

## Accession of Turkey to the European Union—A Question of Advantage?

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### Abstract:

On October 25, 2005 the European Union (EU) has started negotiations with Turkey about a possible accession. Within the scope of the controversially discussed topic, there is one main question: What effect would the perceived wealth oriented advantages and disadvantages have on a possible accession of a further country with regard to EU citizens' forming of opinion? In view of the results of the existing analysis, one can assume that on one hand there is a mainly advantage-oriented approach concerning candidate countries – as is Turkey. On the other hand, the willingness to accept new members is also influenced by the duration and the advantage taken of the own EU-Membership – differentiated by country groups.

**Key words:** European Union; Enlargement; EU

accession of Turkey; Public opinion

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### INTRODUCTION

A possible accession of Turkey to the European Union is an intensely discussed topic. The discussion is affected by political, cultural, economic and historical aspects (Deutsche Bank Research, 2004). The latest ascertainment, commissioned by the European Commission - Directorate General Communication, based on the public opinion of the EUROBAROMETERS 66, has detected eight criteria for an accession of Turkey to the European Union (Eurobarometer 66, 2006). These criteria are reaching from the geographical and historical affiliation of Turkey to the economic situation of Turkey (Eurobarometer 66, 2006):

**Table 1**  
**Criteria for a Possible Accession of Turkey to the EU**

Criteria		
Commerce & Prosperity	State & Society	History & Geography
Criterion 8: "To join the EU within next 10 years, Turkey has to improve its economic situation considerably"	Criterion 3: "The accession of Turkey to the EU would improve safety in this region"	Criterion 2: "Turkey partially belongs to Europe because of its history"
Criterion 6: "The accession of Turkey to the EU would increase the danger of immigration into the countries of the EU"	Criterion 7: "To be welcome in the EU, Turkey has to respect human rights"	Criterion 1: "Turkey partially belongs to Europe because of its geographical position"
Criterion 5: "The accession of Turkey to the EU would help to rejuvenate the Community's aging population"	Criterion 4: "For a successful accession of Turkey to the EU the cultural differences between EU-25 and Turkey are too strong"	

Note. Own illustration, based on Eurobarometer 66 (2006)

Judging by the first view, it seems that a summarization of eight criteria is hardly possible. However, on closer examination one can see that similarities allow to assign

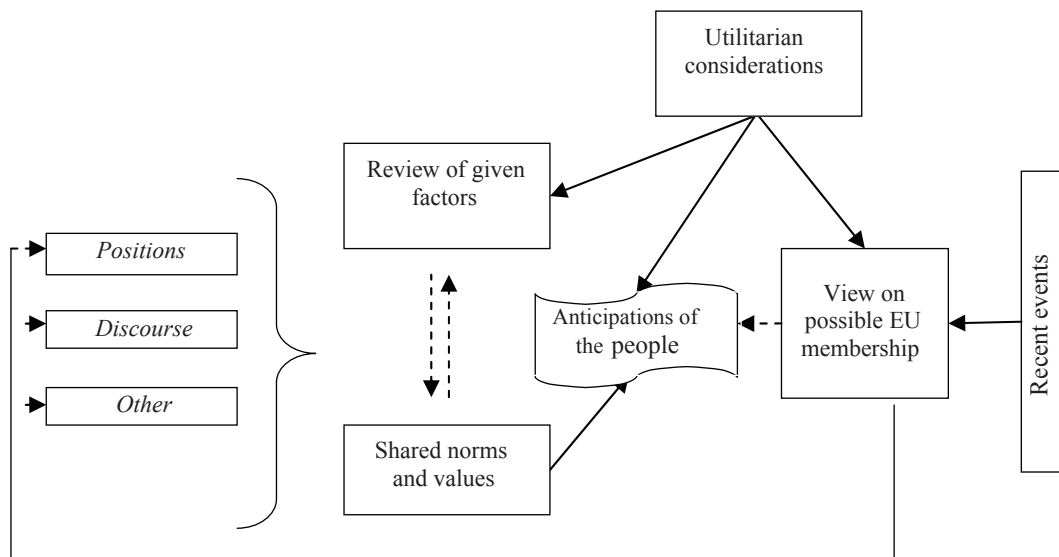
certain criteria - such as human rights, cultural differences the economic situation and a strong concern about increasing immigration to the EU – to certain groups.

Especially the criteria listed exemplarily above contribute to a negative vote (Eurobarometer 66-2, 2006). Furthermore, one can assume that several criteria are related to each other, as for example the criterion of increasing immigration to the EU and the economic situation of Turkey. The latter criteria have a relevant influence on the prosperity of existing EU citizens. Moreover, this evokes the question of advantages entailed by the accession of a new member state and the resulting benefits for present EU members. These advantage-oriented considerations are fuelled by headlines such as “In case of EU entry, Turkey would get almost 1/3 of the total European Structure Subsidies ...” (N. N., 2006a). Hence, it is necessary to define the term “advantage” as exactly as possible.

**(1) Discussion About the Term of “Advantage of the EU Membership”**

According to the survey of the EUROBAROMETER 66 one question of advantages was: “Taking everything into account, would you say that (Our Country) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Union?” (Eurobarometer 66, 2006). The way people answered this question does not allow to identify specific concepts or forms of “advantage”. If it is assumed that the respondents assess all perceived alternatives in a rational manner, that means the main focus is on the cost benefit thought in accordance with the approach of Homo Oeconomicus (Falk, 2001, pp. 1 et seqq.). For the paper at hand it is assumed that “Advantages of EU-Membership” of countries like Turkey from the EU-Citizens’ point of view - collected by EUROBAROMETER - are benefits in accordance with the approach of Homo Oeconomicus (Falk, 2001); furthermore, people strive for maximizing these benefits and the benefit is first of all economic

and wealth oriented (Falk, 2001). As an evidence for this assumption, the Maastricht Contract (1993) can be mentioned, because a result of the reorganisation the Community’s name was changed by removing the word “economy” so that the “European Economic Community (EEC)” became the “European Community (EC)” (REGIERUNGonline, 2005). The intention was to develop from a rather economic union into a “Political Union” (REGIERUNGonline, 2005). In 2006, EU citizens still recognized the core of the alliance as an economic union whose major target is to fight unemployment and poverty (Eurobarometer 63, 2005). This corresponds to the political statements of the presently largest political group within the European parliament, the European People’s Party, which has defined “growth and employment” as the major concern in their Rome manifesto (N. N., 2006e). Freedom and peace which can be seen as political or social advantages are ranked on a lower level, that can be interpreted as the general basis for prosperity – q.v. the above-mentioned hidden personal profit (N. N., 2006e). Finally, this approach connects the advantage orientation to the bounded rationality (Simon, 1990; Fölsz & Tóka, 2004), which is also supported by a model of Fölsz and Tóka (2004). This model was used to explain the shaping of public opinion in the EU (Fölsz & Tóka, 2004). Their concept underlines the importance of both advantages and the context-related aspects such as political party preferences (Fölsz & Tóka, 2004). Relating to the EU membership the authors concluded that the attitudes of the people are henpecked by different factors, e.g. “. . . utilitarian considerations” (Fölsz & Tóka, 2004). Furthermore, factors like recent events (e.g. political crisis) could be seen as relevant too (see Figure 1).



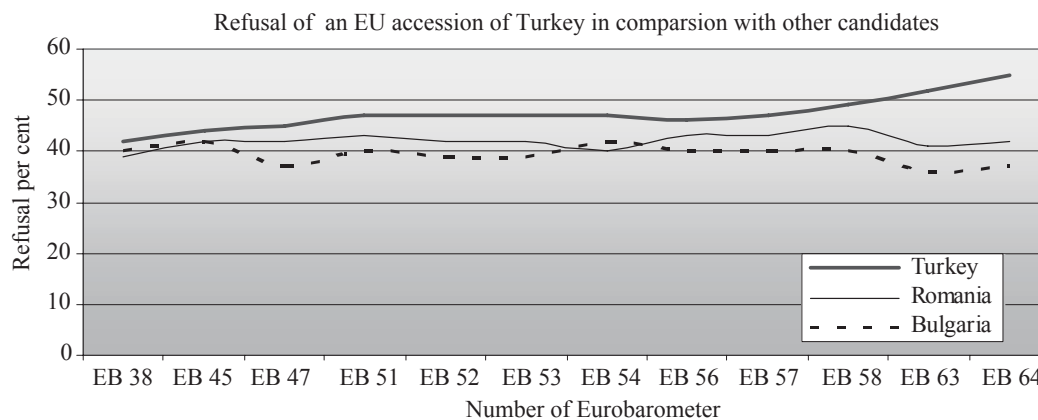
**Figure 1**  
**Influencing Factors - EU Membership**  
 Source: Fölsz & Tóka (2004), modified version by the author

**(2) Definition of the Term “Advantages of EU Membership”**

Based on these considerations it is assumed, that the concept of “advantage” is more or less directly related to prosperity. The used term of perceived advantage is in accordance with the definition of Klopff and Park (Klopff & Park, 1982), who define perception as “... the internal process by which we select, organize and interpret information” (Klopff & Park, 1982). Hence, the following advantages should be considered in a postulated sense.

The topic of accession is not new to the EU, which is proved by numerous publications, but the issue of an entry includes many elements and dependencies (e.g. N. N., 2006b). “For the EU expansion it is becoming more and more important to pay attention to the factors and motives that influence the public opinion on EU enlargement, both within the new and the old member states” (N. N., 2001). This challenge was recognized by the EU commission and the member states, therefore they intend to particularly outline the chances and advantages of the enlargement (N. N., 2001). Thus, within the framework of this study

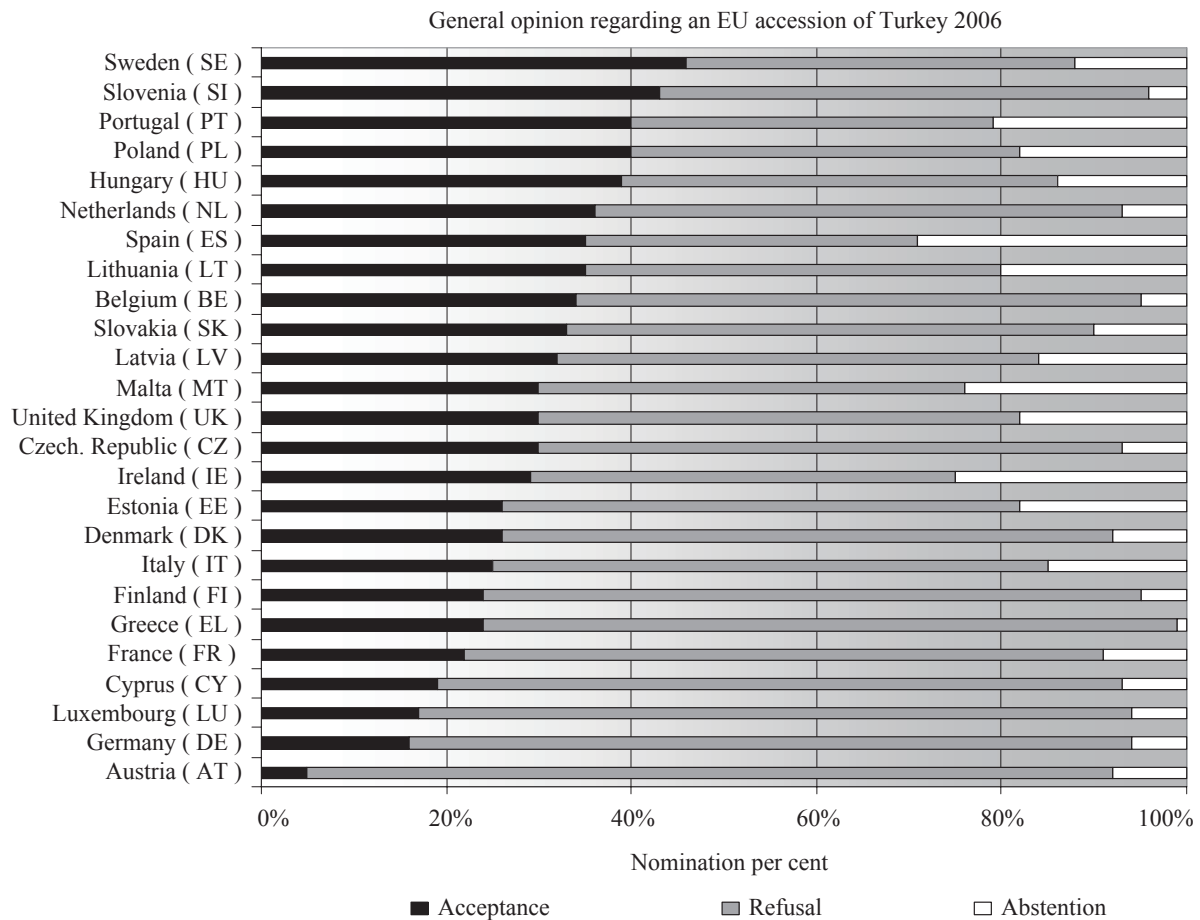
the term “state of research” refers to the public opinion of the EU citizens in terms of a possible EU accession of Turkey, with perceived advantages being the reference point for public opinion. Not surprisingly, the Directorate General Communication of the European Commission has been analysing topics relevant for the EU since 1974 by using the EUROBAROMETERS. Among other things, information on the EU expansion, advantages of membership and the image of the political union has been collected and analysed continuously. The statistics of the EUROBAROMETERS – from 1992 through 2006 – clarify that the rejection rate of certain countries – such as Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey – to access the EU has always been higher than their approval. It is also remarkable that since 2002 (equals Eurobarometer 57) the refusal rate rose continuously. In the last statement, Turkey differed from the latest acceding countries, Bulgaria and Romania. For the whole observation period both countries denoted a virtually changeless rejection rate, whereas Turkey’s has increased (Eurobarometer 38-64, 1992-2004).



**Figure 2**  
**Rejection of an EU Accession of Turkey Compared with Other Candidate Countries**  
 Source: Own illustration, based on Eurobarometer 38 – 64 (1992-2004)

These findings also correspond to the estimation of the Austrian Department of European Safety Policy (Zaunbauer, 2005). The figures from autumn 2006 (EUROBAROMETER 66-2, 2006) showed that this trend has increased. By now, more than 59 % of the polled EU Citizens refuse the accession of Turkey (see Figure 3). The biggest adversaries are Austria with a rejection rate of 87 %, Germany with 78 % and Luxembourg with 77 %

(EUROBAROMETER 66-2, 2006). In December 2006, the Politbarometer determined a lower rejection rate of 54 % for Germany in 2006, but this does not put into question the general rejection by Germany (N. N., 2006c). As a third source, a consumption survey by Reader’s Digest European Trusted Brands 2006 is mentioned, which conforms to the figures of the Eurobarometer with a rejection rate of 72 % for Germany (N. N., 2006d).



**Figure 3**  
**Acceptance of a Possible EU Accession of Turkey in the EU-25**  
 Source: Modified according to Eurobarometer 66 (2006); Eurobarometer 66-2 (2006)

The poll of the EUROBAROMETER 2006 mentioned above produces the following results with regard to the eight criteria for the evaluation of an EU accession of Turkey (EUROBAROMETER 66-2, 2006):

**Table 2**  
**Modified Table of the Criteria for an EU Accession of Turkey**

Relevant Criteria for an Accession of Turkey to the EU	Acceptance in Percent		
	EU-25	Austria	Germany
Human rights must be respected	85	84	93
Economic situation must be improved	77	83	83
Danger of increasing immigration to the EU	66	81	78
Cultural differences to the EU are too strong	61	84	74
Particular geographical belonging to Europe	56	42	59
Particular historical belonging to Europe	40	33	40
Contribution to safety in Europe	33	18	22
Rejuvenation of the aging EU population	29	24	32

*Note.* Own illustration, based on Eurobarometer 66 (2006) and Eurobarometer 66-2 (2006)

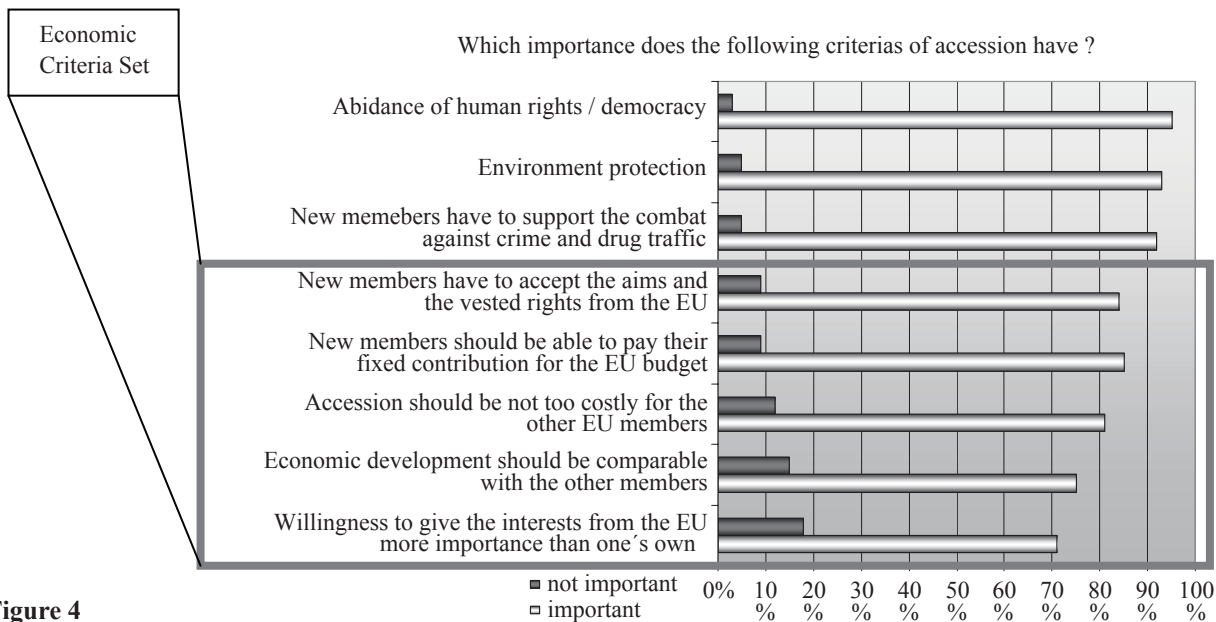
If you take a look at the two biggest adversaries, the strength of rejection or acceptance of the criteria “economic situation” and “immigration” attract attention in comparison to the EU average. This strength is in close relationship with the advantages or their own prosperity, respectively, and provides an indication of the relevance of these criteria for the adversaries. Another indicator for the relevance of the prosperity oriented advantages is given by a survey of the European Commission, which asked how future EU enlargements can be more successful (Eurobarometer 66, 2006; 66-2, 2006).

When looking at another question of the above mentioned survey, the trend seems to be verified: the question assesses whether the enlargement of the EU represents a base for the EU becoming a strong trading partner worldwide. This was especially affirmed by the new member countries in Eastern Europe whereas major enlargement opponents rather denied (Eurobarometer 66, 2006; 66-2, 2006).

This is also an indication of the dominance of the prosperity oriented advantages both from the point of view of the opponents of the enlargement, which fear to lose their present advantages, and the accession countries, which obviously joined the EU for that reason. Another

evidence for the special role of the advantages and the prosperity, respectively, is given in the autumn interview 2006 of the Eurobarometer 66 (2006), which assessed the acceptance of the enlargement in a common sense and asks for the first time, which class of the population expects advantages from a membership of the EU and how they assess the membership. The results suggest that those who are self-employed or managers see advantages in the enlargement, whereas the unemployed tend to expect disadvantages (Eurobarometer 66, 2006; 66-2, 2006).

That indicates the prosperity dimension of the accession considering the current economic background of the class of the population. Another interesting point can be gained through the appraisal of the EU Citizens concerning the eight criteria for the accession to the EU, which were set by the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993, where five out of these eight criteria interestingly have a more or less economic character (Eurobarometer 53, 2000).



**Figure 4**  
**Significance of the Criteria for an EU Enlargement**  
 Source: Own illustration, based on Eurobarometer 53 (2000)

If you take a look at the progress of this appraisal, the last years have shown that the economic stage of development and the willingness to rank the interests of the EU higher than the own ones have an at least constant, sometimes even increasing significance “1998: 73% or 67%, respectively; 2000: 76% or 71%, respectively” (N. N. 2001, pp. 10-11). A low level of development of a new acceding country to a system like the EU implies a medium-term lowering of the average level of the system as a whole and of its present members. For that reason the majority of EU citizens may be less threatened to lose the achieved prosperity level by new members with a higher level of development. A new member with a rather high level delivers a higher contribution to the community in any case: the transfer dues, which are paid to the EU might be higher and the received funds – for area development for instance – are lower. As a result, the estimation of the criteria of Copenhagen can give an indication for the special meaning of advantages and prosperity, respectively. The previous considerations generally confirm the estimated significance of the advantage-oriented thinking within the eight criteria (Eurobarometer 66, 2006) on the one hand. On the other hand, one can see from the brief analysis above that among the set of

possible advantages of an EU membership prosperity related considerations play a more important role than e.g. political advantages. The question arises whether or not the advantages EU citizens perceive as a result of their country’s membership can influence the acceptance or the refusal of the enlargement of the EU.

**(3) Research Question and Hypothesis**

In the context of the investigation it shall be determined if the perceived advantages and aspects of prosperity play a major role in the decision-making of EU citizens regarding the enlargement of the EU, especially with respect to the possible accession of Turkey. Therefore the following hypothesis was developed:

**Hypothesis:** EU-25 citizens’ acceptance of an enlargement of the EU in general depends significantly on the perceived advantages of their own EU membership.

**1. METHOD**

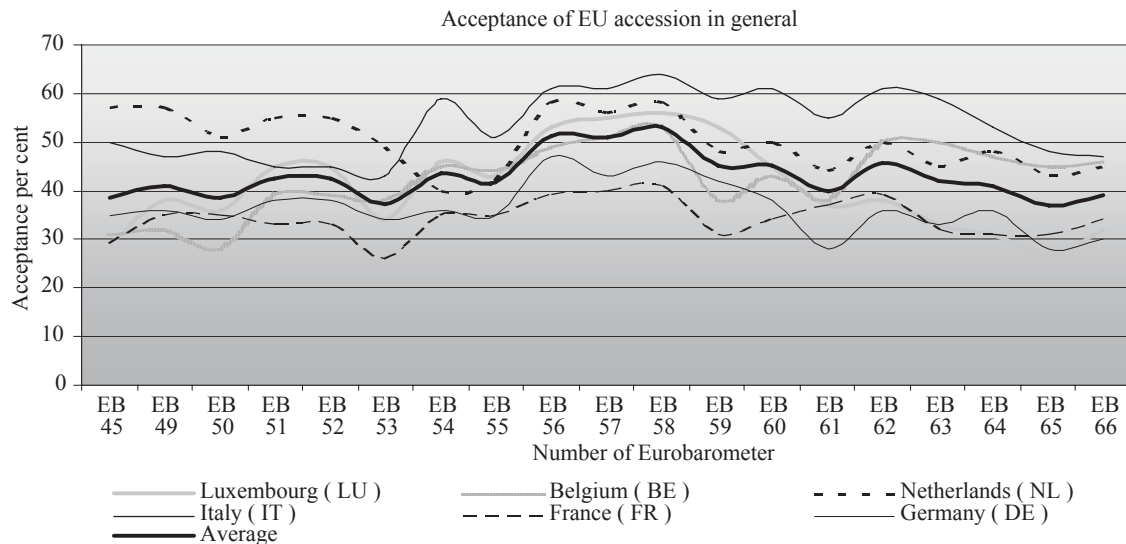
Based on the above-mentioned assumptions the hypothesis was verified by means of Eurobarometer (1992-2006) data. The evaluation is carried out descriptively as well as

analytically using the evaluation software SPSS 15. Primarily the Bravis-Pearson correlation coefficient is applied. The vertical cluster analysis is used for the extraction of groups of countries with similar attribute specifications. In case of different value ranges transformations of variables are effected with a z-value-transformation.

## 2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

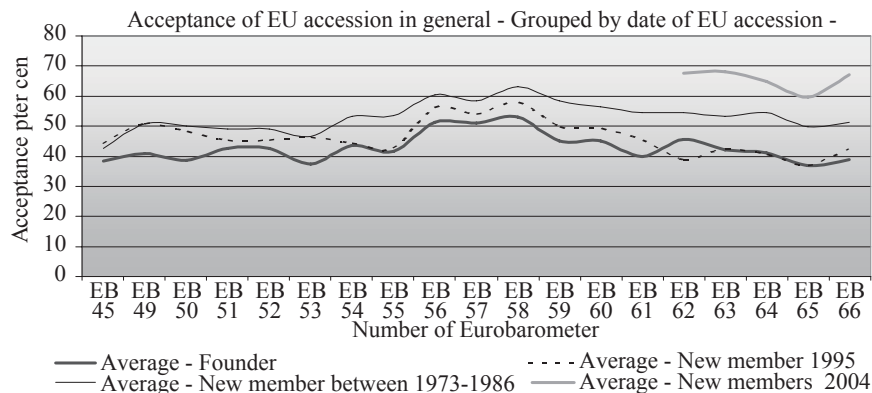
In the following we will verify the hypothesis and discuss the results. The hypothesis was verified using the data of the European Commission's 2006 survey (Eurobarometer, 2006) on the advantages of the own EU membership and the acceptance of the general EU enlargement. For hypothesis testing the data of the above-mentioned

EUROBAROMETER are subjected to a product moment correlation which is admissible because both data sets are interval-scaled and normally distributed variables (Zöfel, 2003). The results show a small correlation ( $r = 0.410$ ) between of perceived advantages of EU membership and acceptance of EU enlargement, which is significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, an unexpected correlation appeared between the general acceptance of the EU enlargement and the moment of accession to the EU of the EU-25 countries. This correlation was at  $r = 0.724$  and was very significant (= for more details, see also Table 3), i.e. certain countries with an identical EU accession date, as for example Italy, Belgium, France or Germany, showed correlating answer patterns with regard to their acceptance of the enlargement, however on different levels.



**Figure 5**  
**Acceptance of EU Enlargement in EU Founder States**  
 Source: Own illustration, based on Eurobarometer 45 – 66 (1996-2006)

A comparison of the average of the above-mentioned countries reveals the following picture: founder states with the average of the later entering

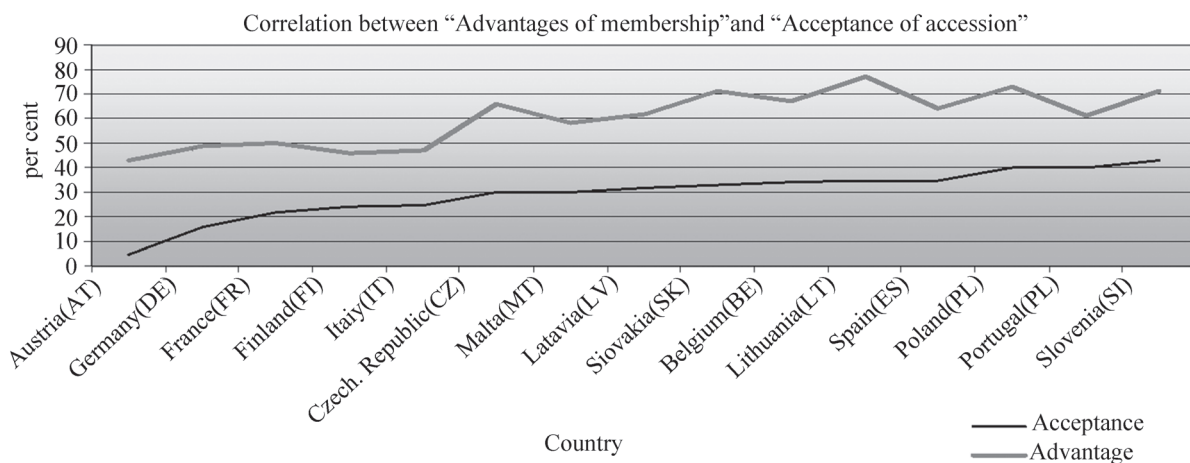


**Figure 6**  
**Acceptance of EU Accession – Grouped by Date of Accession<sup>1</sup>**  
 Source: Own illustration, based on EUROBAROMETER 45 – 66 (1996-2006)

<sup>1</sup> Accessing Countries 1973 – 1986: Denmark, Great Britain, Ireland, Greece, Spain, and Portugal; Accessing Countries 1995: Finland, Austria, and Sweden; Accessing Countries 2004: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Malta, and Cyprus; Source: [http://www.europarl.de/view/de/Europa/EU\\_Vorstellung/Mitgliedstaaten\\_der\\_EU.html](http://www.europarl.de/view/de/Europa/EU_Vorstellung/Mitgliedstaaten_der_EU.html)

Based on the grouping of the countries according to the date of their EU accession it becomes apparent that the acceptance of the enlargement decreases with the duration of the own EU membership, i.e. on average the founder states show a lower level of acceptance than the accession countries, e.g. from the eastern enlargement in 2004. Following this argumentation the acceptance of the accession countries for the EU enlargement will presumably decrease in the years to come. Possibly, the group of accession countries of 1995 (= e.g. Finland, Austria and Sweden) has anticipated this development. Their level of acceptance is already consistent with the founder states. Thus it can be put on record that

the acceptance of the enlargement is influenced by both the perceived advantages and the duration of the EU membership of the country of the interviewed EU citizens. On the basis of these results an even more differentiated examination seems to be indicated. For this the 25 EU member states were sorted under the aspect which of them show compliances between ‘acceptance of the enlargement’ and ‘perceived advantages of the EU membership for the own country’ and those countries which as a tendency show no consistencies. The next figure shows the resulting group of 15 EU countries as well as their correlation behaviour in a descriptive form:



**Figure 7**  
**Economic Country Group**

Source: Own illustration, based on EUROBAROMETER 45–66 (1996-2006)

Evidently, there is a significant correlation between the negative attitude towards an EU enlargement in countries like Germany and Austria and the low perception of advantages of the own EU membership. On closer examination the above-mentioned assumptions are confirmed, i.e. the Pearson coefficient of correlation shows

with  $r = 0.836$  a high correlation between the acceptance and the advantages, which is very significant, and at the same time an almost consistently high correlation of acceptance of the enlargement and the accession date of a country. These countries are in the following referred to as “Economic Group”.

**Table 3**  
**Correlation Between Accession Date, Advantages and Acceptance**

		Date_of_EU_accession	Advantage_EU_membership	Acceptance_EU_accession
Date_of_EU_accession	Pearson correlation	1	.486	.724**
	Sig.(2-tailed) N		.066	.002
Advantage_EU_membership	Pearson correlation	.486	1	.836**
	Sig.(2-tailed) N	.066		.000
Acceptance_EU_accession	Pearson correlation	.724**	.836**	1
	Sig.(2-tailed) N	.002	.000	
		15	15	15

Note. Own illustration, based on figures of the EUROBAROMETER 45–66 (1996-2006)

This analysis shows that there is at least one rather large group of countries in which the decision on the acceptance of the general EU enlargement and the advantages of the membership is made with a view

on ‘economic’ aspects, which strongly supports the hypothesis. In the remaining countries – in the following referred to as “Residual Group” – the correlation is with  $r = -0.121$  very small and not significant.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion it can be said that the question of a Turkish EU membership is a multidimensional problem in which economic considerations are indeed important. However, there are considerable country and population group specific differences. To sum up we would like to establish the following results:

(1) Economic considerations generally do have a large influence on the decision about the acceptance of the EU enlargement; (2) The influence of economic considerations differs within the EU-25 States; (3) The analysis resulted in the selection of a group of 15 countries (the so-called "Economic Group"), which show a high correlation between economic considerations and the acceptance of an EU enlargement in general. Principally, the detected correlation can be interpreted in such a way that countries whose citizens rate the advantages of an EU membership low have a low tendency to accept the accession of further countries; (4) For the remaining, Residual Group' of EU countries a clear interpretation / attribution is not possible; (5) Furthermore the general acceptance of the enlargement correlates with the EU accession date of the different countries. Summing it up it can be said that in countries with a long-term EU membership the acceptance of the enlargement tends to be rather low; (6) The correlation between economic considerations and the acceptance of the enlargement in particular, that is in the case of Turkey, shows with regard to the above-mentioned Economic Group a similar rejection behaviour as already seen in connection with the enlargement in general; (7) The 'Residual Group' (with three countries sorted out) shows with regard to both, the acceptance of the accession of Turkey and the economic considerations, a correlation that is opposed to the Economic Group. A possible interpretation could be that citizens of countries with large advantages from an EU membership oppose to the accession of an economically weak country like Turkey (Bürgin, 2006) out of concern to lose their advantages; (8) The Turkish economy, its importance for Europe (EUROBAROMETER 66, 2006) and its reform efforts (N. N., 2006f) are by many EU citizens (Kizilyaprak, 2006) rated poorer than they are in direct comparison with some EU countries, like for example Poland (N. N., 2006f); (9) In Germany as well as in different other EU countries the economic orientation differs according to different population groups. Groups with a seemingly lower benefit of the Turkish accession (e.g. retired or unemployed persons) tend to reject whereas groups with a high expected benefit tend to support it.

## FOOTNOTES

- (1) I have used the abbreviation "N. N." for "not named authors" (Retrieved from [https://www.wiso.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/wiso\\_master\\_](https://www.wiso.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/wiso_master_)

[euro/Word%20Docs/Informationen/Manual\\_for\\_Academic\\_Writing.doc](#)).

- (2) This paper has been presented on the IABR Conference, San Juan (USA), 18<sup>th</sup> of March 2008.

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## APPENDIX

### Abbreviation for the Country According to Eurobarometer 65 (2005)

AT	Austria	EL	Greece	IE	Ireland
DE	Germany	EE	Estonia	BE	Belgium
FR	France	CZ	Czech Republic	ES	Spain
FI	Finland	MT	Malta	NL	Netherlands
IT	Italy	LV	Latvia	CY	Republic of Cyprus
UK	Great Britain	SK	Slovakia	PL	Poland
LU	Luxembourg	LT	Lithuania	PT	Portugal
DK	Denmark	HU	Hungary	SL	Slovenia
SE	Sweden	PL	Poland		