



Croatia as the 28th EU Member State : How Did We Get Here and Where Should WE Go From Now ?

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In light of the upcoming signing of the Accession Treaty between the EU and Croatia in December, this article process-traces Croatia's road to EU membership. The article aims at providing the reader with a discussion on the accession negotiations from the perspective of a wider set of events, which have left their mark on EU/Croatian relations during the past decade. The accession is further analyzed in the context of pending challenges that need to be answered for Croatia to become the 28th EU member state.

Croatia began its quest for European Union (EU) membership in 2000 at the Zagreb Summit, where the leadership of Western Balkan countries, Croatia included, and the EU adopted the Declaration of the Zagreb Summit, initiating the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP). The Declaration is noteworthy as it not only confirms the region's rapprochement with the EU, but it also highlights the EU's commitment to support the Western Balkan countries' efforts to consolidate democracy, stability, and economic development. Moreover, the Declaration reaffirms the European perspective of these countries and their status as potential candidates for EU membership, in line with the conclusions reached at the Feira Summit. The Copenhagen European Council reinforced this perspective, and in March 2003, during the Brussels Summit, the EU yet again affirmed that the future of the Western Balkans lies within the European Union. Finally, the conclusions reached at the Thessaloniki EU Council summit formalized the membership prospects for the region and further strengthened the SAP as a key framework for the accession of these countries to the EU. Hence, in the course of a few years, the Western Balkans quickly jumped from being Europe's forgotten region into the spotlight of the EU's enlargement policy, with the well-known mantra of conditionality, plus tailored country strategies and regional co-operation in exchange for *everything including the institutions*ⁱ now being applicable to each country of the region.

From the time of the Zagreb Summit, things have moved relatively swiftly for Croatia, which has confirmed the country's role of a regional frontrunner for EU accession. Whereas Croatia's position towards the EU throughout the 1990s was marked by the narrative of isolation and self-sufficiency, the 2000s opened up the process of integration. Already in the early 2000s, EU accession became the central objective of Croatian foreign policy, being supported by all mainstream political parties in the



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government and the opposition. The political consensus about EU accession as a strategic goal of Croatian foreign policy was formalized in 2002 by the Parliament's "Declaration on the Croatian accession to the European Union." The European Commission has duly recognized the democratization efforts embarked upon by the new coalition government led by Prime Minister Ivica Račan. Moreover, with a somewhat stable economy and exempt from security problems faced by other states in the region, Croatia emerged as an obvious nominee for the post of the EU's protégé in the Western Balkans.

In October 2001, Croatia signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA), which confirmed her status as a potential candidate and provided for a solid basis for the country's further integration with the EU, and which came into force in February 2005. In February 2003, Croatia applied for EU membership. In July 2003, she received the Questionnaire of the European Commission comprised of 4560 questions, on the basis of which the Commission evaluated whether a country qualifies for the initiation of accession negotiations. After the Croatian government submitted its answers to the Questionnaire, the Commission issued a positive Opinion (*Avis*) on the *Application of Croatia for Membership in the EU*. Consequently, Croatia gained candidate status in June 2004, with accession negotiations being opened in October 2005. The negotiations were provisionally closed in June 2011, with accession expected on 1 July 2013, provided that there are no unforeseen complications in the referendum and/or the ratification process.

Despite of a fairly firm commitment to Croatia's EU perspective on both sides of the negotiation table, the necessary harmonization of Croatian institutional structures and political practices with EU rules and norms was an uneasy process. With the accession to the EU becoming the *raison d'être* of the country's external and internal policies, one can hardly contest the argument that for Croatia transition was *de facto* Europeanization. However, the task was complex. Cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was the first stumbling block on the list. This stalled the beginning of the accession negotiations until October 2005. Hence, the negotiations were launched only after Carla del Ponte, at the time chief prosecutor for the ICTY, has confirmed Croatia's full cooperation with the ICTY. Yet, once negotiations were opened and Ante Gotovina, former Croatian army general, was in Scheveningen awaiting trial, new problems emerged.

With regard to the Copenhagen political criteria, the country faced major challenges in the areas of judiciary and human rights protection. Concerning the economic criteria, Croatia was evaluated as a functioning market economy, well integrated with the economy of the European Union. Nonetheless, in 2009, Croatia's economy went into recession, which brought to surface pressing problems of a large public debt and an imbalance in the foreign trade ratio. The ensuing increase in the unemployment rate and cuts in public spending have not only destabilized the country politically, but they have also interfered with the ability of the leadership to comply with some aspects of the accession conditionality, such as privatization and restructuring of large state-owned enterprises in the steel and shipbuilding sectors. As to the



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implementation of the *acquis*, the Commission evaluated that considerable efforts are needed in fourteen out of thirty-five chapters of the *acquis*, among which the most problematic areas were the competition policy and judiciary and fundamental rights. One must not forget that, in comparison to the 2004-2007 enlargement round, accession conditionality was more encompassing and firmer. Vladimir Drobnyak, Chief Negotiator for the accession of Croatia to the EU, portrayed the escalation in the strictness of the accession conditions as follows: "If the previous rounds of negotiations have been hiking, this is professional climbing, without the oxygen."ⁱⁱ

First, in contrast to Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs), Croatia enters the EU alone. Even though all accession negotiations are bilateral and country-specific, the *big bang* enlargement indicated that in the group accession scenario, one's problems quickly become everyone's problems and one's achievements become everyone's achievements. With no one on the horizon to be compared to, Croatia's failures and successes were measured in absolute rather than relative terms.ⁱⁱⁱ Hence, Croatia could not fly under the radar, making every disruption in compliance very visible and very much scrutinized. Similarly, Zagreb could not free-ride on the triumphs of others. Furthermore, in contrast to CEECs, of which, for instance, some coordinated their negotiation activities under the auspices of the Visegrád Group, Croatia carried the administrative burden of negotiations alone. However, being the second country after Greece that joins the EU alone has also worked in Croatia's advantage. Croatia was judged solely on its own merits and was therefore not burdened by the lack of reform progress in other countries and/or insufficient absorption capacity of the EU.

Second, Zagreb was confronted with a new, stricter generation of negotiation rules. These comprised of a set of legal, institutional, and track-record benchmarks for the opening and closing of *acquis* chapters, which in the case of Croatia meant 138 formal benchmarks that needed to be met. Hence, out of a total of thirty-five *acquis* chapters, eleven chapters had benchmarks for opening the negotiations, whereas benchmarks for closing of the negotiations were set for thirty-one chapters. Croatian experts stress that the number of real benchmarks to be met exceeded 400, seeing that many of the benchmarks were divided into sub-categories. Moreover, novelization of the accession negotiations also added an additional chapter on Judicial and Fundamental Rights to the *acquis* package, focusing on the reform of the judicial system, fight against corruption, and respect of fundamental rights; areas which proved to be problematic in both the 2004-2007 accession round and in Croatia. While this chapter (Chapter 23) did not exist in previous enlargement rounds separately, its content was subsumed within the chapter Justice, Freedom and Security.

Third, the EU entered negotiations with Croatia with a firm commitment not to allow political commitments to jeopardize the credibility of conditionality. The Commission and the EU's political elite have strictly avoided giving any potentially premature promises to Croatia, stressing that only a country that is fully ready – as opposed to partially or semi-ready – may join the EU. This position is well reflected in



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statements of the Enlargement and Neighborhood Policy Commissioner Štefan Füle. To illustrate:

"the focus is very much on quality and making Croatia fully ready to take the advantages and also assume the responsibilities that come with membership. Enlarging the EU must mean strengthening the EU."^{iv}

While this new-age conditionality package has enhanced the quality of reforms and added to the credibility of the accession process as a whole, including the final decision on closing the negotiations with Croatia, it has also prolonged the negotiations with the final benefit of accession sometimes seeming very abstract and distant. An increased number of benchmarks and tighter monitoring have transformed the accession process into a very bumpy and turbulent journey with constant ups and downs and a blurry outlook on the final destination. This was often hard to *sell* domestically, which is reflected in a drop of public support for EU accession, although euro-skeptic streams in the political right and left remain marginal.

Besides the troublesome process of absorbing EU conditionality, disagreements with Italy over the property rights of *esuli*^v, the infamous border dispute with Slovenia over the Bay of Piran, and the unexpected resignation of Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, followed by high-level corruption scandals and major reshuffling in the government, also added to the complexity of the accession process.

The situation was not bright for the EU either. On the one hand, the EU wholeheartedly welcomed Croatian efforts to integrate seeing that the suspension of the integration process with Croatia would have sent out a negative message to the rest of the region resulting in the strengthening of euro-skepticism and national extremism. This would have consequently further destabilized the already relatively unstable South East Europe. If the *return to Europe* can be identified as the slogan of the 2004-2007 enlargement, the *stability in the Western Balkans* discourse frames the accession of Croatia. Vladimir Drobnjak argued:

"Croatia is an empirical confirmation that the Thessaloniki Agenda works. That enlargement in the Western Balkans is going on and that it can be a successful story. So Croatia's success and the end result of our negotiations carry much more importance than just for Croatia as future 28th EU member state. It serves as the example for other countries that enlargement is going on, it can be achieved."^{vi}

On the other hand, the accession negotiations with Croatia took place against the background of three major EU crises, each having a spillover effect on the accession process. The institutional crisis after the Dutch *nee* and the French *non* to the Constitution and a troublesome ratification of the Lisbon treaty has sidetracked the EU's attention away from enlargement. In comparison to CEECs, Croatia's accession was never in the center of the spotlight. With the institutional crisis bringing more salient matters out for discussion, Croatia became almost a non-issue.

The financial crisis has further pushed enlargement into the margins of political debates in Brussels. This became very visible during the Czech presidency. Although the Czech Republic identified enlargement as a priority of her presidency agenda, the



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economic decline faced by the member states and the accompanying rise of political instability within the EU has directed the discussions elsewhere. Alexandr Vondra, at the time deputy prime minister of the Czech Republic, argued: "Yes, there is an enlargement fatigue among some member states ... Of course, you know, everybody is now concentrating on the crisis."^{vii} As a consequence of the institutional and the financial crises, the EU became tired of enlargement. The consensus among the political leadership about the need for further enlargement was weakening. Some politicians have been very outspoken against it, calling for a slow-down of the enlargement process or even revocation of the previously made commitments towards the candidate countries. Growing skepticism about the enlargement was further fueled with the shortfalls of the fifth enlargement round floating to the surface. The negative post-accession track of Rumania and Bulgaria in complying and enforcing EU law contributed to an already unfavorable sentiment towards widening. In 2006, David Rennie, a columnist and a well-respected commentator on European matters, concluded: "Europeans are in a funk about enlargement."^{viii} From a historic achievement, integration of further countries into the Union's structure quickly became a public no-no. According to a Eurobarometer survey on the public perception of enlargement, over half of the respondents argued that the accession of Central and Eastern European Countries made the EU more difficult to be managed, contributed to job losses in their country, caused problems because of the divergent cultural traditions in the new member states and led to an increased feeling of insecurity in the EU as a whole.^{ix} This soon grew into the EU's absorption crisis. Stjepan Mesić, former president of Croatia, depicted this difficult process rather bluntly: "The EU is tired of enlargement, but Croatia is also exhausted from transition."^x However, he further stressed that this state of collective fatigue can only be resolved if the enlargement process is fully realized.^{xi} Indeed, with the enlargement as a backbone of many foreign policy strategies in the region, the Union could not afford not to widen. To tackle rising uncertainty about the benefits of enlargement while keeping the commitments made towards the neighbors, Barosso's Commission put forward the Enlargement Strategy of 2005, providing the candidates with a clear set of guidelines on membership conditions. The strategy also consolidated the Union's commitments on enlargement, and highlighted the need for better communication of the enlargement to citizens. Put differently, eager to protect the credibility of the accession criteria, the Commission changed the negotiation strategy from *let in and hope for the best* to *demand tangible results and expect the worst*. Besides the already discussed novelization of the Commission's accession strategy, enlargement was now discussed in the context of the EU's capacity to *absorb* the new members, including significant efforts being invested into communicating enlargement to the citizens of the EU.

For Croatia, this meant paying a toll for the mistakes of others via rigorous application of strengthened accession conditionality coupled with a constant threat of the accession process being blocked due to political turmoil within the EU or any of the member states. As confirmed by president Mesić, even though the process of



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entering the EU from time to time acquired the characteristics of Beckett's absurdist play *Waiting for Godot*, Croatia could not afford not to try. With EU accession now being highly internalized in the domestic political discourse, the costs of failing would have been too high. Plus, there was hardly any alternative.

Therefore, despite of, or perhaps due to, enlargement fatigue, the Commission, by setting out clear criteria via the benchmark methodology and by demanding strict fulfillment of these criteria and credible reforms, did its utmost for conditionality, thus Europeanization via conditionality, to work. Based on a thorough analysis of empirical data, the Commission has designed precise guidelines on how to meet over four-hundred benchmarks and sub-benchmarks, even suggesting the number of people necessary within the state apparatus to manage the individual tasks. In addition to assisting Croatia carry the administrative burden of the reforms, the EU also helped financially. Croatia received around 278.8 million euro from the CARDS programme, while in 2005 and 2006 a total of 252 million euro were available from the PHARE, ISPA and SAPARD funds. Within the IPA programme, the EU has allocated around 900 million euro of financial assistance to Croatia for the period 2007-2012. Hence, besides saying what, the Commission has also said how, and has also, to an extent, paid for it.

On the other hand, Croatia did her utmost to please the Commission. Croatia's political elite and negotiating team have stressed this many times:

"In our negotiating process, which is thirty-five chapters thick, not a single stone shall be left unturned. It is a thorough process that really goes deep into every aspect of society and, in a way, it touches everyone."^{xii}

Furthermore, Europeanization has fastened and fortified democratization processes in Croatia. If it was not for the promise of EU accession, these would perhaps have never happened, or, at least, would only happen after much waiting. The best evidence is the reform of the judiciary system, particularly the fight against corruption, which directly compromises the position of some key societal groups, including the political elite.

In terms of portraying the extent of reforms numerically, the following facts need to be mentioned. About 4,000 people took part in the negotiations on the Croatian side, either as part of the negotiating team or in working groups concerned with individual *acquis* chapters. The Croatian government has sent over 200,000 pages of documents to Brussels; negotiating positions, implementation programs, implementation strategies, implementation reports, etc. Aiming to harmonize Croatian legislation with the EU's one, the Parliament has introduced 375 new laws. Moreover, due to EU accession, Croatia has adopted several amendments to the Constitution, including a change in the law on referendum, making it *easier* for the citizens to say yes to the EU.

The question, however, is whether this has been enough; alternatively, to what extent this has been enough? Hence, on a scale from 1 to 10, to what extent have all the benchmarks, progress reports, negotiations, reforms, and projects implementing these reforms made Croatian politics, economy, society and legislation Europeanized enough



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to be able to join the EU, and, on top of that, to be able to join the EU as a success rather than as a rushed mistake? The Commission and the Council say Croatia is able to join. However, their firm belief in Croatia's preparedness for EU membership has been watered down with the introduction of post-negotiation monitoring, particularly in the area of the judiciary and fundamental rights, competition policy, and the area of justice, freedom, and security.

Hence, when Brussels decided to close the accession negotiations, Croatia became ready to enter, at least from a *de jure* viewpoint. Still, *nothing is agreed until everything is agreed*. For Croatia to move from being a candidate to an acceding state and finally to accede, a couple of very important *ifs* still need to happen. First, signature of the Accession Treaty is awaiting positive opinion of the European Commission, the consent of the European Parliament and finally a positive decision from the Council. Judging from the statements of the Polish presidency, this should happen by the end of December 2011. Although Croatia is holding parliamentary elections at the beginning of December, it is extremely unlikely that these will in any way affect the occasion of signing the Accession Treaty. Once the Treaty is signed, a whole new dimension of challenges is to be tackled. Although this 381 pages long text sets 1 July 2013 as the official date for Croatia's accession to the EU, this is not written in stone.

Hence, the second *if* refers to post-negotiation monitoring. Signing the Accession Treaty triggers a new set of deadlines for the implementation of the accession obligations. These place a set of difficult questions into the spotlight of the political debate; with the matter of how to better deal with the legacy of war crimes and human rights abuses probably being the most publicized one. In an environment where the ICTY's verdicts against generals Gotovina and Markač provoked widespread protests and fierce opposition even from the members of the political elite, the extent to which Croatian society is ready to deal with the legacy of the 1990s is debatable. Moreover, the Parliament has recently adopted a law declaring all legal acts issued by the SFRJ or Serbia and related to the 1991-1995 war, in which Croatian nationals are suspected, indicted or sentenced for war crimes, as null and void. Besides being a major obstacle in the reconciliation process, the law directly jeopardizes relations with neighbouring Serbia. Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that the mentioned legal act was passed in absence of the opposition parties and with major objections from the civil society representatives and some members of the political elite, including the President. It is also relevant to state that even though the Croatian elite objected to the ICTY rulings on crimes committed by the two generals, it has never questioned the legitimacy of the Court.

War legacy aside, the pending reforms in the shipyard and steel industry could intensify the already rising euroscepticism and, in the context of economic recession, provoke revolt among citizens as they center around a reduction of production, ultimately leading to the loss of employment for many. The undertaken commitments concerning privatization and restructuring of six major shipyard companies and one



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steel producer are to ensure production independent of state aid. The agreed model of restructuring further includes a reduction of production capacities and setting production quotas. The shipbuilding sector generates 1.5 % of GDP and employs roughly 25 000 people. As a traditional export-oriented industrial branch, it is responsible for 12 to 15 % of the country's total exports. Accordingly, besides having a positive effect on Croatia's trade balance, the shipbuilding sector is also a relevant factor in the overall economy. However, the shipbuilding industry has been severely affected by the economic recession. In the case of Croatia, this trend has been multiplied by the high degree of state interventionism in the shipbuilding sector. The subsidies have generated extensive social costs burdening the state. Moreover, extensive aid has been utilized to patch the existing holes within the shipbuilding sector, which has, among others, postponed the very much needed restructuring. On the one hand, the risk of further ignoring this problem might trigger an eventual crash of Croatia's centuries-long tradition in shipbuilding. On the other hand, reforms in shipbuilding are growing into a political in addition to an economic matter. Consequently, the social costs of a partial or complete closure of certain companies might be a bite none of the political fractions is willing to take. With privatization carrying the stigma of corruption, money tunneling, and job losses, this is a *hot potato* political parties are resistant to tackle beyond the discourse on improved competitiveness of Croatian industry. The Commission's conditionality vis-à-vis competition policy might therefore serve as a catalyzer for the necessary reforms. A gloomier alternative is that the EU will be scapegoated for the production and job cuts the government would have been forced to make in any case.

Finally, the Commission continues to monitor Croatia's fulfillment of the commitments arising from Chapter 24 on Justice, Freedom and Security. In addition to the Schengen-related measures concerning external border management and judicial and police cooperation in civil and criminal cases, for Croatia, this also means reaching a compromise with Slovenia on the Piran Bay border dispute. The Arbitration Agreement, which is to determine the course of the maritime and land boundary between Slovenia and Croatia in addition to the issue of Slovenia's junction to the High Sea, was signed in 2009 and registered with the United Nations by Prime Ministers Kosor and Pahor in July 2011. This Agreement forbids unilaterally presented accession-related documents to prejudice the Tribunal in the arbitration process. It further commits the parties to the Agreement to refrain from statements and/or actions which might negatively reflect upon the results of the accession process. However, a part of Slovenia's political elite, headed by former Foreign Affairs Minister Dimitry Rupel, has expressed dissatisfaction with the Agreement's provisions. Rupel claims that Slovenia was coerced by the US into an extremely unfavorable compromise. More importantly, the recent fall of Pahor's coalition government after the no-confidence vote might further complicate the matter. The upcoming December elections might mark the return of Janez Janša's Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), with Janša being outspoken about wanting to re-open the border issue with Croatia. Seeing that the



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ratification process will most likely precede the results of the border arbitration, it would not be surprising if the border dispute re-appeared as one of the elements of the debate surrounding the Accession Treaty's ratification. In the worst case scenario, one might expect a re-politicization of the border dispute and a *déjà vu* of the 2009 blockade. Gloomy forecasts aside, the border problem with Slovenia is certainly an example of a case where Croatia's compliance with the accession conditionality is, among others, conditioned by a set of externalities, particularly by political developments within another country.

The same applies to the ratification process in other member states, which is the third big *if* that needs to happen. Considering the extent to which various EU matters have been politicized within the political discourses of individual member states, one may dare to speculate that in the absence of extensive lobbying in favor of Croatia's accession, the actual decision of whether or not to ratify the Accession Treaty may not be based solely on Croatia's performance in complying with the accession obligations. It is a matter of political maturity of both the national and EU elites not to let paroles such as *we don't need another Greece/Romania* and the infamous *le plombier polonais* influence the debate around the ratification. Similarly, a high degree of political maturity is expected from member states' governments in order not to condition the ratification by the advancement of their own national interest. This particularly refers to the already mentioned border dispute with Slovenia, but also to the past intention of the Czech government and President Klaus to combine the voting on Croatia's accession with the voting on a Czech opt-out from certain provisions of the Lisbon Treaty. Although the Czechs have recently accepted the EU's opinion stating that it is not possible to merge the voting on the opt-outs with the ratification vote, experience indicates how easy it is for a member state to look at Croatia from the perspective of domestic political dynamics and/or to subject the accession process to the furthering of national political interests within the EU.

The last *if* regards Croatian citizens. Despite (or maybe because of) the omnipresent EU campaign, the average citizen remains relatively confused about what the EU represents and is increasingly skeptical about the benefits membership in the EU brings. The government's campaign, entitled "*The EU. This is where we belong*", is based on answering the citizens' fifty most imminent questions from a broad spectrum of issues, ranging from agriculture and social policy to EU citizenship and the Euro. However, the campaign fails to tackle the citizens' ambiguity about the EU. First, the campaign was launched only once the accession negotiations were practically completed. Hence, the legitimacy of the accession process was shaken by the lack of transparency in the negotiations. The central government has monopolized all the communication with the EU and about the EU. Consequently, data about what has been agreed upon with Brussels were rare and released selectively, often presenting EU accession as a panacea for all problems the country is facing. The resulting information gaps have been filled with speculation stemming from the media and other societal actors. The citizens were able to learn about the conditions of accession only once the



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negotiations were over. Hence, rather than openly debating the terms of the accession process, the citizens now face Sophie's choice of either saying yes to something they do not fully understand, or, alternatively, saying no to something for what they have been preparing for over ten years. Second, even with all the information now being available to the public, the government continues to prettify the accession by marginalizing the debate on the negative aspects of EU membership. These questions are either treated as non-issues or are quickly balanced out with a wide list enumerating the positive aspects of becoming an EU member. Moreover, the campaign answers citizens' concerns only superficially and it is therefore unable to compensate for the information vacuum generated throughout the negotiations period. *Suma summarum*, although the government has invested significant funds into informing the public about the EU, Croatian citizens' knowledge remains limited. At the same time, the fear of the unknown and resistance to change stand out as key causes of growing distrust in EU institutions and increasing opposition to Croatia's EU accession.

Thus, Croatia will join the EU, subject to the four big *ifs* being fulfilled. Hence, if the Accession Treaty is signed, if Croatia continues to have a positive track record in implementing the accession obligations, if the EU member states ratify the Accession Treaty, and if the citizens of Croatia say yes to EU accession within the upcoming year, Croatia will join in 2013. Due to the existence of these threatening *ifs*, the academia is of course wary of making any predictions about the future. At this point, the literature agrees that Europeanization by conditionality had some impact on Croatia's policies and politics. Yet, it cannot agree on this impact's extent.

Thus, has Croatia been Europeanized enough? Is Zagreb ready? Considering the degree of legislative reforms alone, the country is certainly more prepared now than it was in 2000, at the beginning of the expedition to Brussels. Considering the matter of changing the political culture, big steps have been made, but there is still a lot of work to be done. The problem, however, is that the end target does not look as bright as it did in 2000. To an extent, this is a matter of perspective; when you get close to something, you see it better. However, with the financial crisis severely shaking the very foundations of the European Union, one wonders if it was all worth it or if, maybe, Croatia came to the party late, when everybody was already going home. In 1942, Miroslav Krleža, a prominent Croatian author, argued that the days we have naively dreamt about a golden and mysterious Europe are gone; *Europe lies dead* and we are not naïve children anymore, he concluded.^{xiii} Is history about to repeat?

Suggested reading:

Caratan, Branko. "The European Union, South-Eastern Europe and the Europeanization of Croatia." *Politička misao* 46, no. 5 (2009): 171-80.

Jovic, Dejan. "Croatia and the European Union: a Long Delayed Journey " *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 8, no. 1 (2006): 85-103.



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Petak, Zdravko. "Europeanization and Policy-making in the National Context: The Work of Policy in Croatia." *Political Thought: Croatian Political Science Review*, no. 5 (2006): 61-75.

Samardžija, Višnja, and Mladen Staničić. "Croatia on the Path towards the EU: Conditionality and Challenge of Negotiations." *Croatian International Relations Review* 10, no. 36/37 (2004): 1-14.



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The author refers to Prodi's 2002 speech at the launching of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). The former president of the Commission outlined the EU's policy towards the neighboring countries to offer the same treatment and economic benefits of EU membership, *except for the institutions*, hence, the membership itself. Adopting an analogy, the author highlights that in contrast to other neighboring regions, the Western Balkans have, in addition to economic integration and financial assistance, also received the membership perspective.

Dnevnik, *Ispunili smo više od 400 mjerila* (Zagreb: Hrvatska radiotelevizija, 2011). (translated from the original)

It is noteworthy to mention that although Croatia failed to enjoy the benefits and feel the disadvantages of the big bang enlargement during the actual negotiations for the accession, being compared to other countries of the Western Balkans has worked to Croatia's advantage on the level of political discourse.

Georgi Gotev, "Interview with Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Commissioner Štefan Füle. Füle: 'I'm Enjoying Every Minute of my Work as Commissioner'," *EurActive* 2010, : 2.

Following World War II, large number of ethnic Italians fled from the Istrian peninsula, the City of Rijeka, and Dalmatia to Italy. Whereas in Yugoslavia these people were referred to as *optati*, the choosers, they refer to themselves as *esuli*, the exiles. The exact number of people that have left as well as the motives for leaving remain a matter of historical debate. In 1975 Yugoslavia and Italy signed the Treaty of Osimo where Yugoslavia agreed to pay compensation for the exiles' property confiscated after the war in Zone B of the Free Territory of Trieste. After the break-up of Yugoslavia, Slovenia and Croatia, as successor countries, obliged to divide the remaining debt among themselves. The matter remains a subject of dispute between Italy and Croatia.

Vladimir Drobnjak, *Speech Delivered at Conference Global Europe - European Policy Summit. A Balkans Balance Sheet* (Brussels Friends of Europe/Les amis de l'Europe 2008).

ⁱ Elitsa Vucheva, "Financial Crisis Slowing Enlargement, Prague Warns," *EUobserver* 2009, : 2.

ⁱⁱ David Rennie, "A Case of Enlargement Fatigue: Hostility to Expansion of the European Union Reflects Displaced Fears of Globalisation" *The Economist*, May 11 2006, 1.

"Flash Eurobarometer 257: Views on European Union Enlargement Summary," (Brussels DG Enlargement 2009).

Stjepan Mesić, "Strategije na putu prema europskoj integraciji i politička transformacija u Jugoistočnoj Europi. Uvodni govor g. Stjepan: Mesića, predsjednika Republike Hrvatske," in *International Forum of the Bertelsmann Foundation: South-East Europe on the Way to the EU* (Zagreb: Bertelsmann Foundation, 2005).

Stjepan Mesić. "Makedonski predsjednik u službenom posjetu Hrvatskoj." Zagreb Ured Predsjednika Republike Hrvatske 2009.

ⁱ Drobnjak, *Speech Delivered at Conference Global Europe - European Policy Summit. A Balkans Balance Sheet*.

ⁱⁱ Miroslav Krleža, *Dnevnik 1933. - 1942*. (Sarajevo Oslobođenje, 1977).