

The New Enlargement Methodology for Albania, After The Opening of Negotiations

Dr. Entela Nikaj

Faculty of Law, University of Tirana, Albania

Abstract

During its almost 70 years of existence, the EU has managed to grow exponentially and has striven to transform itself into the pan-continental political-economic union that it is today. From the Six States that in 1951 signed the Treaty of Paris¹ and created the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC²), to the European Union with 27 states today, a positive balance of 21 new member states has boosted the European Union and made it an economic key factor and the world's largest trade actor, with an estimated population of 447 million³. Enlargement is ultimately considered one of the most extraordinary mechanisms of the EU's foreign policy, open to any European country that "respects the EU's democratic values and is committed to promoting them"⁴. The current enlargement process is the political and technical consequence of successive waves of accession, during which the conditions and requirements for full membership have become increasingly demanding. The process, as we know it today, involves several formal steps, starting with the signing of the pre-accession Stabilization Association Agreement (SAA)⁵. Each SAA is tailored to the needs of each potential candidate country and is used as the basis on which the future accession process will be built. Once the country complies with the SAA, it can apply for membership and be granted candidate status – after which the Council of the EU (hereafter, the Council) must decide whether to formally launch accession negotiations. These negotiations are framed in 35 chapters, in which the *acquis Communautaire* of the EU is structured - the complete set of legislation, international agreements, fundamental rights and standards that build the EU law. Once all chapters

¹ Cohen, A. (2018). Why call it a “European Community”? Ideological continuities and institutional design of nascent European organisations. *Contemporary European History*,

² Gillingham, J. (1991). *Coal, steel, and the rebirth of Europe (1945–1955): The Germans and French from Ruhr conflict to economic community*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

³ Mioche, P. (2001). La déclaration Schuman, le traité de Paris et la CECA: Débats historiographiques. In M. Catala (Ed.), *Histoire de la construction européenne. Cinquante ans après la déclaration Schuman* (pp. 31–43). Nantes, France: Ouest éditions,

⁴ European Commission, 2016. Conditions for membership. [online] Available at: [Accessed 11 March 2020]

⁵ SAA is the official ad hoc name given to the formal Association Agreement (AA) with EU

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have been opened, subjected to the so-called review (monitoring) process and closed, the European Council may recommend the closure of membership negotiations and submit its decision to the Member States, which will have the last word and final decision. If the Council approves unanimously, an Accession Treaty is signed and, after ratification by the national parliaments of all member states, the candidate country becomes a member of the European Union.

Keywords: Enlargement, process, signed, treaty, conditions, members states, accession, membership, agreements, population, politics, candidate. etc.