament

Social Democratic parties of Central Europe generally follow the line of their counterparts from Western Europe. Like the German SPD, they support the Turkish accession as a spur towards the country's democratisation and improvement of the human rights record and a factor in stabilising the region with Turkey serving as a 'bridge' with the world of Islam. At the same time, the perspective of the entry of a large and poor country necessitates the continuation of institutional reforms in the EU (e.g. the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty). These positions largely coincided with those of the national governments – as throughout 2004 all four states were governed by coalitions led by Socialist parties.

However, the level of commitment to enlargement to Turkey varies from country to country within the party ranks. For instance, while the Czech CSSD was unanimous, the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSzP) showed some rifts as one of its MEPs openly stated his support for the idea of a special partnership and another one linked the prospects for membership with the call for autonomy for the Kurdish minority.¹⁸ The other Socialist parties formally stood by their governments' positions but had no references to the question in their programmes (the Slovenian Social Democrats and Poland's Alliance of Democratic Left). However, their support for Turkish accession is weakened by their wish to see a deepening of European integration and primary interest in other directions for enlargement (Western Balkans for Slovenia and Ukraine for Poland).¹⁹

18) Csaba Tabajdi MEP. Official records of the debate at http://www.europarl.eu.int/plenary/default_en.htm.

19) The Slovenian Social Democrats explicitly referred to the difficulties in the ratification process of the Constitutional Treaty for Europe in calling for a 'special agreement' between the EU and Ukraine, rather than extending the membership offer to Kyiv.

The Group of the European People's Party and European Democrats

Confessional parties of Europe have been among those most opposed to Turkey's EU accession. Their counterparts in Central Europe follow the arguments advanced against the full membership offer and generally adopt the German CDU/CSU's idea of a 'privileged partnership'. The Czech KDU-CSL presents a position that is in many respects the closest one to that of its German sister party. While the Christian Democrats are sure to stress the value of exemplary and close relations between the EU and Turkey, they oppose the wholesale integration of the country, which to them would undermine the Judeo-Christian heritage of Europe. A large Muslim state without the historical experience of participation in the formative layers of European civilisation is concluded as being incompatible with the EU's 'club rules'. Moreover, the KDU-CSL fears the entry of a large country whose voting power would upset the delicate balance in the EU of today, as well as questions Turkey's ability to abide by the democratic principles as laid down in the Copenhagen Criteria. The Hungarian Democratic Forum takes a similar position, denying the membership offer while considering the 'special status' in the EU-Turkey relations.

Within the EPP-ED, the confessional argument was confronted by another view advanced, *inter alia*, by the Czech Civic Democratic Party (ODS). The ODS strongly promotes a comprehensive argument in favour of Turkey's membership in the EU. Somewhat reminiscent of the British Conservative Party's position, the ODS argues that the entry of a large, poor and populous Turkey would challenge the EU to undertake necessary reforms, requiring the most costly redistributive EU programmes to be overhauled. Furthermore, enlargement would have to slow down if not reverse the process of deepening the integration, resulting in a model *a la carte*, with greater scope for national sovereignty. The ODS's vision also embraces Turkey's decided pro-U.S. line and the important part that the country plays in NATO architecture, hoping to strengthen Europe's transatlantic ties and gain an important ally in combating new threats to security (terrorism, illegal migration). Finally, the party argues for keeping the membership offer available as a form of broader dialogue with Europe's neighbours, especially in the Muslim world.

The support of some parties may be dependent on the evolution of the position of the European People's Party in the European Parliament. Here an important argument was made by the European Parliament's speaker,

Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, representing the Civic Platform of Poland. While the platform within the EPP-ED voted in favour of opening the negotiations with Turkey, a number of the party's MEPs echoed Saryusz-Wolski's 'conditionality' line, which stated that saying 'yes' to Turkey ought to be followed by opening a membership perspective to Ukraine as well.

The New Slovenia (NSi) party, self-designated as the Christian People's Party, is much more ambiguous about the future of enlargement. In principle, its policy vision includes continued enlargement and points to the mutual benefits of integrating Turkey into the EU. However, the party programme qualifies these statements by calling for a 'realistic' enlargement scenario and explicitly names Croatia and the Western Balkans as priority areas for expansion. It also remains to be seen how the party's stress on the "consciousness of [Slovenia]'s historical origins in...Christianity and Enlightenment" could be reconciled with the open enlargement horizon.²⁰

In turn, another party represented in the EPP-ED, the Fidesz Hungarian Civic Alliance, has not presented a clear and consistent stand, although its representatives voiced strong concerns about the ability of the EU to integrate Turkey. The leader of the party's representation in the European Parliament, for instance, explicitly subscribed to the idea of a privileged partnership with the country. Although the vote within the European People's Party was not made public, the statements surrounding the ballot in the European Parliament on endorsing the opening of negotiations with Turkey indicate that the Fidesz MEPs may have supported the decision. Analysts expect moreover that in the course of the electoral campaign, the party might downplay its opposition to Turkey's candidacy and instead follow the developments in the EU arena rather than announce its own position.

The Union for Europe of Nations

A similar evolution seems to be taking place in Poland's governing Law and Justice party (PiS). In December 2004 its MEPs voting as part of the Union for Europe of Nations Group opposed the move to open negotiations with Turkey. During a debate, a representative of the party argued for a 'privileged partnership' as a "platform for good economic co-operation" with Ankara. Unlike the Christian Democratic cultural argument, the Conservative line stressed economic and redistributive issues, pointing to the

20) The NSi party programme, <http://volitve.nsi.si/staticne/program>

implications of Turkey's accession on unreformed agricultural and cohesion policies of the Union. However, as the vote was taking place in the wake of the Ukrainian Orange Revolution, the party's speaker made a direct link between the process of rapprochement with Turkey and Ukraine: "The stepping up of relations with Turkey should also be kept more in proportion to Europe's policy of openness towards Ukraine."²¹ Upon assuming power, however, the PiS leaders (including President-elect Lech Kaczyński) toned down the opposition to possible Turkish accession, and instead strengthened the link between the offer made to Ankara and the called-for upgrading of relations with Kyiv.

21) MEP Konrad Szymbański, Brussels, 13 December 2004.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The question of enlargement to include Turkey so far has had little appeal in national debates as some of the factors fuelling the sceptical position in large EU Member States are missing from the domestic politics in the new Member States. As opposed to some of the members from ‘old Europe’, any opposition to Turkey’s accession is likely to be counterbalanced by additional structural cleavages separating them from the more established Member States. The newcomers (especially Poland and Hungary) are likely to be net beneficiaries from the EU budget for at least one if not two budget perspectives. Thus, as long as the budgets until 2020 do not include a major reallocation of funds, the fundamental priority of the EU policies of those states – i.e. the acceleration of development and bridging the standard-of-living divide with the Western European neighbours – is not at stake.

Furthermore, in general these states as recent NATO entrants, supporters of strong transatlantic ties, and signatories of the letter of eight and of the Vilnius group statements in 2003 giving a green light to the intervention in Iraq, have been sceptical of the federalist plans for the strong identity of Europe apart from the U.S. Thus, they do not necessarily share the concerns of the dilution of this new identity by further enlargement. Instead, a range of alternative views prevails: from the assertion of Turkey’s positive role as a stabilising factor in the Middle East to the belief that the state could actually share these countries’ own security predicaments (such as anxiety over the Russian policies, especially in the Caucasus or the fight against terrorism).

An assertion may be risked that the absence of clear stakes in terms of economic interests and security considerations forces the debates in the new Member States to feed on the arguments adopted from other locations and to remain at a high level of abstraction. This virtual form of the debate may be observed in the wholesale adoption of the terms circulated in the political controversies in the larger EU states (especially France and Germany) and

preference for solutions that have already been announced without considering their contents (such as the ‘privileged partnership’). These arguments are circulated in the relatively small groups of interested activists who absolutise the human rights record or European federal idea at the expense of geopolitical concerns or dialogue with the Muslim world.

These small-group discourses are unlikely to influence the larger societies in the absence of certain socioeconomic factors that would provide fertile grounds for large-scale protests against the accession of Turkey or other countries from outside the East European region. First of all, the Central European states’ historical experiences and current social structures differ from those of many West European states. As a result, the sentiments prevailing in the society and among the elites towards the inclusion of specific countries into the European project are different as well. All the four states have been relatively homogenous ethnically for at least half a century and have not recently contended with issues of the co-existence of major religious or national minorities. With the exception of Slovenia, the three Central European societies have historical reasons to recollect the times when they were the driving forces in multinational structures as glorious periods (Poland prior to the Second World War and earlier until 1795, the Czech Republic in the Czechoslovak Republic and Hungary in Austria-Hungary).

Finally, in some cases, either historical precedents of good relations (Poland’s acknowledgment of Turkey’s refusal to recognise the partitions or Hungary’s positive reaction to the relatively good treatment of its ethnic diaspora in Ukraine) or ideological considerations (Slavic solidarity between the Czech Republic or Slovenia and Ukraine) may underlie certain common positive attitudes. Such ‘clichés’ represent important anchors for the discussion of the policy issue that otherwise is relegated to a distant position in the list of foreign policy priorities – for instance, relations with Turkey for Poland, or with Ukraine for the other three Central European states.