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The EU membership processes of Romania and Bulgaria relative to Turkey?

Abstract

Bulgaria and Romania joined the European Union in 2007 as part of the EU's sixth enlargement wave. However, the problems concerning Bulgaria and Romania, such as their struggle with economic problems, are still on the agenda. That both countries are full members of the EU has begun to be debated within and outside Europe since both states are regarded as among the weakest countries in the EU. At the same time, this situation has brought forth the question concerning Turkey's accession. Even though Bulgaria and Romania have been accepted into the European Union, Turkey's application to the Union has been held in abeyance for a long time. Recognising that Turkey's accession process is currently frozen, and indeed that some EU member states are in opposition, the article considers the reasons why Bulgaria and Romania were accepted as EU members, drawing on a series of European Commission reports. It uses this official analysis to prompt a debate as to whether, and in which areas, Turkey needs to make a change in its foreign policy discourse and in the type of relationship it wants with the EU.

Keywords: *Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, European Union, full membership*

Introduction

With Bulgaria and Romania becoming members of the European Union in 2007, the borders of the European Union reached to the Black Sea as (Phinnemore, 2009). They negotiated alongside the ten new EU member states acceding in 2004, but they only joined the EU in 2007 due to issues related to their economies, and specifically bribery and corruption. After the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, two of the weakest economies in the EU, some debates began to arise that the EU had made the wrong decision (Spendzharova and Vachudova 2012; Bilefsky 2017). These two countries have taken important steps on the way of eliminating corruption and economic difficulties, but there remains a long way to go in finding a complete solution in these problem areas (Crombois 2017).

Turkey is a more developed country than Bulgaria and Romania in terms of its economy and other issues, but Bulgaria and Romania have made decent progress in terms of reforms. Despite their ongoing problems, the prospect and then the actuality of EU membership has developed these two countries both before and after 2007 (UNDP 2007: 229).

On the other hand, Turkey does not fully meet the criteria to enter the membership process in full. Actually, it is hampered by issues such as the Cyprus problem

and restrictions on human rights and other fundamental rights and freedoms. At the same time, however, Turkey has not received the support that it is due from the EU as a candidate country owing to its own domestic problems. Indeed, over time, the EU has moved away from Turkey's membership process due to its own ongoing debate about whether negotiations with Turkey should continue (Aslan 2017).

From this point of view, this study will try to examine the process of membership with a focus on Bulgaria and Romania, discussing developments in the negotiation process of Bulgaria and Romania and comparing this with Turkey. The full membership of Bulgaria and Romania caused controversy in Turkey as it is believed that Turkey is in a much better economic position than these countries as regards GDP, the level of the minimum wage and the dimensions of its exports and imports. At the same time, and despite some progress being made, there are domestic problems applying in all three states such as concern over judicial independence, the development of democracy, the rule of law, corruption and organised crime. Above all, while Romania and Bulgaria continue on their path as full EU members, Turkey is still struggling for full membership and, in consequence, the EU is regarded as applying a double standard towards Turkey (T.C. Başbakanlık Basın ve Enformasyon Genel Müdürlüğü 2017).

In the context of its domestic problems, this study acknowledges that Turkey is lacking in the EU accession process. When we examine human development reports, we can see that Bulgaria and Romania are at a more advanced stage than Turkey. So EU indications that Turkey needs to make reforms to overcome these shortcomings seems not to be unhelpful in terms of the membership process. Nevertheless, our study uses primary sources, such as country progress reports, country reports, human development reports and strategy expansion documents. In addition to these, our work will also benefit from the use of secondary sources.

A general comparison of Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey

Bulgaria is the sixteenth largest country in Europe. After the domination of the socialist economy in the administration of the state, the country experienced a very severe economic depression during the 1990s due to the loss of the Soviet market after the disintegration of the eastern bloc and the articulation problems of the capitalist economy. However, the Bulgarian economy has been one of the fastest-growing economies among European countries in its recovery period since the end of the 90s (Watkins and Deliso 2017).

The Bulgarian economy operates according to free market conditions, open to the public, moderately developed by the private sector, and with a few strategic state enterprises. The World Bank regards the Bulgarian economy as among upper middle income economies. Its GDP was €39.9bn in 2013 (World Bank 2017), with a per capita level of €5 500. Accordingly, Bulgaria is ranked 54th among 144 countries surveyed in the 2014-15 Global Competitiveness Report produced by the World Economic Forum (World Economic Forum 2014: 20-22).

Additionally, Bulgaria ranks 38th in the World Bank's list of *Doing Business 2015* on the basis of the inclusion of 189 countries (World Bank 2014: 94).

When we look at exports for 2013, we can see that EU member countries and neighbouring Balkan countries, including Turkey, are dominant. In 2013, Germany became the largest export partner of Bulgaria. Turkey, meanwhile, is Bulgaria's second largest export partner. Italy, Romania and Greece are the other major partner countries in Bulgaria's exports. In terms of imports, Turkey takes fifth place, with the Russian Federation taking first place. Other major partner countries concerning imports are Germany, Italy and China (European Commission 2011: 1-5).

Bulgaria's development is also reflected in the UNDP's Human Development Reports. According to the Human Development Report published in 2002, Bulgaria was seen as a country settled in 62nd place, being moderately advanced. This rate increased in the following years. For example, in the Human Development Report published in 2005, Bulgaria ranked 55th and gained the status of highly-developed (UNDP 2005: 220). In the 2007 report, when it became a full member of the EU, Bulgaria rose to 53rd (UNDP 2007: 229).

Romania, a country located in the south-east of central Europe, had a GDP of $179.79bn in 2011 (International Monetary Fund 2017). When this figure is divided by the population of the country and calculated according to purchasing power parity, per capita GDP is $8 785. Some 0.41 per cent of the population lives on less than $1.25 a day. On the other hand, Romania's gross external debt to GDP ratio is 38.6 per cent (Eurostat 2017a), a ratio which negatively affects the country's credit rating.

Romania has rich agricultural lands and a wide range of agricultural products, although the agricultural sector is still developing slowly in comparison with other EU member countries. Low productivity and agricultural plots being small and fragmented are among the problems in this sector (Timofti, Popa and Kielbasa 2015: 345-356). Additionally, the downsizing experienced in the construction industry has been influenced by labour migration. In response to these developments, Romania demanded a package of $26bn of assistance from the IMF and other international organisations. In this direction, the IMF recommended Romania take measures to ensure public fiscal discipline and, by 2010, there was a 1.3 per cent contraction (International Monetary Fund 2017).

When we look at Romanian foreign trade figures, it is possible to talk about the existence of a steady increase in trade volumes since liberalisation. Foreign trade volume, which was $10.5bn in 1992, reached $111.4bn by 2010. Despite periodic ups and downs, the foreign trade volume of the country thus increased about ten times over twenty years (World Trade Organization 2017). This is reflected in Human Development Reports. Romania, ranked 63rd in the Human Development Report published in 2002, held the status of moderately-developed country (UNDP 2002: 39). This rate changed in the period of membership of the EU, with Romania rising to 60th place in 2007 (UNDP 2007: 229).

Turkey, Romania's and Bulgaria's neighbour and their important partner, occupies an important geostrategic position thanks to its location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Turkey ranks 17th in terms of GDP, with an economy sized at $857.7bn, while it is a founding member of the OECD and G20 economic communities (Zdanowski 2014: 11). Turkey's exports in 2014 were $157.6bn, up four per cent on the previous year. The countries most exported to were Germany, Iraq, the United

Kingdom, Italy and France (European Commission 2017c). However, same-year imports totalled $242.2bn, resulting in a foreign trade deficit of $84.5bn. This figure had been $99.8bn in the previous year. In 2014, Turkey's major import partner was the People's Republic of China, followed by Germany, Russia and the United States (Turkish Statistical Institute 2017).

Turkey's successful economic performance and its young population and trained workforce, alongside its liberal and reformist investment environment, highly-developed infrastructure, advantageous geographic position, low tax rates, incentives and wide internal market, and its customs union with the EU from 1996, have provided significant opportunities for foreign investors (OSCE 2017).

Turkey has become one of the world's leading investment centres, thanks to the large-scale removal of bureaucratic obstacles, the provision of improvements in the tax system, the support of profit transfers and successful privatisation programmes. However, Turkey's situation in Human Development Reports is worse than Romania and Bulgaria (UNDP 2002: 39). In the Human Development Report published in 2002, Turkey was ranked 84th (UNDP 2002: 45) and similarly 85th in 2007 (UNDP 2007: 229).

Bulgaria and its EU membership talks

On 8 May 1990, improving relations between Bulgaria and the EU saw the introduction of the Trade, Business and Economic Relations Convention, while the existing PHARE programme was also extended to Bulgaria. In October 1990, the Bulgarian parliament announced that it had set as its main goal becoming a full member of the EU and signing a European Agreement (Velichkova 2011: 62). The EU decided to begin negotiations with Bulgaria in January 1991. The first negotiations on the partnership agreement between the two sides began on 14-15 May 1992. At the end of seven meetings, a decision was reached and, on 8 March 1993, the Interim Europe Agreement on Trade and Related Matters was signed (Tsachevsky 2000: 2).

The EU set down its Copenhagen Criteria as a result of the meetings it held to develop relations with eastern European countries. At this summit, the EU determined its strategy on enlargement and it was decided that new member states must fulfil these criteria. Meanwhile, negotiations on political dialogue between Bulgaria and the EU began and the Transitional Agreement began to have a positive effect (Novotna 2007: 54).

In January 1994, the Additional Protocol to the Europe Agreement was signed and the EU began to recognise unilateral economic privileges for Bulgaria. On 14 April 1994, the Bulgarian government adopted a declaration that it should become a full member of the EU. On 24 November 1994, Bulgaria and other partner countries were invited to participate in the EU Declaration on Foreign Policy and Security Issues in the context of the positive steps taken by Bulgaria and other states (European Commission 2017a).

On 29 May 1995, Bulgarian and EU officials met in Brussels and discussed the EU integration strategy, regional co-operation and free movement policies. On 6-8 September 1995, the EU Parliamentary Committee was established in Sofia and issues discussed such as trade and economic relations between the two sides, co-opera-

tion in the fields of justice and home affairs and the performance of the PHARE programme (European Commission 2017a).

Positive steps were taken as a result of the EU's encouragement and Bulgaria made a full membership application to the EU on 14 December 1995. After the application, the European Commission announced its opinion on 15 July 1997. In the Agenda 2000 Report, Bulgaria was considered to be a candidate country, albeit in a second group, but that it was not yet ready to begin accession negotiations (European Commission 1997: 95). At the Luxembourg Summit, the EU was expected to start accession negotiations with Hungary, Poland, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Cyprus; while Bulgaria, Lithuania, Slovakia and Romania were kept in the waiting room (European Parliament 2017a). The Bulgarian Council of Ministers adopted the National Strategy for Participation in the EU on 23 March 1998 (Müftüler-Baç and Çiçek 2015: 8-9).

On 4 November 1998, the EU published its first Progress Report on Bulgaria in accordance with which it continued to apply the European Convention and exerted intensive efforts towards visa liberalisation. The EU became the largest trading partner in Bulgaria, with a trade volume of 43 per cent in 1997, rising to 44.7 per cent in 1999 and 52.1 per cent in 2001. The Customs authority received financial assistance of €53m within the scope of Bulgaria PHARE; €83m within the scope of SAPARD (Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development) and €125m under the scope of ISPA (Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession). Bulgaria began to participate in many programmes, such as nuclear security and public reform (European Commission 1998a: 46-48).

At the Helsinki Summit held on 10-11 December 1999, the EU decided to start negotiations with Bulgaria and negotiations began on 15 February 2000. In October 2001, 21 chapters were negotiated between the EU and Bulgaria (European Parliament 1999: 1-10). By 2002, the European Commission had prepared a roadmap that included what Bulgaria needed to do to become a full member of the EU and setting out the obligations which Bulgaria had to undertake in order to become a full member (European Commission 2000a: 1-6). On the other hand, 22 negotiation chapters between Bulgaria and the EU were provisionally closed and, in 2003, 26 of 31 chapters were provisionally closed. According to the 2003 Progress Report on Bulgaria, the country was continuing to complete the Copenhagen Political Criteria while it emphasised that the implementation of public reforms would accelerate Bulgaria's accession. Meanwhile, the biggest problem highlighted for Bulgaria during this period was corruption. Bulgaria had, however, made significant progress both in regulating monetary policy and in the development of the domestic market since it had delivered macroeconomic stability (European Commission 2003: 121-124).

In 2004, Bulgaria was highlighted as continuing to fulfil the political criteria of democracy, human rights and rule of law, and had made significant progress in areas such as public administration and judiciary. Major reforms had also been made in the fight against corruption, but the problem remained. In spite of all this, Bulgaria provisionally closed all 31 chapters negotiated in 2004 (European Commission 2004: 139-143). In December 2004, accession negotiations with the EU were successfully concluded and, in April 2005, the Accession Treaty was signed (Bechev 2009). On 1

January 2007, Bulgaria became a full member of the EU (Nikolova and Nikolaev 2016: 6-8).

Romania and its EU membership talks

Romania had been the first country in central and eastern Europe with which the EU established relations. The first Agreement was superseded in 1991 by a Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement which, in turn, was succeeded by a Europe Agreement (Association Agreement for accession to the EU), signed on 1 February 1993 and which entered into force on 1 February 1995 (European Commission 2017b). This Agreement aimed at gradually establishing a free trade area, yet this was already put into effect by means of an Interim Agreement signed at the same time and which helped to boost trade and create a suitable climate for expanding bilateral economic relations (European Commission 2017b). In other words, institutional and diplomatic relations between the two sides began to develop with this Agreement and a decision was made between the two sides to make a free trade agreement. On 22 June 1995, Romania submitted its application for full membership, with the European Commission announcing its Opinion on 15 July 1997. This report emphasised that Romania had taken positive steps towards meeting the Copenhagen political criteria, although development was lacking in privatisation, competition, economic policies and alignment with the EU acquis. Nevertheless, the EU's view of Romania was positive (Încalțărău and Maha 2013: 76).

1998 saw the commencement of a partnership for membership preparations. The financial assistance provided by the EU for adaption to the EU was presented in a National Programme. In this context, financial aid was used to improve the environment and agriculture. In the 1998 Progress Report, Romania was identified as having fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria but that it needed to fight against corruption and pay more attention to the judicial system and to fundamental rights and freedoms. On the other hand, it was stated that little progress had been made in the market economy and that competition capacity had, for this reason, fallen (European Commission 1998b: 3-4).

Candidate country status was gained at the Luxembourg Summit. At the Helsinki Summit held on 10-11 December 1999, it was decided to start negotiations with Romania, these getting underway on 15 February 2000. In the 1999 Progress Report, the volume of trade between the EU and Romania was identified as 57.5 per cent, while concessions were granted in the field of agriculture to increase this further. However, it was emphasised that human rights and other fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as child care issues, were still missing and should be completed. Additionally, problems were observed in the judicial system, the fight against corruption, discrimination and the market economy, with the need identified to complete these issues as soon as possible. Macroeconomic and financial problems have also increased as a result of the problems in the market economy, while the lack of stability in economic issues reduced Romanian exports (European Commission 1999: 5-10).

In the Progress Report published in 2000, it was highlighted that Romania had a well-educated population of 22.6m, good potential with significant tracts of agricul-

tural land and strong industrial growth. But the underlying problems still continued, among which observable progress in democracy and the rule of law had occurred despite the country's complicated political decision-making process. Furthermore, an extensive bureaucracy in the country was regarded as reducing the efficiency of its management: for example, only 59 of the 453 draft laws and ordinances submitted to parliament in 1999 had been accepted by the end of the year. This situation also damaged macroeconomic development as it had slowed down privatisation. High inflation in the country had also seriously affected social development. At the same time, the excesses of corruption had also negatively affected the country's political, economic and legal processes. But despite all these observations, the situation in Romania was not regarded with pessimism: positive steps had been taken in terms of law, competition and transportation (European Commission 2000b: 8-13).

In the following years, despite Romania acting in line with the European Treaty and the EU *acquis*, these problems continued to persist. For example, the 2001 Progress Report highlighted that parliament needed to make significant efforts towards increasing the influence of the legislative body and the judiciary, along with other policy areas such as human trafficking, child protection, the market economy and macroeconomic stability, while still requiring to work hard on export restrictions, high inflation, government weakness and competition. With these problems coming together, private sector development in Romania was noted as having slowed (European Commission 2001: 10-17).

The publication of the 2003 Accession Partnership Document and associated roadmap was designed to ensure adequate progress towards full membership. In this period, it was emphasised that proper harmonisation with the EU *acquis* had been underway since 1997, with 13 chapters having been provisionally closed. Further, if development in Romania continued in this way, it was foreseen that it would become a full member of the EU in 2007 (Eur-Lex 2017a).

In 2004, all the chapters related to the accession negotiations were closed and the accession treaty was prepared. Significant progress had been made in the areas of judicial reform, the fight against corruption, money laundering and combating organised crime and, in April 2005, the accession treaty was signed. In this context, Romania became a full member of the EU on 1 January 2007 (EUR-Lex 2017b).

Turkey and the EU membership negotiation process

Turkey-EU relations, which started with the application for associate membership made by Turkey on 31 July 1959, gained a legal basis through the Ankara Agreement signed on 12 September 1963. The preparation period of Turkey-EU relations was planned to be carried out in three periods known as preparation, transition and final period.

According to the Ankara Agreement, the preparation period would last up to the ratification of the Additional Protocol in 1973. It was envisaged that the preparatory period would last for five years, which could be extended to eleven years if an extension was requested. It was planned that Turkey would not be under any obligations during the preparation period and that the EU would apply tariff quotas to some agricultural products with financial assistance (Özen 1998: 193).

The transition period was the second phase and was not expected to last more than twenty years. During this period, a joint Association Council would approve the beginning of the transition period by examining the economic situation of Turkey and, if necessary and subject to sufficient progress, by implementing the Additional Protocol. Turkey would undertake obligations based on the principle of reciprocity and equilibrium in this period (Kılıç 2006: 19).

The basis of the final period as regards the official statements was envisaged as a customs union and economic policy co-ordination between Turkey and EU, which had to be established and strengthened (Arıkan 2006: 72).

The transitional period was approved in the Turkish Grand National Assembly on 5 July 1971 and in the Senate on 22 July 1971 and was enacted on 1 September 1971. Later, after ratification of the Protocol in member states' parliaments, this was put into effect on 1 January 1973 (Atacan 2009: 51-52).

The final period was envisaged to commence with the establishment of a customs union. This, eventually, resulted from a decision by the Association Council, adopted on 5 March 1995 and entering into force on 1 January 1996.

However, a departure from the Ankara Agreement had been realised on 14 April 1987 with Turkey's presentation of its application for full membership of the Community (Pehlivan 2008: 15). The Commission adopted its Opinion on this on 18 December 1989.

The Commission decided that, as a result of both economic and political reasons, starting negotiations with Turkey immediately would not be useful. The Commission also noted the negative effects of the poor relations between Greece and Turkey, particularly their conflict over Cyprus, although it believed that the Community should continue to co-operate with Turkey taking into account the general opening of this country towards Europe. The Commission also acknowledged that the Community had a fundamental interest in intensifying relations with Turkey and in helping it complete its political and economic modernisation process as soon as possible (Kunilholm 2001: 1). On 5 February 1990, the Council approved the general content of the Commission's Opinion and asked it to provide detailed proposals to develop the ideas expressed in the Opinion on the need for a strengthening of relations with Turkey. On 7 June 1990, the Commission adopted a series of proposals set out in the Matutes Package, including the completion of the customs union, the resumption and intensification of financial co-operation, the development of industrial and technical co-operation and the strengthening of political and cultural ties (Arıkan 2006: 72). This package was, however, not approved by the Council.

On 6 March 1995, the Association Council decided to move the customs unions into the final stage as had been envisaged under the Ankara Agreement and to restart financial co-operation. The Council also decided to increase co-operation in various sectors, strengthen institutional co-operation and intensify the political dialogue. On 13 December 1995, the European Parliament approved the customs union, with the decision on the last stage of the customs union entering into force on 31 December 1995 (Atacan 2009: 51-52).

Agenda 2000, adopted on 15 July 1997, gave an assessment of Turkey's economic and political situation. This document also concluded that Turkey should provide

a strong commitment to resolving a number of issues in the region and actively contribute to a just and lasting settlement of the Cyprus problem (Kramer 1996: 68-70). Agenda 2000 stated that the EU should continue to support Turkey in its efforts to tackle its problems and, at this point, it should be noted, to establish closer ties with the EU (European Commission 1997: 77-79).

The European Commission also recommended that Turkey be assisted in its efforts to improve the human rights situation. In this framework, the Commission prepared a preliminary draft proposal on co-operation with the Turkish authorities and non-governmental organisations to support the efforts of the Turkish authorities to increase respect for human rights and the rule of law, although the Turkish authorities did not immediately act on this proposal. The Luxembourg European Council of December 1997 confirmed, at the highest level, the prospect of Turkey's accession to the European Union. The Heads of State and Government also decided to create a strategy for bringing Turkey closer to the European Union and to prepare it for participation (European Parliament 1997: 7), with details as follows in each area: improvement of the possibilities of the strategy set out in the Ankara Agreement; strengthening the customs union; implementation of financial co-operation; the approximation of laws and the adoption of the Union's *acquis*; and participation in specific programmes and institutions decided on separately in each individual case. The EU Council also noted that Turkey would be invited to participate in European discussions on the same basis as other applicant countries.

Turkey reacted negatively to the conclusions of the European Council, thinking that discriminatory treatment had been made in comparison to the other applicant countries. Ankara stated that it would not attend further discussions and that, in its political dialogue with the Union, it no longer wanted to discuss issues with it such as relations with Greece (Maresceau 2006: 324-343).

As requested by the European Council at the Luxembourg Summit, the European Commission adopted the first functional proposals of the European Strategy to prepare Turkey for membership on 4 March 1998, a package which was subsequently welcomed at the Cardiff EU Council in June 1998 (European Council 2017). The Council pointed out, when taken as a whole, that this Strategy provided a platform for the development of relations on a sound and evolutionary basis. The Council of the European Union invited the Commission to develop the strategy further, including on the submission of proposals for its effective implementation. The Strategy was intended to be enriched over time, taking into account the views of Turkey. The Council also invited the Presidency, the Commission and the relevant Turkish authorities to pursue the objective of the harmonisation of the legislation and practice of Turkey with the Community *acquis* and requested the Commission to report to an early meeting of the Association Council on the progress achieved. Recalling the need for financial support for the European Strategy, the European Council noted the Commission's intention to think about the ways and means of supporting the implementation of the European Strategy and to submit proposals for this purpose. Turkey's attempts to strive for candidate country status was realised with formal recognition by the EU at the Helsinki Summit held on 10-11 December 1999 (Özal 2010: 349).

Consequently, the beginning of the 2000s was one of the most important periods in Turkey-EU relations. Despite corruption, the rule of law, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and the Copenhagen political criteria still presenting problems of compatibility, promising work began on these issues. Turkey undertook many reforms within the context of alignment with the EU and the Brussels Summit on 16-17 December 2004 decided to start negotiations on 3 October 2005 (European Council 2004: 1-28).

Turkey's EU membership process continued in a good way, but the Cyprus problem worsened relations in 2006, with the global economic crisis from 2008, and the Arab Spring from 2010, seeing both Turkey and the EU withdrawing into their shell. For this reason, relations between the two sides have come to the point of stagnation (Icener and Phinnemore 2014). During this time, negotiations on eight chapters were frozen in accordance with the recommendation of the European Commission, which also said no chapters were to be closed pending a resolution to the dispute over Cyprus. This situation led to the negative development of relations between Turkey and the EU (Karluk 2013: 463-464). Interestingly, neither event stopped other chapters being opened.

Nevertheless, in the Enlargement Strategy Document published in 2011, it was pointed out that Turkey-EU relations were so bad as a result of the current problems that a revitalisation strategy was required. In this context, the two sides came together to resolve the existing problems and breathe new life into the process, as a result of which the European Commission published the Positive Agenda in 2012 (European Council 2011: 9). The scope of the Positive Agenda aimed at a revitalisation of Turkey-EU relations and a continuation of the negotiation process.

This represents an important movement between the two sides within the scope of the aims of the Positive Agenda. However, neither Turkey nor the EU has achieved the desired outcome. In the process of negotiations, Turkey has so far been able to open 16 chapters and as provisionally closed only one (Science and Research). Recent tensions between Turkey and the EU, and Turkey's own restructuring process, have been seen as impeding the development of relations and the continued progress of negotiations (Bohler, Pelkmans and Selcuki 2012: 12). In addition, there are also debates about an end to Turkey's membership negotiations with the EU.

On 15 July 2016, a group of soldiers lost their lives and many people were injured in an attempted *coup d'état*, after which the government declared a three-month state of emergency, then extended this for a further three months. During this period, many people were taken into custody, numerous arrests and expulsion decisions were made and many institutions were shut down (Aslan 2017).

EU officials condemned the coup attempt, albeit not in the way that the government expected, calling on the Turkish authorities to respect the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right of all individuals concerned to a fair trial; and outlining that the parliament and all forces represented in the democratic institutions of the country should play their constitutional role in full. At the same time, in terms of the justification given by the government for its measures, the EU urged 'restraint' alongside continued respect for democratic institutions (Dalay 2017).

Drawing on the warnings of the EU, and critical of the government's 'disproportionate repressive measures', the European Parliament adopted in November 2016 a resolution on the suspension of accession negotiations with Turkey (European Parliament, 2017b). The resolution, which also pledged to re-evaluate the process were a constitutional regime to be re-established in Turkey, saw the President and government officials react angrily and threaten to tear up the recently-agreed migration pact.

Conclusion

Bulgaria and Romania, the most important Balkan countries, have been full members of the EU since 1 January 2007, meeting the criteria to establish such a relationship with the EU. Full membership of the EU has improved the two countries in economic, political, social and cultural terms. The fruits of all these can be seen in the UNDP Human Development Reports.

In addition to Bulgaria and Romania fulfilling the criteria for full membership, it was also easy for the EU to absorb them given the size of their populations, since less-populous Romania and Bulgaria will have no significant impact on the EU's decision-making mechanisms. For this reason, it is easier for both these countries to be accepted as EU members and to become integrated into the EU.

However, it is not as easy for the EU to integrate Turkey, which has a population of 79m, the majority of which is Muslim. In countries like Germany, France and Austria, Turks and Muslims live in quite densely-focused areas rather than being spread out. In other words, these states have not fully integrated them in their own countries. For example, the French authorities have said that Muslims living in France do not live like French or European citizens, and are insistent on trying to maintain their own culture, and that they therefore have a problem with integration. In this situation, if Turkey becomes a full member of the EU, discussions about EU integration, including institutional, political, economic and cultural issues, will arise. For this reason, some groups within the EU do not look positively on the full EU membership of Turkey, even were all the conditions to be fulfilled.

Economically, Turkey is the 17th largest economy in the world, whereas Romania is the 44th and Bulgaria the 62nd. Romania and Bulgaria quickly completed the criteria for full membership of the EU and closed their negotiating chapters. Turkey, on the other hand, has not been able to make progress due to problems such as Cyprus, as well as human rights, democracy, the rule of law and the economy. This situation has created both a trust problem and a reluctance between the two sides to engage in full. Nevertheless, Turkey continues to maintain full membership of the EU as a state policy.

Until recently, relations between Turkey and the EU have continued in a determined way. However, on 15 July 2016, the treacherous coup attempt in Turkey saw a deterioration in the relationship between the two sides and, after the European Parliament's resolution in November 2016, the association has reached freezing point.

Furthermore, countries such as Germany, France, Austria and the Netherlands oppose the full membership of Turkey in the EU. Against this background, Turkey has said that the EU is applying a double standard to it and that, despite Bulgaria and

Romania becoming members of the EU, even though Turkey has done everything in its power to become a member, it has still not been able to do so. The EU would take increase its position in terms of global power were it to admit Turkey to membership. However, given the size of its population – it is second only to Germany in terms of population size – Turkey would have a significant influence in terms of EU decision-making structures. Consequently, the EU is implementing the pretext of religion and problems such as inability to integrate to oppose Turkey's membership. At this point, it seems difficult for Turkey to become a full member of the EU.

For this reason, Turkey needs to be more pragmatic in its relations with the EU, and it should consider the issue of whether it still wants to pursue a policy of full membership of the EU. It would, perhaps, be more beneficial for Turkey's national interest to continue its relations with the EU by taking Norway, Iceland and Switzerland, rather than Bulgaria and Romania, as its example in discussions on the relationship it wants to have with the EU.

Turkey should continue to progress in line with the EU's values and criteria because, from 1959 up until 2017, Turkey has developed significantly, both economically and politically, in line with the EU's values and criteria. Seeking a continuing relationship between the two sides in the Norwegian, Icelandic or Swiss model, outside of the goal of full membership, will prevent neither the development nor the implementation of western-style foreign policy. On the contrary, political imperatives such as accepting the Armenian Genocide and recognising Cyprus, imposed on it as membership criteria, will be taken out of the equation. If such a change in its foreign policy is possible, Turkey will be able to generate a more comfortable and bold foreign policy towards the EU.

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