



Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Written Evidence from Dr George Christou, University of Warwick

Impact on the national interest

1. What has been the impact of EU enlargement on UK interests? How has the UK influenced the enlargement process?

This depends on which interests – the UK has benefited strategically (security) from enlargement by drawing states in that adhere to EU values, and economically in relation to extending the single market with regard to both consumers and business.

The UK has historically always had a positive attitude towards enlargement (for precisely the reasons given above – economic and security) and has therefore always pursued a strategy of support for expanding the EU (through supporting coalitions rather than unilaterally more recently). It has influenced it in several ways – by cultivating positive bilateral relationships with potential members, through consistent support for candidates inside, and more specific support in providing guidance and help to candidate countries in terms of the procedural, administrative and legal changes required to implement the *acquis*.

3. How do you consider the balance between the roles of member states and of the EU institutions in the process? Might UK interests be served by any changes to the balance of competences in this area?

The balance with regard to the final decision on allowing a candidate to begin accession negotiations and making the final decision on entering the EU once all chapters have been opened, negotiated and closed clearly lies with the Member States (intergovernmental).

The Commission (DG Enlargement), on the other hand, has an important role in the '*process*' of accession – in particular with regard to assessing the progress of candidate states in accession negotiations.

UK interests are well served by this model, although as the number of EU Member States has expanded it has been less influential, but has been successful in finding new allies to support its priorities. On the other hand, the UK's priorities have also worked to create tensions given that those that acceded in the most recent rounds of enlargement have had to implement all areas of the *acquis* rather than being selective.

UK interests might be better served in the future by a more flexible model of accession.

Exercise of competence

4. How effectively have the member states and the EU institutions run the enlargement process? Have lessons drawn from previous enlargement rounds been applied?

They have been effective in general with regard to managing the process – but have ultimately struggled in cases that are more complex (e.g. Turkey, FYROM, B&H, etc). Lessons have clearly been learnt, in particular with regard to implementation in critical areas (judicial reform, rights, freedom, security and justice) prior to accession (e.g. following post-accession problems in Romania/Bulgaria). The changing economic climate has also meant that conditions attached to economic governance have become much more important.

5. How do you assess the EU's use of conditionality (e.g., the Copenhagen Criteria, the „New Approach“ on rule-of-law issues)? Has conditionality been effective in ensuring candidate countries implement reforms necessary for EU membership? Please give examples.

I think the mixed record of the use of conditionality is well-documented now in terms of the EU's ability to apply it consistently and robustly and in terms of the nature of how it has been applied in the pre-accession period within those states that have acceded and are part of the accession process.

It has been effective for those states with a clear incentive and orientation (essentially those that joined in 2004), but less so, for various reasons (related to political complexity but also the lack of robust application of conditionality) for those that joined after that (Croatia being the exception – perhaps a good example of how certain important issues were resolved before final accession).

The New Approach is an indication that the EU is front-loading and placing more emphasis on critical areas of implementation prior to accession for those countries that are now in the accession process, but further '*smarter*' conditionality e.g. stronger monitoring mechanisms based on primary legislation giving the ECJ a role (that is, better legal regulation of enlargement) or longer (& more differentiated) safe-guard clauses – pre- and post- accession - would also help to cultivate a more effective application of conditionality.

Future options and challenges

7. What challenges / opportunities might EU enlargement face in future?

The challenges are numerous. The main ones in general are first, where enlargement might end e.g. what is the basis for making such a judgment? Second, how can enlargement be managed effectively once a decision is made to expand further? Third, what are the practical implications of a potential EU of 35+ members – in terms of an EU governance model, a geopolitical model and a cultural/social model? Connected to this latter issue are challenges that enlargement may bring with it - security, migration flows, economic etc – within an extended EU and beyond the extended borders.

The challenges can also be translated as opportunities – enlargement expands the single market, brings opportunities of exchange in goods, services, people, can

strengthen the EU as an economic and political bloc, can provide further options in relation to key issues such as energy security, can help to create further harmonisation of standards across different sectors that will ensure the functioning of effective markets or more effective combating of cybercrime etc. At a political level it can create a more diverse, open and tolerant EU and provide for a more common understanding of problems, challenges and solutions within Europe.

8. How might the EU's approach to enlargement be improved in future?

A depoliticisation of the process and stronger legal (primary legislation) framework

9. What future impact might EU enlargement have on UK interests? How might any positive impacts be enhanced or disadvantageous impacts be addressed?

As above – opportunities can be enhanced, for example, by cultivating first-mover advantage for UK consumers and business in an expanded EU market, by attracting FDI/new industry to the UK through the incentive of access to the single market, through cultivating political support for UK priorities within an expanded EU etc.

Disadvantageous impacts can be minimised by remaining within the EU as an influential Member State that can shape critical policies on trade, banking, finance, security etc, and through engaging constructively with the institutional mechanisms and community policies that will enhance British and European interests regionally and globally.