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## **New challenges of the Western Balkan Countries and Turkey on the way to European Union**

This year is the tenth anniversary of the Thessaloniki Summit when the famous “Western Balkan Agenda” was adopted which was the clear signal to Western Balkan countries that they have European perspective. Then it was possible to hear from the top officials of this integration that European Union shall not be completed until Western Balkan countries join it. Ten years later, Croatia achieving requirements for EU admission, became its equal 28<sup>th</sup> member. Other Western Balkan countries and Turkey are still trying hard both politically and economically to become the part of big “European family”. However, events on the European economic stage, first of all world economic crisis and Euro- zone crisis, have recently influenced the stagnation of Euro – optimism in the Western Balkan countries and Turkey imposing them reconsideration of achievements and further ambitions regarding European Union joining. According to economic parameters, these countries are far from European Union. Politically, each in its own way, tends to membership and perceives its perspective in integration. From sociological aspect, citizens express less optimism regarding the European Union membership, and the number of those who support joining is in constant decrease. Will the idea on European perspective of Western Balkan countries and Turkey be achieved in recent future or will these countries be left to themselves and stay on the Europe margins? Is it possible to achieve healthy economic growth, stability and living standard suitable to citizens out of European Union? The future will bring answers to these questions, and this time I will try to anticipate the part of the future based on economic and other analysis.

**Key words:** European Union, Western Balkan, Turkey, economic crisis, public opinion, European perspective

### **Introduction:**

The seventh round of EU enlargement has introduced Croatia among the countries which consist this integration. Thus, the list of countries under the name of Western Balkan which have been for the quarter of the century in the process of transition tending to achieve the same goal is shortened. On one hand, by admission of Croatia, EU showed that has the right policy of extension, that is showed the causality between necessary conditions and membership admission. On the other hand, the impact of actual economic situation of further EU enlargement and increasing tasks which EU imposes on Western Balkan countries, cause the deduction of enthusiasm and greater skepticism regarding their final admission into EU. However, it is so far proved that the greatest Union problems regarding enlargement are connected to Turkey, not to Western Balkan countries. Although it has been in the candidate status for a century and a half, economic and political power in expansion, member of NATO and the liaison between West

European, Asian and Near East market, Turkey is not even close to realization of its European aim. The challenges Turkey has on its European way, are first of all political, and problems it has regarding this context in the EU integration process seem to be insuperable. And while Western Balkan countries, despite everything continue their fight for the EU “place under the Sun”, Turkey expresses disappointment for the achieved progress and dissatisfaction with frozen negotiations and increasingly directs cooperation towards Asia ( first of all China), and even Russia. The decline of Turkey’s interest for the admission in EU, is followed by decrease of Turkey’s population for joining EU. It is more often declared that the relations between Turkey and EU shall develop according to Norwegian model – Turkey will have European standards and will be close EU ally, but not the member in its composition.

### 1. Western Balkan: Thorny Path to European Union

Phrase “ Western Balkan” was firstly used in 1999 to define the region composed of new countries in the area of former Yugoslavia without Slovenia at that time the candidate for EU membership, and with addition of Albania<sup>1</sup>. This geopolitical determinant which includes Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, allowed political EU enlargement creators to have compact approach to this, in many ways specific part of Europe. In post – conflict period, EU as most powerful integration and respectable political and economic power in the region of Europe, with its authority imposed among Western Balkan countries to provide long term peace and stability.<sup>2</sup> Later, after 2000, Western Balkan was treated by EU as a group of countries that have clear EU membership perspective, but which are at the same time characterized by sluggishness in completing the regulatory conditions and inconsistency in creating of political stability and social and legally responsible ambiance that would fit into EU system.

Today, Western Balkan may be observed in two ways: *first*, as inter fragmented geographic entity to which Euro integration flows “got through to”, and *second*, as a space recombined by Yugoslavia destruction, with inherited problems and additional difficulties solving of which demands imported post-conflict solutions.<sup>3</sup> At present, Western Balkan sub-region is estimated as politically still unstable region, area in social crisis which, on one hand was caused by economic crisis and on the other precipitates itself. This is not about world economic crisis, but about malty-dimensional transitional crisis which in the Western Balkan countries lasts as long as the transition process. The state of economy in the Western Balkan countries is today estimated as “ mostly miserable”. Such a state was contributed by mutual

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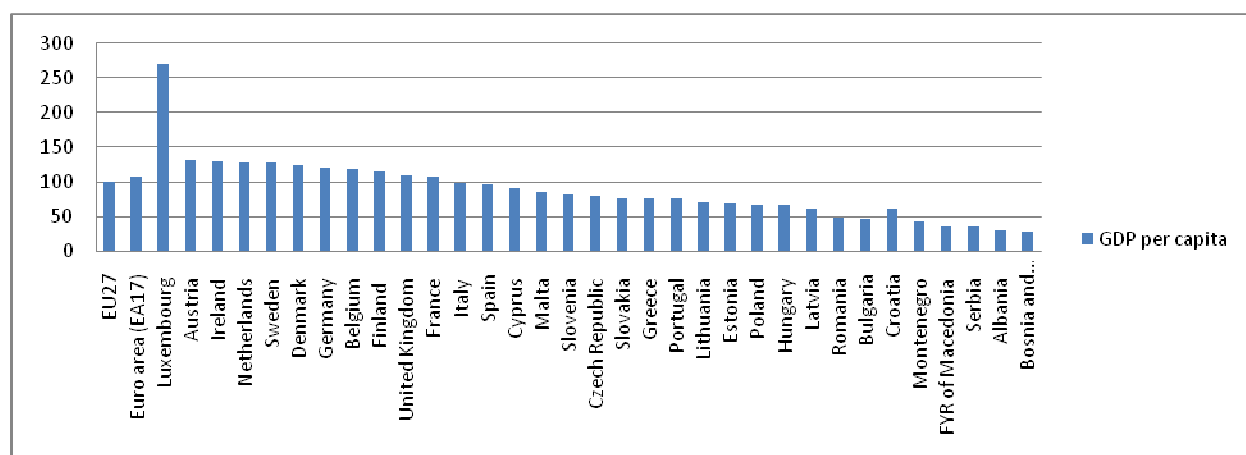
<sup>1</sup> Predrag Simic, „Do the Balkans Exist?: Vision of the Future of Southeastern Europe: Perspectives from the Region“, in: Predrag Simic, Gordana Ilic, Zlatko Isakovic, Ivan Krastev and Krassen Stanchev (eds.), The European Union, NATO and their Southeastern European Neighbors, Institute of International Politics and Economics, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Belgrade, 2002, pp. 13–30.

<sup>2</sup> The most important reasons of EU for Balkan countries joining this association, often mentioned are: provision of peace in Europe, provision of Europe cultural unity, possibility of faster European and Balkan economic development, that is achieving European geostrategic interests in this region, *In details*: Bozic, Milorad (2005): **Balkan countries Economies on the way to European Union**, in: *Balkan in the process of Euro integrations: Economy, Transition and Regional Cooperation* ed. Milorad Bozic, Faculty of Philosophy – Institute for sociology, Nis pgs 49-81

<sup>3</sup> Stepic Milomira, Geopolitical EU Spreading and Position of Serbia, Serbian Political Thought, Vo. 27.No.1/2010 pg.17-42

conflicts during 90ties, economic sanctions and military interventions of international community directed towards solving of these conflicts. On the other hand, implementation, in the world already tried solutions for the transition to system of market economy, after 2000, on Western Balkan did not have desired and expected results. Uncontrolled privatization lead to closing of companies, which in the previous system, with their production, met the domestic and foreign market needs. Transforming of such companies into private ownership of one person or a group, resulted into production reduction, unemployment increase, unstable currency exchange rate, and all of these finally reflected into decline of living standard and more lower economic growth rate in relation to the one in pre-transitional period.

**Picture 1: GDP per capita in PPP in 2012. (EU27=100)**



Source: Eurostat News Release 98/2013-19 june 2013, GDP per capita in the Member States ranged from 47% to 271% of the EU27 average in 2012, page 2

Data in the picture on achieved level of economic growth expressed in GDP per capita 2012, in relation to the one achieved in EU27, illustrate the economic position of Western Balkan countries in Europe. According to this indicator, they are far from Western Europe developed countries, and much below the rank where their East European neighbors are, which recently have become the part of EU.<sup>4</sup> GDP per capita in this sub-region is in the scope of 42% totally achieved value in EU27 (Montenegro) to 28% recorded in Bosnia and Hercegovina. The current economic position of Western Balkan countries in Europe is conditioned, among other things by political problems and absence of socially engaged actions, which, at certain periods significantly slowed the transition process and lead to economic decline of states and impoverishment of their population.<sup>5</sup> Generally, one should say that current state and problems in

<sup>4</sup> It is interesting that GDP per capita in 1980 was in Greece 5.901, Turkey 2.874, Romania 1.422, Bulgaria 3.926 and Yugoslavia 5.565 of international US dollars, which leads to the conclusion that Yugoslavia, at that time, according to these indicators, was economically most developed countries of the Balkan, Source: Jan-Erik, Lane and Svante, Ersson (1997): **Comparative Political Economy a Development Approach**, Second Edition, Pinter – London and Washington, p 26-44

<sup>5</sup> As the greatest political problems, which in the past burdened ( and some of them still burden) this group of countries is: non recognition of the Kosovo and Metohija region status by Serbia, great number of refugees and displaced people whose return has been solving for years, internal relations in Bosnia and Hercegovina between three constitutive peoples, dispute between Macedonia and Greece about name, postponing of liabilities fulfillment toward Hague Tribunal and problems connected to certain actions of the countries from this NATO group.

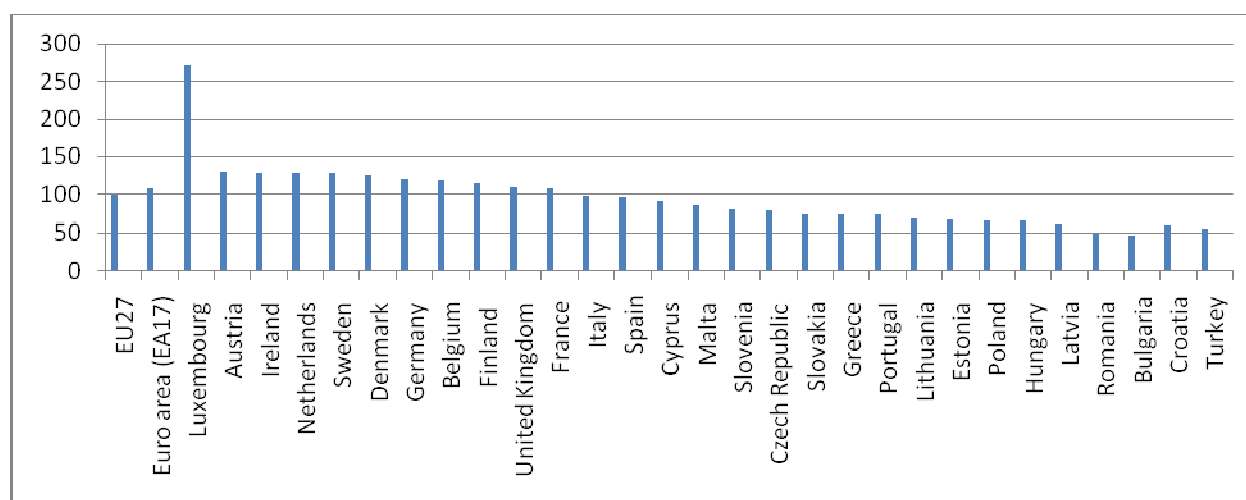
Balkan countries economies, and thus their positions in Europe, are conditioned by two groups of developing factors and processes: a) historical heritage and b) globalization and regionalization processes, specially all those changes that have happened in the world and Europe, and which those countries were unable to adequately follow or participate in. Economic underdevelopment of Western Balkan countries and absence of their economic cooperation, certainly are the heritage from the past. Faster movements in these areas are the allusion of better future when Western Balkan should represent political and economic part of modern Europe, but not its most undeveloped part. Economic backwardness of Balkan states in transition compared to EU member states is one of the very important aspects of their mutual relation and cooperation. Improvement in this area is conditioned by improvement in realization of other challenges and tasks which EU imposes on Western Balkan countries. Among main challenges, which are today, as at the beginning of dialogue with EU, imposed on these countries are the questions important for establishing of democracy and economy and the pace of EU joining process depends on their solution. Those are, first of all administration and justice system reforms, question of sustainable refugees and displaced people return, higher level of inter regional cooperation ( with special stress on Serbia and Kosovo good relations ), solving of open bilateral questions such as those referring to state border defining and similar. Progress of each Western Balkan country on its way to Euro integrations depends on their readiness to solve the above mentioned questions, that is to adequately respond to old and new challenges imposed by EU.

## **2. Uncertain mutual future of European Union and Turkey**

Regarding its social and economic performances, Turkey during the period after the II World War belonged to the West. Its economic system and economic policy was marked by then market economy, and its attachment to NATO as of its establishment, was clear attribute of its geopolitical orientation and belonging. Modern Turkey, with its strategic Euro- Asian position with the largest domestic market and biggest developing potential, has great influence on economic state and trends in Europe economic development, as well as countries in the Black sea and Near East region. Its potentials, leadership ambitions in the wider region and commitment to Euro integrations, have not been up to now used enough for economic cooperation and stronger economic connections with the Western Balkan countries, and those Balkan countries have not used its position to open more towards Near East and further to Asia. Changes regarding this may be expected with Turkey's aim prior achievement and all five countries of Western Balkan to become European Union members.

Recently, political and economic development of Turkey suffers all the influences that have globalization and regionalization processes. Wider opening towards the world, economic cooperation and integration in the region, economy restructuring according to global market demands and technological development and development of the modern market economy system, are some of the changes observable in the process of its economic development. These changes effects on Turkey economy are necessary to observe in relation to its economic heritage. This very heritage points that this is the country with insufficiently developed economy, burdened with numerous economic and social problems and which lately has been trying to adopt its developing policy according to new conditions in order to accelerate its economic development and rise the quality of economy to a higher level.

**Picture 2: GDP per capita in PPP in 2012. (EU27=100)**



Source: Eurostat (tec 00114), available: October/2013

The data show that the achieved level of economic development in Turkey is close to economic increase in the Central and East Europe countries which in 2004 became the EU members. Achieved GDP per capita values are higher than those achieved in Romania and Bulgaria. Turkey's development policy has ambitious aims which achievement in economic sense gets it closer to Europe and improves its position in Europe. In this context the needed level of current economic stability is being tried to provide, which is seen according to inflation trends, balance of payment, unemployment rate and other<sup>6</sup>. When it is about economic development dynamic, it may be concluded that the GDP growth rate in Turkey is among the highest in the group of countries aspirant for EU membership.

**Table 1: GDP of West Balkan countries and Turkey (comparative analysis)**

|            | GDP (in mil \$) |         |         |         | GDP average growth rates ( in %) |       |       |       |
|------------|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
|            | 2005.           | 2008.   | 2010.   | 2012.   | 2005.                            | 2008. | 2010. | 2012. |
| Albania    | 8.159           | 12.986  | 11.954  | 12.532  | 5,76                             | 7,54  | 3,94  | 1,20  |
| BiH        | 10.948          | 18.543  | 16.647  | 17.278  | 7,98                             | 5,58  | 0,72  | 0,20  |
| Macedonia  | 5.987           | 9.834   | 9.339   | 9.407   | 4,35                             | 4,95  | 1,77  | -0,30 |
| Serbia     | 31.223          | 53.402  | 42.659  | 41.420  | 5,12                             | -2,65 | 1,42  | -0,88 |
| Montenegro | -               | 4.520   | 4.111   | 4.339   | -                                | -5,66 | 2,46  | 0,30  |
| Turkey     | 482.986         | 730.325 | 731.144 | 791.356 | 8,40                             | 0,66  | 9,16  | 2,20  |

Source: <http://unctadstat.unctad.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx> available: October/2013

<sup>6</sup> Current stability of Turkey economy are presented by the following date: inflation rate in Turkey, 2006 was 11% and in 2012 8,89%. Foreign debt in 2006 was 207,4 billion \$ and in 2012 336,8 billion \$. Unemployment in 2005 increased by the rate of 10,2% whereas in 2012 it was 9,30%, which is close to the rate achieved the same year in EU. Source: <http://unctadstat.unctad.org/TableViewer/tableView.aspx> available: October/2013

In only seven years GDP in Turkey was increased from 483 to 791.4 billion dollars, in fact for more than 60%. With such an economic growth dynamic and achieved GDP, it secured the place of the greatest economy among countries with the same status regarding EU membership. In its economy, today it has been creating almost 40% of total GDP which has been creating in all Western Balkan countries together, and this confirms its economic power superiority among them. It allows the high level of attractiveness to foreign investors, who are more and more present in Turkey economy and who contribute both to faster economy development and its structure changing. In the growth and development of its economy, Turkey for the last twenty years strategically oriented to developing of service sector, specially: tourism, trade, catering, traffic, telecommunications and similar. Within its industry development, food and textile industry, chemical industry and industry of building material have been developing the fastest. With these changes, Turkey economy, according to its structure is becoming modern market economy, especially those European ones.

Besides unambiguous “economic European way” which Turkey economy has been following for decades, one of the most controversial questions of further enlargement of EU is just the Turkey joining. Apart from criteria fulfillment from Copenhagen, their relation is burdened by numerous others, first of all, political problems.<sup>7</sup> The question concerning Turkey reception has been opened since 60ties and from time to time it is being actualized depending on internal political problems in Turkey itself and European Union and also Turkish political relations with the countries in the wider region. However, regardless to all this, economic relations between EU and Turkey are at a high degree liberalized. There is the Customs Union Agreement between Turkey and EU for industrial products and agricultural products as of 1995. No doubt, Turkey is today very important economic partner of European Union. When it comes to its EU membership, from economical point, there are mutual interests: EU has interest to expand its market and increase developing potentials by market and by potentials of a big country such as Turkey; on the other hand Turkey has interest to provide by EU membership unimpeded access to its market, use of its capital, technology and other. Of course, one must not lose sight of Turkish aspiration to become political and economic leader in the region. Such ambitions of Turkey have specially been actualized after Soviet Union destruction, during the period when some of former republics become independent: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. All these countries have high degree of togetherness with Turkey in religion, culture, language, history and other. From the point of geostrategic position of this region, it should be considered that these countries have great reserves of oils and gas, which is the basis for their development and market expanding in the region; also the joining of Turkey to EU is strongly supported by USA for the reason of decreasing of Russian political influence in that region. In EU itself there is no common attitude on Turkey accession: some countries insist on respecting of economic criteria, while others are against its admission because of default of political conditions and criteria.

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<sup>7</sup> Among political problems important for its admission in EU, special are: Turkey’s attitude for Armenians victims from 1915, Turkey waiver of expansionist policy towards Balkan countries and countries of Turkey language area, approaching EU values and Turkey society regarding religion, culture and demographics, Cyprus problem, problems of national minorities rights achievement in Turkey ( specially Kurds), Turkey very long border control, and its control is very expensive and that is why is hard to implement EU standards in its control, and other. See: Jovanovic, Miroslav (2006), *European Economic Integration*, Faculty of Economics Belgrade, pg 733-737

### **3. Is there “enlargement fatigue” on the side of Western Balkan and Turkey or is it only EU privilege?**

A number of documents have been written on negative Western Balkan countries image from the view of EU - from newspaper articles and essays to scientific works. In them is often, western European view on Western Balkan reduced to “Balkansim discourse”, that is this part of Europe is considered as the source of instability and wars, and its population as primitive and always ready to solve a problem in a combat mode. Such an image of the Western Balkan countries additionally was strengthened during nineties of the previous century when developing tendencies in this area had totally opposite flows than the ones promoted in the region of Western Europe. Regarding the level of economic development, Western Balkan cannot be differently defined but as a European economic province. Regarding politically, the sense of constituting of such geopolitical creation, in the first years after its defining, was the testing of regional EU concept, that is reconsidering collective treatment possibilities of all the countries it consisted of. Given that very early was clear that such concept was impracticable, it was dropped and replaced by selective approach and different pace of Western Balkan countries approaching to EU. The most successful in performing activities that lead to EU membership was Croatia, while the rest of the countries are more or less in uncertain status: some have the date of starting negotiation on joining, some are candidates, and some are still far from it. (see Appendix 1). Talking about time that passed as of the moment of receiving the candidate status until present time, Turkey is the absolute recorder. This country has been the membership candidate for 14 years, and it has been estimated that, as of the negotiation start, this 2013, EU and Turkey relations are at the lowest level. The Turkey example clearly shows that the beginning of negotiations is not meant to be the unconditional admission to membership, respectively, that the beginning of negotiation is not the last chance to stop the process of accession of a country. As happened this year to Turkey, negotiations on specific chapters may be postponed due to political reasons which are not in connection to particular chapter.<sup>8</sup>

The road to EU membership is long and thorny, and occasional statements on “enlargement fatigue” presented by media, additionally heat the doubt of Western Balkan countries and Turkey population that their European future mission soon will be ended. It may be said that today, in these countries is present the slight disappointment by European Union and its foreign policy regarding the member countries and those tending to be. Disappointed by achieved motion towards EU membership, Western Balkan countries and Turkey express certain resistance to new demands which EU imposes, and which are popularly called “stick and carrot policy”.<sup>9</sup> From this point, and they have “fatigue” of enlargement, more precisely, “fatigue on enlargement policy”, which is from day to day more complex and in front of them put more complex demands. Carrying out EU demands, in these countries is accepted as an unflinching preposition for continuation of enlargement process, but it does not offer any guarantee that this process will go on predictably and that it will really end by membership. From the point of EU, the great importance of its enlargement pace on Western Balkan and Turkey, gives the experience of the last

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<sup>8</sup> Thus Brussels in Jun, within negotiation on Turkey EU membership, wanted to open chapter 22 referring to regional policy and coordination of structure-political instruments. However, Netherlands and Germany blocked the opening of this chapter due to excessive use of power against demonstrators who protested in and around Gezi Park in Istanbul in Jun 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Ivana Bozic Miljkovic, Economic and Political Dialogue on Balkan – Necessity, Obstacles and Perspectives, Facta Universitatis, series Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology and History vol.12, no.1, 2013, pp 53-67



enlargement circle, that is how the new members will fit in this “large European family”. In the same manner as the problem of corruption in Romania and Bulgaria impacted that EU demanded of Croatia stricter completing of conditions in this area, in the same way the possible failure of Croatia in some of the areas will influence old EU members to have less will for EU enlargement or to make stricter criteria to candidate member countries.<sup>10</sup> Today all the Western Balkan countries and Turkey, regardless the status they achieved in negotiations with EU, are somewhere on the half way to membership. Their vision of own development within EU is in a way destabilized by world economic crisis. Sudden rise of Euro skepticism specially appeared in the years after the crisis, when became obvious that neither old nor new EU members could not find solutions for incoming economic problems. In addition, as of the middle of the previous decade, started openly to talk about poverty within EU, taking into consideration the criteria according to which are poor those citizens who have income less than 60% of average national income.<sup>11</sup> The quoted date significantly reduced the great optimism that during the previous decade was among potential members and increased Euro skepticism, more precisely, doubt that benefit from membership would be great as it used to be. This Euro skepticism is illustrated by data in the following table.

| <b>Table 2: Generally speaking, do you think that country’s membership of the EU would be a good thing, a bad thing or neither good or bad (in %)</b> |              |       |       |             |       |       |                     |       |       |
|---|--------------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|-------|---------------------|-------|-------|
|   | a good thing |       |       | a bad thing |       |       | neither good or bad |       |       |
|   | 2008.        | 2009. | 2010. | 2008.       | 2009. | 2010. | 2008.               | 2009. | 2010. |
| Albania   | 83,1         | 88,1  | 82,1  | 1,5         | 2,7   | 6,5   | 7,7                 | 4,5   | 11,7  |
| BiH   | 48,4         | 66,5  | 69,6  | 11,2        | 6,3   | 8,7   | 30,9                | 22,4  | 20,7  |
| Croatia   | 28,5         | 26,2  | 24,8  | 26,3        | 28,3  | 31,7  | 38                  | 38,5  | 37,9  |
| Macedonia   | 66,1         | 62,0  | 60,0  | 6,5         | 8,6   | 8,5   | 24,3                | 25,9  | 28,5  |
| Serbia  | 57,8         | 50,3  | 44,5  | 9,2         | 11,9  | 17,2  | 26                  | 33,5  | 35,3  |
| Montenegro  | 57,1         | 67,3  | 73,6  | 6,7         | 3,1   | 4,3   | 19,8                | 18,8  | 18,1  |

Source: Danijel Tadić, Enlargement and Public Opinion, EU Enlargement Anno 2012, a progressive engagement, page 41.

The data undoubtedly show that among Western Balkan countries mostly decreases the interest for EU membership. The exception is Bosnia and Hercegovina and Montenegro where the interest rises for participation in the next extension circle. Data on Turkish public opinion attitude show that the number of those who see Turkey within EU is drastically reducing. While in 2004, 73% of Turkish population thought that EU joining of Turkey is good thing, today, this opinion share only 44% of questioned

<sup>10</sup> Nenad Radicevic, “ New EU enlargement is not expected before 2020” Daily paper “Politika”, published 08.07.2013, pg 7

<sup>11</sup> According to research in 2007, 60 million of European citizens or about 16% of them may be considered poor (A.Giddens, 2007 Europe in the Global Age, Cambridge, page.74). Today, six years later, risk from poverty is exposed to about 120 million people in EU, 24,4% (Eurostat: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search\\_database](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database))

citizens.<sup>12</sup> In the most recent foreign policy activities of Turkey authority is clearly seen the wider orientation to South East Europe and Asia and certain distance to EU which is the result of too long existence in the candidate status without announcement of certain concrete moves toward membership. It is obvious that among observed countries, Croatian citizens expressed the largest deflection toward EU although, at that time was obvious that Croatia would become the 28<sup>th</sup> member of this integration. Euro skepticism rises in Serbia as well as a result of international community increasing pressure concerning the Kosovo and Metohija recognition. In these three countries, less than the half of examinee are for EU joining, while in the rest of the countries is still present enthusiasm concerning the EU joining and hope that the benefits of joining will overcome the invested efforts. It is interesting that Euro enthusiasm is the strongest in Albania which has not moved far concerning the agreed relations with EU and which is without candidate status.

**Table 3: For each of the following countries are you in favour of it becoming part of the EU in the future? (average percentage of EU 27)**

|            | 2005. | 2006. | 2008. | 2010. |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Albania    | 33    | 32    | 34    | 29    |
| BiH        | 40    | 39    | 40    | 35    |
| Croatia    | 51    | 50    | 52    | 47    |
| Macedonia  | 41    | 40    | 40    | 35    |
| Serbia     | -     | -     | 38    | 34    |
| Montenegro | -     | -     | 41    | 36    |
| Turkey     | 31    | 28    | 31    | 30    |

*Source:* Eurobarometer  
[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm)  
 available: October/2013

There is a question about what EU citizens think of the process of its extension on Eastern Balkan and Turkey? The before last enlargement circle in 2004 that included 10 countries of South East Europe, and the last circle of extension in 2007, in EU itself are estimated as hasty and prepared badly. There is an opinion that those extension circles additionally complicated some economic and political problems which modern Europe Union was faced with. Today in EU, further enlargement not only off the priority list but the majority of the population is against further extension to Western Balkan and Turkey. When EU was consisted of 25 member countries, less than half of the population (46%) supported its further enlargement, out of whome Germans lead (64%).<sup>13</sup> Today, the enlargement is not on the priority list, and

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-329096-turkey-blames-irresponsible-eu-countries-for-waning-public-support-for-membership.html>; available: October/2013

<sup>13</sup> European Commission: <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/> available: October/2013

the number of opponents is not reducing. Talking about Western Balkan countries, the highest willingness is expressed towards Croatian EU membership (which was completed), whereas the highest resistance is to Turkey and the poorest and politically most unstable members of European outskirts: Albania and Serbia. Often this relation is justified by „enlargement fatigue“, but in fact the reasons of political, economic and cultural nature are more complex upon which „the level of desirability“ for future member is determined.

## **Conclusion**

It is the fact that EU high officials in their public appearances express unequivocal interest and willingness for Western Balkan and Turkey accession, but in their activities they are reserved in relation to it. Although Western Balkan and Turkey, for already quarter of a century pursue pro European policy, it is still towards them implemented ““stick and carrot policy”” by EU, that is new more complicated demands are placed, which fulfillment should take them one step closer to EU. Activities performed during the transition process in Western Balkan countries, conditioned economic impoverishment of these countries and their great dependence on foreign capital import. In contrast to them, Turkey for the last twenty years have achieved by itself significant economic improvement, so if carefully analyzed one may conclude that its accession to EU would be, from economic aspect counterproductive. However, the globalization process imposed regional connecting of countries as an imperative of their more efficient adaptability in this process and hence great aspiration of Western Balkan and Turkey for EU membership. It may be said that all together, both group of countries in transition and Turkey, which traditionally has been developing according to postulates of market economy, see the interest for EU membership in easier access to its large market and easier access to EU capital funds.

Regardless the uneven attitudes of EU members concerning its enlargement on east of Europe and political uncertainty regarding accession of Turkey, citizens of Western Balkan and Turkey are expected further enthusiasm for Euro integrations. This enthusiasm is incomparably lower than it was at the beginning of the century, partly because a lot of time have passed of the beginning of European path and the end is not perceived, and partly due to experience of Slovenians, Romanians and Bulgarians who say that they have not got expected benefit from EU membership. Euro enthusiasm abating contributed the appearance of the world economic crisis that had negative impact on Euro zone and questioned the stability and survival of euro. Path to EU is difficult and uncertain. The alternatives of that path of the Western Balkan countries and Balkan always exist, however, it should be considered that at present there is no more credible alternative which shall provide this group of countries very necessary stability and better position in international economic relations, than the EU membership.

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| <b>Inset 1: The dynamics of the Western Balkan countries accession to the European Union (October 2013.)</b> |                |                                  |                            |  |  |                   |
|--|----------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|--|--|-------------------|
| <b>Phase</b>   | <b>Albania</b> | <b>BiH</b>                       | <b>Croatia</b>             | <b>Macedonia</b>                                   | <b>Serbia</b>  | <b>Montenegro</b> |
| <b>Dialogue with representatives of the EU Commission / Working Group</b>                                    | November 2000. | Consultative working group 1998. | February 2000.             | January 1998.<br>Cooperation Agreement with the EU | Consultative working group (2001/02) and enhanced permanent dialogue |                   |
| <b>EU Commission approves feasibility study</b>  | 06.06.2001.    | 18.11.2003.                      | 24.05.2000.                | 16.06.1999.  | 25.04.2005.  |                   |
| <b>The EU Commission recommended the start of negotiations</b>   | 28.11.2001.    | 21.10.2005.                      | 19.07.2000.                | 08.09.1999.  | 12.07.2005.  |                   |
| <b>The Council approved the start of negotiations</b>  | 21.10.2002.    | 21.11.2005.                      | 20.11.2000.                | 24.01.2000.  | 03.10.2005.  |                   |
| <b>EU Commission starts negotiations</b>   | 21.11.2005.    | 25.11.2005.                      | 24.11.2000.                | 05.03.2000.  | 10.10.2005.  |                   |
| <b>The initialling of the SAA</b>  | 18.02.2006.    | 04.12.2007.                      | 14.05.2001.                | 24.11.2000.  | 07.11.2007.  | 15.03.2007.       |
| <b>The signing of the SAA and the definition of the deadline of application</b>                              | 12.06.2006.    | 16.06.2008.                      | 29.10.2001.<br>(six years) | 09.04.2001.<br>(ten years)                         | 29.04.2008.  | 15.10.2007.       |
| <b>Into force the Interim Agreement</b>  | 01.04.2009.    | 01.07.2008.                      | 01.03.2002.                | 01.06.2001.  | 01.02.2010.  | 01.12.2008.       |
| <b>Applying for EU membership</b>  | 28.04.2009.    |                                  | 21.02.2003.                | 22.3.2005  | 22.12.2009.  | 15.12.2008.       |
| <b>The Council provides a candidate</b>  |                |                                  | 18.06.2004.                | 17.12.2005.  | 01.03.2012.  | 22.12.2010.       |
| <b>SAA enters into force</b>   |                |                                  | 01.02.2005.                | 01.04.2004.  | 01.09.2013.  | 01.05.2010.       |
| <b>Negotiations for membership</b>   |                |                                  | 03.10.2005.                |  |  | 29.06.2012.       |
| <b>EU membership</b>   |                |                                  | 01.07.2013.                |  |  |                   |

*Source:* Internet, [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/index_en.htm), available 15/10/2013 — the table is amended by author Božić Miljković, PhD Ivana